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LEADER'S GUIDE

FROM MENTORSHIP TO SPONSORSHIP:
A MANAGER'S GUIDE TO GROWING
TALENT FROM WITHIN

PRESENTED TO:
LLMC MASTERCLASS

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INTRODUCTION: WHY THIS GUIDE EXISTS

Mentorship shapes careers.

Sponsorship changes trajectories.

Across industries, managers often believe they are already “sponsoring” their people when they are, in fact, mentoring. The difference isn’t semantics — it’s structural. Mentorship is about guidance; sponsorship is about advocacy.

Sponsorship is what happens when a leader uses their influence, voice, and reputation to actively create visibility, opportunity, and access for someone else.

At **Catalais Consulting**, we help organizations bridge that gap — transforming mentorship conversations into sponsorship action that builds equitable, future-ready workplaces.

WHY CATALAIS CONSULTING?

At Catalais Consulting, we’ve seen what happens when organizations rely on yesterday’s thinking to solve today’s challenges around talent and culture. We exist to change that.

Our work bridges people and performance — helping leaders embed respect, equity, and accountability into how they hire, grow, and sponsor talent. We combine lived experience with business strategy to redesign systems where opportunity isn’t left to chance or connection, but built by design.

Because when leadership is intentional, sponsorship becomes systemic — and that’s where people and performance meet purpose.



MENTORSHIP VS. SPONSORSHIP

Mentorship	Sponsorship
Focuses on growth and learning	Focuses on advancement and opportunity
Offers feedback and advice	Uses influence to advocate and open doors
Can be peer-based or informal	Requires positional power and credibility
Builds skills and confidence	Builds visibility and access
Helps you grow	Helps you go

Most people have mentors. Far fewer have sponsors. And those who do often share one key advantage — **someone with power chose to invest in their potential.**



THE MENTORSHIP-TO-SPONSORSHIP JOURNEY

This journey isn't linear; it's **relational** and **intentional**.

Each stage prepares both the leader and the team member to grow together.

Stage 1: Identify and Develop Potential

- Look beyond comfort zones. Who consistently delivers, demonstrates curiosity, and shows capacity to lead?
- Identify under-sponsored talent — particularly those historically overlooked.
- Invest in their growth through mentorship first. Sponsorship must be earned through performance, trust, and readiness.

Stage 2: Build Trust and Performance Credibility

- Create space for your team member to showcase excellence through stretch projects.
- Provide candid feedback and remove obstacles that limit visibility.
- Communicate belief in their potential — sponsorship thrives where trust is strong.

Stage 3: Advocate and Activate Sponsorship

- Bring their name into rooms they can't yet access.
- Nominate them for high-profile opportunities or cross-functional initiatives.
- Share your platform — co-present, co-author, or connect them to senior networks.
- Use your reputation to elevate theirs. Sponsorship is action, not advice.

Stage 4: Measure and Sustain Progress

- Set tangible advancement goals: promotions, expanded responsibilities, visibility metrics.
- Track milestones — not just outcomes, but increased confidence and readiness.
- Celebrate their wins publicly. Visibility compounds credibility.



PREPARING YOUR TEAM MEMBER FOR SPONSORSHIP

For sponsorship to succeed, your team member must be ready to step through the door you open. Help them:

1. **Clarify Ambition** – Encourage them to articulate career aspirations clearly.
2. **Demonstrate Excellence** – Deliver results that make advocacy easy.
3. **Increase Visibility** – Volunteer for projects that broaden their exposure.
4. **Follow Up with Value** – Keep you informed of wins and lessons learned.
5. **Pay It Forward** – Encourage them to mentor others once they advance.

💡 Catalais Insight:

“The best sponsorships create ripples — when one person moves forward, others see what’s possible.”



True sponsorship requires courage and intention.

- **Champion Beyond Your Team.** Advocate for diverse talent in other departments or disciplines.
- **Share Your Credibility.** Offer introductions and vouch for readiness.
- **Model Inclusive Leadership.** Reflect on whose potential you recognize — and whose you overlook.
- **Create Systemic Access.** Push for fair visibility in succession planning and promotion pipelines.
- **Mentor the Next Sponsors.** Teach your leaders to do the same.

Sponsorship is not about favoritism — it's about fairness. It's the mechanism that equalizes access to opportunity.





TOOLS & REFLECTION PROMPTS

A. Sponsor-Sponsee Agreement

- (A simple one-pager for managers and employees to co-sign)
- Purpose of the relationship
- Agreed-upon goals (e.g., visibility, project leadership, advancement)
- Sponsor commitments (introductions, advocacy, feedback)
- Sponsee commitments (performance, communication, accountability)
- Check-in cadence

B. Visibility Map

Opportunity Type	Examples	Who Can I Nominate?
Internal visibility	Present at leadership meetings, task forces	
External visibility	Industry events, media features, panels	
Stretch exposure	Cross-department projects, interim leadership	



TOOLS & REFLECTION PROMPTS

C. Reflection Prompts for Managers

1. Who am I currently mentoring — and who am I truly sponsoring?
2. Whose potential am I overlooking because they don't look, sound, or work like me?
3. When was the last time I used my influence to advocate for someone's advancement?
4. How am I measuring the impact of my sponsorship on team representation and retention?

Closing: Where People and Performance Meet Purpose

The path from mentorship to sponsorship is where culture shifts from supportive to transformative.

As leaders, our greatest legacy is not in the promotions we earn, but in the doors we open for others.

Catalais Consulting partners with organizations to design the infrastructure — systems, leadership frameworks, and culture — that make sponsorship sustainable.

Let's build workplaces where talent and opportunity finally meet.