

Ten
Thousand
Coffees

Sponsorship Programs Decoded:

10 Expert Insights for Success

Your essential business guide to unlock the full potential of workplace sponsorship programs that enhance DEI strategy and boost employee retention, engagement, and promotion.



Sponsorship 101 with Jarvis Sam, former Chief DEI Officer of Nike

Research has shown that mentorship and sponsorship are vital pillars for any successful talent strategy—helping to increase employee engagement, retention, and performance. But while corporate mentorship programs are on the rise, sponsorship often flies under the radar.

In an effort to dive deeper into this topic, we hosted a [live Q&A on all things sponsorship](#) with Jarvis Sam, former Chief DEI Officer of Nike.



Watch the Q&A with Jarvis here.

Unsure what the difference between mentorship and sponsorship is? **Learn more here.**

Jarvis possesses a wealth of experience in championing workplace diversity, educating leaders, promoting professional development, and fostering environments that cultivate inclusivity and belonging.

Apart from his time at Nike, Jarvis served as the Head of Diversity & Inclusion at Snap, Inc. (Snapchat), where he spearheaded the development of the company's D&I strategy. Prior to this role, he held the position of Diversity Program Manager at Google. Now, Jarvis is the CEO and Founder of The Rainbow Disruption, a comprehensive DEI firm. He's also an adjunct faculty member at Brown University and has delivered lectures at various prestigious universities and global institutions of higher learning.

In our conversation with Jarvis, we covered everything from key considerations for sponsorship programs, benefits, funding, and more. It was a jam-packed hour with lots of important takeaways, and we've distilled the 10 essential tips for sponsorship success here in this ebook.




"[Sponsorship is] where you encourage and incentivize leaders to move from just engagement to real and apparent advocacy, where you understand the talent you're working with and you're willing to engage in those high stake opportunities to see the potential that these folks have and drive the progress forward."

Jarvis Sam, former Chief DEI Officer of Nike

10 Expert Insights for Success with Sponsorship

1. Have clear objectives

Setting clear objectives for your sponsorship program is fundamental to its success. Consider why you want to launch such a program and the specific outcomes you aim to achieve. It's not enough to simply introduce the program; you need to ensure that your organization's people, processes, and culture align with the program's goals and are poised to enable its success.

 **Some goals and outcomes you might want to achieve include:**

- ☐ Driving internal promotions to ensure career advancement
- ☐ Developing a pipeline of future leaders to improve talent mobility
- ☐ Democratizing access to opportunity for the advancement of diverse talent
- ☐ Boosting employee sentiment for a more engaged, productive business
- ☐ Increasing employee retention while reducing hiring costs and efforts
- ☐ Ensuring employees gain visibility to enhance networking opportunities

94%

of employees say they would stay at their company longer if the company invested in their career.¹

2. Assess your organization's readiness

It's possible that your entire organization may not be fully prepared or willing to embrace a sponsorship program immediately. This shouldn't inhibit you from getting started with more manageable facets of your organization. When programs are initiated on a smaller scale, these teams can then serve as active proponents by demonstrating positive outcomes and advocating for expansion.

When assessing your organization's readiness for sponsorship, consider the following factors:

Executive buy-in

Within the department that you're implementing the program, the most senior executive must not only allocate budget, but also become a genuine advocate. They should express, "I care about this, and where time permits, I'm going to participate."

Willing participants

To be successful, you need a pool of willing participants who are prepared to undergo training and development to become effective sponsors.

Adaptable growth mindset

Understand that implementing a sponsorship program is not an exact science, and there may be instances of trial and error. The willingness to embrace a growth mindset is essential. Are you prepared to view these points of error as opportunities for positive change and refinement?

3. Secure funding

Adequate funding is essential to ensure your sponsorship program's sustainability and effectiveness. Traditional routes for funding often include utilizing budgets from DEI or HR departments, given the clear connection between sponsorship programs and talent management. However, it's unlikely that the whole company will engage in the program initially, so requesting this central funding can be challenging with the expectation of company-wide impact.



"This is not the same age old business case for diversity, equity, and inclusion. This is a business case for retention and promotability within your organization [...] Give them details on the cost of losing talent in our organizations. Give them stats on the cost of rehiring."

Jarvis Sam

Alternatively, Jarvis recommends going to specific executive functions and making the business case clear. Employee turnover and hiring a replacement can cost a pretty penny.² Or, as a third option, you can get the entire executive leadership team to agree on central funding. This way, it's built into a sustained budget system.

4. Integrate with DEI efforts

Avoid the mistake of siloing sponsorship efforts from your DEI efforts. Leverage this as an opportunity to grow the cultural competence of leaders. Many organizations focus intensely on diversity recruitment at the outset, but often struggle to retain employees because they fail to invest in their development. The curriculum surrounding sponsorship can play a vital role in making DEI advocacy authentic from a career management standpoint.

56%

of senior executive women agree that sponsorship is a key success factor in their career.³

60%

Black employees who are sponsored are 60% less likely to quit within a year than their unsponsored peers.⁴



"What is the most important principled approach when building effective diversity programs? The answer is undoubtedly sponsorship. [...] We can't just think of this program as separate and distinct from all of the other equity work that we do. In fact, it has to be directly integrated."

Jarvis Sam

5. Avoid solely labeling it as a diversity program

While sponsorship should absolutely integrate with DEI efforts, ensure that you're not also alienating talent that doesn't fall into those diverse groups. Additionally, launching the program solely as a "diversity sponsorship program" can feel inherently othering. It may suggest that participants from underrepresented backgrounds are only capable of growth within the program's framework. You can share your commitment to ensuring that a certain percentage of participants are from underrepresented backgrounds, but emphasize that the program is rooted in enhancing career management for top-performing talent, irrespective of their backgrounds.

6. Support effective sponsor/sponsee relationships

Creating an effective system for sponsor/sponsee relationships is essential for the success of your program. It's not enough to simply pair individuals with senior leaders. Sponsees need guidance on how to get the most value from the program.

Likewise, sponsors should receive training on how to build these relationships successfully. Navigating conversations, particularly with individuals from culturally different backgrounds, can be a learning process. Equipping leaders with the confidence to be advocates for others is a crucial aspect of making your program effective. When both sponsors and sponsees are well-prepared, satisfaction increases for all parties involved.

10KC's Sponsorship Program

Action-oriented curriculum covers crucial topics like:

- Career mapping
- Gaining visibility
- Expanding networks
- Sustaining sponsorship relationships

[Learn more](#)

7. Make the benefits clear for sponsors, too

This program has to be seen as a leadership development opportunity for the sponsor too, as opposed to only beneficial for the sponsee. The work of a sponsor is both part of their growth as a leader and their contribution to equity and inclusion in the organization.

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“Otherwise, it feels like charity. It feels like you're adding on an element to your role without actually being developed yourself.” (Regarding leadership development for sponsors)

Jarvis Sam

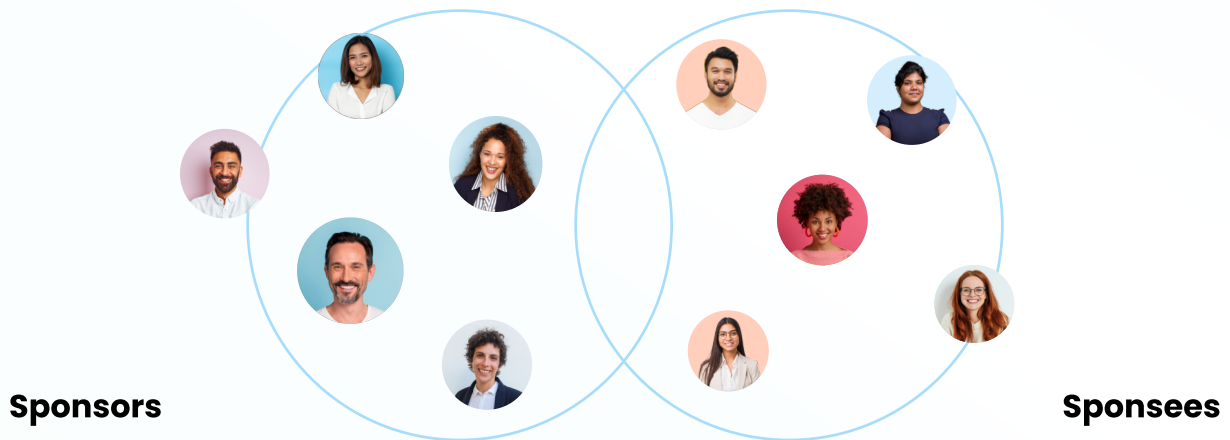
8. Consider extended timelines

Recognize that building meaningful connections through a sponsorship program takes time. A quick 3-month program isn't long enough to reach the point where a sponsee is comfortable discussing their biggest career challenges or to establish the trust necessary for effective discussions.

Consider implementing a more extended timeline, even spanning 9-12 months. This duration allows for a deeper and more meaningful relationship to develop and provides ample time to observe impact. The longer timeline also typically covers a full performance review cycle, including mid-year reviews, enabling you to track progress and course correction over time.

9. Build program cohorts

To foster open dialogue, consider implementing program cohorts. These cohorts can include the entire program group, sponsors, and sponsees as 3 distinct communities. The sense of community allows any first time sponsor/sponsee to share "here's what really working for me," or "these are the gaps I'm continuing to experience." This helps ensure that the program isn't just a one-way relationship. There has to be a dialogue for this to work!



10. Monitor ROI with tech enablement

Measuring the return on investment (ROI) of your sponsorship program is vital to demonstrate value and secure ongoing support. To effectively track the impact of the program, consider utilizing the right technology platform. As an added benefit, a good tool won't just help measure impact; it will streamline the entire sponsorship program's deployment as well.

Say goodbye to guesswork, and gather all the insights you need.

Check out 10KC's Data Dashboard.



"Being able to make this investment requires a clear ability to talk about the ROI. [...] And so tech-enablement through platforms like 10KC make measurement and monitoring pretty seamless in how we do the work."

Jarvis Sam

About 10KC

10KC is the only all-in-one platform for inclusive mentoring, networking, and skills development that drives better employee engagement and retention.

We help employees build the skills and relationships they need to succeed. We do this by providing software that delivers:

REACH & SCALE

Scale your talent initiatives by matching 1000s of sponsees and sponsors in your organization with the click of a button.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Create an equitable culture of opportunity through high-quality matches by delivering a 98% match rate.

EASY TO USE

Our software is easily embedded in your everyday life. We can use employees' personal emails which makes it convenient and accessible.

MEASURABLE RESULTS

We provide data on employee sentiments, skill development and program insights – all in real-time, making the feedback actionable.

FLEXIBLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

We provide off-the-shelf programs for all of your employees. Already have a career mobility program? Great! Use our platform to deploy it.

REWARDS PARTICIPANTS

Our platform recognizes the sponsors that are advancing emerging talent at your organization in real time.

The best part? Your employees will love 10KC. Here's what our past participants say:

98% want to continue their relationship/connection post program:

- **20%** as a sponsor
- **47%** as a mentor
- **31%** as an informal connection

88% said the program helped them make progress towards their development goals

93% want to be notified about future program offerings



Sponsorship Program

📅 16 weeks

Selected

Belonging at work	56%	10% ▲
Strategic management	45%	5% ▲
Communication	42%	12% ▲
Confidence	38%	7% ▲

Accelerate Your Talent Strategy with a Sponsorship Program

10KC's Sponsorship Program is designed to facilitate career advancement for emerging and diverse talent by enhancing their visibility through the support of leadership advocates and meaningful networks.



Why Sponsorship matters

48%

Employees with sponsors are more likely to strongly agree that their workplace gives equal opportunities for career advancement.⁵

65%

Higher career growth satisfaction in sponsored underrepresented talent vs. their unsponsored peers.⁶

94%

Employees would stay longer at their company if it invested in their career development.⁷

The Benefits of 10KC's Sponsorship Program



Sponsees

- ✓ Enhance workplace visibility through meaningful advocacy
- ✓ Expand diverse networks and cultivate impactful connections
- ✓ Unlock promotion and new opportunities



Sponsors

- ✓ Pay the success forward and gain a sense of fulfillment
- ✓ Acquire insights into workplace challenges and opportunities
- ✓ Elevate organizational reputation and authority



Organizations

- ✓ Foster a more inclusive workplace environment
- ✓ Improve employee satisfaction and boost morale
- ✓ Drive talent retention

Client List & Testimonials

Join the hundreds of companies who've trusted 10KC with scaling their talent strategies to drive employee engagement, career development, and retention.



"With 10KC, we now have an ideal platform to enable connection on a number of dimensions and extend our reach across the national firm in ways that would not have been possible for us in the past. We're living a new normal with 10KC that addresses our evolving needs and challenges and enables our focus on building and sustaining an inclusive and caring workplace."

Soula Courlas
Interim Chief People Officer



"We're building a diversity and inclusion roadmap that's focused on impact, that'll be measured and communicated to our employees. Through technology and tools like Ten Thousand Coffees, our hope is that we'll democratize access to networks. We're looking to scale up because everyone needs to be part of the conversation."

David Simmonds
SVP Communications



Sources

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