

Mentorship versus Sponsorship



“BOTH MENTORING AND SPONSORSHIP ARE AIMED AT FOSTERING PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT. ALTHOUGH THE METHODS DIFFER, THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO HELP INDIVIDUALS NAVIGATE THEIR CAREERS AND SUCCEED IN THEIR CHOSEN FIELDS”.

– Sergen Ozvar, Mentorink

WHAT IS MENTORSHIP?

Mentorship involves a relationship with an advisor or peer who offers guidance and support, and acts as a role model. Mentors share their knowledge and experience in a formal or informal relationship with a less experienced individual.

“A mentor offers guidance and support and may develop a more personal relationship with their mentee”.

– Sonia Kang, Canada Research Chair in Identity, Diversity, and Inclusion, University of Toronto



WHAT IS SPONSORSHIP?

Sponsorship involves a relationship with a colleague who is in a position of power that can be used to actively promote growth, provide access to opportunities at work and advocate for the career advancement of a less-experienced individual.

(Den Houter & Maese, 2023)

“A sponsor is a senior colleague who advocates on a sponsored employee’s behalf, helping guide them through career challenges, and creates opportunities”.

(Finley, 2019) Source: Catherine Finley, Vice President of Human Resource, Amex Bank of Canada, The Globe and Mail, September 25, 2019



MENTORS

- Offer guidance, tips, feedback, advice (such as on someone’s presentation or job application).
- Provide insights from their experience.
- Support employees who are earlier in their careers.
- Help build the skills and confidence needed to step into leadership roles.
- Mentors are usually known to the mentee.

UNDER-REPRESENTED PERSONS

Can benefit from both, with mentors helping them navigate challenges and sponsors opening doors to new opportunities.
(Radulovski, 2024)

SPONSORS

- Actively advocate for an individual’s advancement or placement in leadership roles.
- Support career pathways.
- Have positional power to influence your role.
- Earned through performance.
- The sponsored person may not know this is happening.
- More opportunities to address inequalities of underrepresented persons.



IMPORTANCE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mentors and sponsors focus on career success for an individual and support leadership development. Mentors may advise on networking or conferences to attend, while sponsors introduce networks, or connect with others or opportunities to advance careers. Having a mentor positively influences confidence in abilities, self-esteem, and optimism.

"We often hear about the importance of mentorship, and while it is critical to have mentors, it's equally important to find at least one sponsor in your career – someone who can help move your career forward... it's essential to find a sponsor who will champion you, cheer you on, and actively support your career advancement"

– Lynne Vicars recently President of the Canadian Bar Association



76% OF WORKING PROFESSIONALS BELIEVE THAT A MENTOR IS IMPORTANT TO GROWTH, BUT MORE THAN 54% DO NOT HAVE SUCH A RELATIONSHIP

Source: (Horoszowski, 2020)

GENDER



Women who are mentored:

- report higher job satisfaction
- are promoted faster
- earn more money
- gain entry to a broader circle of colleagues, peers and potential collaborators, increasing their visibility and influence within STEM fields
- derive a higher value from the relationship than men.

27% of senior-level women compared to 38% of men have had formal mentors (DDI, 2024) (Byham et al., n.d.)

77% of women in tech with mentors are more likely to stay in the industry after three years than those without mentors (Bui, 2024) (Anita Borg Ins/tute, 2024)

16% of women report receiving mentorship and sponsorship-on-site compared to 23% of men (McKinsey & Company, 2024)

24% of girls report access to mentorship compared to 38.9% of boys. (Kurt, 2024)

YOUTH



46% of Millennials report having a mentor compared to 27% of those 35+

38% of young adults (age 12-18) in Canada report barriers to accessing mentors

Mentorship is important for more than skill development. Youth with a formal mentor report good or excellent mental health (79%), and a strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging (68%).

(Mentor Canada, 2021)

"By connecting with mentors, women gain entry to a broader circle of colleagues, peers and potential collaborators, thereby increasing their visibility and influence within STEM fields."

– Dr. Melanie Ratnam, President of SCWIST

STEM



STEM also stands to benefit from greater diversity through mentoring. According to Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, mentoring programs boost ethnically diverse representation by

9% to 24% and improve promotion and retention rates for minorities and women by **15% to 38%** compared to non-mentored employees. (Kirby, 2024)

Women in STEM can benefit from both sponsors and mentors, with mentors helping them navigate challenges and sponsors opening doors to new opportunities. (Radulovski, 2024)

Resources:

Future of Good <https://futureofgood.co/state-of-mentorship/>
Mentor Canada <https://mentorcanada.ca/en>
STEM Fellowship <https://stemfellowship.org/receive-mentorship/>
SCWIST <https://scwist.ca/programs/make-possible/>

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