

JUMP Corporate Hub
25 September 2018
Mentoring vs Sponsorship,
And how to maximise them both

Summary of the session

1. Introduction

1. Global presentation

This HUB session focused on mentoring and sponsorship programmes. Mentors and sponsors serve different purposes, but their end goal is the same: to support employees in achieving their goals. Mentors are a source of guidance, feedback and support; sponsors are senior leaders with positions of authority who use their influence to help others advance.

Our speaker was Caroline Pickard, who is consultant at Catalyst. Her presentation was followed by a company testimonial from Marine Santos, who is the Business HR Director of Cargill.

Thank you to our hosts: Sara Ndayirukiye and Georges de Ridder (National Bank of Belgium).

2. Our hosts

Sara Ndayirukiye, Senior Adviser, Diversity Manager, National Bank of Belgium
The National Bank of Belgium aims at maintaining a stable and trustworthy economic and financial environment, which are basic requirements for a sound economy. Last year, the company launched a working group on gender diversity, in order to increase diversity at the bank. Diversity and inclusion are crucial to attract talents and retain them. People are more efficient when they feel included, and debates are much more interesting. Moreover, if they want to be credible in representing the population, the staff must be diverse.
Sara Ndayirukiye has been appointed Diversity Manager and is now developing an action plan, including mentoring and sponsorship programmes.

2. Guest speaker

Caroline Pickard, Consultant, Catalyst

Catalyst is a global non-profit working with some of the world's most powerful CEOs and leading companies to help build workplaces that work for women. Founded in 1962, Catalyst drives change with pioneering research, practical tools, and proven

solutions to accelerate and advance women into leadership – because progress for women is progress for everyone.

Between 2009 and 2012, Catalyst lead initial researches on mentoring: a woman said she was being mentored “to death”, meaning that she was attending too much mentoring programmes that were not going anywhere. Changes were needed.

At Catalyst, they examine effective strategies that help organisations, individuals, and leaders.

First, they started focusing on diversity. Now, they concentrate on inclusion – and especially on gender issues, even if they look at the broader frame of inclusion, adopting an intersectional point of view. They explore the different barriers women have to face.

In 2011, Catalyst conducted a research on career advancement – *the Myth of the Ideal Worker: Does Doing All The Right Things Really Get Women Ahead?*

They asked 3 questions to more than three thousand ex MBA candidates:

- What they were doing to extend their careers
- What was, according to them, doing the right things to achieve this goal
- Do certain strategies work better than others?

The results were that what worked for women and men in terms of career advancement were different. On the one hand, what mainly worked for men was to have access to powerful people (who could use their influence), blur work life boundaries (make sure the boss knows they will work long hours and weekends), and to scan for opportunities outside the company. On the other hand, for women it was to make their achievements visible (get credit for their work) and have access to powerful people.

The results showed four different areas: hot jobs (profit & loss responsibility, international assignments, exposure, etc.), credit (who gets the credit for the work done – very often men get more credit than women), the (unwritten) rules (access to inside information, women sometimes do not understand them the same way), and performance vs. potential. This last idea is crucial: a woman is often judged on her performance – the work she did – and a man on his potential – the work he could do. This makes that women are staying put while men are scanning the market for new opportunities. The one thing that works both for men and women to advance in their career is to gain access to power by getting introduced to people with influence and this is what sponsorship is all about!

Caroline Pickard then explained the differences between a mentor and a sponsor, stating that “sponsors are what you really need to succeed”. Men tend to be the ones getting naturally access to sponsors and are also more active pursuing sponsors. On the one hand, a mentor informally or formally helps you navigate your career, providing guidance for career choices and decisions. On the other hand, a sponsor is a senior leader who uses strong influence and passes power on to help you obtain high-visibility assignments, promotions, etc. This often happens behind closed doors. Caroline emphasised one crucial difference, which is that mentors talk *with* you, whereas sponsors talk *about* you. In fact, they should be ready to risk their reputation for you.

The advantages for employees are that they can ask for what they want, get to be seen, dare to take risks when not 100% sure and they receive feedback from both mentors & sponsors. The question is: how does sponsoring benefit sponsors? It is in fact an asset for sponsors as they learn a lot on their organisation, it gives them personal and professional satisfaction and it is proven that their compensation grows (possibly they earn more because they are more visible and are seen as loyal people). For the organisation, the 'win' is in job satisfaction, commitment and lower turnover of both sponsors and receivers of sponsoring. Sponsoring therefore creates a circle of success in which helping someone helps you at the same time. The principle of "pay it forward" making sponsorship a win-win opportunity.

The next step to *traditional* sponsorship programmes is to establish *advanced* sponsorship programmes that are more diverse. To illustrate this idea, Caroline Pickard told the story of CEO Thomas Falke of Kimberly Clark asking his employees to think about and write down the name of the person who played a great role in their careers by sponsoring them. Secondly, he asked to think about who would write their names down. Then, he asked if they wrote down people that looked like them. As it was very often the case, the idea was to come up with different people in order to go beyond homogeneity. In fact, advanced sponsorship programmes are about diversity and inclusion.

Caroline Pickard ended her presentation by listing the key elements to sponsorship success; which are trust, honesty, communication, and commitment.

Some people raised the question whether it is better to start with a mentoring or a sponsorship programme.

The answer is that it is best to have both. There is no silver bullet. In fact, mentoring is essential but has limitations in terms of advancing women while sponsors can give access to influential others.

Also, formalising programmes helps to open up the advantages to a more diverse audience. Mentoring and sponsorship is already happening in more informal way, but it helps to formalise to become more inclusive.

3. Company testimonial

Marine Santos, Business HR Director, Cargill

Cargill is still a family-owned business, with 155 thousand employees.

Cargill is committed to achieving a new norm in the corporate world: one in which women and men have equal power, status and opportunity. Cargill is a founding member of the Paradigm for Parity coalition which outlined specific set of concurrent actions a company can take to achieve gender parity, working toward achieving full parity by 2030.

Marine Santos explained that there should be enough women in the pipeline when they need to select a new board member, so that they can create – and maintain – a board with the same proportion of men and women.

The Paradigm for Parity roadmap's is made of five points:

- Minimise or eliminate unconscious bias (for example, the way job offers are written sometimes only appeal to men so it is better to have gender neutral vacancies);
- Significantly increase the number of women in senior operating roles: without role models at the top, it is difficult to have the whole organisation moving;
- Measure targets at every level and communicate progress and results regularly: it is crucial to keep track!
- Base career progress on business results and performance (not on presence): from the 60s, organisations have been designed according to men schedules, assuming that men could attend a 6am meeting as their wives would take care of the kids. Unfortunately, we keep thinking the same way, and women sometimes unconsciously replicate that.
- Identify women with potential and give them sponsors as well as mentors.

There are different types of mentoring at Cargill. For example, in the Reverse Mentoring Programme, junior people mentor senior people, which can be quite challenging yet rewarding.

There is also Menttium, a formal leadership development programme designed to help high potential, high-performing women leaders accelerate their development and enhance their leadership skills by matching them with senior executives from different companies in mentoring relationships. This programme was created after realising that women did not take enough time to attend mentoring programmes. In fact, even if they are really dedicated, they do not have the time to look at the broader picture and do essential things such as networking. What was missing was someone who could shift their way of thinking, and this is why a specific programme for those women became a necessity. For example, choosing a mentor that is not from Cargill brings external elements, and therefore a different perspective or market orientation.

Cargill also has started a sponsorship programme. The first year, 25 women take part and there are specific goals set per participant. There is the expectation that 50% of them will be in another job after the programme. Cargill measures success via

1) whether the personal goals are achieved, 2) increased diversity in leadership team 3) higher retention of participants, up to 90%, 4) higher engagement of participants & sponsors.

Being a sponsor is not as common as being a mentor. In fact, 60% of Cargill managers are mentors but there are not a lot of sponsors, as sponsors need to truly have an influence on the person's career, otherwise it is not useful. This is why they want to expand the number of sponsors so that sponsorship becomes a fully integrated way of doing business. The objective is to start with minorities and then extend the programme to everyone. Therefore, they aspire to a future state when a formal sponsorship programme is no longer needed as it is fully integrated into the organisation's culture.

Marine Santos ended her presentation by giving key elements of an effective sponsor. To be an effective sponsor, you need to partner with others (and clearly establish the roles each play), to use your influence, to be an active advocate (provide visibility and offer connections by introducing your participant to members of

your network), and to provide a foundation of support to help ensure success (an extra level of support can help ensure success).

4. Discussion & Best practices Sharing Session

The process

What is the process for one to become a mentor/ sponsor/ participant to a programme? At Cargill, they assess the development and potential of people and decide afterwards who will benefit from which programme. They have a very open discussion about sponsorship with leaders, and often they then sign up as volunteers to become sponsors. They have for example as personal goal to leverage their network.

Mentees are selected via a talent process. In order to make pairs, Marine Santos explained that they start with the participants' goals and then find sponsors that have capabilities to achieve those goals. In 80% of cases, it is a match and the two people get along, 10% adapt and in 10% of cases it does not work out so they stop.

Sponsors are often men (seen leaders are still mainly men), so they tend to have cross-gender pairing. An interesting side-effect is that sponsorship is also a good way to find credible activists and to identify and engage male champions for D&I. At the start of a programme, it is also important to speak about relations and appropriate behaviours and put rules of engagement in the process.

In a company, they organised speed dating sessions in order for mentors and mentees to get to know each other. People ask each other a few questions and then they turn tables. Mentees can afterwards share their preference for a mentor and this helps in the matchmaking process by HR.

In another one, mentees get to select mentors out of their service line. The purpose is to enlarge the network.

An organisation implemented group coaching for women with external coaches. This is a global, virtual programme. This is different from sponsorship.

One organisation is in the process of setting up a sponsorship programme for a group which was identified via talent pool identification.

Manage expectations

It is crucial to make sure that the participants know what they can expect from the programme.

For example, the distinction between mentoring, sponsorship and coaching has to be explained because some participants sometimes believe that the mentor will advance their careers, even though that would be a sponsor's role. It is therefore important to set the scene at the beginning in order to clearly explain the different roles.

Managing expectations also has to do with transparency. Do you have to tell the whole company about these programmes? At Cargill, they first kept things a secret, under the radar, so that the programmes would not get overcrowded. The problem was that the results were not as good as expected because participants did not understand the goal of sponsoring/being sponsored, namely to accelerate careers. If you do not brand things properly, participants think for example that the programmes increase their workload instead of helping them advance. So even if it means upsetting people by not including them, it is still better to brand and promote the

programmes, so that participants know what to expect and you create a mechanism for change.

The importance of diversity

According to Caroline Pickard, it is very beneficial to consciously try to make cross-gender pairings (male participant with female sponsor, and vice-versa). However, this situation raises questions (cfr. MeToo): How should men and women formally behave in this business relation? In fact, the close nature of the relationship can be seen as inappropriate by some. So, you clearly need to state the rules of engagement. For example, mention that it's forbidden to have meetings after 8 pm.

Should there be programmes specifically for women?

Some companies have sponsorship programmes specifically for women with potential. The reason is that there are no women yet in executive positions in quite some companies. A JUMP survey revealed that most women feel a lack of influence. In fact, women have one third of the network of men within a company (and it is even less outside the company). Caroline Pickard added that the most successful men were those looking outside their organisation for opportunities. It is the opposite for women. Women are being promoted on proven ability and men on potential. Men are often promoted by fear of losing them, whereas this type of behaviour would not lead to a promotion for women. This is why, as Marine Santos explained, Cargill's programmes help this change by creating external exposure for women.

According to Isabella Lenarduzzi, identifying male mentors/ sponsors is a way of identifying champions: this is the perfect way to engage more men. Caroline Pickard added that it is also a way of giving men the opportunity to see the company through women's eyes.

However, a bank decided to open mentoring programmes to the whole population of the organisation – not only to women – in order to create an inclusive network. They are not sure to have enough participants to completely mix men and women in the pairing. Moreover, a lot of people already have unofficial mentees. Caroline Pickard explained that there should be a balance between uniqueness and belonging. In fact, for the network to be inclusive, they should not only address the uniqueness of a network but also how people belong to a demographic group. And it remains important to address the business interest e.g. product innovation.

What about cross country programmes? Mentee/mentor or sponsee/sponsor pairs living in different countries is not a problem – quite the contrary as it can be really enriching. It is a way of helping the participants think “out of the box”, which is especially interesting when someone is aiming an international career.

According to Caroline Pickard, cross mentoring programmes are less risky than cross sponsorship programmes. Since the participant and the sponsor should be in the same company because “you want people opening the door for you in your organisation, not somewhere else”.

A transformation process

Should the sponsorship programmes be mandatory or voluntary? According to Caroline Pickard, it depends on the company's culture. A sponsorship programme

does not work from the first time so it is crucial to try several times with several set-ups.

A programme should always start with a case and with a clear purpose. You should not start a programme because it is the trend nowadays (diversity is fashionable so let's go for more women). If it does not fit the beliefs and culture of the company, nothing will really change. In fact, mentoring and sponsorship programmes should be part of a transformation process, and should be managed by specific measures. It is difficult to measure so you need to be specific. Marine Santos from Cargill explained their way of measuring. For example, with a voluntary programme: How many are interested? When your programme is mandatory, your measurement can become more granular: How many were promoted within a year? Were the personal goals achieved?

Favouritism?

A bank would like to start a programme for the happy few but would like to avoid being accused of favouritism

Caroline Pickard stated that legislation is changing and quota will be imposed in the future so it is better to be ahead of the curve and create your own programmes to advance women and start with a small cohort now. Even if twenty women sponsored would probably be seen as favouritism, it is not – as 80% of the company is still run by men.

Marine Santos, Cargill, added that the fact that a company wants to promote women does not mean it wants to stop promoting men. It is about making sure that men and women all have the chance to be the best ones. Trainings are essential to remove the fear for an unfair competition.

It was stated that men should hear more about the argumentation. Men need to be trained in D&I as their biggest barriers are apathy and fear for reprise and blame. The MARC (Men Advocating Real Change) initiative of Catalyst is working on this.

Thank you to all participants!

Thanks for sharing!

Don't miss the up-coming Corporate Hub on "***Agile and flexible work models: what impact on gender equality, how to make them sustainable***" (November 29, 2018).