

# Everyday sponsorship

Sponsors are active advocates for another person's career.

This guide will examine the steps you should take to become a powerful sponsor in the workplace.

## What is sponsorship?



*Sponsorship is about using your own **social** and **professional** capital to make someone's story known by decision-makers who can **influence their success**. Sponsorship is making yourself **vulnerable** – putting yourself out there for someone else.*

Anant Gadia – Managing Director, Canadian Public Service



### Sponsorship is not mentorship!

Unlike mentors, sponsors are not just advisors; they are active advocates for your career. It is important to note that while mentors and sponsors can overlap, they are not the same. Mentors provide guidance, while sponsors provide opportunities and advocacy. Understanding the differences between these two roles is crucial when seeking the right support to advance your career.

## Effective sponsor activities – engaging with sponsees

### Adapting communication style

Adapting your communication style to best suit your sponsee will help you start building trusting and open relationship. Some sponsors can pick up on a sponsee's preferred communication style just by meeting and talking to them, but it also might be beneficial to understand your sponsee's communication style more formally.

There are loads of profiling activities that achieve a similar goal:



DISC profile assessments

Service animals profiling



Once you are aware of how your sponsee operates, trying adapting to their communication style.

## Active listening

Listening shouldn't be a passive activity; this is particularly true during interactions with a sponsee. Sponsors need to listen to understand, rather than listening to respond. Active listening involves the following elements:

| Summarising                                                                     | Good questioning                                                  | Empathise                                                                             | Body language                                                                                                                                               | Paraphrasing                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The ability to summarise feelings and concerns from your partner's perspective. | Use of prompts, open ended questions and probing where necessary. | Tuning in to what the other person is feeling and having some level of understanding. | Pay attention to your body language while listening. Maintain eye contact, nod and avoid crossing your arms to show you're receptive to what is being said. | Do this occasionally to describe the meanings and feelings you perceive; this is a useful way of checking that you have understood what your partner is saying. |

## Supporting new or more introverted colleagues

Building your network is important when trying to progress and develop your career path. This can be difficult for colleagues who are just starting their professional journey or for those who are more introverted. As a sponsor you should help guide your sponsee by:



- Acting as a sounding board for their anxieties about socialising and networking.
- Opening doors for them and helping to facilitate connections to expand their network.
- Consciously seeking out those individuals or notice when others may be struggling.

## Effective sponsee activities

Sponsorship isn't a one-way street. Sponsees also have a key role to play in supporting everyday sponsorship. Here are some ways sponsees can go that extra mile and enhance their sponsorship relationship:



1. Take time to reflect on work experiences and translate that into actionable information that will help you find the right sponsor.
2. Take up opportunities to attend networking events, this will help you practice and find a sponsor that suits you.
3. Seek out new experiences that will help your career by searching for and learning from people that you wish to emulate.
4. Move outside your role or team, leadership has elements of HR and financial awareness. Learn from those teams directly.

## Sponsorship within design, engineering and science

Most colleagues will have both internal and external progression opportunities to consider; this needs to be recognised and reflected in sponsorship activity.

These opportunities provide the perfect platform for sponsees to gain insights and first-hand experience that will aid their development. As sponsors, you should extend the invite when appropriate. As sponsees, ask and make it clearly known to your sponsor when you want to be involved.

This goes to the heart of what everyday sponsorship is.

## Everyday sponsorship – for everyday activity!

### External sponsorship opportunities might include:



Client meals

Client meetings



Public events

## Navigating the sponsor-sponsee relationship

While sponsor-sponsee relationships can be highly beneficial, they can also be challenging to navigate. Here are some tips to help you navigate the relationship:

|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <b>Be flexible</b><br>Be flexible in your approach to the relationship. Recognise that your sponsee might have different priorities and commitments.                         |  |
|  | <b>Be accountable</b><br>Take responsibility of your own career development. Be accountable for your own progress and be willing to put in the effort to achieve your goals. |  |
|  | <b>Be professional</b><br>Maintain a professional demeanour. Show respect, be reliable and punctual, and follow through with your commitments.                               |  |

Source: Jenny Garrett OBE, [www.jennygarrettglobal.com](http://www.jennygarrettglobal.com)

## Common mistakes to avoid in sponsor-sponsee relationships

No two sponsor-sponsee relationships are alike, they will all hold unique qualities to them. Awareness of the common mistakes to avoid will not only help you form a strong relationship, but one that will last. Keep these common mistakes in mind, to avoid damaging the relationship:

|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <b>Overreliance on your sponsor</b><br>Your sponsor will provide support and advocacy, it is ultimately up to you to take responsibility for your career development. They can't always tell you what to do. |  |
|  | <b>Not communicating clearly</b><br>Effective communication is essential. This goes beyond active listening. Avoid misunderstandings by communicating clearly and regularly with your sponsor.               |  |

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