The Executive Leadership Council’s Guide to Effective Mentoring Relationships
A publication of The Institute for Leadership Development & Research

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The Executive Leadership Council’s mission is to build the inclusive business leadership pipeline, developing African American corporate leaders, one student and one executive at a time. The Council does this through a variety of initiatives and programs created by The Executive Leadership Council members and supported by contributors to the Executive Leadership Foundation.

The Institute is one such initiative focused on providing executive seminars, mentoring, leadership development, and diversity education to help senior executives and high potential African-American leaders achieve breakthrough performance. Participants learn from the foremost academic scholars, business leaders, and consultants in the field of leadership development. The Institute also offers cutting edge research in the interest of understanding issues affecting African-American leadership development and performance.
THE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL’S GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS
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ABOUT THE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The Executive Leadership Council is a unique, national membership organization representing senior-level African American corporate men and women who bring unparalleled insight to a variety of issues that affect global businesses. We have been working for nearly two decades to provide African American executives with a network and leadership forum that adds perspective and direction to the achievement of excellence in business, economic and public policies for the African American community, their corporations and the community at large.

The goal of The Council is to enhance the professional effectiveness of the membership and the work of their corporations, and to ensure business opportunities for future generations of aspiring African American corporate executives and entrepreneurs.

The Council represents more than 350 African American senior corporate executives from Fortune 500 companies focused on developing and maintaining a strong pipeline of senior African American corporate leaders through a wide cadre of initiatives as diagrammed below.
INTRODUCTION

Mentoring has gained increasing attention and popularity as a powerful tool to enable the careers of those advancing through the ranks in organizations. The practitioner and research-based literatures are both full of anecdotal and factual research documenting the importance of mentoring in the career development of professionals. Yet the role of this important developmental relationship may be particularly critical for African-American executives. In his research on the career progression of minorities in U.S. corporations, Harvard Business School Professor David Thomas (2001:99) notes “… people of color who advance the furthest all share one characteristic—a strong network of mentors and corporate sponsors who nurture their professional development.”

There are also several contextual factors that highlight the need to better understand the mentoring experiences of African-American executives. A number of workforce trends and changes, including increasing workforce diversity, a battle to retain diverse talent and the persistent presence of a glass ceiling, suggest that in order to better prepare African-American executives for advancement in organizations, we should pay some attention to their access to mentoring relationships.

Why Mentoring, Why Now?

One contextual change is the needs of an increasingly diverse workforce. In 1987, Johnston and Packer predicted that minorities were going to be an increasing percentage of the workforce. In fact, their forecasts have been realized; organizations are more diverse today than two decades ago and are now grappling with how to support/enable relationships among people who are engaged in some common enterprise but “who do not share a common history or culture” (Caproni, 2004:269). Our work with the Executive Leadership Council (ELC) suggests that both formal and informal mentoring may be necessary tools to facilitate positive interactions among the increasingly diverse members of today’s organizations.
A second contextual change is an increased focus on the retention and development of talent in organizations, particularly women and people of color. Futurists predict that one of the biggest challenges organizations will face is the war to retain their human talent—their knowledge workers. According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, we are facing an impending shortage of skilled workers; by 2010, there will be 10.3 million more jobs in the American workforce than skilled workers to fill them. In light of the predicted labor shortage, organizations cannot afford to continue operating with a revolving door—hiring the best talent only to see them leave in frustration over challenges and barriers engendered by cultures that are not conducive to effective recruitment and retention. Mentoring has been suggested as a tool to increase the retention of diverse talent. For an example, we can turn to Proctor and Gamble (P&G). Through an employee survey, P&G found that the company was losing a significant number of promising young female managers. They developed a “reverse mentoring” program to help senior managers better understand issues facing junior women, as well as factors related to retaining this particular pool of employees. Other firms (e.g., PepsiCo, Deloitte Consulting, Pitney Bowes) have conducted similar analyses and now use formal mentoring programs as a way to recruit and retain diverse talent within the organization.

Finally, there is a third contextual factor that has worked as a catalyst for change in how organizations use mentoring. In spite of the increased number of people of color entering organizations and the acknowledged need to retain diverse talent, we still see a glass ceiling that effectively keeps the top levels of Corporate America devoid of the same diversity that exists throughout the middle and lower levels. This glass ceiling has been recast as a concrete ceiling—an impermeable barrier that keeps people of color effectively locked out of the corridors of power in organizations across industries and professions. Mentoring has been posed as a catalyst to shift the dynamics of power that keep people of color from attaining those executive level positions within organizations in substantive numbers.

We argue that mentoring is one way to “break into the country club.” We believe that mentoring is a particularly effective and timely tool companies should use to support African-American executives and their successful career progression. In this guide, we provide information on the concept of mentoring and share lessons learned about effective mentoring relationships. In the second part of this guide, we draw some important distinctions between informal versus formal mentoring efforts in terms of the benefits and
limitations for individuals and organizations. We further describe formal mentoring by sharing the steps used in effectively delivering a formal mentoring program based on an innovative program launched by the ELC in 2004. Based on the knowledge of a wide variety of organizations and the lessons learned from the ELC efforts, we conclude with suggestions for formal mentoring best practices and recommendations.

**MENTORING DEFINED – MOVING BEYOND THE “MYTH”**

The original concept of a “mentor” is based on a character from Greek mythology, namely Homer’s story of the Odyssey. Within this story, a goddess appears in different forms to help guide, protect and support the journey of the main character within the story. This all-knowing and powerful figure that Homer describes as “Mentor” has shaped our modern-day expectations and perceptions of what a mentor does – or more importantly what a mentor should do. However, it is helpful to have a realistic understanding of what is meant when the term “mentoring” is being used in today’s organizations. Mentoring can be described as:

A reciprocal and collaborative learning relationship between two (or more) individuals who share mutual responsibility and accountability for helping a mentee work toward the achievement of clear and mutually defined learning goals.”

An important role of the mentor is to advise mentees about organizational and professional do’s and don’ts; this inside advice allows mentees to avoid costly errors and to proceed in a more effectively directed career journey. Mentors offer support to mentees through several key critical behaviors; we typically see guidance offered through the provision of three types of activities or functions: 1) instrumental help; 2) psychosocial support; and 3) role modeling.

*Instrumental help* consists of activities such as sponsoring, coaching, and protecting the other person. Mentors also provide instrumental help by giving mentees exposure, visibility and challenging work assignments. *Psychosocial support* increases mentees’ sense of competence and effectiveness and may include counseling and friendship. Mentees may also receive acceptance and confirmation from psychosocial support. Finally, a mentor may also provide support to her mentee by acting as an exemplar or role model, sharing her decision making at critical career junctures and demonstrating appropriate behavior in different situations.
Clearly the activities of a mentor are diverse and can benefit both individuals involved in this important developmental relationship.

Mentoring relationships take time to develop; career, psychosocial and role model functions do not emerge in a vacuum. Informal mentoring relationships evolve through four phases—initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition. In the initiation phase, mentors and mentees are getting to know one another, testing their understanding of one another through their interactions in this early phase. Once both parties have established trust and committed to the relationship, they enter the cultivation phase of that relationship. In cultivation, the maximum amount of psychosocial, career and role modeling functions emerge. Throughout the time a relationship is being cultivated, a variety of different mentoring functions may be demonstrated depending on the needs of the relationship, the skill of the mentor, and the level of trust between the partners. As the relationship evolves, some change occurs that pushes the relationship into the separation phase. The catalyst may be a physical shift (one of the mentoring partners moves to a new location) or a psychological change (a promotion for one of the mentoring partners). As a result, mentoring partners have to restructure or rethink their relationship through the redefinition phase. Redefinition may involve renewing commitment to the relationship by determining ways to make it work in light of the recent changes from separation. Redefinition may also mean severing the relationship if one or both of the mentoring partners determines that the relationship has run its course or has become a negative one. These phases underscore the dynamic nature of mentoring relationships—they are not static interactions.

Because mentoring is a dynamic exchange between the people involved in the relationship, mentoring has been shown to provide benefits for mentees, mentors, and organizations. Those with access to mentoring have been consistently shown to benefit from their involvement in these relationships; mentees report higher salaries, increased promotion rates, greater career satisfaction, higher organizational commitment, and less intention to leave the organization, as well as lower levels of turnover.

Mentors also benefit from their participation in mentoring relationships, experiencing satisfaction from helping others grow and succeed. Mentors also gain access to alternative perspectives and paradigms through their interactions with mentees. They may also learn
about what is happening at lower levels of the organization, information that is not as forthcoming as mentors move higher and higher up the organizational hierarchy. Mentors also receive loyalty and help from their protégés and recognition from their organizations. The consensus is that mentors can benefit from the developmental relationships as much as mentees.

Finally, organizations also gain from the presence of developmental relationships. Mentoring is a tool for preserving knowledge, encouraging learning, and socializing employees. Mentoring has been used as a mechanism for succession planning in organizations—companies build their bench strength through the identification and strategic development of internal talent. Mentoring has also been used to integrate distinct cultures after a reorganization or a merger and acquisition. Finally, mentoring is being used as a catalyst for addressing issues of diversity in organizations.

A LOOK AT FORMAL VERSUS INFORMAL MENTORING

Informal mentoring relationships have received considerable attention, as indicated by the numerous articles cited in the previous section. The fact that organizations have formalized these relationships with the hopes of capturing the same positive benefits of informal mentoring is a further testimony to the power of mentoring for organizations. However, there are several important differences between formal mentoring and informal mentoring. Researchers have differentiated these relationships along three dimensions: initiation, structure, and process.

The initiation of formal mentoring relationships is externally directed; a program coordinator generally determines the matches between mentors and mentees. In contrast, informal mentoring relationships are initiated when two people are drawn toward one another because of common needs, interests or perceived similarity. The similarity and attraction principle confirms that we connect to and form relationships with people whom we perceive to be like ourselves. On the other hand, mentors and mentees involved in a formal mentoring relationship may not have the same level of comfort and connection in the early phases as those in dyads who started their relationships informally.
The structure of formal mentoring relationships differs in several ways from that of informal mentoring relationships. Formal mentoring relationships are generally contracted for a specific amount of time (generally a year); they are also pre-designed, often characterized by predetermined frequency and locations for meetings between the mentor and the mentee. In contrast, informal mentoring relationships may have less predetermined structure and can last a longer period of time – from three to six years, or more, and meetings and activities occur when desired as opposed to a set schedule. Another difference in the structure of formal versus informal mentoring is the types of goals used in the relationship. In formal mentoring relationships, goals are often pre-set at the beginning of the relationship; additionally, some goals are determined by the organization rather than those inside the relationship. Goals set in informal mentoring relationships evolve over time as opposed to being determined at the onset of the relationship, and are shaped by the needs and interactions that take place between the mentor and mentee.

A final consideration is how interpersonal processes may be affected by the formalization of the mentoring process. Two important processes to consider are the mentor’s motivation and the mentor’s ability to act on behalf of the mentee. Because mentors and mentees in formal mentoring relationships are brought together through external forces, the mentor’s motivation, desire or willingness to engage in the relationship may not be as strong as that of informal mentors. This difference suggests that formal mentors may be more driven by their desire to act as a “good organizational citizen” who are supporting their organizations by participating in the mentoring initiative rather than supporting and guiding their assigned mentees. Another difference is that mentors in formal relationships may be more visible, and therefore less able to engage in career development behaviors that may be construed as favoritism by coworkers in the organization.

Do we see differences in outcomes accruing to mentors and mentees involved in formal versus informal mentoring relationships? While there is only a small amount of research that addresses this question, the attention that is being focused on metrics of mentoring outcomes is growing. Some work that investigates the effects of informal versus formal
mentoring relationships indicates that informal mentoring relationships provide greater outcomes for mentees than participation in formal mentoring. For example, one set of researchers studied mentees involved in 212 informal and 53 formal mentoring relationships.\textsuperscript{xxi} They found that mentees involved in informal mentorships reported greater career support and higher salaries than their peers engaged in formal mentoring relationships. Another study that followed the experiences of 510 informal mentees, 104 formal mentees and 548 non-mentees, found that informal mentees reported that their mentors were more effective and that they received higher salaries than mentees with formal mentors.\textsuperscript{xxii}

This relatively limited amount of research might lead to the conclusion that mentees in informal relationships benefit more in terms of outcomes than those in formal mentoring relationships. In fact, it might lead one to question whether or not formal mentoring initiatives should be used. If results are better with informal mentoring, why should organizations support formal mentoring relationships? While informal mentoring relationships can provide support for a mentee’s career outcomes, those who receive formal mentoring report better career outcomes than those who are not involved in any mentoring relationship at all. Formal mentoring relationships provide valuable support to those who may not have ready access to informal mentoring – particularly those who are left out or have limited access to the “country club” or exclusionary informal network that exists in most organizations. Formal mentoring also provides a legitimate basis for a mentor to act, intercede, or protect a mentee that may not be as strong within informal mentoring relationships. Also, formal mentoring may act as a platform or foundation for partners to build a sustainable relationship that lives beyond the duration of the formal mentoring initiative. Finally, formal mentoring relationships provide an opportunity for the organization to shape its culture and transmit important messages and values through the formal mentoring initiative. So, while formal mentoring relationships do not take the place of informal mentoring, there are several key benefits to participation in formal mentoring initiatives.\textsuperscript{xxiii}
FORMAL MENTORING PROGRAMS

Formal mentoring programs have become popular and powerful initiatives that are being increasingly employed by organizations to support organizational change efforts. These programs are being used as a way to address a number of issues, including:

- leadership development
- succession planning
- employee satisfaction and retention
- recruitment and employee socialization
- blend of cultures as a result of mergers and acquisitions
- connecting geographically dispersed parts of the workforce.

Formal mentoring has also recently been adapted as a strategic human resource intervention to aid in the retention, recruitment, and advancement of an increasingly diverse workforce. In fact, 71% of Fortune 500 and private companies use mentoring in their organizations, and 60% of Fortune’s 100 best companies to work for in the U.S. have formal mentoring programs. And this phenomenon is not limited to American corporations and businesses. A study of 2000 Canadian firms found that 70 percent of the companies had either an informal or formal mentoring program in place. Formal mentoring programs are an international phenomenon. Formal mentoring programs typically consist of the following seven steps: mentoring cultural assessment, selection of mentees and mentors, matching, training, maintenance, formal conclusion and celebration, and evaluation of mentoring relationships and program.

Mentoring Cultural Assessment

Before embarking on a formal mentoring program, organizations should spend some time considering several issues, including:

✓ Why is a formal mentoring program an appropriate initiative?
✓ How will the formal mentoring program be connected to important organizational outcomes?
✓ Who is the organizational sponsor or champion for the program?
✓ Are there sufficient organizational resources to support the program?
✓ How will the culture of the organization be supportive of or challenging to the implementation of formal mentoring?

Organizational leaders have a number of questions to consider before starting a formal mentoring program; this decision should not be one that is made haphazardly or without considerable thought.

Selection of Mentees and Mentors
Potential mentees and mentors are then recruited for the program. Program administrators should be clear on why the mentoring program is being implemented; this reasoning will impact who is selected to participate in the mentoring program. A clear message should be sent that mentees participating in the program have been selected because the organization is investing in their development. Mentors are typically selected for similar reasons—they are acknowledged developers of talent in their organizations. Selection of mentors should also be based on their ability to address the developmental needs of selected mentees.

Matching
One of the most crucial moments in a formal mentoring program centers on matching. While formal mentoring programs hold a great deal of promise, inadequate attention is often paid to how mentoring partners are brought together—the match. There are a couple of criteria that are beneficial to consider as matches between mentors and mentees are being formed. First, what are the developmental needs of the mentee, and how might the mentor contribute to the mentee’s growth? From an interpersonal level, is there a match in the developmental opportunities of the mentee and the developmental strengths of the mentor? Second, how does the mentor-mentee match fit the organization’s goals for the formal mentoring program? From an organizational level, is there alignment between the match and the stated goals of the program?
Training
Both mentors and mentees should be brought together to prepare them to enter their formal mentoring relationships. Mentoring partners need space, time, and guidance to orient themselves to one another and to gain clear insights into the requirements of and expectations for the formal relationship. Some programs hold separate mentor and mentee orientation sessions; other organizations bring mentoring partners together for this training. Topics that are covered in these initial meetings include development of a mentoring plan that addresses issues of time commitment, boundary definition through expectation setting, goals for the relationship, meeting frequency and location, and measures to ensure confidentiality.

Maintenance of Relationships
After the launch of the mentoring program, participants should have additional organizationally-sponsored opportunities to connect with one another. These meetings should be planned at regular intervals throughout the program. Many organizations plan a check-in with mentoring partners midway through the program, to ensure that the relationships are on track and to have a designated time to address issues if the formal mentoring relationships are not proceeding well. These maintenance meetings may also be used for skill development—if there is a particular issue or topic that program administrators want to address. Mentoring partners may also revisit the goals established in their first meeting.

Formal Conclusion and Celebration
Most formal mentoring programs are generally one year in duration. Program administrators should plan for a formal ending of the program, with acknowledgement of the effort and work expended by mentoring participants. The formal closing represents an opportunity for leadership in the organization to publicly recognize participants and for participants to reflect on their learning and celebrate goals achieved. This closing also denotes movement of the formal mentoring relationship into the separation phase. Mentoring partners now have an opportunity to determine how they will redefine their formal mentoring relationship.
Evaluation of Relationships and Program

There is an old adage—what organizations value, they measure. In order to gain lessons from the cycle of formal mentoring relationships, program administrators should gather information through a variety of formats. Evaluation measures should start at the beginning of the mentoring program; a baseline measure on important factors is helpful in order to determine the impact of the mentoring program. Effective mentoring programs are typified by on-going evaluation efforts—data is collected at several critical moments in the program. At the conclusion of the program, additional data should be collected through varied methods, including focus groups, interviews, surveys, and web-based questionnaires. Program administrators should also pay attention to collecting data at several levels. Evaluation of the formal mentoring relationships is as important as evaluation of the formal mentoring program. Information collected can be used in several important ways—to document the process and impact of the program, to offer support and testimony for the program that can be used to recruit additional participants, and to make changes to the program that build on aspects that were effective and eliminate or tweak aspects that were less effective.

A Review of “Best Practices” in Formal Mentoring Programs

While formal mentoring programs are relatively new (organizations have been using these initiatives for roughly four decades), there is a fair amount of research and literature to illuminate best practices. In his investigation of successful assigned mentoring relationships, Noe described several critical factors: 1) the goals and purpose of the program are clearly defined; 2) mentors are selected on the basis of interpersonal skills and interest in developing employees; 3) mentors are trained; and 4) explicit provisions are made for time to allow the mentor and mentee to interact with one another. Building on the work of Noe and other scholars and practitioners who have studied and implemented formal mentoring programs, we offer suggestions for best practices. We also share common mistakes to avoid in each of the seven steps of formal mentoring programs based on our prior research and the work conducted by the ELC.
Mentoring Cultural Assessment

A common mistake made in the initial thinking about instituting formal mentoring programs is insufficient consideration of the rationale for and logistics of implementing the program. Currently, mentoring is one of the most popular strategic human resource initiatives; professionals are increasingly expecting that they will have access to developmental support such as mentoring. A recent study found that 35 percent of employees who do not receive regular mentoring planned to look for another job within 12 months, while only 16 percent of those with good mentors planned to do so. In the rush to include mentoring in their repertoire, some organizations do not take the time to answer all of the questions we offered, a potentially costly mistake. Organizations should not put formal mentoring in place without it being tied to critical organizational goals. A realistic assessment of the organization’s culture, commitment and resources available for mentoring is critical to the success of the program. One suggestion we offer to organizations is to start small by running the mentoring program as a pilot before rolling it out to a larger number of participants. Piloting the program offers planners an opportunity to work out potential kinks before moving to scale; a pilot may also generate buzz that heightens interest for future potential participants.

Selection of Mentees and Mentors

Once an organization has decided to implement a formal mentoring program, there is often a flurry of activity to get the program up and running as quickly as possible. It is particularly problematic to rush this step in the formal mentoring program process. There are a number of challenges that may arise with the recruitment of mentors and mentees. One issue occurs when organizations mandate participation in the program, particularly for the mentors. There can sometimes be a level of mental arm-twisting to recruit high-level executives to commit to participate as mentors. When participation is not voluntary, the accompanying cynicism, concerns about the intentions of the organization, and even suppressed anger can derail the mentoring program. A second issue arises when the call for participants yields too few mentors. Mentor shortage is not an uncommon occurrence. While mentees stand to gain access to valuable face time with executives within their organizations, the benefits to mentors are not as readily apparent. In addition, by virtue of the structure of leadership ranks within organizations, there are far fewer people available to act as mentors.
One alternative that organizations facing a shortage of mentors opt to implement is a move from one-to-one mentoring to some form of group mentoring. A final issue regarding participant selection is related to how the invitation is communicated to mentees and throughout the organization. There can be a perception that mentees are selected to participate because they don’t fit the organization or they need additional help to be successful. The perception that invitations for mentees to participate in the formal mentoring program are remedial in nature is yet another potential barrier to an effective launch.

**Matching**

While formal mentoring programs hold a great deal of promise, inadequate attention is often paid to how mentoring partners are brought together—the match. In far too many cases, mentor-mentee pairs are formed in unreliable ways: at random, by geography, for convenience, or because there is a “hunch” that particular people will make a good pair. Often two strangers are quickly and arbitrarily identified as a ‘mentoring pair’ based on sparse information, minimal participant input and no particular matching strategies. In fact, how mentoring partners are selected and placed together is critical. Program planners should take the time to carefully assess and match program participants. To effectively match participants, it is helpful to have some developmental assessment of both mentors and mentees to use in a system of strategic, rather than idiosyncratic, matching. Planners should also align matching with program goals.

**Training**

Formal mentoring dyads are being placed together, for the most part, without the benefit of knowing one another well. Thus, the initial training becomes essential because it gives mentoring partners an opportunity to get to know one another, to assess the commitment of their partner, and to determine important guidelines and boundaries to guide the relationship. “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” As this adage suggests, how relationships begin is important. This training is critical because it provides guidance and support to both mentoring partners as they are making their first impressions with one another. There are a number of red flags that we typically see in this step. Two in particular stand out—“Our mentors are too busy to attend training,” and “Our mentors already know how to
mentor, there is no need to attend training.” Both of these statements miss the objective of the initial training, which is to prepare participants to step into the formal mentoring relationships on which they are about to embark by orienting mentoring partners to one another and providing structured support for setting up their mentoring agreement and relationship guidelines and boundaries.

Maintenance of Relationships
Another common misperception with formal mentoring programs is that once you have matched participants, they are fully equipped to navigate their relationships and no longer need assistance or intervention from the organization. Contrary to these expectations, mentoring partners need ongoing support and guidance beyond the launch of the program. We have found that while mentoring partners may express clear goals and expectations for their relationships, there are times when the best of intentions do not translate into action. Mentoring relationships can falter through “benign neglect,” simply not making enough time to connect and work together as a mentoring pair. Or there may be more serious problems between the mentor and mentee that do require organizational intervention. Even mentoring partners in relationships that are proceeding smoothly can benefit from a chance to check-in with one another to celebrate their success and determine if there are additional ways for them to push the relationship to the next level. For these reasons, and many others, it is important for formal mentoring programs to have built in opportunities for mentors and mentees to meet and assess their mentoring relationships and determine if they are on course for meeting their objectives. Organizations may be tempted to save money by not allocating funds or scheduling time for this important step in the formal mentoring process, however, such short-term actions may jeopardize the effectiveness of the program.

Formal Conclusion and Celebration
Another step in the formal mentoring process that is often viewed as an unnecessary expense is the formal closing and celebration. Organizations that omit this step in the formal mentoring process miss an important opportunity. The formal closing provides an opportunity for closure. More importantly, the conclusion signals a small win for the organization.

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Small wins are a framework for understanding and managing large complex social problems; it is particularly helpful as we use it to understand the power of formal mentoring. Oftentimes, formal mentoring programs are implemented with the goal of addressing substantive issues, such as retaining diverse talent or succession planning and leadership development of the next generation of leadership. Small wins provide a way to break these overwhelming goals into manageable tasks. Weick (1984: 43) notes: “a small win is a concrete, complete implemented outcome of moderate importance. By itself, one small win may seem unimportant. A series of small wins at small but significant tasks reveals a pattern that may attract others, deter opponents…” Implementing a successful formal mentoring program represents a succession of small wins, from engaging organizational leadership to recruiting participants to bringing mentoring partners together to work on their relationships.

Finally, the formal closing and celebration also provide a way to institutionalize the mentoring program. In early iterations of a formal mentoring initiative, it is often associated with the organizational champion and planners. If the organizational champion leaves or moves on to other initiatives before the mentoring program has been institutionalized, the formal mentoring program may be marginalized and/or dismantled. So every opportunity to institutionalize the mentoring program, building it into the culture of the organization rather than tying it to any one person, is invaluable.

**Evaluation of Relationships and Program**

Common pitfalls that characterize this step of formal mentoring programs are related to time. One of the problems here is not allowing enough time to evaluate the program. As organizations seek to rationalize the costs expended for formal mentoring initiatives, they are often looking for results to support the decision to implement the programs. Yet, just as it takes time to plan and implement formal mentoring programs, it also takes time to see results from them. In addition to allowing sufficient time to evaluate the mentoring program, planners should also ensure that both short-term and long-term metrics are measured. An inordinate focus on short-term metrics without also providing an appropriate time horizon to allow for the measurement of long-term outcomes may result in premature and inaccurate assessment of the program.
CONCLUSION

A recent Black Enterprise article (Jenkins, 2005:81) proclaims, “Securing an effective set of mentors can be challenging for African American professionals, but when successfully executed, the payoff in career advancement is huge.” The research and work presented in this guide confirm Jenkins’ observation.

As leaders are considering the use of formal mentoring initiatives in their organizations, there are a number of steps that they can take to ensure that the mentoring relationships are effectively used:

✓ Assess organizational readiness for mentoring

✓ Link formal mentoring efforts to key organizational outcomes

✓ Strategically and proactively select mentors and mentees

✓ Offer structured training and support for mentoring partners

✓ Celebrate the successful completion of mentoring cycle

✓ Conduct evaluations of mentoring program to capture learning for next roll-out of the program

Interestingly enough, we find that organizations tend to stumble in their efforts to implement formal mentoring programs when they are either trying to save time or money. In fact, effective formal mentoring programs are intensive efforts that require a willingness to invest both financial and human resources as well as a sufficient time horizon. Ironically, cutting too many corners to save either time or money may actually end up costing the organization more. We are not suggesting that mentoring efforts should not be economically feasible or efficient in their use of time. With proactive planning and flexibility, formal mentoring programs can be powerful catalysts for regeneration, organizational change, and effective career development of African-American executives. At its best, formal mentoring programs are critical keys that have the potential to open the doors to the highest echelons of Corporate America.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Dr. Blake-Beard’s research is on challenges and opportunities offered by mentoring relationships, with a focus on how these relationships may be changing as a result of increasing workforce diversity. She is particularly interested in the issues women face as they develop mentoring relationships. She also studies the dynamics of formal mentoring programs in both corporate and educational settings.

Dr. Blake-Beard sits on the advisory board of a number of organizations, including MentorNet and Jobs for the Future. Dr. Blake-Beard has been the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships, most recently from the Ford Foundation. She has given seminars for and consulted with a number of organizations on issues of diversity, implementing formal mentoring programs and team-building, including JP Morgan Partners, Chase Manhattan Bank, Swisshotel, PepsiCo, New Leaders for New Schools, Harvard University Graduate School of Education’s Urban Superintendent’s Program, The PhD Project, The Compact for Faculty Diversity and BBN Technology/Verizon.

AUDREY J. MURRELL instructs courses in Organizational Behavior, Men and Women at Work, Careers in Organizations, Business Communication and Workforce Diversity. Professor Murrell has conducted research on the positive versus negative effects of career mobility and transition with a special emphasis placed on factors that can impact the careers of women in management including mentoring, breaking the "glass ceiling", affirmative action and workplace discrimination. This work has been published widely in management and psychology journals as well as book chapters and special issues. Popular media has also highlighted this work including the Wall Street Journal, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Pittsburgh Business Times, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Black Enterprise, Jet Magazine and Vida Executive (in Brazil).

She is an Associate Professor Business Administration and holds secondary appointments in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, the Women Studies Department, and serves as Director for the Women in the Workforce Program at the University of Pittsburgh, Center for Social and Urban Studies.

Professor Murrell serves as a consultant in the areas of organizational effectiveness, teamwork, diversity, leadership development and workplace discrimination. This work involves public, private and governmental organizations and includes numerous public forum and media appearances. She participated in a congressional briefing sponsored by Senator Arlen Spector (R-Pa) on the issue of affirmative action. Dr. Murrell is the author (along with Crosby and Ely) of the book entitled, Mentoring Dilemmas: Developmental Relationships within Multicultural Organizations. She was appointed to the Allegheny County Minority, Women and Disadvantage Business Enterprise Certification Appeals Board. Dr. Murrell is the recent past-chair of the Gender and Diversity in Organizational Division of the Academy of Management Association.
ENDNOTES


vi This guide was developed through the support of The Executive Leadership Council (ELC). The ELC is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit corporation that was founded in 1986 by 19 African-American corporate executive pioneers. This original set of founders/members wanted to “change the face of corporate America by creating a support network and public leadership forum that prepares the next generation of African-American corporate executives, honors business achievements by African Americans; encourages excellence in business; and influences public policy on behalf of African Americans”.


xiii Kram (1983)


Chao, Walz & Gardner (1992)

Ragins and Cotton (1999)

Chao, Walz & Gardner (1992)


We have both popular press books (Murray, Zachary, Douglass) as well as empirical research (Murrell, Crosby, & Ely; Ensher & Murphy; Chao, Gardener & Walz; Ragin, Cotton & Miller; Blake-Beard, Murrell & Thomas).


The mistakes that we note in this section are not an all-inclusive list. At each step of a formal mentoring program, there are many predictable challenges and missteps that can be avoided. Working with a consultant (internal or external) who has extensive experience implementing formal mentoring initiatives can save the organization. There are also unexpected challenges and barriers that may arise; so a measure of flexibility is also needed as formal mentoring initiatives are being implemented.


