

## 2 TALENT DEVELOPMENT/MENTORING/SPONSORSHIP

Once you have the talent on board, are you fully realizing potential? DiversityInc Top 50 data show that even at progressive companies, people from underrepresented groups often have higher rates of voluntary attrition. Why do they leave? Usually because they feel their chances of getting to the top are slim to none, and because they don't perceive the corporate culture as welcoming.

DiversityInc Top 50 data show a direct correlation between increased management participation in formal, [cross-cultural mentoring](#) programs and increased diversity in executive levels. Mentoring is the most essential way to make a direct connection with senior executives and to help high-potentials from underrepresented groups realize their full potential. The cross-cultural element enables both the mentors and the mentees to better understand each other. Having cultural-competence training for both mentors and mentees is increasingly important, as are metrics to assess the success of the relationships.

Increasingly, organizations also are emphasizing [sponsorship](#) or political advocacy, particularly for women, Blacks, Latinos and Asians. The prevailing logic has been that unlike mentoring, sponsorship cannot be "arranged" by the company or diversity/HR staff because you can't force someone to lobby for another person. But increasingly, companies like [Deloitte](#) (No. 11) and [Dell](#) (No. 37) are formalizing sponsorship by requiring their senior leaders to take on protégés from these underrepresented groups; giving them toolkits and training to help them succeed in the relationships; and monitoring and measuring the outcome.

### Guided Questions for Staff

#### **Is your mentoring program effectively reaching high-potentials from underrepresented groups as well as white men?**

If the percentage of managers in your organization who participate in formal, cross-cultural mentoring programs is low (or not rising as high as others in your industry), look at several factors—where you are offering mentoring (is it only at headquarters?), how you are communicating the opportunity, whether your senior leaders are involved, and how you are measuring and communicating success (in terms of engagement, retention and promotions).

#### **Have you considered sponsorship?**

If so, is it totally informal? Are you giving sponsors opportunities to be exposed to potential protégés from underrepresented groups? Are you offering cultural-competence training to make them more effective? Educate your executives and protégés on the [difference between mentoring, sponsorship and coaching](#) and help them succeed.

#### **Are you monitoring retention?**

In many industries, such as professional services, talented people tend to leave before they get to the top. If this is more true of people from underrepresented groups at your company, you need to find out why. Your resource groups, engagement surveys and exit interviews are the best places to start.