



Ideas and information for human resource professionals



Sponsorship: The Key Ingredient to Advancement



Mentorship programs have been in the corporate arena for years. You know the drill. A more experienced employee offers advice and support to a fledgling heading up the career ladder.

The mentor acts as a sounding board for the junior staff member and offers recommendations on a periodic basis. Mentors are key to building connections across the

organization and getting a third-party perspective. That being said, mentorship alone will not suffice if you have your eyes set on the most senior ranks of the organization. This is where sponsorship comes in. [How does sponsorship differ from mentorship](#) and why is it important to career growth?

Think of sponsorship as mentorship 2.0. Instead of merely offering advice or introductions, a sponsor actively “pounds the pavement” for the person they are sponsoring. Sponsors take some responsibility for the other’s career advancement. They seek growth opportunities, put their name in the hat for promotions, and talk them up to others in elevated positions across the organization. As you can imagine, the sponsor is putting their reputation on the line each time they advocate for the person they are sponsoring. And for most professionals, these sorts of relationships don’t just happen overnight. They develop over time after trust is earned. While not always synonymous, mentorship can develop into a sponsorship relationship.

If you are thinking “But I don’t need a sponsor. I work hard and that alone is enough,” think again. Relationships are important to career progression; leaders need to be familiar with you, your work, and your career intentions to help you. Unfortunately, lack of meaningful sponsor relationships has been shown to affect the opportunities women, primarily women of color, are given in the workplace. Women are 54% less likely to have a sponsor than their male counterparts and thus fewer advocates to speak on their behalf. Women hold only 31% of senior management roles, per Grant Thornton’s [“Women in Business 2021”](#) report, and [women need to actively seek sponsors](#) to move the needle on representation. With these numbers so

December 2021

In this edition:

[Sponsorship: Key to Advancement](#)

[Delegation: A Teaching Moment](#)

[Recruiting for “Culture Fit”](#)

[Tiny Habits](#)



off balance, women shouldn't just seek sponsorship from other female leaders; they need to develop relationships with men at the top as well.

The act of creating relationships strong enough to result in sponsorship takes effort. It is understanding that some people aren't comfortable talking about themselves or reaching out to leaders they do not know very well. It can be helpful to think of this as a project versus a public relations campaign. Step one of the project plan is to make yourself available to senior leaders and report back regularly. A focus on the results of your work can help these interactions feel more like a brainstorm and less like a brag session. Over time, these conversations can evolve from "work talk" to a meaningful sponsorship relationship and more career advancement opportunities for you. And when you get promoted, you will remember to look for openings to pull up the next person behind you.

Delegation: Turn Task Management into a Teaching Moment



In theory, delegation sounds amazing. Do you want to pass off work to someone else so you have more time for other projects? Yes, of course you do. In practice, delegation is more complicated. It involves giving up control, something that may feel difficult for a new manager or someone with micromanagement tendencies. It involves prioritizing your workload and communicating clearly with your team. Easier said than done! Why is delegation so tough and how can leaders ensure they are providing their team members the

right information to help them be successful?

Many managers are promoted because of their competency in their *prior* role. Read that again...their prior role. Let's look at an example – a Marketing Associate, with skills in copywriting and SEO optimization, is promoted to manage their team. As a manager, they set the strategy, coach employees, and lead their team. They are no longer spending most of their time on execution, an area they clearly excelled in. Some naturally transition into a coaching role and love helping others figure out how to approach their work. The problem comes into play for those individuals who have a hard time passing the baton to a member of their team. Letting go of control can be tough, especially for someone who excelled doing the tasks themselves. New managers can start by delegating a low-risk project and slowly build up to passing off higher profile assignments after trust is gained.

It is key for managers in this situation to [set up their teams and themselves for success](#) when passing along a responsibility or task. Colin Boyd, international speaker and communications expert, created a simple delegation system called the [P.A.T. model](#) to remind leaders what key information needs to be passed along. "P" stands for purpose. This is the "why" of the assignment. What will happen if it is not completed? What will take place after this assignment? The purpose is the motivation that fuels ownership of the project. Encourage your employee to ask questions at this stage so they have the big picture. Without the purpose, you may find that people make a change to the project plan or a substitution that does not fit the bill. For example,



you ask for holiday gifts to be sent to clients but hesitate to mention that your big client is allergic to nuts (a key detail when the plan was to order snack gift baskets!).

You are now ready for the “A” which stands for action. The level of detail you provide at this stage depends on the prior knowledge, experience, and education of your employee. Is your employee a new hire? It is likely a good strategy to provide a step-by-step project plan. No detail is too small! On the other hand, you can provide less instruction for more experienced staff since they have the know-how to fill in the blanks and make reasonable decisions. This is a good opportunity to ask the employee what information they need to successfully accomplish the project. Managers can put on their coaching hats here and involve their employee in identifying the right course of action. This is a great step to utilize when you consider who to choose for the project.

Finally, you are ready to move onto “T”, the timeline! A strong delegator will not just share a due date but also offer multiple points to touch base and check in on progress. Although you are delegating this project, you are still responsible as a leader to be available to help and coach as needed. This part is important – a good delegator gives enough space and time for the employee to make decisions along the way.

Effective delegation is part art and part science. Using the P.A.T. model can give managers the structure to delegate with confidence. Pro tip? Schedule an after-action review at the beginning of the project so you are setting the expectation that this is a learning opportunity. This makes feedback a part of the learning cycle and ensures that both the manager and employee will receive feedback.

How To Responsibly Recruit for “Cultural Fit”



Your first candidate interview of the day just flew by and you didn’t even pick up your pen. You have so much in common with the candidate that you chatted effortlessly. You both have two daughters, a love for hockey and you both grew up in a small Midwest town. You leave the interview confident she is a good “[cultural fit](#)” for your company and recommend an offer. If this sounds familiar, stop right there. This is your official wake up call. Relying on social interactions to make hiring decisions may mean you end up with a team of people who look, act, and think just like you. This pattern not only promotes hiring bias and discrimination but also has a negative effect on innovation in the workplace. Does this mean hiring for cultural fit is outdated? Not necessarily, but it does mean that your team needs a plan to assess a candidate’s cultural fit using facts rather than feelings.

“Go with your gut.” In many situations, this would be good advice. For example, your gut provides helpful cues in low-risk decisions like choosing a flavor of ice cream or selecting a book to purchase. But when it comes to assessing an employee cultural fit, [your gut is an unreliable](#), and often unhelpful, source. It offers better insight into whether you could be friends with the person (i.e., Can I imagine having a beer at happy hour with this person?). A team



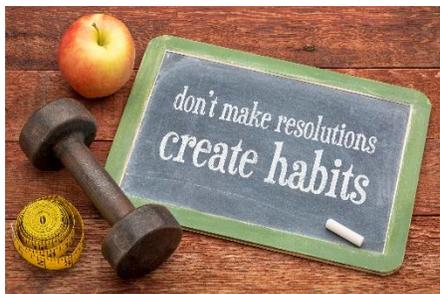
member selected in this manner would be a better fit for a party invite rather than a high performing team.

Instead, reframe how your hiring managers think and assess fit. Start by introducing them to the concept of “[cultural additive](#).” Think of this descriptor as a way to diversify skills and add dimension to the team. Instead of looking for clones, the team looks to fill gaps in knowledge, style, and experience. What new perspective can this candidate bring to the team?

Second, create search criteria that clearly outline what the position needs and how to assess it. Provide question options to your hiring team rather than relying on each person to put their unique spin on the interview. This level of clarity and detail will help your team level the playing field when assessing candidates. A candidate scorecard or other rating system can set expectations with the hiring team on what is important as it relates to culture. Are you looking for someone who is comfortable dealing with ambiguity? Then ask behavioral questions about how they have dealt with lack of information in the past. Clarity and measurable outcomes are key.

The term “cultural fit” is vague and can be easily misinterpreted. This may lead some to say that screening for culture is irrelevant. But before you throw out the baby with the bathwater, think about how your team can create structure to screen for meaningful cultural additives. With these tips, your team can make hiring decisions based on facts rather than relying on their gut or using social attributes as a determining factor.

Tiny Habits: How Lowering Your Expectations Can Lead to Change



The New Year is right around the corner. Many take this opportunity to set a big, hairy goal to work on their health, professional development, or relationships. These goals can look like losing 20 pounds by year end or read 3 new books a month. This renewed commitment to a goal is why gyms see a beginning of the year spike in new memberships. How long does this determination last? 12 days! A study conducted by Strava reported that most people [dropped their resolutions](#) by January 12. With this underwhelming

statistic, how do people make big changes in their lives? BJ Fogg, a behavioral scientist at Stanford University, posits that we should lower our standards and start with tiny habits to create a domino effect of change.

Author BJ Fogg wrote the book, [Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything](#) to explain the key ingredients needed to create lasting change: motivation, ability, and prompt. Motivation is the engine; it is the excitement that urges you to act. As you can imagine, motivation is often highest at the beginning when you start with a fresh slate. The less motivation needed to complete a task, the easier it is to add to our regularly scheduled routine. Identifying your “why” may bolster your motivation. The second ingredient is the ability to accomplish the behavior. Like a SMART performance goal, the change must be achievable with



your current skills. And the final ingredient is a prompt. Think of this as the green light to go. Putting these three ingredients together creates a recipe for behavior change!

Often, new habits are not successful because you set your sights too high. Fogg recommends setting bite-sized goals that build competence and lead to more positive internal dialogue. This is good news because our internal narrator is usually piqued by what we do wrong, rather than what we do right. When you institute a small habit, you increase the number of opportunities to celebrate your successes.

Let's look at a small change in action. You want to offer more positive feedback to your team. You decide you will start your day by sending a brief thank you for a job well done the day before to one team member. Nothing fancy, just a simple IM or email. Your prompt is turning on your computer in the morning (something you already do!). You collect small wins quickly since this task is a light lift. Your internal dialogue changes from "I am bad at giving feedback" to something like "I am the type of person who regularly offers gratitude." Over time, this positive acknowledgement leads to more motivation to continue the practice and the cycle advances.

Contrary to popular belief, setting a new goal at work or home doesn't have to be complicated. Research shows that "baby steps" may be most effective when trying to create a new routine. Tiny habits can accumulate to meaningful change. So, the next time you are tempted to institute a major life change, pull back the reins and start small.