

Key Findings

GOOQUAL

Formerly CTI

The Sponsor Dividend

Sponsors

American Express
Bank of America
Crowell & Moring LLP
Ernst & Young LLP
Freddie Mac
Interpublic Group
Johnson & Johnson
Macquarie Group

Key Findings

THE
SPONSOR
DIVIDEND

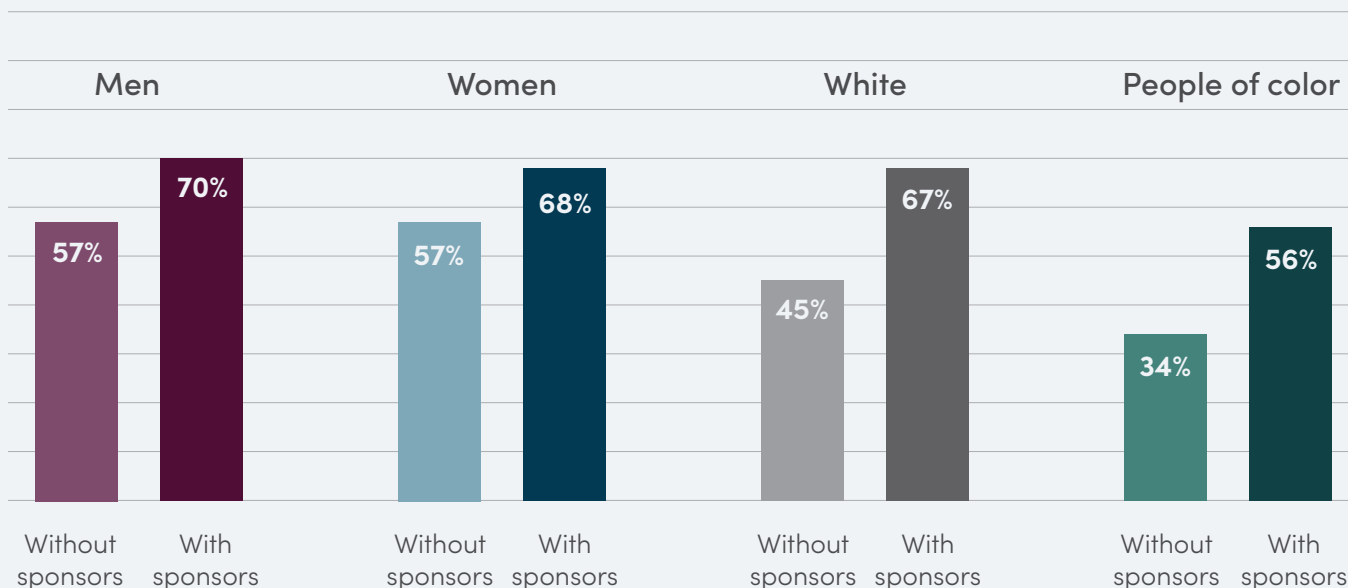
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Sponsors boost protégés' careers

Having a sponsor—someone ready to deploy relationship capital on your behalf—confers a significant career boost on a protégé, as we've found time and again in our work. For professionals of color, winning a sponsor can have an even more critical impact, particularly when it comes to retention. As companies devote enormous sums to attracting talented women and employees of color, sponsors can ensure that employers make good on their initial recruiting investment.

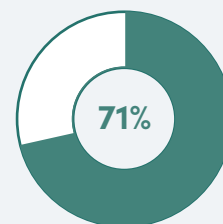
Employees in large companies who are satisfied with their rates of advancement¹



Sponsors suffer from mini-me syndrome

Diversity pushes us into uncomfortable territory. We're more comfortable around people who are like us, who share our gender, race, upbringing, religion, or culture. Research on implicit bias and affinity bias confirms this pattern.² In our research, we find sponsors hit the same obstacle: they are far more likely to select protégés who share their race or gender.

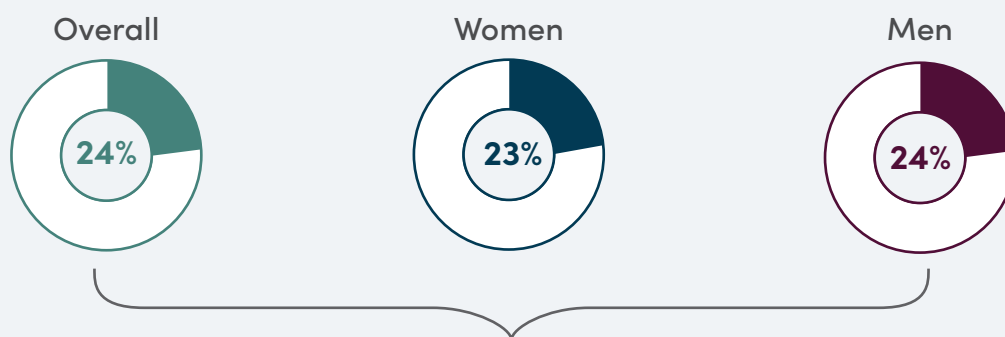
Sponsors who are the same gender or race as their primary protégés



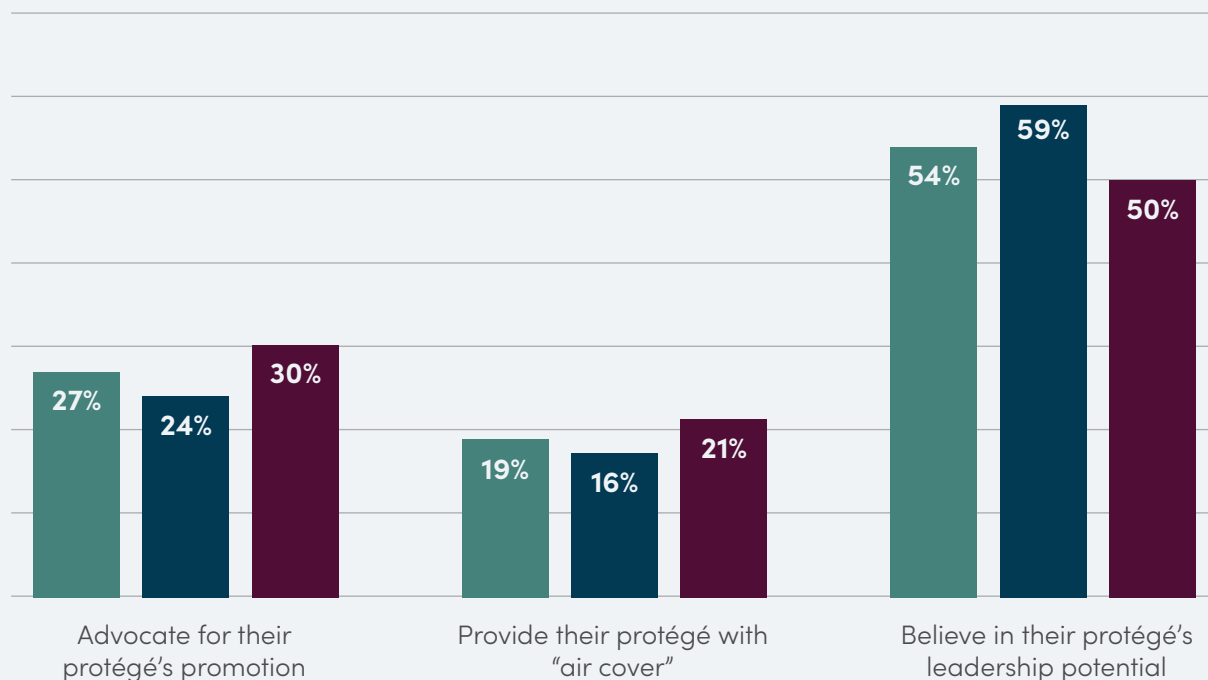
Sponsors rarely do their job well

For both parties to reap the benefits of a sponsor relationship, sponsors first need a clear understanding of what's expected of them. We find that leaders who think they're engaged in sponsorship fall short on the requirements of the role because they're often actually playing an important but different one: mentor. They're far more likely to believe in their protégé's leadership potential than to advocate for their protégé's promotion.

Respondents who identify as sponsors



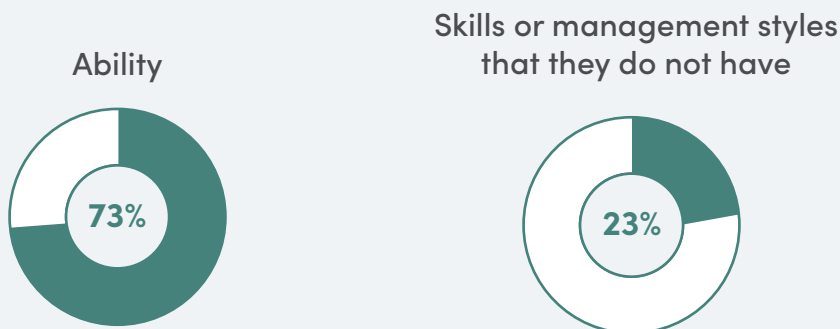
Of sponsors, those who:



Sponsors can miss out on value

Not only do sponsors hesitate to advocate for their protégé's next promotion, they also fail to choose protégés who can do more than just outperform their peers. Performance is indeed an important trait for a protégé; after all, sponsorship should only be given to those with a track record of success. But the quality that allows sponsorship to soar is an undeniable and unique value-add—the trait that less than a quarter of sponsors think is important.

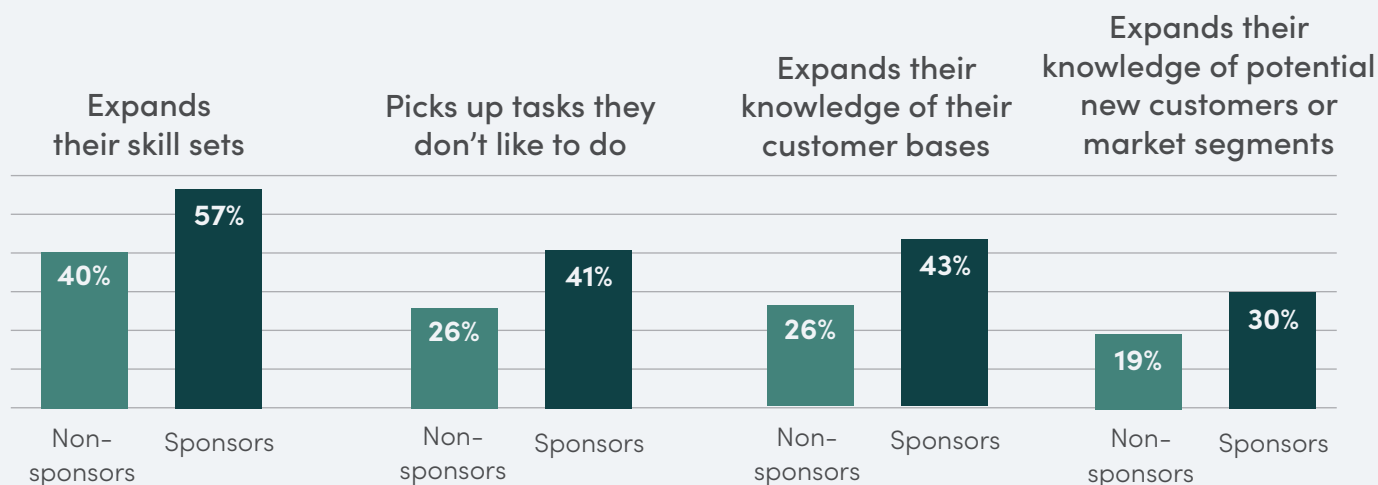
What sponsors look for in potential protégés:



Sponsors still reap significant dividends

When powerful individuals invest the time to cultivate this crucial relationship, the returns can be tremendous. Those who sponsor others see an expansion in their capacity to get things done.

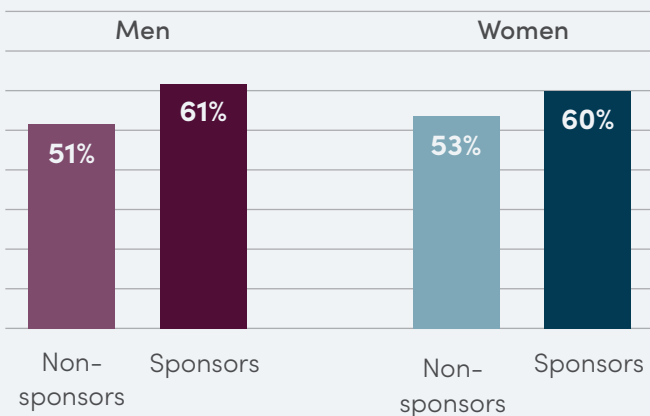
Employees who have a bench of talent that:



Sponsors see a raft of other career benefits

Advocating for rising employees, along all stages of a career, pushes your own career forward. It signals your leadership capacity to those above you—that you are committed to the organization, and tuned into up-and-coming managers. No matter how good they are at sponsoring, we see a bump in career benefits for those leaders who sponsor others.

Employees who are satisfied with their rates of advancement³



“While earning sponsorship is critical to one’s success, at some point in your career you realize that your success is magnified by the people whom you sponsor.”

Kerrie Peraino, Vice President of People Operations for Global Advisory Functions, Google

Our most recent data backs this up, revealing that sponsors are more likely than non-sponsors to be satisfied with their ability to deliver on “mission-impossible” projects. They are, of course, more likely to be satisfied with their bench of talent—and more likely to be in touch with the concerns of junior employees.

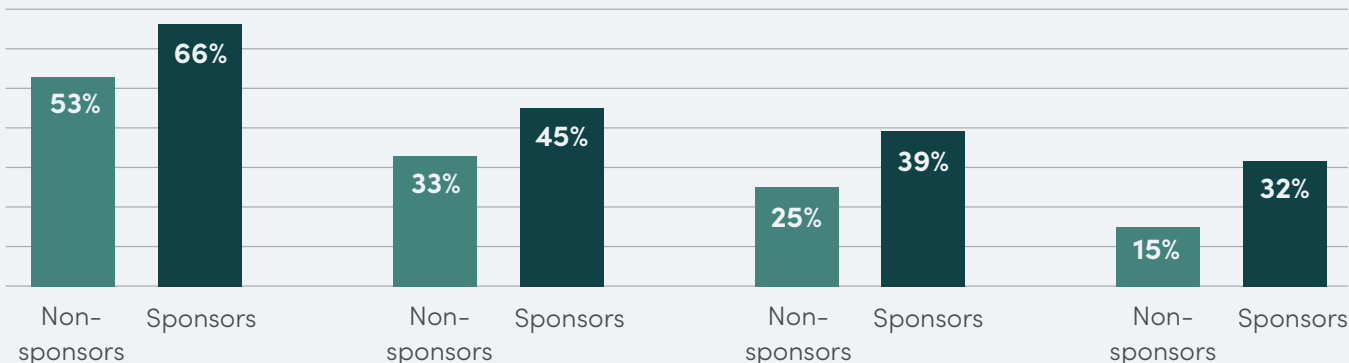
Employees who are satisfied with:

Their ability to deliver on difficult projects

Their bench of talent

Their professional legacies

Their level of awareness of junior colleagues’ concerns



Sponsoring across difference

It can be intimidating to sponsor someone of a different background. Here are a few steps to crossing the divide.

1 Understand changing talent imperatives

The world is changing quickly. The Pew Research Center projects that by 2055, the United States will be “minority-majority,” with no single racial or ethnic majority.⁴ To find the best protégés, you have to be inclusive.

2 Run a bias self-diagnostic

Science has long proven that we all hold biases, whether or not we consciously register them.⁵ Taking an implicit bias test will tell you where your own biases lie.

3 Put yourself in the path of employees with different backgrounds

Increase your exposure to up-and-coming employees of diverse backgrounds. Get involved with an employee resource group. Join company volunteer efforts, hackathons, and networking events where you can be exposed to fresh faces.

4 Build trust

As Andy Molinsky and Sujin Jang write in *Harvard Business Review*, similarities, no matter how seemingly small, have the power not only to forge trust but “supersede cultural differences.”⁶ Inviting someone to your home can forge a closer connection; so can finding a common interest in food, art, or music.

“I’ve loved every minute of it.”

Now retired, former Ernst & Young US Chairman and Managing Partner and EY Americas Managing Partner Steve Howe first met Kate Barton when she was in her first management role. “I saw that she was going to need some help thinking about how to grow and develop,” Howe recalls. “He told me that not only was I on his radar, I was on others’ radars,” Barton remembers.

After that conversation, their relationship kicked into high gear. A key component of Howe’s sponsorship, he reflects, was making himself available to Barton. Just 11 months later, a position Barton had vied for earlier, EY Americas vice chair of tax, again became available, and Howe urged her to apply and helped her earn buy-in from board members. She landed the job.

Now, in her 33rd year with the organization, Barton serves as the EY global vice chair of tax, and the two still connect frequently. Barton remains ever-cognizant of paying her debt to him forward. “We’re all about legacy. That’s what Steve created, and that’s what I want to do as well.”

Doing your part

As you prepare to turbocharge sponsorship in your company and career, we've boiled down key actions each person can take from different parts of a company to create a sponsorship culture.

Chief Executive Officer

- Talk about sponsorship regularly, as a way to drive diversity in leadership.
- Tell stories of how you've been sponsored, and how you've sponsored others across lines of difference.

Chief Human Resources Officer

- Embed sponsorship into performance review and succession planning processes to drive accountability.
- Create a budget for sponsorship programs in critical areas of the employee base.

Chief Diversity Officer

- Run a diagnostic to understand which talent cohorts would benefit most from sponsorship.
- Design and drive a sponsorship program for those critical cohorts, with educational resources.

Sponsor

- Evaluate protégés based on their value-add, distinct brand, loyalty, trustworthiness, *and* performance.
- Deliver on advocacy for their next promotion, air cover, and belief in their potential.

Protégé

- Check your own affinity bias in the sponsor you target: build trust with powerful leaders of different backgrounds.
- Get clear on where you want to go in your career. A sponsor can best help you when you can articulate your goals.

“I don't need to know people socially to feel comfortable sponsoring them. But I do need to know they stand for the same things that I do.”

Horacio Rozanski, Chief Executive Officer, Booz Allen Hamilton

“What is it clients should be calling my protégé about, as opposed to calling me about? It could be marginally different or radically different. But it needs to be differentiated so that your protégé can develop a specialized cachet.”

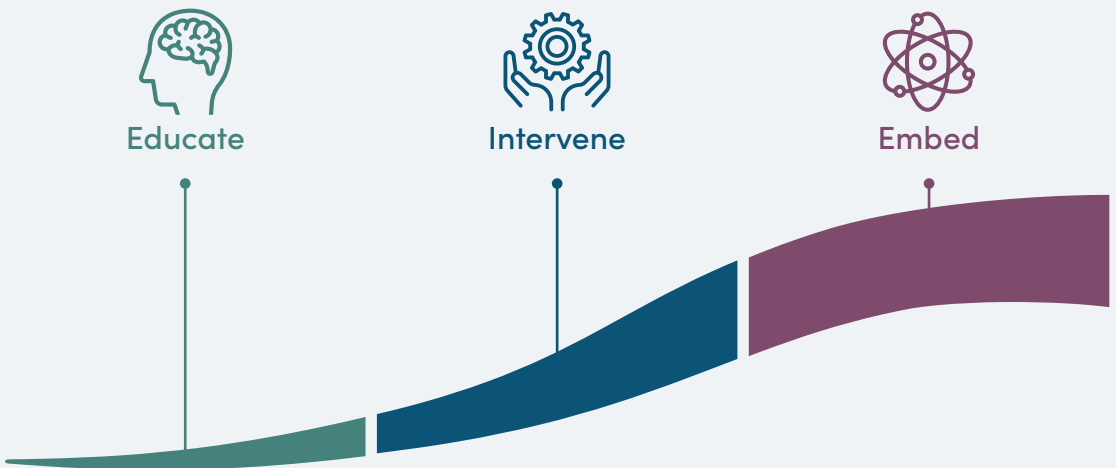
Kent Gardiner, Partner and Strategic Growth Committee Chair, Crowell & Moring

“I picked the yin to my yang. For me, sponsorship is all about complementary skill sets and opposite personalities. That helps us both deliver better.”

Anne Erni, Chief People Officer, Audible

SCALING SPONSORSHIP

The Sponsorship Maturity Curve



To build a culture of sponsorship, leaders must set sponsors and protégés up for success with strategic intervention.

Given our experience partnering with dozens of companies on sponsorship, Center for Talent Innovation Advisory is in a unique position to help employers chart their own paths along the sponsorship maturity curve. We find the most impactful companies build awareness of sponsorship among employees; run a diagnostic to understand where sponsorship is distributed unfairly; stand up programs that address those pain points; and, ultimately, reinforce an organization-wide culture of intentional, and equitable, sponsorship relationships.

Educate



As a critical component of building a diverse leadership team, leaders must ensure that sponsorship is understood across all levels of the company. Gaining visibility into the reasons why sponsorship may stall is a necessary first step.

Diagnose

Tackling sponsorship across a company can be daunting. Assessing your company's unique opportunities and challenges can help you prioritize. Here are a few ways to do so:

Insights In-Depth® assessment

CTI's proprietary methodology determines the current state of sponsorship, pinpointing where it is strong and weak across the organization

Add questions to employee engagement surveys

Build diverse leadership succession plans

Inform

Good sponsorship requires clear understanding of a complex dynamic. The following tools can build awareness:

Presentations, webinars, and/or toolkits for level-setting across the company

External speakers and reading materials can educate all levels of talent

Sponsor Ready

CTI's signature digital learning platform enables professionals to find the right sponsor and cultivate sponsor relationships

Bespoke leadership seminars

Opportunities for small group learning and interaction on sponsorship, designed to suit the unique needs of senior leaders

Intervene



Once companies examine their organizational cultures of sponsorship, they can move forward with targeted programs for leaders and the broader talent pool—something else CTI regularly partners with companies to provide. The method of intervention can vary depending on organizational needs and culture. Key decisions to be made:

- Whether sponsors and protégés should be matched or set up to connect with one another more organically
- Ideal program length
- Ideal number of participants
- Job level of sponsors and protégés
- Resources and support for participants, both on the topic of sponsorship and other leadership development needs

Embed



A deep sponsorship culture is woven into the fabric of the organization. In this stage of the maturity curve, sponsors are incentivized to seek out protégés across difference, they're comfortable doing so, and they understand the dividends for themselves and for the organization. In turn, protégés seek out influential sponsors because they understand how crucial it is to their success. And throughout the organization, sponsorship is understood, taught, and exercised as a core component of development. Here are ways to embed sponsorship:

Evaluate whether sponsorship is occurring inclusively

Assess whether leaders are using sponsorship best practices and sponsoring across lines of difference.

Revamp performance incentives

Increase accountability by incorporating sponsorship metrics into performance reviews and compensation or bonus decisions.

Revisit onboarding process

Embed sponsorship education into onboarding materials for all levels of talent and create the expectation that everyone should sponsor others.

Continue to discuss sponsorship openly

Senior leaders speak openly about sponsorship dynamics, and can even make public pledges to sponsor, especially across difference. When leaders know that their peers are leveraging protégés to establish their legacy, it motivates and encourages them to do the same.

Learn more

Contact CTI at info@talentinnovation.org to learn more about how your organization can benefit from sponsorship research, create dynamic solutions, and move forward along the maturity curve.

Methodology

The research consists of a survey; an Insights In-Depth® session (a proprietary web-based tool used to conduct voice-facilitated virtual focus groups); and one-on-one interviews with more than 30 women and men.

The national survey was conducted online and over the phone in January 2018 among 3,213 respondents (1,566 men, 1,633 women, 12 not identifying as male or female, and two who did not disclose their gender) between the ages of 21 and 65 currently employed full-time in white-collar professions with at least a bachelor's degree. Data were weighted to be representative of the US population on key demographics (age, sex, education, race/ethnicity, housing tenure, telephone status, and census division). The base used for statistical testing was the effective base.

This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago under the auspices of the Center for Talent Innovation (CTI), a non-profit research organization. NORC was responsible for the data collection, while the Center for Talent Innovation conducted the analysis.

In the charts, percentages may not always add up to 100 because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple responses from respondents.

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3. Unpublished data from Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Maggie Jackson, and Ellis Cose, with Courtney Emerson, *Vaulting the Color Bar: How Sponsorship Levers Multicultural Professionals into Leadership* (New York: Center for Talent Innovation, 2012).
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