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Creating Successful Mentoring Programs: A Catalyst Guide



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ABOUT CATALYST

Catalyst is the nonprofit research and advisory organization working to advance women in business, with offices in New York, San Jose, and Toronto. The leading source of information on women in business for the past four decades, Catalyst has the knowledge and tools that help companies and women maximize their potential. Our solutions-oriented approach—through Research, Advisory Services, Corporate Board Placement, and the Catalyst Award—has earned the confidence of global business leaders. The American Institute of Philanthropy consistently ranks Catalyst number one among U.S. nonprofits focused on women's issues.

Creating Successful Mentoring Programs: A Catalyst Guide

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Catalyst Publication Code R63; ISBN#0-89584-234-3

This book is dedicated to
Lynn Tandler Bignell
Entrepreneur, Leader, Mentor.

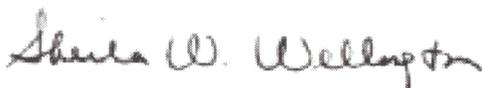
Lynn Tandler Bignell was a true innovator whose vision and insight turned into reality with the founding of Gilbert Tweed Associates, Inc., the oldest and largest female-owned and -operated executive search firm in the world. Lynn's accomplishments were acknowledged by her peers and clients in Harper & Row's "The Career Makers—America's Top 150 Executive Recruiters." She was also Chairperson and President of the International Association of Corporate and Professional Recruiters. Among the achievements she counted as her greatest were the number of women who learned under her wing and went on to cultivate their own successful practices.

In the workplace, mentors help people maximize their potential. They give career advice, offer insight about the work environment, and expose mentees to employee networks. Catalyst knows from our Research and Advisory Services engagements that the best mentoring happens informally. However, we also know that women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds and men of color report difficulty building informal mentoring relationships. Formal mentoring programs fill that gap and are important components of corporate efforts to advance women in business.

This updated edition of Catalyst's guide to mentoring—one of our best selling publications over the last 10 years—lays out all of the information you need to create a formal mentoring program that works in your organization. Packed with more practical tips and up-to-date best practices, this guide contains added evidence—from our latest research—that mentoring is critical to career advancement.

As you'll discover by turning the pages, the most important step in creating a successful mentoring program is developing concrete goals that address the needs of your employees and the organization as a whole. Companies can use mentoring to orient new employees, develop mid-level managers, or cultivate high-potential employees. Each of those audiences has distinct developmental needs that different approaches can address. In addition to clear objectives, mentoring programs need visible support from senior leaders to gain credibility. Top managers can act as champions by participating in launch events, inviting mentors to participate, and communicating ongoing support for mentoring programs. Finally, both mentors and mentees need training to clarify their roles in this process. Both sides should have realistic expectations of what a formal program can and cannot deliver.

It is Catalyst's hope that companies and firms will continue to promote a work environment in which mentoring can thrive because people in every organization—including women and men of all backgrounds—can benefit from the advice of a more experienced colleague. And leading organizations know that they must provide a formal platform for this exchange.



Sheila W. Wellington
President, Catalyst

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND APPROACHES

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

When Catalyst advises organizations on the topic of mentoring, we view the creation of a mentoring climate—not a program—as the ultimate goal. The best mentoring is informal, where people build relationships based on mutual interests and talents. However, a formal program is an important step in making mentoring a valued part of the corporate culture. Mentoring has to be recognized and rewarded for people to invest time in these activities.

The purpose of formal mentoring programs is to help participants be successful at work. Mentoring is not meant to stand alone. It is most effective when integrated into a career development program that includes training, succession planning, and performance management. In this guide, Catalyst outlines the success factors and challenges in developing a formal mentoring program and provides best practices throughout the report that highlight a range of organizational approaches. We've also included tips for you to pass to your future mentoring program participants on how to be good mentors and mentees.

But first, this chapter offers background information about the importance of mentoring for both employers and employees in today's business world. It also provides descriptions of various formal and informal approaches, as well as a few examples of current programs.

WHY IS MENTORING IMPORTANT?

Mentor relationships have always existed in the workplace, although they haven't always been labeled as such. While mentors play many roles, their central task is to help people maximize the potential they already have. Mentors give advice about career decisions, provide insight about the political environment, and introduce their mentees to their own networks. In 1978, *Harvard Business Review* published a landmark article, "Everyone Who Makes it Has a Mentor." The problem, then and now, is that not everyone has equal access to mentors. Catalyst research consistently finds that women cite lack of mentoring as a critical barrier to their advancement.

In the business world, mentoring relationships are typically informal and unstructured. Often a senior male executive will take an ambitious young man under his wing. The mentor explains the unwritten rules of the workplace based on his years of experience, and the mentee gains a trusted and influential adviser. Because the majority of senior leaders are white men, and mentors tend to gravitate towards colleagues with similar backgrounds (gender, race/ethnicity, education, class, etc.), women and men of color are less likely to be informally mentored. One senior-level African-American woman in Catalyst's 2001 study *Women of Color Executives: Their Voices, Their Journeys* explained:

"This company has favorites. The field is not level. If you are the 35-year-old, 40-year-old white male, perfect hair, suit, wife, and two kids guy, you can connect easily with this gentleman up above you or beside you who looks at you as a son, his father, his friend, whatever.... Those connections happen and are so blatant it's amazing."

As a result, many companies are using formal mentoring programs to develop and retain talented employees. But rather than expecting one individual to do all the advising, organizations are expanding the definition of mentoring. Mentoring teams have evolved where peers provide coaching and support for each other. Companies create mentoring quads or circles to leverage multiple mentors and offer participants a range of perspectives. Finally, organizations are challenging the traditional hierarchy by having junior professionals mentor senior-level mentees. Reciprocal mentoring programs acknowledge that learning happens in both directions whether the topic is technology or diversity.

Taking a variety of approaches makes sense in today's complex business environment. One person cannot realistically meet someone's every coaching need. As the following quote illustrates, women should develop panels of mentors at all levels, both within and outside of their companies.

MENTORING APPROACHES

External vs. Internal Programs

While the bulk of this guide is devoted to laying out the steps necessary for creating a successful mentoring program within an organization, we would be remiss if we did not point out that there are several external mentoring programs available for women. These external programs—usually offered as a benefit to high-performing employees—complement a company's internal mentoring efforts. They range from email programs that connect participants nationwide to year-long leadership development programs that assist participants in achieving career goals. Mentornet, Women Unlimited, and Menttium are just three examples of external mentoring programs.

Formal vs. Informal Mentoring

Once corporate leaders decide to support mentoring inside their organizations, they have a number of decisions to make. Companies can choose to implement formal mentoring approaches, in which the company matches mentors and mentees, designates minimum time commitments, monitors the relationships, and evaluates the program. However, organizations can also implement informal or facilitated mentoring by providing venues for mentoring relationships to develop and lending some sort of guidance so that effective mentoring occurs. This approach often involves activities such as networking events, where junior staff members are invited to panels or discussions with senior-level leaders. The goal is to promote the development of relationships between junior and senior employees and to encourage informal mentoring to occur more frequently, particularly among groups that are less likely to have mentors.

In an effort to establish a culture in which communication among diverse employees flourishes, many companies create formal mentoring programs. A formal program is typically facilitated by a designated employee. With a colleague focused specifically on mentoring, companies can opt for a more complex program structure than the traditional one-on-one approach. Each platform for mentoring has its own set of advantages and disadvantages. The challenge is to match your organization's climate and program objectives with the right approach.

Informal or Facilitated Mentoring

Essentially, facilitated mentoring is a hybrid of a mentoring and networking program. A company that is hesitant to formally monitor mentoring may provide opportunities where mentoring relationships could potentially develop, such as within employee networks. Participants are left to pair with one another on their own. It is often up to the mentee to make the connection.

In addition to sponsoring networks, companies can provide other tools for developing informal mentoring relationships. Mentoring handbooks can serve as "how to" guides, helping mentees identify and develop relationships with mentors. A mentoring directory of managers and executives who have volunteered to act as mentors can help increase visibility of mentoring and highlight senior-level support. Finally, company sponsored events that facilitate networking or highlight career development strategies of executives offer a chance for employees to learn about advancement strategies and identify potential mentors at the same time.

Women's Leadership Conference at Motorola

Motorola's Women's Leadership Conference is sponsored by their women's network and is designed to be a venue where senior women share strategies and advice with women moving up in the company. The conference creates an opportunity where mid-level women can be exposed to senior-level women who could potentially become their mentors. It is also a chance for Motorola to showcase the accomplishments of its senior-level women.

The conference consists of a panel of high-level women discussing their personal success strategies followed by breakout sessions on career development, work/life balance, and business issues, led by women senior managers. The benefits for the senior women are that they receive the opportunity to share advice with mid-level women and they gain visibility as leaders at Motorola. In addition, they have the personal satisfaction of seeing themselves as role models for other women at the company.

Internal Formal Mentoring Approaches

Catalyst has worked with companies to design and implement several different kinds of mentoring approaches—based on each organization's unique needs. The "size" of the mentoring group can be designed to meet varying objectives. Each approach has benefits and drawbacks.

One-on-one.

Similar to the informal one-on-one relationship, this type of program involves pairing one mentor with one mentee. Catalyst recommends that there is at least a two-level difference (outside the direct reporting line) between the members of the pair. Organizations may also choose participants from different divisions, locations, or countries, depending on the program objectives.

Benefits: The one-on-one structure ensures personalized dialogue and direct feedback. It can often lead to a longer-term relationship than originally assumed through the terms of the program.

Drawbacks: In a formal one-on-one pair where participants are matched together, there is a greater possibility that lack of chemistry will pose a challenge to the relationship. In addition, each person involved only benefits from the perspective of one individual. Catalyst finds that a common challenge to one-on-one mentoring is simply the limited availability of good mentors.

Panel of Mentors

The following innovative forms of mentoring have been established in recent years and address some of these drawbacks associated with one-on-one mentoring. Each involve expanding the number of people from whom we learn. Creating a "panel" of mentors, or a "board of advisors," allows mentees to tap into a wide range of professional expertise from a diverse set of mentors. These creative approaches demonstrate that mentors do not necessarily have to hold a title higher in the organizational hierarchy than the mentee's.

Quads.

A quad mentoring format involves one mentor and three simultaneous mentees.

Benefits: Participants in this system are offered advice and feedback from a senior member of their organization as well as from their peers. This format solves the problem of having too few available mentors, should that be the case in your organization.

Drawbacks: Quads encounter greater difficulty in scheduling mentoring sessions since there are more people involved. The participation of more than one mentee can also result in less personalized interactions between the mentees and mentor.

Groups or Circles.

In groups, there are generally a number of mentors (anywhere from two to four) matched with double the number of mentees (i.e., three mentors and six mentees).

Benefits: Similar to quads, groups are an efficient use of mentors and because of the larger population of peers involved, groups usually foster stronger peer networks than quads do.

Drawbacks: Groups can pose significant scheduling challenges. The group structure can also be potentially unwieldy and allow for the development of competitiveness among mentees, leaving those less assertive to "disappear" in the background and not reap the full developmental benefits of the program.

Reciprocal or Reverse Mentoring

This type of mentoring involves a more senior-level person learning from a more junior person. The goal of reciprocal or reverse mentoring is that it is mutually beneficial.

Benefits: Creates an opportunity for star performers to develop relationships with senior managers and be exposed to the business at a higher level, while senior-level people learn from the experience and perspective of their "reverse mentor."

Drawbacks: More junior mentors may feel uncomfortable serving as a mentor to a senior-level manager and the senior-level mentees may be reluctant to become a "student" and reverse roles.

Mentor-Up Program at Procter & Gamble

In order to educate senior-level managers on the subtle issues facing women in the Procter & Gamble environment, the company created their innovative Mentor-Up program where mid-level women act as mentors to senior-level men.

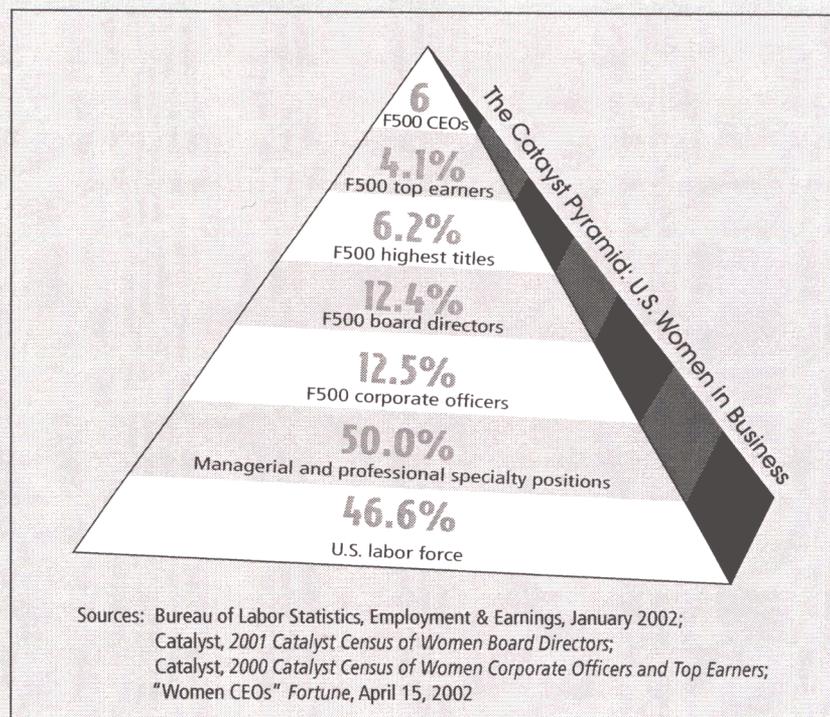
Initially, bi-monthly discussion guides were distributed to mentor/mentee pairs to facilitate relationship-building and two mentors' lunches were held during the year to share feedback and ideas among participants. A steering committee, comprised of senior leaders and an internal mentoring expert, lead the program.

Mentor-Up allows senior managers to discuss gender issues in a non-threatening forum. Participants describe having a female "sounding board," with whom they can discuss gender issues. At the time same time, the program creates an opportunity for mid-level women to gain exposure to influential, senior men.

CHAPTER 2: MENTORING: A RECURRING THEME IN CATALYST RESEARCH

For the last four decades, Catalyst has studied women in the workplace. We publish biannual censuses of women board directors and corporate officers in leading U.S. and Canadian companies. These counts provide benchmarks with which corporations can measure women's advancement. The following illustration demonstrates that although women comprise nearly half of the U.S. labor force, their numbers decline rapidly as you climb up the corporate ladder.

The 2001 Catalyst Pyramid: U.S. Women in Business



Women hold slightly more than 6 percent of highest titles in U.S. business (chairman, vice chairman, chief executive officer, president, chief operating officer, senior executive vice president, and executive vice president). According to the *1999 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers of Canada*, women's representation in top executive jobs in Canada is less than four percent.

What can we learn about mentoring from these numbers? They remind us that senior women probably lack mentors in companies that rely on the traditional, informal mentoring approach because there are so few women at the top. Therefore, women looking for mentors should not set their sights solely on top women because there aren't enough to go around. This is also true for women and men of color. However, this is not necessarily bad news. Women can learn different perspectives on succeeding in business from male mentors. Companies, too, must help women, including women of color, cross the gender/culture barriers in mentoring relationships. Mentors need to learn to coach people who have completely different life experiences and situations.

MENTORING AND CATALYST RESEARCH

Catalyst has asked women and men across a wide range of industries and geographies about what they think is holding women back. Not surprisingly, mentoring comes up again and again. Women who have broken through the glass ceiling give credit to mentors for helping them succeed, while those still struggling to advance cite the lack of access to mentors as a key barrier.

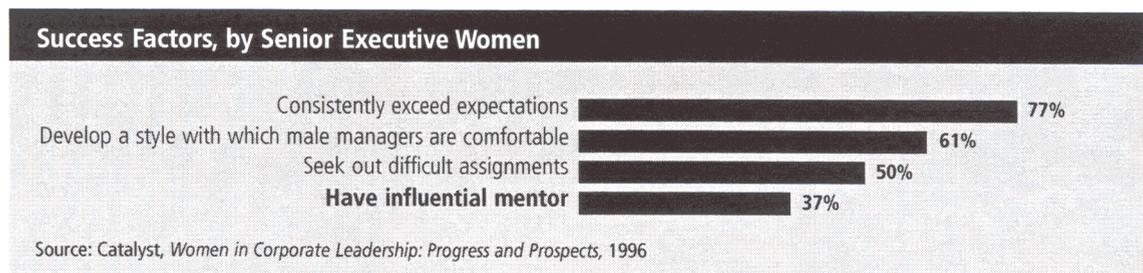
Catalyst Finding: Mentoring Is Key to Senior Women's Success

In 1996, Catalyst set out to learn about women's success strategies by surveying nearly 500 executive women for our groundbreaking study on women in corporate leadership.¹ The majority of participants were within one to two reporting levels of the CEO. The most important success factor, cited by 77 percent of the women, was exceeding performance expectations. It makes sense that excelling is critical to any employee's advancement, regardless of gender. But understanding performance expectations can be tricky—particularly when there are subtle expectations for employees at senior levels. Mentors can be useful resources in figuring these expectations out.

The second most frequently cited success strategy was finding a style with which male managers are comfortable (61 percent). In interviews, women described this as learning the rules of the game. This is where mentoring is critical. An employee can only learn the unwritten rules from someone who has experience in the culture. Mentors helped these women fit in, and because there are so few women in senior positions, fitting in is challenging. Half of the women in this study reported feeling excluded from informal networks of communication.

Seeking out difficult assignments is a third success factor given by the senior women in this study. Again, this is another area where mentors can help. Mentors can advise people about which assignments to take and why. They can also offer support and guidance during the difficult assignment.

Finally, 37 percent of the women executives explicitly stated that having an influential mentor or sponsor was a critical ingredient for success. And four out of five respondents considered this strategy at least somewhat important to their career advancement.



¹ Catalyst, *Women in Corporate Leadership: Progress and Prospects*, 1996

Similarly, the senior-level women surveyed in studies in Canada and the UK indicate that having an influential mentor is a career advancement strategy—76 percent in Canada² and 56 percent in the UK.³

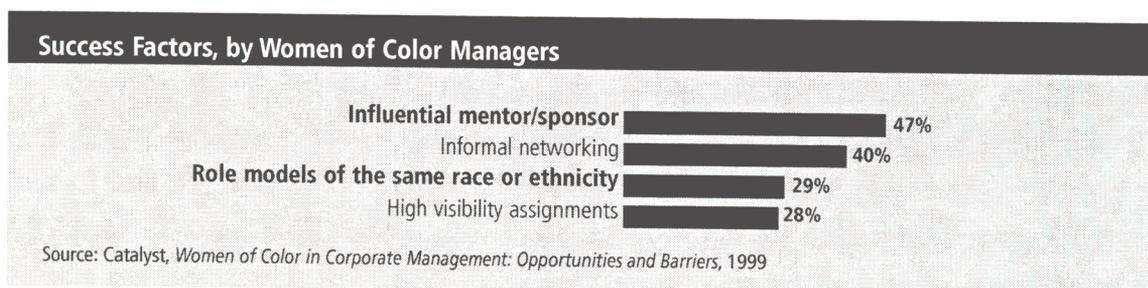
The importance of mentoring is not recognized by senior women alone. In fact, 44 percent of the women surveyed in Catalyst’s 2001 study on today’s generation of professionals—born between 1964 and 1975—report that having an influential mentor or sponsor is a top strategy for career advancement.⁴ One-half (50 percent) report that lack of mentoring opportunities in an organization is a barrier to women’s advancement.

Catalyst Finding: Women of Color Face a Mentoring Gap

In 1999, Catalyst surveyed more than 1,800 African-American, Asian-American, and Latina managers working in corporate America to understand the unique experiences of women of color professionals. Forty-seven percent of this group cites the lack of an influential mentor as the number one barrier to their advancement.⁵

As mentioned earlier, mentoring happens informally and people are often drawn to others with similar backgrounds. This “comfort factor” can unconsciously exclude women, and race and ethnicity add another dimension of difference.

In an ideal corporate work environment, employees have both managers and mentors; however, of all of the women of color surveyed, only about one-third report that they do, in fact, have a mentor. More senior-level women of color have mentors than do women at the lower levels. For example, 50 percent of senior-level African-American women have mentors, compared to 37 percent of mid-level and 34 percent of lower-level African-American women. Similar responses were observed for Asian-American women and Latinas.



² Catalyst, *Closing the Gap: Women’s Advancement in Corporate and Professional Canada*, 1998

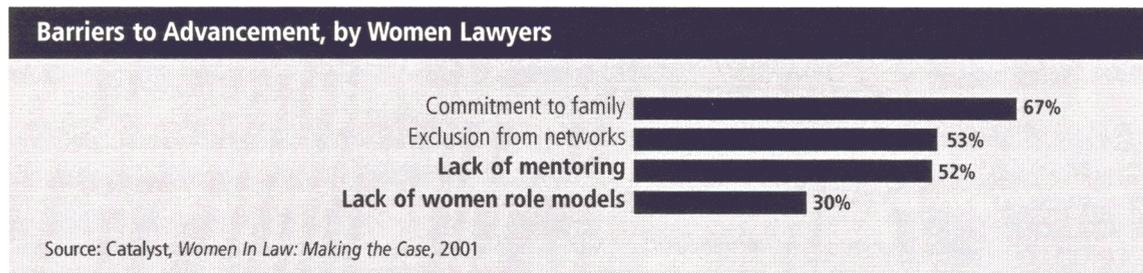
³ Catalyst, *Breaking the Barriers: Women in Senior Management in the UK*, 2000.

⁴ Catalyst, *The Next Generation: Today’s Professionals, Tomorrow’s Leaders*, 2001

⁵ Catalyst, *Women of Color in Corporate Management: Opportunities and Barriers*, 1999.

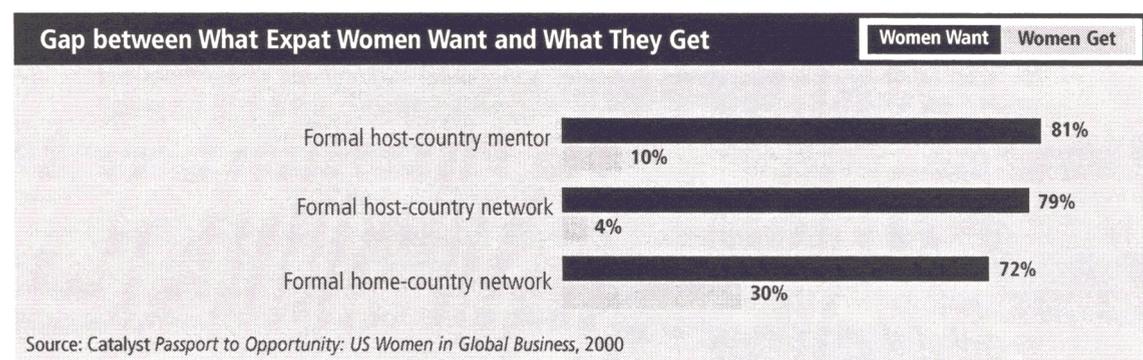
Catalyst Finding: Women Lawyers Want Mentoring Opportunities

The themes that Catalyst finds in corporations also resonate within professional firms. Although women have comprised more than 40 percent of law school students since 1985,⁶ they still account for less than 16 percent of law partners nationally⁷ and 14 percent of Fortune 500 general counsels.⁸ The legal profession has a strong pool of qualified women, but few women make it to the top. According to Catalyst’s 2001 study on women in law, women say the number one barrier to their advancement is work/life conflict.⁹ This is not surprising given the profession’s emphasis on billable hours and client service. However, the next three obstacles are all relationship-driven: exclusion from networks, lack of mentoring, and the absence of women role models.



Catalyst Finding: Global Women Want Mentors and Networks

Mentoring helps people feel connected to their organizations. For expatriates who live and work abroad, maintaining ties to the home office is critical. In Catalyst’s 2000 study on U.S. women in global business, a majority of women report that they want formal mentors and networks in both their home and host countries.¹⁰ But very few of these women receive such services through their employers. Women expatriates feel more isolated than their male counterparts because there are so few role models. Formal mentors can provide coaching about working in different cultures, maintaining visibility outside the home office, and ensuring that the desired skill set is being developed.



⁶ American Bar Association, "First Year Enrollment in ABA Approval Law Schools 1947-2001 (Percentage of Women)," <<http://www.abanet.org/legaled/statistics/femstats.html>>

⁷ National Association of Legal Employers, "Women and Attorneys of Color at Law Firms - 2001," <<http://www.nalpe.org/nalpresearch/mw01sum.htm>>

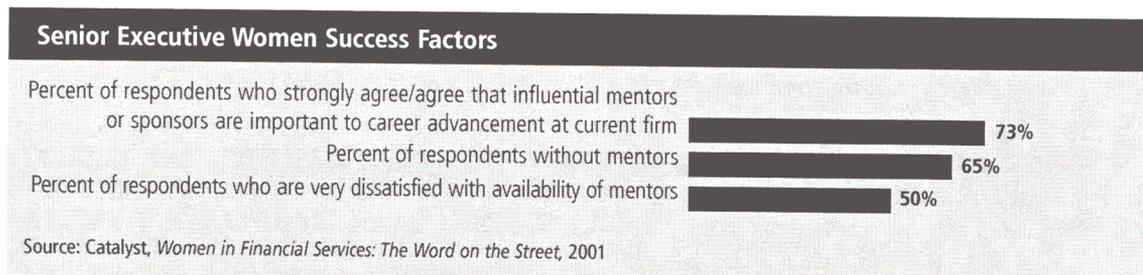
⁸ Catalyst, *2000 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners*, 2000

⁹ Catalyst, *Women in Law: Making the Case*, 2001

¹⁰ Catalyst, *Passport to Opportunity: U.S. Women in Global Business*, 2001.

Catalyst Finding: Women in Financial Services Want Mentors

In Catalyst’s study on women in financial services, 73 percent of the women surveyed reported that having an influential mentor or sponsor is very important or critically important to career advancement in their firms.¹¹ Despite this finding, 65 percent of respondents indicated that they do not have a mentor. One-half of the women in the study were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the availability of mentors.



Global HR Mentoring Program at JP Morgan Chase

In 1999, Chase Manhattan developed its first worldwide mentoring program for human resources. The Chase Global Human Resources Mentoring Program is open to any officer in the company’s HR department around the world, and candidates are identified through an open nomination process.

One of the program’s key objectives is to “enhance the mentee’s ability to react quickly and strategically to changes in the marketplace.” Because Chase is a global company, it believes matching mentors and mentees across geographies is a good strategy to assist in meeting that goal.

Including the Global HR Mentoring Program, there are currently more than 25 formal mentoring programs at JP Morgan Chase, in which an estimated 4,000 employees participate. A corporate-wide Mentoring Steering Committee was established to provide objective perspective, guidance, and advice in the design and delivery of programs to the line businesses.

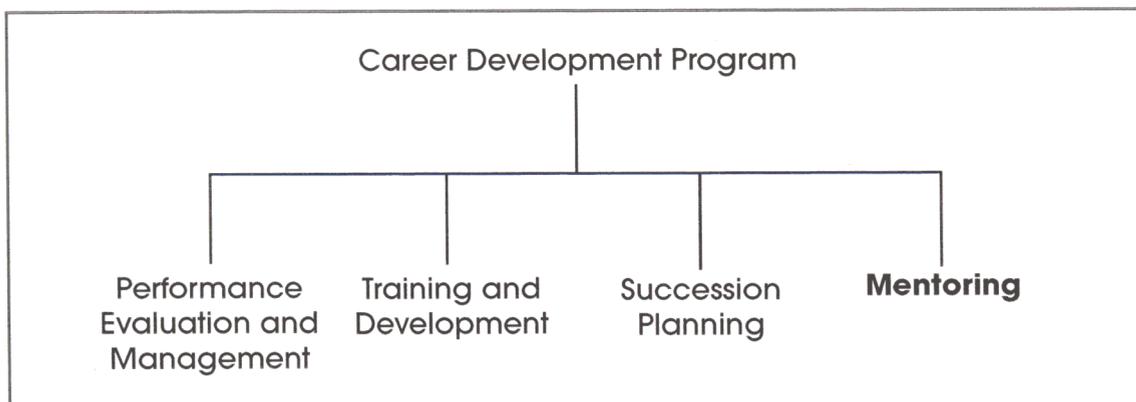
As these and other Catalyst studies show, mentoring is an integral factor in advancing women in business. Across organizational levels, geographies, industries, and cultural backgrounds, women consistently report that mentoring is a key to reaching the top and that the lack of mentoring serves as a barrier to advancement.

¹¹ Catalyst, *Women in Financial Services: The Word on the Street*, 2001

CHAPTER 3: WHY FORMAL MENTORING PROGRAMS?

As Catalyst's research demonstrates, mentoring is a critical issue for women. Based on this knowledge, Catalyst and its President Sheila Wellington wrote *Be Your Own Mentor*, published by Random House in February, 2001. The book acts as a stand-in mentor for individual women until they can develop mentoring relationships of their own. It is a great resource for mentees to have in hand. The mentoring guide you are currently reading acts as a stand-in advisor as an organization considers, or begins to develop, a formal mentoring program. Also, through our Advisory Services practices, Catalyst offers a half-day or full-day mentoring workshop that features different approaches to mentoring programs, highlights best practice companies, and outlines the key success factors for creating an effective program.

Mentoring programs are effective tools for recruiting, retaining, and advancing the very best talent. However, they are only part of a comprehensive career development program that should also include performance evaluation and management, training and development, and succession planning. Mentoring programs can help meet the developmental needs of employees and serve a business purpose.



MENTORING PROGRAMS ADDRESS HR CHALLENGES

By the year 2010, women are projected to make up 47.9 percent of the U.S. workforce. The representation of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American women in the workforce will continue to grow (12.8 percent in 2000 to 15.2 percent in 2010 of the total U.S. labor force).¹² As the composition of the workforce changes, companies are successfully using mentoring programs to help employees:

- ◆ Improve personal and professional performance
- ◆ Gain insights into the organizational culture
- ◆ Develop new skills and knowledge
- ◆ Seek honest and constructive feedback
- ◆ Discuss workplace issues such as diversity

¹² Howard N. Fullerton, Jr. and Mitra Rossi, "Labor Force Projections to 2010: Steady Growth and Changing Composition," *Monthly Labor Review* (November 2001): 21-28

When mentoring is integrated with a comprehensive career development program, it can help advance women and people of color to senior leadership ranks. *Catalyst's 2001 Member Benchmarking Survey* revealed that mentoring programs also help enhance relationships between diverse groups. Seventy-six percent of the 106 companies that participated in the service offer formal mentoring programs to employees. A greater percentage of the Catalyst Award winners have formal mentoring programs (88 percent of the participating Catalyst Award winners).

MENTORING PROGRAMS ENHANCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Companies often highlight mentoring programs in their recruitment efforts. The availability of a mentoring program for new hires sends a strong message to potential candidates about a company's commitment to its employees. Indeed, new hires increasingly have higher expectations about the role that the company should play in their career advancement. Mentoring is also a valuable tool for helping companies retain new or recent hires. Programs designed to acclimate new employees to the organization provide recent hires with advisors, helping to reduce stress and ensure a positive introduction to the company. In addition, companies increasingly identify high-potential employees early in their careers and provide mentors for them. Mentoring efforts can contribute to employee morale, motivation, and retention by showing employees that they are valued and by providing a connection with the company. As one participant in a proprietary Catalyst Advisory Services interview explained:

"I think [the program] helps retain a lot of people in the company. It shows that the company is interested in them and is trying to bring them along."

—Corporate Mentoring Program Grad

Mentoring Partnerships at PricewaterhouseCoopers

Mentoring Partnerships is an important initiative with a dual purpose: first, to ensure that PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) mentors and promotes more high-performing women and people of color into the partnership of the firm, and second, to develop leaders' abilities to manage a diverse workforce successfully. As part of its business strategy, PwC hopes to continue creating a competitive advantage through managing and retaining a diverse workforce to serve its varied clients. Mentoring is one of the ways to help the many diverse employees of the firm reach their career pinnacles and come into positions of leadership. The Mentoring Partnerships Program provides one-on-one mentoring and career development by matching senior managers with partner leaders. Currently, there are approximately 250 pairs.

MENTORING PROGRAMS HELP WITH SUCCESSION PLANNING

Through mentors, women obtain valuable "inside information" and tap into social and professional networks. Mentors help women understand what it takes to advance in a company and can offer guidance about how to present and position themselves. Also, a mentor can explain the organizational politics and help the employee plot a course for career advancement.

Considered an effective means of identifying and developing high-potential managers, mentoring programs have been used to augment succession-planning efforts. Mentoring programs are often built to "fast-track" high-potential employees being groomed for leadership positions. Putting employees in contact with senior leaders can help them develop the confidence to build their own visions and leadership styles.

Bench Strength Program at Knight Ridder

Knight Ridder's "Bench Strength" program is a formal mentoring system targeted at high-level employees who are identified by senior managers as being within two to three years away from taking on significantly broader leadership positions. The program was established to strengthen the diversity of the company's leadership, including the number of women, and an emphasis is placed on diversity among the mentees. Corporate officers and business unit heads are the mentors. They meet annually to discuss the individuals in the program in order to create familiarity with the group should a job opening arise.

VP's and supervisors are held accountable for the success of the program, and corporate officer bonuses are tied to performance on their advancement of diversity. Other key elements of the diversity effort include sustained focus over time, high profile support of top leaders, and alignment with the company's business strategy.

MENTORING PROGRAMS FOSTER CULTURAL CHANGE

Many companies have begun to reexamine their internal organizational structures and are moving to team-based approaches. Mentoring programs can help ease the transition by demonstrating that coaching and team building are valued in the organization.

In order to stay competitive, companies need to create cultures that foster creativity and innovative thinking. Mentoring relationships can provide a relatively safe environment for both the mentor and mentee to develop ideas and get feedback.

"People use the groups as a sounding board for future actions, almost like a test ground. For example, a member might ask the group, 'What would the reaction be if we were to implement a policy like this?'"

—Manager of a Mentoring Circles Program

In most organizations, information flows downward, but mentoring can help change the way communication happens. Furthermore, mentoring can often be reciprocal. Mentoring junior staff members offers a window into the issues and problems faced by employees at lower levels in the company before those problems become serious. One mentor working out of headquarters told Catalyst that working with his mentee helped him realize how out of touch he had become with the pressures of being in the field.

SELLING A MENTORING PROGRAM

If you are interested in creating a formal mentoring program in your company, consider the following organizational benefits.

- ◆ Mentoring can lead to increased productivity. New managers and new hires at senior levels can get up to speed more quickly, and be less stressed, once they have access to informal information networks and constructive feedback and coaching.
- ◆ Coaching can mean fewer mistakes. Mentors will help mentees navigate the organizational culture and politics, thus enabling mentees to avoid mistakes that could potentially damage internal and external client relationships.
- ◆ Inclusion through mentoring can lead to increased organizational commitment and retention. Creating connections between employees communicates that the organization values them and, therefore, they will be less likely to leave.
- ◆ Mentoring relationships can help companies tap a wider range of leadership talent.
- ◆ Information sharing facilitates knowledge management. When mentors pass along knowledge to mentees, they ensure that their knowledge stays in the company even after they move on or retire.

CHAPTER 4: BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PROGRAM

SUCCESS FACTORS

Catalyst has found that although the ways to implement a mentoring program differ from organization to organization, different types of mentoring programs all share the following fundamental success factors:

- ◆ Link to business strategy
- ◆ Clearly articulated program objectives
- ◆ Leadership commitment
- ◆ Devotion of adequate resources
- ◆ Realistic participant expectations
- ◆ Supportive culture

Link to Business Strategy. A mentoring initiative must be linked to the business strategy of the organization. Programs are more easily implemented and actively supported by both senior management and participants when they are consistent with other personnel policies and practices and are tied to a business goal.

Informal Mentoring at Deutsche Bank

The women's network at Deutsche Bank, The Global Partnership for Women, created a series of networking breakfasts to connect women in the network to each other, encourage mentoring relationships, and share business information across highly decentralized business units. The program has been met with success, and a number of the outcomes are linked to the company's overall business strategy. For example, the networking breakfasts have generated business deals, created opportunities for cross-product sales, and raised interest among men at Deutsche Bank who have since been included in the events.

Clearly Articulated Program Objectives. Organizations need to be explicit about their goals and objectives. Determine what specific needs your company wishes to address with a mentoring program. Identify potential pitfalls involved in implementation. Establish the target population, the specific developmental needs of the mentees, and the incentives for mentors to participate.

Informal Mentoring at Pershing

Pershing's mentoring program is a firm-wide, self-nominating, one-year program that was piloted in the Office of Diversity and is now administered by the Office of Career Development. The program, which pairs assistant vice presidents (AVPs) with high-performing mentors (directors or vice presidents), is designed to meet the following clearly articulated goals:

- ◆ Help AVPs develop their leadership skills
- ◆ Expose them to a range of functions
- ◆ Help AVPs navigate their careers through the organization

Program participants attend training and networking lunchtime events where mentors and mentees address a number of topics including: Pershing's systems, products, and services; project management; time management; and networking, negotiation, and presentation skills. Also, at twice-monthly meetings, mentors and mentees discuss and establish their expectations and track meeting dates and discussion topics with progress logs.

Leadership Commitment. Visible support from senior leaders will ensure the credibility and success of a mentoring initiative. Senior managers should act as champions of the program by participating in the launch event—inviting mentors to participate, or even participating as mentors themselves. They should serve as role models, sharing mentoring strategies or key advice they've received. Finally, they should informally highlight the importance of participation and ensure that mentors receive recognition during performance reviews.

Women's PLAN (Partners Leadership Alliance & Network) at Ernst & Young

Women's PLAN seeks to support high potential women partners at Ernst & Young through mentoring and development planning. The ultimate goal is an increased pool of available leadership talent at the firm.

The program was created in response to inquiries by women partners across the firm about why there weren't more women in visible leadership positions. One factor identified was that women have more limited access to senior-level mentors than their male peers do, so the Center for the New Workforce worked closely with the Executive Board to address these challenges.

Each participant in Women's PLAN is assigned a mentor from the Executive Board. With help from a professional coach, the participant creates an individual development plan based on input from a 360-degree feedback instrument, and then works with her mentor to fulfill that development plan. Additionally, they form co-mentoring groups consisting of six or seven participants to provide ongoing career support and guidance to each other.

Devotion of Adequate Resources. Many organizations fail to invest the financial and staff resources necessary to design and sustain a successful mentoring program. The best practice companies highlighted in this report exemplify those that recognize the importance of committing time, money, and attention to mentoring. Start-up orientation and training, costs for speakers series and career development events, and costs for informal mentoring tools such as directories and handbooks are mentoring program elements that are often overlooked when allocating resources. A dedicated mentoring program coordinator is also important to many programs. The amount of time dedicated to developing and administering the program will vary depending on a number of factors including, the objectives of the program, the current mentoring climate in the organization, and the number of participants. The coordinator leads the mentoring program, facilitates the matching process, acts as a point person to participants, organizes events, and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the program.

Realistic Participant Expectations. It is critical to ensure that mentors and mentees understand how they will contribute to and benefit from the relationship. In order to accomplish this, the goals of the mentoring program should be clearly articulated. Provide an outline of what the mentoring program can and cannot do. Summarize roles and responsibilities of the participants and create a vision for the mentoring relationship and desired end results.

Supportive Culture. A supportive organizational culture is as important as the structure of the program. Although mentoring programs have the potential to change the culture of an organization, the design and implementation of the program should be consistent with the organization's culture.

Also, keep in mind that “chemistry” is often overrated. While informal mentoring is frequently established when there is the pretense of a spark between two people with common interests and similarities, a good formal program should focus on concrete career advancement needs and goals. The program should connect people who have something to learn from one another but would not meet otherwise. This is why incorporating diversity into the matching process is critical. Participants do not necessarily have to become best friends, but rather, colleagues that can comfortably share opinions and advice about work and workplace issues.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

The needs of organizations vary widely, as do the accepted means of addressing them. Therefore, program planners should assess a range of approaches to find the ones that are most appropriate for their corporate cultures. Programs evolve over time, and organizations should be ready to make changes based on feedback as well as on shifting needs of individuals and the organization. Catalyst recommends answering the following questions before launching a formal mentoring program:

- ◆ What specific business needs will mentoring help to address? (The answers will provide a framework for all of the decisions that follow.)
- ◆ What are your short- and long-term goals for mentoring?
- ◆ Who are your target mentees by level, location, gender, and race/ethnicity?
- ◆ What specific developmental needs will you address?
- ◆ Who are your target mentors by level, location, gender, and race/ethnicity?
- ◆ How will you create incentives for mentors to participate in the program?
- ◆ What structure (one-on-one, quads, or groups), given your work culture and demands, will work best for mentors and mentees?
- ◆ How often should the mentoring pairs/groups meet?
- ◆ What ongoing training and supports will you offer?
- ◆ How will you evaluate whether or not the program is successful?

STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED

1. **Complete up front and comprehensive planning.** Invest time up front to save time and ensure the program’s effectiveness. Any attempt at a quick fix, i.e., simply matching mentors and mentees, will undermine the program’s effectiveness. Take your time to plan, orient, and train.
2. **Establish objectives.** The next step is to establish the objectives of the program, which should be developed in the context of the company’s culture and existing employee development and career enhancement programs. The program’s objectives should identify the target population, as well as the intended benefits of participation. Clearly defined objectives enable you to measure the success of the program.
3. **Commit resources.** Understand what resources you’ll need to implement your mentoring program successfully. Take into account financial considerations as well as staff support training. If the company allows mentoring on company time, which is advisable, guidelines should specify how much time employees might spend on mentoring. Resources should not be underestimated and should be allocated according to the

objectives of the program. In addition, it may be worthwhile to employ a coordinator to manage the program, support and counsel participants, and serve as an information resource.

- 4. Choose the right participants.** Carefully target your mentees and match them with the right mentors and the right activities. For example, if you are targeting new hires to be oriented through mentoring, focus on a high level of interaction for the first few months, reduce the level of interaction for the next few months, and then conclude the program after approximately six months. Some companies find that they need more than one type of mentoring program to address multiple needs.

Examples of Goals for Formal Mentoring Programs	
Objective	Characteristics
Orient new employees	<p><i>Learning the organization</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Peer mentors at all levels ◆ Basic, orientation information; less tailoring for different individual needs
Develop mid-level managers	<p><i>Navigating your career</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide career direction/advice ◆ Develop peer networks ◆ Start identifying high-potentials; plan for the future
Motivate long-term employees	<p><i>Continuing the learning and connections</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ensure ongoing learning and development ◆ Maintain strength of company relationship with valued employees at different levels ◆ Avoid upward mobility as a specific focus
Develop high-potential employees	<p><i>Targeted intervention</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Give specific career direction ◆ Build targeted skills ◆ Link to succession planning ◆ Deliver expected outcomes re: development and opportunities
Help senior managers understand diversity issues	<p><i>Reciprocal mentoring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Create learning opportunities for senior leaders ◆ Promote candid feedback ◆ Provide a confidential and non-threatening forum to discuss difficult issues

- 5. Ensure realistic participant expectations.** Set up expectations about time commitments. Mentors don't want to be inundated, and mentees want to feel that their mentors are accessible. In addition, set up expectations about chemistry, longevity, and outcomes. Mentees need to know that a mentoring relationship in and of itself does not lead to a promotion.

TIPS FOR CREATING PROGRAM GUIDELINES:

While there are a range of different mentoring programs, all share a few fundamental elements. To ensure the success of your program, take the following steps:

Define the purpose of the program. Participants will better understand their roles when they understand the objectives of the program.

Establish duration and frequency of contact between mentor and mentee. Programs may require the mentor and mentee to meet as often as once a week or as infrequently as once a month. Generally, the length of the mentoring relationship should be driven by mutual desire and satisfaction, although most programs specify a formal endpoint for relationships.

Create steps to ensure that mentors are accessible to mentees. Mentors should make initial contact with their mentees and should reserve the time scheduled for subsequent meetings. Whenever possible, mentors and mentees should work at the same location to ensure sufficient access.

Outline suggestions for starting, managing, and ending relationships. For example, mentees should periodically consider whether they want to continue meeting with their mentors and what they are getting from the relationships.

Develop procedures for withdrawal from the program. Clearly communicate to all participants the procedure for withdrawing from the program and who they should contact if they are having problems. Provide a system for resolving disputes to help avoid employees' withdrawal from the program.

Define how results will be measured. Develop a method for regularly assessing the success of the program. For example, mentees can complete quarterly reports on their experiences—evaluating availability, relevance, and quality of advice.

Establish how to find mentors. In choosing mentors, organizations should look for the behaviors, attitudes, and work styles that they would like to perpetuate. Unqualified mentors may give inappropriate information or form counterproductive relationships. Special attention should be given to selecting mentors who embody the company's values and who are not threatened by younger, ambitious employees.

Set up a system to match mentor and mentee. Companies approach the matching process in a variety of ways. Some host a social event for those interested in the program so employees can meet and pair naturally. Others have strategic procedures for pairing: the program manager or a committee matches mentors and mentees based on mutual interests, compatible personalities, or other criteria. Some companies let mentees pick

their top three choices for a mentor; others let mentors pick their top choices for a mentee; and still others match pairs based on input from both mentor and mentee.

Ideally, the mentor should work in the same locale as the mentee, but outside the mentee's chain of command. However, e-mentoring (mentoring relationships conducted largely over e-mail) has been highly successful for certain organizations. A close proximity, though, encourages open communication, especially about sensitive topics such as problems with a supervisor. Some experts have found that the best matches occur when mentors and mentees share similar attitudes and job functions. Others feel that the pairing should create networking possibilities for mentees and mentors and give mentees exposure to different functional areas.

Provide role descriptions and training. Failure to provide training can jeopardize the success of a program. Indeed, most new participants have only a vague sense of what a mentor relationship is about. Orientation and training should provide the knowledge, skills, and support needed for participants to benefit from their involvement. In some instances, intensive self-assessment and skill training are necessary to teach individuals what they can contribute to and take away from the relationship.

When training mentors, communicate ways in which mentors can advise and counsel their mentees. This is important because at times, mentors need to use skills that differ from those they normally use. Provide descriptions of roles, actions, and behaviors for mentoring. An exploration of attitudes toward mentoring and the behaviors required to initiate and manage relationships can be useful. Give opportunities for mentors to practice interpersonal skills and offer constructive feedback.

Mentees need to understand that they must play an active role in the relationship. To gain this understanding, they can start by clarifying what it is they want to get out of the relationship. Mentees should understand that they are primarily responsible for their own development.

Communicate the program. A solid communication strategy helps ensure the success of the program by inspiring participation and building management support. Be informative and motivated. Communication regarding the expectations of the program should be kept realistic so that everyone understands what the mentoring program can and cannot deliver.

Many companies have developed formal communication tools, such as brochures or videotapes, to describe the objectives of the program and the benefits of participation.

Monitor and evaluate the program. Effective programs are continually monitored in order to keep pace with the changing needs of participants and to determine whether objectives are being achieved. Monitoring helps identify problems before crises develop and determine how the program can be improved. Typically, most

mentoring programs are evaluated at the end of a cycle to ascertain their effectiveness and to solicit recommendations for improvement.

Given the nature of mentoring programs, some company representatives feel that qualitative measurement is more appropriate. Success, in this case, might be measured by the level of participant satisfaction, or whether or not participants continue their relationships after the program has officially ended. Others note that their companies plan to expand the program into other divisions or locations, a development they consider a sign of success.

Now that you are familiar with the components of a formal mentoring program and you have the tools to get started, you may be wondering how to go about choosing your mentors and mentees as well as defining and communicating their specific roles in your program.

CHAPTER 5: THE ROLES OF MENTORS AND MENTEES

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD MENTORS

It is sometimes assumed that any executive can and should mentor. However, mentoring requires specific skills and characteristics that are not possessed by everyone. For example, mentors must be able to work with their mentees to define and communicate the roles, expectations, and outcomes for each person involved. They should also evaluate their own skills and approach mentoring as a developmental exercise that will help them sharpen these skills. In addition, mentors should expect their mentees to move on to bigger and better things. Because mentoring relationships often result in career advancement for the mentees, mentors should be prepared for the possibility that their roles may change from superior to colleague. They should also expect some failures; however, mentors shouldn't let these prevent them from taking risks in selecting their mentees.

THE MANY ROLES OF MENTORS

Before committing to a mentoring program, mentors need to know what is expected of them. Mentors can play many of the roles described below, but most mentors should not be expected to play them all. In fact, Catalyst advises mentees to develop a panel of mentors to provide different types of guidance and support.

"I advise women to build a personal mosaic of experts and guides that will cover each of the areas where they need specific information and advice. Someone who's good at office politics, someone who's a good time manager, and so on."

—Carol Bartz, Chair, CEO and President, Autodesk¹³

The Counselor. In this role, the mentor is supportive and acts as a sounding board to help the mentee solve work-related problems or issues.

- ◆ Orients the mentee to the organization's environment; explains the unwritten rules.
- ◆ Helps the mentee weigh the pros and cons of career choices.
- ◆ Helps the mentee strategize to achieve his/her career goals.
- ◆ Offers advice based on the mentor's own professional experience.

The Coach/Adviser. The mentor serves as a coach/advisor in giving candid feedback, assistance with career development, and advice on how to accomplish goals.

- ◆ Helps the mentee clarify performance goals and developmental needs.
- ◆ Offers the mentee candid feedback and recommends specific behaviors to improve performance.
- ◆ Reviews the mentee's development plan on a regular basis.

¹³ Sheila Wellington and Catalyst, *Be Your Own Mentor*, Random House, 2001

The Role Model. Many successful men and women report using the strategy of watching others to learn how to conduct themselves and interact with others.

- ◆ Leads by example.
- ◆ Demonstrates knowledge and insight into the informal political process of the organization.
- ◆ Exhibits components of an effective leadership style.

The Advocate/Champion. In some cases, mentors can be advocates or champions for their mentees. In this role, the mentor helps the mentee gain exposure internally and externally by opening doors to his/her professional network and sponsoring the mentee for key assignments, promotions, and developmental opportunities.

- ◆ Opens doors and introduces the mentee to the mentor's network of professional contacts.
- ◆ Informs the mentee about appropriate educational or employment opportunities.
- ◆ Arranges for the mentee to participate in high-visibility activities within or outside of the organization.

THE BENEFITS OF MENTORING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

Should men mentor women? Of course. Male mentors can be very effective in giving advice on career strategies and office politics, especially from their typical position as "insiders" to the majority culture. Male mentors also often have established networks and credibility and can be very effective advocates at the senior management level. Finally, there are more men in the top ranks to serve as mentors.

Given the demographic composition of today's managerial work force, the majority of white women involved in mentor relationships will have male mentors. The same is true for women of color. Catalyst's 1999 survey found that 37 percent of women of color are mentored by white men and 26 percent are mentored by men of color.¹⁴ It is important, therefore, to be aware of the potential problems of cross-gender mentoring. The most common of these problems are:

- ◆ Stereotypical gender assumptions
- ◆ Sexual tension or innuendoes by others about the relationship
- ◆ Inability of male mentors to meet female mentees' needs
- ◆ Different preferences for social activities

Training participants and providing materials can address some of these issues. Offering relevant case studies and articles to facilitate discussion on gender dynamics is another way to address the issues.

Should women mentor women? Of course. While there may not be many women in the senior levels, female mentors can give advancement advice and discuss gender issues from a woman's point of view. Also, female mentors serve as readily applicable and valuable role models who help mentees avoid any mistakes they may have made and candidly share issues related to gender at work. They might also be able to help with strategies for time management essential to balancing work and personal life. However, the few women in positions to

¹⁴ Catalyst, *Women of Color in Corporate Management: Opportunities and Barriers*, 1999

mentor others may receive an overload of requests from the relatively larger group of women at lower levels.

The right answer? Mentees should not focus on finding one perfect mentor. Instead, they should aim to be the mentees of several talented people. A panel of diverse mentors is certain to enrich the mentees' learning experiences.

"Every person of color will tell you that typically they are the only one in their area. To overcome that sense of isolation, you need people you can trust. I like to think of those people as my own board of directors."

—Senior Manager, Women of Color in Corporate Management

TALK WITH POTENTIAL MENTORS ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES

Most new mentoring program participants have only a vague sense of what a mentor relationship is about. Orientation and training should provide the knowledge, skills, and support needed for participants to benefit from their involvement. The information below is critical for mentors to have before they undertake the task at hand.

Among the many myths about mentoring is the assumption that the mentor must "click" with the mentee. In a formal mentoring program, mentors should know that the focus is less on the personal connection with the mentee and more on the career objectives of the individual. The mentee has been given permission to ask the mentor questions and seek counsel about work expertise. There should be no pressure to make lasting friendships. The point of formal mentoring is to help one another succeed at work.

WHAT IS IN IT FOR THE MENTOR?

"The benefit to you as a mentor may be far more subtle than you may think. You will feel more accomplished in your own career when you realize how much you have to impart to someone else. And a mentee can often offer information or feedback you'd not otherwise have access to."

—Sheila Wellington, President, Catalyst

While most of the activities in a mentor relationship imply effort on the part of the mentor for the benefit of the mentee, mentors should be aware that they too can gain both personally and professionally. Professionally, mentors gain respect and recognition from others in the organization as individuals who have the ability to identify, encourage, and promote talent. Mentoring a future leader can extend the manager's network by providing access not only to the current connections of the mentee, but also to the connections the mentee will develop in the future. A mentee can also provide hands-on assistance with a mentor's workload—helping to finish a project or acting as a sounding board for new ideas. In cross-generational pairs, mentees provide mentors with the perspectives of another generation—useful to any executive responsible for people management.

Tips for Being a Good Mentor

It takes practice to be a good mentor. Share the following Catalyst tips with mentors in your program:

1. Build from Your Own Experience

- ◆ Think about what you wish you had known.
- ◆ Think about who mentored you and what you learned.

2. Share What You Know Now

- ◆ Translate the unwritten rules.
- ◆ Explain the grapevine—how information is transmitted informally.
- ◆ Share your failures.

3. Open Doors and Set Up Contacts

- ◆ Provide professional contacts for the mentee both inside and outside the organization.
- ◆ Arrange for the mentee to participate in high visibility activities within or outside of the organization.

4. Provide Perspective

- ◆ Help your mentee to recognize his/her challenges—and to ride them out.
- ◆ Serve as a reality check when your mentee faces organizational or personal conflicts.
- ◆ Be candid with your feedback.
- ◆ Help your mentee recognize and celebrate successes in the context of the new business culture.

5. Enjoy the Benefits of Being a Mentor

- ◆ Take advantage of a two-way source of advice and perspective.
- ◆ Gain a sense of fulfillment for passing your wisdom to others.

6. Know the Limits to Mentoring

- ◆ Respect confidentiality.
- ◆ Don't feel you have to know all the answers.
- ◆ Expect some failure, and don't let this get in the way of mentoring others.
- ◆ Be willing to say good-bye. At some point, your mentee will move on—especially if you have been a good mentor.

THE ROLE OF THE MENTEE

To ensure that a formal mentoring program succeeds, it is critical to manage the expectations of participants. Mentees can reap many career benefits from mentors—professional advice, managerial training, increased visibility, and broader networks. However, a mentee must be a responsible partner in the mentoring relationship in order to take advantage of these benefits.

It takes practice to be a good mentee. Share the following Catalyst tips with mentees in your program:

The Do's

- ◆ Exceed performance expectations.
- ◆ Demonstrate your openness to coaching and feedback.
- ◆ Listen carefully to your mentor's advice and incorporate those insights that make sense for your career.
- ◆ Ask a lot of questions.
- ◆ Inform your mentor of significant career accomplishments and failures.
- ◆ Share with your mentor the advice that made the most difference for you and why.
- ◆ Give back to your mentor—be loyal; return favors.
- ◆ Become a mentor.

The Don'ts

- ◆ Act defensive when receiving advice.
- ◆ Expect a promotion or other reward from having participated in a mentoring program.
- ◆ Feel entitled to your mentor's time and attention.
- ◆ Be judgmental about your mentor's experience.
- ◆ Breach a confidence.

There are a number of problems commonly associated with mentoring relationships, especially with formal mentoring. Problems with formal mentoring usually occur when the mentor and mentee fail to assess each other's needs, goals, and intentions correctly, or when external organizational factors work to derail the relationship. However, most pitfalls can be avoided or addressed through careful planning and implementation.

CHEMISTRY

A common complaint about mentoring programs is that formalized relationships cannot achieve the depth, scope, and/or level of commitment that are experienced in relationships that develop naturally. Formal relationships tend to be more task-oriented, focusing on achieving specific goals. Problems arise when participants in formal programs expect the relationship to provide the personal and emotional intensity inherent in informal mentor relationships. As part of the orientation or written guidelines, participants should be advised to define their expectations and how they plan to meet them. They should also be warned that the relationships may not attain the natural affinity of informal mentor relationships. At the same time, guidance can be provided to help develop a relationship that allows for trust in discussing sensitive topics—which can be especially crucial for cross-gender or cross-race pairings.

POOR MATCHES

The success of any mentoring program is determined by the value the participants receive from the relationships. The negative impression left by unsuccessful matches can endanger a mentoring program. Poor matches have the potential to undermine individuals' careers and self-esteem. As a result, programs should develop procedures for either partner to terminate the relationship without facing retribution. As one program coordinator put it, "This is the one place where divorce is okay." Some participants may find informal separation too uncomfortable to initiate, however. A formal mechanism for ending the relationship allows dissatisfied participants to separate more comfortably. Before splitting up, however, it is important to give the assignment a try. Sometimes the best learning comes from working with people who have different approaches, personalities, and experiences—people you may think you have nothing to learn from.

PROBLEMS WITH SUPERVISORS

Programs need to address the potential for rivalry between the mentee's supervisor and the mentor. Supervisors may feel that their authority will be undermined by the mentor's relationship with the mentee. They may also resent that the mentee is being given opportunities that they never received. Program administrators should explain to supervisors that a mentor's role is not to evaluate performance or to share information about the mentee. Nor is it to usurp a supervisor's authority.

CONFIDENTIALITY

A successful mentoring program must also set clear guidelines stressing that any information shared between mentors and mentees is to be treated as confidential. In order to effectively play any of the mentoring roles described earlier (counselor, coach/advisor, role model, advocate/champion), the mentor must secure the mentee's trust and respect his/her confidentiality.

RESENTMENT FROM NON-PARTICIPANTS

It is critical to openly communicate the purpose of the mentoring program and selection criteria. Allow those who wish to participate in the program the opportunity to do so or provide alternative development opportunities for them. Managing expectations this way helps to avoid resentment from non-participants.

Targeted mentoring programs are necessary for success. Inevitably someone will feel excluded. However, since the goal is to create a mentoring climate within the organization, mentoring tools and tips should be provided for everyone. This can be done by sharing career tips over the intranet, showcasing successful mentoring pairs or circles at an event, or encouraging discussion about the behaviors that employees should emulate. It is also useful to communicate widely that informal mentoring is encouraged in your organization and to urge employees to look for those kinds of opportunities.

BAD INFORMATION

A mentor may impart poor advice, or share organizational values that are outdated or incorrect. Because mentoring is a personal, one-on-one relationship, companies cannot always control the type and quality of information passed on to mentees. However, by carefully selecting mentors and providing training for mentors and mentees on their roles, responsibilities, and appropriate "modeling" behavior, companies help to ensure that these relationships are beneficial to the organization and to the individuals involved.

OVER-RELIANCE OF MENTEE/MENTOR

In all mentoring relationships, there is the potential for exploitation, either by the mentor or the mentee. For example, a mentee might rely too heavily on the mentor for recognition and guidance, or the mentor may have a personal agenda for the relationship. Mentoring guidelines should clearly illuminate how the relationship can be misused and offer strategies for avoiding these pitfalls.

THE "QUICK FIX" TRAP

While mentoring programs can be used as low-cost vehicles to achieve a range of human resources goals, they alone cannot remedy deep-seated problems, such as chronic turnover. Successful programs are developed in conjunction with other human resources programs that work together to help attract, develop, and retain qualified employees. Human resources professionals should recognize the limitations of a mentoring program and the reality that cultural change takes time.

SHORTAGE OF MENTORS

One of the most common obstacles to formal mentoring programs is a lack of mentors who have the necessary skills and clout. This is particularly true for women or people of color who wish to be mentored by members of their own gender or race/ethnicity. To leverage fewer mentors, many organizations use mentoring quads or groups.

IN SUMMARY

Although each of these problems associated with mentoring can pose potential drawbacks, they can usually be avoided or addressed through careful consideration at all stages of the planning and execution of the program. With the insight, advice, and recommendations that Catalyst provides in this guide, you will be prepared to tackle possible obstacles in creating and implementing a successful formal mentoring program.

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