



JULY 2016 BLOG: FINDING CAREER SPONSORSHIP

“The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.”
- Steven Spielberg

It's often said that success can't be achieved alone. Whether you are in the early stages of your career, looking to get to the next level or own a business, having people in your inner circle to guide you, give you advice, and share insights from their experience is key to your success.

Most people have heard the words mentorship and sponsorship thrown around a lot and many use the words interchangeably, but they are in fact very different from each other. In an interview with [Everwise](#) and [Forbes](#), Sylvia Ann Hewlett, founder of the Center for Talent Innovation and Hewlett Consulting Partners discusses the difference. Hewlett says, “A mentor is someone willing to give you guidance. Someone willing to provide a sounding board, someone you could go to if you are struggling.” On the other hand, Hewlett says “If mentors help define the dream, sponsors are the dream-enablers. Sponsors deliver: They make you visible to leaders within the company – and to top people outside as well. They connect you to career opportunities and provide air cover when you encounter trouble. When it comes to opening doors, they don't stop with one promotion: They'll see you to the threshold of power.”



Therefore, it's not hard to see why sponsorship could be the differentiating factor that propels you to new heights in your career. Research conducted by the Center for Talent Innovation found that 56 percent of men and 44 percent of women who have a sponsor will approach their manager to make the request to get assigned to a highly visible team or a reach project, compared to 43 percent of men and 36 percent of women without sponsors. When asking for a pay raise, a similar thing occurs. While employees without a sponsor, 67 percent of men and 70 percent of women, resist confronting their boss, 50 percent of men and 38 percent of women with a sponsor are more likely to approach their boss and ask for the raise. While having a mentor is important and provides its own set of benefits, these statistics prove that having a sponsor in your corner offers real career traction and opens a path to success through pay raises, high-profile assignments, and promotions.

So by now you realize that if you don't have a sponsor, it's time to start intentionally and strategically thinking about who that might be. To offer some guidance in your search, here are three guidelines for you to use as you search for a sponsor and look to create a relationship which will benefit both sides.

3 Guidelines for Finding the Right Sponsor:

- *Someone with clout and well connected in the industry.* You should look for someone that has influence within your company and industry. Someone who is well-respected and has proven their own success will be important as they guide you and assist you on your own career trajectory.
- *Someone who is two levels above you.* It's important to look past your inner circle and direct managers. You want to connect with someone who is at least two levels above, has a voice at the table with key decision makers and has the connections to pass along to you.
- *Someone who truly believes in you.* The first two guidelines listed here are important but this one might be the most important of all. If your “sponsor-to-be” doesn't truly believe in you, your potential or your mission, then the relationship isn't going to benefit either of you. As a protégé, you need to make sure you are showing up

and doing everything you can to prove to your sponsor that they should help you. If you show them you are putting in the effort, they will be more likely to believe in you because they know how important it is to you.

What is the first step you will take to find a sponsor?



Leadership Spotlight:

Sylvia Ann Hewlett

Founder of Center of Talent Innovation and Hewlett Consulting Partners, Economist, Author, Speaker

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