



GLOBAL HR

Community

Connect. Learn. Grow

BRIDGING THE GAP:

THE POWER OF EQUITABLE

SPONSORSHIP IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	2
Introduction	3
Understanding Equitable Sponsorship	4
The Benefits of Equitable Sponsorship	5
Implementing Equitable Sponsorship	6
Challenges and Solutions	7
Measuring Impact and Continuous Improvement	7
Conclusion	9
Contact Information for GHRC:	9



ABSTRACT

In a dynamic business environment where diversity, equity and inclusion have become pivotal, equitable sponsorship emerges as a transformative strategy for organizational growth and cultural change. This whitepaper explores the concept of equitable sponsorship as a proactive approach to nurturing and promoting underrepresented talent within corporate structures. Unlike traditional mentorship, which primarily offers guidance and support, equitable sponsorship involves a commitment from senior leadership to advocate actively, provide visibility, and open career advancement opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds. This approach brings multitude of tangible benefits, such as enhanced diversity and inclusion, increased employee engagement and retention, and a boost in innovation and problem-solving through diverse leadership. The paper provides a comprehensive guide to implementing equitable sponsorship, including leadership commitment, training and awareness programs, structured sponsorship initiatives, and metrics for measuring success. The importance of integrating equitable sponsorship into broader corporate strategies, like leadership succession and talent management, is also emphasized. Through case studies and insights from industry experts, the paper articulates the significance of equitable sponsorship in creating more inclusive and forward-thinking workplaces.



INTRODUCTION

The business landscape has undergone significant transformations, propelled by globalization, technological advancements, and a growing emphasis on social responsibility. Companies now operate in a highly interconnected world where the workforce is increasingly diverse, and the market demands inclusivity. However, this diversity often does not translate to equity and representation at higher organizational levels. The challenges of integrating diverse talents and perspectives into the leadership pipeline persist, primarily due to ingrained biases and unequal access to opportunities. Equitable sponsorship emerges as a strategic response to these challenges. It represents a commitment to not just diversify the workforce, but to actively nurture and advance diverse talent to positions of influence and decision-making. This concept marks a departure from traditional sponsorship models, which have often mirrored the prevailing power dynamics within organizations, typically favoring those who already have access to networks and opportunities.

The history of sponsorship in the corporate world has its roots in mentorship and networking. Traditionally, senior executives would identify and nurture talent that they saw as a reflection of themselves, often leading to homogeneity in leadership. This approach, while beneficial for some, inadvertently perpetuated cycles of exclusion for underrepresented groups. As awareness of these patterns grew, there was a shift towards more intentional and inclusive practices.

The evolution into equitable sponsorship is characterized by a conscious effort to identify, advocate for, and support individuals from a variety of backgrounds, particularly those who have been historically marginalized. This involves recognizing and addressing the systemic barriers that prevent equitable access to career advancement. By fostering a culture where diverse talents are not only recognized but also strategically positioned for leadership, organizations can unlock a wealth of innovative perspectives and ideas, better reflecting the diverse nature of their customer base and society at large.

Equitable sponsorship is thus not just a moral imperative but a business imperative. It offers a pathway to harness the full potential of a diverse workforce, driving innovation, and sustainable growth. This whitepaper explores how organizations can effectively implement equitable sponsorship, the benefits it brings, and the pivotal role it plays in shaping the future of inclusive and dynamic business environments.

UNDERSTANDING EQUITABLE SPONSORSHIP

Equitable sponsorship is a deliberate effort to support underrepresented and marginalized employees by providing them with visibility, opportunities, and advocacy. It goes beyond mere mentorship by involving sponsors who leverage their influence and networks to open doors for their sponsees. The goal is to create a level playing field where talent from all backgrounds can ascend to leadership roles, thereby enhancing diversity at the top echelons of an organization.

“

Equitable sponsorship is the bridge that connects diverse talents with opportunities, ensuring that every voice is not only heard but also valued and empowered to thrive.

A key aspect of sponsorship is its critical role in helping diverse talent thrive within an organization. It involves the development of an earned, reciprocal relationship that's crucial for upward career mobility. Unlike mentorship, which is often perceived as a one-way flow of advice and support, sponsorship requires a two-way engagement, where both the sponsor and the protégé work collaboratively towards the latter's career advancement.

While sponsorship is vital for career advancement, it's often misunderstood. Some candidates might not fully grasp the extent of commitment and advocacy involved in a sponsorship relationship. Unlike mentorship's informal nature, sponsorship is a strategic, goal-oriented initiative. It involves sponsors taking a risk and using their influence to actively open doors for their proteges.

Equitable sponsorship is not just about offering opportunities but ensuring equal access to them. It challenges individual unconscious biases that might lead us to favor those similar to us. By deliberately sponsoring across differences, organizations can accelerate progress in normalizing a broader representation of diversity at all levels. This involves sponsors providing tangible opportunities for their sponsees, such as connecting them with senior leaders, offering critical feedback for advancement, and exposing them to new, challenging opportunities that allow them to grow, learn, and demonstrate their capabilities.

THE BENEFITS OF **EQUITABLE SPONSORSHIP**

Promotion of Diversity and Inclusion:

By ensuring that individuals from diverse backgrounds have champions in their corner, organizations can break down systemic barriers to advancement. This leads to a more diverse leadership pipeline and a culture that values and reflects the society it serves.

A study by McKinsey & Company found that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians. This data underscores the tangible impact of diversity on business performance. As noted by Indra Nooyi, former CEO of PepsiCo, “We need to ensure our workplaces reflect the communities we serve. Equitable sponsorship plays a crucial role in achieving this diversity.”

Enhancement of Employee Engagement and Retention:

Employees who feel supported and know that they have equitable opportunities for advancement are more likely to be engaged with their work and committed to their employer. This reduces turnover and fosters a sense of loyalty and belonging.

According to a Deloitte study, organizations with inclusive cultures are twice as likely to meet or exceed financial targets. Furthermore, they are three times as likely to be high-performing. As Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, aptly put it, “Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.” Equitable sponsorship ensures that impact by nurturing a culture of support and recognition.

Driving Business Innovation:

Diverse leadership teams bring a range of perspectives and ideas, which is a crucial ingredient for innovation. By promoting equitable sponsorship, organizations can tap into a wider pool of insights and experiences, driving creativity and problem-solving.

A report from BCG (Boston Consulting Group) showed that companies with above-average diversity scores reported innovation revenue that was 19 percentage points higher than that of companies with below-average leadership diversity. This highlights the direct correlation between diverse leadership and innovative output. “Innovation comes from teams with diverse ways of thinking,” says Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, encapsulating the importance of varied perspectives in driving creativity.

In summary, equitable sponsorship not only catalyzes individual career growth but also propels organizational success. Through intentional advocacy and support for diverse talent, companies can build an inclusive culture, enhance employee engagement, and foster innovative thinking, all of which are critical in today’s competitive and diverse global marketplace.

IMPLEMENTING EQUITABLE SPONSORSHIP:

Step-by-Step Guidelines and Best Practices:

1. Leadership Commitment:

- Begin with explicit commitment from top management. Leadership must not only endorse equitable sponsorship but actively participate.
- Conduct executive sessions to discuss the importance and benefits of equitable sponsorship, integrating it into the organizational culture.

2. Training and Awareness:

- Organize comprehensive training for potential sponsors on the principles of equity and inclusion, and how to effectively advocate for their sponsees.
- Raise awareness among all employees about the availability and purpose of the sponsorship program, emphasizing its difference from mentorship.

3. Creating Structured Programs:

- Develop formal sponsorship programs with clear objectives and guidelines. These should include matching criteria based on professional needs and goals.
- Regularly monitor and review the relationships to ensure they are meeting their objectives.

4. Measuring and Rewarding Success:

- Implement tracking systems to monitor the career progression of individuals under sponsorship programs.
- Introduce rewards or recognition for successful sponsors to encourage ongoing participation and commitment.

5. Fostering a Culture of Inclusivity:

- Ensure the sponsorship program is part of a broader inclusivity and diversity strategy.
- Create opportunities for open dialogue and feedback within the organization to continuously improve the sponsorship program.

6. Integrating with Broader Organizational Strategies:

- Align sponsorship programs with overall business strategies, leadership succession planning, and talent management systems.
- Regularly report on the program's progress and impact to keep it aligned with the organization's strategic objectives.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Promotion of Diversity and Inclusion:

Bias in Sponsor Selection Potential sponsors may subconsciously choose mentees who resemble themselves in background or personality. Solution: Implement a structured matching process guided by objective criteria rather than personal choice to ensure diverse pairings.

Challenge: Lack of Engagement from Senior Leadership:

Successful sponsorship requires active participation from top executives, which can be challenging to secure. Solution: Highlight the business benefits of sponsorship and include sponsorship as a metric in leadership performance evaluations.

Challenge: Measuring Impact:

It can be challenging to quantitatively measure the success of sponsorship programs. Solution: Establish clear metrics such as promotion rates, retention statistics, and employee satisfaction scores to gauge effectiveness.

Challenge: Sustaining Long-Term Interest:

Maintaining enthusiasm and participation over time can be difficult. Solution: Regularly refresh the program with new training, success stories, and evolving objectives to keep it dynamic and engaging.

In conclusion, implementing an equitable sponsorship program requires a structured approach, consistent effort, and an organization-wide commitment to diversity and inclusion. Addressing potential challenges head-on and continually refining the program will help in maximizing its effectiveness and impact.

MEASURING IMPACT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

For any organizational initiative, especially one as critical as equitable sponsorship, measuring its impact and continuously refining it based on feedback is crucial. This ensures the program not only achieves its intended goals but also evolves with changing organizational dynamics and needs.

Setting up Metrics and KPIs:

To effectively measure the success of sponsorship programs, specific metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be established. These KPIs should align with the objectives of the sponsorship program and the broader goals of the organization. Key metrics might include:

Promotion and Advancement Rates:

Track the rate at which individuals in sponsorship programs are promoted compared to those not in the program. This can provide insight into the effectiveness of the program in advancing careers.

Diversity in Leadership Roles:

Monitor the diversity in leadership before and after the implementation of the sponsorship program. This metric is crucial for programs aimed at increasing underrepresented groups in senior positions.

Retention Rates:

Measure the retention rates of participants in the sponsorship program. Higher retention can indicate a successful program that contributes to employee satisfaction and loyalty.

Employee Engagement and Satisfaction:

Use surveys and feedback tools to gauge the satisfaction and engagement levels of both sponsors and sponsees. This can help in understanding the qualitative impact of the program.

Return on Investment (ROI):

Although challenging, calculating the ROI of the sponsorship program in terms of increased productivity, innovation, and reduced turnover costs can be a powerful indicator of its value.

Importance of Feedback Loops and Continuous Improvement:

Creating a culture of continuous improvement through regular feedback is vital for the sustainability and success of the sponsorship program.

- **Regular Assessment:** Implement regular check-ins and reviews of the sponsorship program. This could be through surveys, focus groups, or one-on-one interviews with participants.
- **Adaptability:** Use the feedback to adapt and modify the program. What works well in one organizational context or at a certain time may not be as effective later. Being open to change and responsive to feedback ensures the program remains relevant and effective.
- **Celebrating Successes and Learning from Challenges:** Share successes widely to encourage ongoing participation and support for the program. Equally important is openly discussing challenges and lessons learned, which fosters a culture of transparency and continuous learning.
- **Leadership Involvement:** Ensure that feedback and learnings are shared with senior leadership. Their involvement in the continuous improvement process reinforces the importance of the program and can lead to more strategic support and resources.

In summary, setting clear metrics and KPIs provides a framework for objectively evaluating the success of equitable sponsorship programs. Incorporating feedback loops ensures that the program is dynamic, responsive, and continually evolving to meet the needs of the organization and its employees. This ongoing process of measurement and refinement is essential in realizing the full potential and impact of equitable sponsorship.

CONCLUSION

Equitable sponsorship is a powerful tool for building inclusive workplaces where every individual has the opportunity to succeed. By actively advocating for underrepresented talent, organizations can unlock the full potential of their workforce, drive innovation, and reflect the diversity of the world around them. As the business case for diversity and inclusion continues to strengthen, equitable sponsorship will undoubtedly play a critical role in shaping the future of work.

Organizations must not only recognize the importance of equitable sponsorship but actively invest in it. This means dedicating resources, time, and effort to develop and sustain sponsorship programs that are aligned with organizational values and goals. The call to action is clear: embrace equitable sponsorship to build a more diverse, inclusive, and successful future.

The time to act is now. Embrace equitable sponsorship and witness the transformation it brings to your organization and society at large.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR GHRC:

GHRC offers specialized training programs designed to help organizations implement effective equitable sponsorship initiatives. These programs cover aspects ranging from understanding the concept of sponsorship to practical steps for implementation and measuring success. GHRC also provides continuous support systems to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of these initiatives.

For detailed information on GHRC's training programs and support systems for deploying equitable sponsorship programs, you can contact them through the following:

SREEKANTH K (SREE) ARIMANITHAYA



Entrepreneur In Residence and CHRO with Machani Group, shaping a diverse portfolio of businesses within the Group, while nurturing his own entrepreneurial endeavours.

He is also the Co-Founder of Visara Human Capital Services a leading Human Capital Consulting and Service firm, powered by AI and the Global HR Community a platform designed to bring together HR professionals, people managers, and leaders from diverse functions and industries to connect, collaborate, learn, and contribute. GHRC aims to create a space where members can bring their whole selves to work and celebrate life. Sreekanth has over 30 years of experience across the service and manufacturing industries. He has a wide range of experience in human resources management, people supply chain management and organizational development, technology leadership and quality management.

He has been the CHRO & Held Leadership positions in EY Global Delivery Services, DXC Technology, CSC India, Computer Associates, Phillips Software, Britannia, GE and worked in Toyota Motor Corporation.

RAMESH RANJAN



Ramesh Ranjan is currently the Co-Founder & CEO of Global HR Community.

With over four decades in Human Resources Management, Ramesh Ranjan is a distinguished figure recognized for coaching prowess. Selected in the MG 25 India Coaches group by Dr. Marshall Goldsmith and named one of Silicon India Magazine's SI Top 10 Prominent Leadership Coaches in 2023. He is a mentor at E-Cell, IIT Bombay, fostering startups in Asia's largest business model competition.

With leadership roles in Schneider Electric India, American Power Conversion, Chevron Texaco/Caltex India, Praxair India, Co Systems India, Indian Herbs & ITI, Ranjan brings a wealth of experience. Currently a Professor (HR) at IFIM School of Management and a visiting professor at prestigious institutions in Bangalore and Prague University of Economics & Business, he is also the Founder & Editor of the award-winning HR Blog/Website, www.humanengineers.com.

A multifaceted professional, Ranjan has held key roles in NHRD Bangalore Chapter, AMCHAM, and the Roundtable of HR Directors of Petroleum Companies.

By accessing or using any copyrighted materials owned by Global HR Community, you acknowledge and agree to abide by the terms of this Copyright Disclaimer. If you do not agree with any of these terms, please refrain from accessing or using the copyrighted materials.



www.globalhrcommunity.com