



White Paper: Accelerating women's promotions through a comprehensive mentoring program

Introduction

In large organisations with over 10,000 employees and global offices, promoting diversity and inclusion remains a significant challenge. Despite various efforts, it was discovered that women were being promoted less frequently and more slowly compared to their male counterparts. This discrepancy highlighted the need for a focused initiative to address and bridge these gaps. Consequently, a comprehensive mentoring program was developed and implemented with the aim of ensuring equal opportunity for women's career growth and providing equitable feedback and development opportunities.

Objective

The primary objective of the mentoring program was to support women identified as high potential who had repeatedly missed promotion opportunities. By offering structured mentoring, the program aimed to:

- Ensure equal opportunity in the promotion process for women.
- Address gaps in feedback and development.
- Raise awareness about bias in performance management.
- Foster a culture of support and growth among women employees.

Program design and implementation

The mentoring program was meticulously designed and rolled out in several stages:

1. **Discovery phase**
 - **Identifying the issue:** Analysis revealed that women were promoting less and slower.
 - **Setting objectives:** Establish clear goals to accelerate promotions and provide comprehensive support to women.
2. **Program structure**
 - **Catalogue creation:** Developed a comprehensive catalogue of mentors and mentees, ensuring a diverse pool of experienced leaders and high-potential women.
 - **Matching process:** Facilitated a series of meetings between potential mentor-mentee pairs to ensure compatibility and mutual goals.
3. **Mentoring activities**



- **Individual meetings:** Regular one-on-one sessions between mentors and mentees to provide personalized guidance and feedback.
 - **Group experiences:** Organized group learning sessions to build a supportive community, share experiences, and learn from each other.
 - **Bias awareness:** Conducted workshops to raise awareness about bias in performance management and develop strategies to counteract it.
 - **Inspirational talks:** Hosted a series of talks by external speakers to inspire and motivate participants.
4. **Program Duration**
- The initial program was planned to take place over 12 months, with the first cohort consisting of 30 high-potential women.

Results

The results of the mentoring program were remarkable:

- **Promotion rates:** More than half of the mentees were promoted within the next promotion cycle, just six months into the program.
- **Feedback:** The feedback from both mentors and mentees was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the program's impact on career development and confidence building, as well as increasing NPS scores for afferent departments.

Expansion and Inclusion

Encouraged by the success of the initial cohort, the mentoring program was expanded to include more underrepresented populations. It became an integral part of the organisation's development paths, accessible to employees across all departments and regions.

Key Components of the Program

1. **A comprehensive catalogue of mentors and mentees**
 - Ensuring a diverse and experienced pool of mentors.
 - Carefully selecting high-potential mentees who had missed promotion opportunities.
2. **Structured matching process**
 - Facilitating meetings between potential pairs to ensure the best fit.
 - Fostering relationships based on mutual goals and compatibility.
3. **Group learning and networking**
 - Creating opportunities for mentees to connect, share experiences, and learn collectively.
 - Building a supportive network to enhance personal and professional growth.



4. **Bias awareness and management**

- Educating participants about the impact of bias on performance evaluations.
- Developing strategies to mitigate bias and promote fair assessment practices.

5. **Inspirational and motivational engagements**

- Inviting external speakers to provide fresh perspectives and inspiration.
- Encouraging mentees to aspire to leadership roles and take proactive steps in their career paths.

Conclusion

The mentoring program designed to accelerate the promotion of women within a large organisation has proven to be a transformative initiative. By addressing gaps in feedback and development, raising awareness about bias, and providing structured support, the program has significantly impacted the career trajectories of its participants. The success of the initial cohort has led to the program's expansion, making it a vital component of the organisation's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As the program continues to grow, it promises to foster a more inclusive and equitable workplace for all employees.

Future directions

To sustain and enhance the impact of the mentoring program, the organisation plans to:

- **Continuous monitoring and evaluation:** Regularly assess the program's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.
- **Scalability:** Expand the program to include more participants from diverse backgrounds.
- **Integration with organisational goals:** Align the mentoring program with broader organisational objectives to ensure long-term sustainability and impact.

By maintaining a strong focus on mentorship and development, the organisation can continue to break down barriers and create a more inclusive environment where all employees have the opportunity to thrive and succeed.