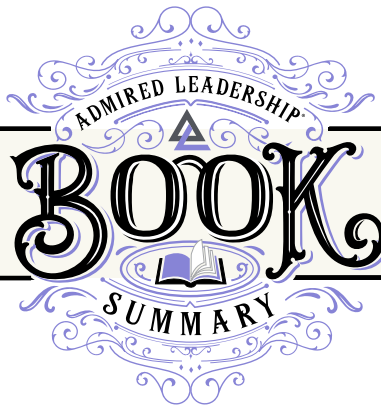




Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



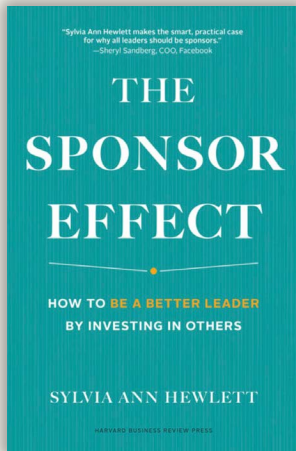
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The Sponsor Effect

How to be a Better Leader by Investing in Others

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Are you investing in the right people? The renowned business author Sylvia Ann Hewlett, CEO of Hewlett Consulting Partners, and the most published author ever in the Harvard Business Review, answers that question and more in her book *The Sponsor Effect: How to Be a Better Leader by Investing in Others*. This book takes a deep dive into the world of sponsorship, going beyond traditional mentorship relationships. Shining a light on the significance of sponsorship, which is a professional relationship between an established or rising leader and their chosen outstanding junior talent, called a protégé. Through Dr. Hewlett's research, you learn the importance of becoming a leader through sponsorship, selecting the right protégé, and how it can strengthen both of their careers. Hewlett's research gives you everything you need to become a successful sponsor and explains how by using rich data from the top industry leaders and the Center for Talent Innovation. Below is a detailed summary of each core step Hewlett describes in her approach to building a fruitful relationship between a sponsor and their protégé.

Key Quote

"You don't have to be an orator to inspire. You have to come from a place of authenticity and conviction. If you can't fire up a protégé with your values and goals, you probably have the wrong pick" (p. 77).

KEY POINTS AND CONCEPTS

Knowledge is Power

The saying, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime" by Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu sums up the value of sponsors. Sponsors have the ability to invest in smart people and empower them with education and success. Hewlett describes this relationship as mutually beneficial "Sponsorship isn't charity or granting a favor; it's a powerful leadership capability" (p. 5).


Hewlett describes this in the rise of Lebron James. Instead of simply giving his friends money, he invested in them by sending them to school for management and marketing skills and “taught them to fish.” Hewlett summarizes that “He helped them become high-performing loyal protégés who could do for him what he couldn’t do for himself find and develop lucrative business opportunities that would ensure that he remains a successful and influential man long after he leaves the basketball court” (p. 4).

In order to be a good sponsor and get a return on your “investment,” you also have to be a good leader, listener, and teacher. Tiger Tyagarajan, CEO of Genpact, was a skilled sponsor and worked hard setting up his protégé’s success. Tyagarajan shares that he did this by “blocking out time to meet with her, providing external coaching and other resources to support her, setting up check-points with the board for her ahead of the investor day, and advising her on handling certain individuals” (p. 65). Tyagarajan shows us that being a sponsor isn’t as simple as giving someone tasks you don’t want to do. In order to be effective, it’s about leadership and accountability to make sure that your guidance is followed.


Win-Win Strategy

Sponsorships are mutually beneficial relationships when done right. Hewlett shares with us that “unlike a mentorship relationship, a sponsorship places both the sponsor and the protégé in the position of actively and publicly working for each other’s success” (p. 7).

A well-chosen protégé will immediately increase a sponsor’s productivity, thereby freeing up a sponsor’s time for his or her highest priorities. In return, the protégé increases their chances of receiving a promotion. Hewlett’s research shows that “male employees with a sponsor are 23 percent more likely to get the next promotion than those without. For female employees, the figure is 19 percent” (p. 6).



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To be a valued sponsor you need to believe in your protégé’s value and help guide them towards growth to achieve their unrealized potential. In return, the protégé will be better able to provide support for the sponsor’s organizations. Hewlett works with the Center for Talent Innovation (CTI), and “according to CTI’s survey, 74 percent of sponsors give their protégés career advice, 64 percent provide specific, concrete feedback, and 40 percent boost their protégés ambition. . . you want your protégé to choose the right path, to become better at what they do, and to rise with you” (p. 79).

Hewlett emphasizes that “sponsorship is about reciprocity. Although it rests on a quid pro quo and is transactional, at heart, it is a mutually beneficial and generous relationship. Your protégé should gain enormously from the investments you make in them—and so should your organization” (p. 171).

Choose Carefully

With great risk often comes great reward, but how can you be sure? Sponsorship is a much greater risk than mentorship. With a mentor, no one holds you responsible for the mentee’s mistakes, but when a protégé that you have publicly and financially endorsed disappoints, the consequences can

be quite severe. In order to mitigate this risk, Hewlett suggests a substantial amount of research going into the selection of a protégé. “No one will take on a protégé unless that protégé has clearly demonstrated their potential worth and loyalty. Sponsors, on their part, must devote effort and energy to identifying, including, inspiring, instructing, and inspecting a potential protégé before they instigate a deal and fully invest their precious clout and capital” (p. 9).

When looking for a protégé set high expectations from the start. This will help you create a sponsorship that will give a sense of “urgency” addressing the needs of both the client and sponsor.

Think larger than yourself by picking a protégé that isn’t just like you but fills in the gaps that will complement your skills with the value of their own. Don’t let your differences get in the way of seizing their talent, even if it might not be an obvious fit. “A tech-savvy millennial might bring to the table social media marketing expertise you don’t have” (p. 56). This might not be what you are looking for at the moment but coming down the line could take your career to the next level.

At the end of the day, it’s all about trust. You have to trust the work your protégé can deliver and be able to delegate tasks to create more bandwidth for your higher-priority needs.


The Trend of the Mini-Me

Hewlett’s research shows that most people are more comfortable with people that remind them of themselves in life and business. “Over three-quarters of sponsors (77 percent) look for a ‘mini-me’” (p. 23).


Although we have made great strides towards equality in the workplace, “only 4.2 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs are women, and only 3.8 percent are people of color” (p. 19). But why? When women and people of color have similar credentials, performance, and ambition to succeed, the common explanations do not apply. Hewlett must ask, “I had a hunch: maybe women and people of color, lacking membership in the old boys’ club, didn’t have advocates in high places” (p. 19).

If the best way to rise to the top is with a sponsor and the majority of CEOs are dominantly white males, this could be the pivotal factor of why women would be falling behind their male peers. This would also apply to people of color and ethnicity; as Hewlett mentions, “Caucasians are 63 percent more likely than people of color to have a sponsor” (p. 20).

Sponsors can get on top of the mini-me trend by implementing the “Gilligan’s one-plus-two rule” established by the late Ed Gilligan—former president of American Express. Hewlett shares Gilligan’s insight “he made it clear to senior executives that they should 1) pick three up-and-comers to sponsor and 2) make sure that two of these protégés didn’t look like them” (p. 57). This rule reached across the divide of race, gender, and skill set, creating a powerful team where each member brings insight into something the others couldn’t, thereby multiplying your odds of success as a sponsor.



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Ignite the Fire Within

All protégés have a fire of ambition within them just waiting to be ignited, but not all sponsors know how to ignite that fire, and possibly the harder part is how to keep it lit long enough for them to become star players of the team. Hewlett demonstrates that “a key step is to encourage protégés to dream big for themselves and their role in your organization. Forty percent of sponsors in our survey said that they have boosted their protégés ambition, and 38 percent said they helped them develop a career vision. . . 50 percent of protégés overall said that if their sponsor helped them shape their vision for their career, they are more loyal to that sponsor” (p. 70).

Inspiring passion in a protégé ignites the fire within them. Lighting up their skills and creativity will ensure they do not take that skill set somewhere else. “You don’t have to be an orator to inspire. You have to come from a place of authenticity and conviction. If you can’t fire up a protégé with your values and goals, you probably have the wrong pick” (p. 77).

Three Way Investment

You found a star protégé and are ready to fuel the fire. Hewlett describes the three ways to invest in your protégé so they succeed and embody your brand, helping you rise to the top. The three-step narrative to strengthen your legacy is: endorsing noisily, providing personal advocacy and support, and celebrating failure (pp. 120-132):

Endorsing noisily will increase the odds of your protégé succeeding enormously by showing that their sponsor believes in them and endorses them, not by just being open about your protégé to others but by being boisterous and giving them your full support. This then provides support and encouragement for their success and reduces the chance of misunderstanding or malicious gossip.

Providing personal advocacy and support when not just in public but in places of importance so when promotions or opportunities arise, you personally advocate for your protégé being the best fit. This will create bonds of loyalty from your protégé, and the higher up they rise, the more they help you and the organization.

Celebrating failure by providing the freedom to fail allows your protégé to know you have their back and opens the opportunity for them to bring forth a bold idea or prove the viability of a project idea. Sometimes this idea or pilot project might fall short, but having a sponsor that has your back to the people in power shows that they deserve a second chance.



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The Me-Too Era

Although sexual harassment in the workplace is not new, in 2017, when a wave of women (and some men) came forward to expose the predatory sexual behavior of certain men in power, the #MeToo movement began. “A CTI study published in July 2018 found that, among white-collar workers, 34 percent of women have experienced sexual harassment from a colleague, and 7 percent have experienced sexual assault” (p. 148). This affects sponsorship.

Consensual sex is also a danger between protégé or subordinates. It extends to the entire enterprise taking a moral hit, loss of respect for all parties involved, and creating an unproductive, uncommunicative team dynamic.

Don't let fear stop you from sponsorship. Men fearful of suspicions or gossip won't take women on as protégés. The CTI survey revealed that forty percent of men and women agree that “recent publicity about sexual harassment at work makes it even less likely that a male leader will sponsor a female protégé—even if she deserves it” (p. 151).

Overcoming this wariness of male sponsors and taking on female protégés in business is imperative. A report by CTI, Innovation, Diversity, and Market Growth, showed that “when teams have at least one member that reflects the gender of their end user, the entire team is more than twice as likely (61 percent versus 25 percent) to report that they understand the targeted marketplace” (p. 152).

If you are not sponsoring top female talent in your company, what is stopping them from going somewhere else where they have a chance to thrive?

It is possible to overcome the risk of sexual harassment and for men and women to safely interact in the workplace with trust and professionalism. Using openness and respect by speaking up about your professional relationship, being public with your professional relationship in an open setting, not oversharing, and having a zero-tolerance policy will create a safe, healthy work environment for men and women throughout the organization.

Leaving Your Mark


At some point, we all move on, and our professional lives come to an end. What would you like to leave behind, making sure you leave the organization better than you found it? With sponsorship, you can create your legacy. Protégés that you have guided along the way won't just carry on your legacy but will carry it forward.

CTI data shows the “legacy effect” by surveying entry-level professionals to C-suite executives showing “39 percent of those with a protégé deemed themselves ‘satisfied’ with their professional legacy. Only 25 percent of those who don't have protégés said the same” (p. 158).

Hewlett emphasizes not letting your legacy end with just your protégé—be forward thinking and maintain your influence in your field years past your death.” Have a protégé who in turn will have protégés that will keep your legacy alive” (p. 170).

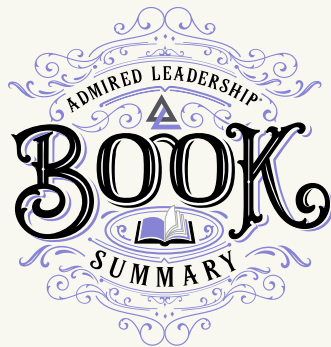


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A more robust legacy is an ideal end to your sponsorship journey, but there is so much more you will have contributed, such as making a difference in the world, helping a deserving talent rise to the top, or enhancing your professional success for yourself. All big rewards help you leave your mark in the most beneficial ways. Hewlett asks the final question, “why not get started now?” (p. 171).

Sylvia Ann. H. (2019). **The Sponsor Effect: How to be a Better Leader by Investing in Others.** Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review



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