EXPANDING LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY THROUGH FORMAL MENTORING PROGRAMS

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To attract and retain people, it is essential that organizations design and successfully implement programs and processes that develop people and nurture their talents. For those who aspire to a leadership role, the opportunity to engage in mentoring relationships with senior-level leaders is a powerful way to accelerate growth. In the majority of informal mentoring relationships, mentors and protégés share similar racial, gender, and cultural backgrounds. Senior leaders in most large organizations are still primarily white males. As a result, it can be difficult for people from diverse backgrounds who aspire to higher level leadership roles to find senior executives with whom they can develop a mentoring relationship. To address this challenge, some organizations have implemented formal mentoring programs that are specifically designed to facilitate development of people from diverse backgrounds. Unfortunately, previous research studies conducted on the impact of formal mentoring relationships have shown that these programs do not consistently achieve the desired outcomes. The change intervention described in this article suggests that formal mentoring programs can significantly influence the movement of protégés from diverse backgrounds into higher level leadership positions.

Attracting, developing, and retaining talented individuals is one of the most important human resource challenges that organizations must address in order to influence performance and create a positive work culture. Specific development programs have been created to address this challenge. Formal mentoring programs are one type of change intervention that organizations have sponsored for the purpose of attracting and developing high-performing people whose growth could be accelerated through working with experienced leaders who can guide their growth (Moberg, 2008; Shelton, McKenna, & Darling, 2002; Zellers, Howard, & Barcic, 2008).

Organizational leaders have designed and implemented mentoring programs to give employees opportunities to build their talents and develop relationships with key leaders in the organization. Research and practice show that positive mentoring relationships make a difference in both the career development of the protégé and the satisfaction of the protégé and the mentor with their relationship (DeJanasz, Sullivan, & Whiting, 2003; Hobson & Sharp, 2005; Killian, Hukai, & McCarty, 2005; Lankau & Scandura, 2002). Moreover, having multiple mentors over the course of one's career correlates with a higher promotion rate for those who have been able to foster significant mentoring relationships (Catalyst, 2002; Finley, Ivanitskaya, & Kennedy, 2007; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000).

To date, there has been little research focused specifically on the impact of formal mentoring programs on the development of people from diverse backgrounds (Allen, Eby, O'Brien, & Lentz, 2008). In a recent meta-analysis, Underhill (2006) found that with regard to ethnicity of mentors and protégés, demographic data were reported only in summary form. As a result, it was not possible to identify the outcomes of formal mentoring programs in corporate settings on people from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. In addition, the vast majority of studies conducted on mentor-protégé outcomes have focused exclusively on the development and growth of the protégé, with little attention to the factors that have an impact on the development of the mentors (Feldman, 1999; McCauley, 2007). As stated by Zellers et al. (2008), the relationship between the protégé and the mentor is reciprocal. For a mentoring relationship to be effective, both the mentor and protégé need to learn from one another in a relationship that is built on trust and commitment to the other's growth while respecting differences, preferences, and past experiences (Gaines, Gurung, Lin, & Pouli, 2006; Thomas, 2001).

The change intervention described in this article was based on the experience of a large integrated health care delivery system that designed and implemented a formal mentoring program. The mentoring program positively affected the development of the mentors (all of whom were white) and the protégés (all of whom were from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds) who participated in the program. The design of the formal mentoring program focused on (1) the process of pairing mentors and protégés, (2) training and education designed to expand participants' understanding of cultural differences and mentoring skills and behaviors, and (3) regular assessment of the relationship that was developing between each mentor and his or her protégé. Existing research on mentoring was used as a basis for designing this formal mentoring program.

The Significance of Mentoring in Leadership Development

Research into the dynamics of successful mentoring relationships began in earnest with the publication of Daniel Levinson's *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978). The ideas and concepts set forth by Levinson et al. were systematically expanded and clarified in Kram's research (1985) on the impact of mentoring relationships on the development of protégés. Kram conducted in-depth interviews with protégés to identify the specific impact mentors had on the growth of their protégés. The data gathered through interviews with the protégés showed that the mentoring relationships significantly influenced both career development (e.g., promotions, salary increases) and psychosocial outcomes (such as emotional support). Kram's research established a framework that clarified and articulated the outcomes protégés experience through engaging in effective mentoring relationships.

Within organizations, individuals are often encouraged to build relationships with leaders who can offer opportunities for development and give them advice that can shape their career trajectory and success. Without relationships with key leaders, access to strategic assignments can be limited (Lankau & Scandura, 2002; McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004). The access and advocacy that effective mentors provide can make a significant difference in how individuals are perceived and whether or not they are seen as "high potential" candidates capable of taking on higher level leadership roles within the organization (McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988). Because of the importance of having a mentor, organizations have designed formal mentoring programs with the goal of developing people who can be promoted to higher levels of leadership responsibility. The results achieved through formal mentoring

programs have been inconsistent in terms of a positive impact on developing people who are able to take on higher levels of leadership responsibility, particularly for people from diverse backgrounds (Allen et al., 2008; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Underhill, 2006).

Formal Mentoring Programs for People From Diverse Backgrounds

Research conducted on the impact of formal mentoring programs has shown that they do not consistently have a positive influence on the development and promotion of protégés compared to informal mentoring relationships (Allen et al., 2008; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Underhill (2006) found that in a limited number of studies informal mentoring was somewhat more effective than formal mentoring programs. Underhill posits that this may be because in informal mentoring relationships protégés and mentors naturally select each other on the basis of similarity of interests and personal characteristics. Underhill proposed that with careful attention to the pairing of mentors and protégés in formal mentoring programs, the ability of mentors and protégés to foster strong relationships could be enhanced. Because individuals and organizations need to have other mechanisms for expanding the impact of mentoring beyond the process of natural attraction, Forret, Turban, and Dougherty (1996) and Kogler Hill and Gant (2000) propose that the effectiveness of formal mentoring programs could be improved by designing processes in which self-selection between protégé and mentor is part of the design of the program.

In addition, Killian, Hukai, and McCarty (2005) state that by acknowledging the limitations of formal mentoring and using what is known about the essential elements of informal mentoring relationships, formal mentoring programs can be designed and implemented to facilitate a mentoring culture that prepares leaders to coach and groom individuals from diverse backgrounds. To be effective in creating more diversity in leadership roles, senior management needs to be committed and actively engaged in the processes and systems that are designed to reinforce the significance of diversity in the culture of the organization (Moberg, 2008; Payne & Huffman, 2005).

Research and organizational experience have shown that mentoring relationships are particularly important for people from diverse backgrounds who aspire to be promoted into leadership roles (Caver & Livers, 2002). However, mentors tend to choose others who look like them, creating another obstacle for people from diverse backgrounds in terms of finding and building long-term relationships with senior leaders in organizations (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Underhill, 2006). In addition, when protégés and mentors are demographically dissimilar, protégés are less likely to receive mentoring (Thomas, 2001). For those who do receive mentoring, Thomas states that the mentoring does not have a sustained impact on the protégé's growth (Feldman 1999; Jackson, Stone, & Alvarez, 1993). The managerial ranks of most organizations are still segregated by race and gender (Catalyst, 2002). Thus developing a relationship with a mentor can enhance the ability of people from diverse backgrounds to build relationships with a network of leaders who are able to consider them for promotion into significant leadership roles (Killian, Hukai, & McCarty, 2005; Murray, 2001).

Thomas (2001) clearly articulated the importance of differences in mentoring relationships when mentors and protégés do not share the same race and ethnicity. Thomas asserts that mentors must be able to suspend negative stereotypes that would affect their ability to build an open relationship with their protégé as well as sponsor their protégé for high-visibility assignments with their peers in the organization. For a mentoring relationship to be successful, the mentor needs to foster career opportunities while acting as a sponsor/advocate for the protégé in the face of resistance and skepticism from other leaders who may not see the potential of the protégé (McCauley, 2007; Payne & Huffman, 2005).

To build an open and authentic relationship, mentors and protégés from differing racial and cultural backgrounds need to be able to discuss their differences and the resultant impact on their perceptions, behaviors, and decisions. The protégé needs to have the confidence to challenge his or her mentor's biases and preconceived notions when these biases have a negative impact on how the mentor perceives the protégé (McCauley, 2007; Thomas, 2001). Thomas, for example, found that minority protégés advanced further when their white

mentors directly expressed and clearly understood that race was a potential barrier in their relationship. In these relationships, the mentor and protégé openly discussed biases and issues as they emerged and built relationships based on mutual learning and respect. To be effective, Thomas asserts that it is essential that the white mentor fully understand that his or her advice and ideas may not "fit" the protégé, given the differences in their background and experiences. To help address this challenge, offering training to help mentors and protégés build authentic relationships can facilitate development of a strong mentoring relationship. Given Thomas's observations and experiences, for formal mentoring programs to be effective, the relationship between the protégé and mentor needs to be consistently assessed. This would allow obstacles and challenges to be identified and addressed early in the process in order to facilitate development of the relationship between the protégé and the mentor.

Purpose of This Formal Mentoring Program

Prior to designing and implementing the formal mentoring program, the health care organization described in this article made a significant investment in the growth and development of leaders through implementing a competency-based development process using McClelland's process of research-based competency modeling (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). The competency models were used as a basis for providing developmental 360 feedback to leaders at five organizational levels. The 360 feedback process incorporated a rigorous development planning component that included action learning assignments (McCall et al., 1988).

After implementation of the 360 feedback development plans, the organization designed a leadership review and succession planning process to identify and promote high-performing leaders who not only demonstrated the competencies for their current leadership level but also showed the potential to demonstrate the competencies related to effectiveness at the next leadership level. During the leadership review process, the executives identified high-potential employees who would be groomed for future executive and managerial roles as those positions became available. The emphasis

of the succession planning and development process was to develop and promote current employees, rather than recruit leaders from outside the organization when key positions needed to be filled.

It was during the initial leadership review and succession planning process that the organization identified a significant gap in the number of people from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds that were "ready now" for promotion into manager, director, or vice president roles. Specifically, the leadership review data gathered about the employees who were identified as "high potentials" showed that less than 5% were people from diverse backgrounds. This represented a significant challenge for the organization; its mission statement clearly asserts commitment to enhancing diversity among its employees in order to optimally serve its customers and patients.

Research Questions

Given the gaps identified in the succession planning process, the executives in the organization determined that they needed to make a significant investment in designing and implementing processes that would facilitate development of leaders from diverse backgrounds. The executives identified consultants with the necessary expertise to design and implement a program that would address the identified gaps. Two of the consultants were working for the organization in the human resources and development department, and the other was an external consultant with expertise in leadership development and mentoring. The consultants designed and implemented the formal mentoring process and developed the research questions that would be addressed through this change intervention.

Research question 1: Could a formal mentoring program have a positive impact by increasing the number of people from diverse backgrounds who are promoted to a higher level of leadership?

This research question focuses on assessing the career development impact that occurs in mentoring relationships (Kram, 1985). In the organization where this formal mentoring process was implemented, the executives established a goal of having two people from diverse backgrounds promoted at least one leadership level by the end of the 18-month program. The formal

mentoring process was carefully designed and facilitated on the basis of previous research outcomes as to the impact of both informal and formal mentoring relationships (Forret, Turban, & Dougherty, 1996; Kram; Murray, 2001; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Thomas, 2001). The three program design elements that were included in the design are presented in detail in the Method section.

> *Research question 2:* How satisfied would both the protégés and mentors be with the quality of the relationship they established in the formal mentoring process?

This is an important criterion because effectiveness in mentoring relationships is related to the fact that both the mentor and the protégé find personal satisfaction in the relationship (Finley et al., 2007; Kram, 1985; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Mentors and protégés tend to report more satisfaction when there are clear indicators that the protégé is developing and achieving targeted goals, which in turn tends to create positive feelings between the mentor and protégé and about the organization overall (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004). Furthermore, Kram stated that the quality of the relationship and level of psychosocial mentoring (role modeling and informal counseling) made a difference in the level of satisfaction reported by both the mentor and the protégé.

Method

PARTICIPANTS

The organization's formal mentoring process was designed to last 18 months and focused specifically on facilitating development of people from diverse backgrounds who were underrepresented in the leadership pipeline. All of the participants who were selected as protégés aspired to higher level leadership positions. To be selected as a protégé in the formal mentoring program, individuals had to meet three criteria:

1. Have received strong performance review ratings during the previous two years (a 4 or 5 overall rating with 5 being the highest possible rating)
2. Have aspirations that included taking on leadership roles or a higher level of leadership responsibilities than their current position

3. Come from a diverse background underrepresented in the leadership pipeline

In this organization, women held key leadership roles at all levels; therefore, they were not specifically targeted to be included as protégés.

To demonstrate full executive support and sponsorship for the formal mentoring process, all executives in the organization volunteered to be mentors. Prior to beginning the formal mentoring program, all the executive mentors participated in a formal development process to improve their ability to mentor others as well as expand their understanding of the culture of their protégé. The senior executive mentors represented all functional areas: operations, sales and marketing, pharmacy, quality, finance, information technology, and human resources.

The results presented in this article cover two 18-month formal mentoring programs that occurred between May 2002 and December 2006. During the first 18-month program, 18 protégé-mentor pairs engaged in the development process. During the second 18-month formal mentoring program, there were 16 protégé-mentor pairs. Of the 34 protégés, there were 22 women and 12 men; 6 of the protégés were Asian, 16 were African American, 10 were Hispanic, and 2 were Native American. All of the mentors in both 18-month formal mentoring programs were white. Ten were men and 8 were women. In the mentor-protégé pairs, 12 were male-female pairs, and the remaining pairs were the same gender (see Table 1 for a complete description of the gender and race composition of the mentor/protégé pairs).

FORMAL MENTORING PROGRAM DESIGN

Pairing Mentors and Protégés

To create the optimal protégé-mentor pairs, each protégé completed an application describing his or her work and educational background as well as a summary of his or her career aspirations. If the protégés had any specific mentors whom they wanted to work with, on the basis of their career aspirations and goals, they identified those mentors during this initial step in the application process. This part of the design was included to emulate the self-selection that occurs in informal mentoring relationships (Kogler Hill, & Gant, 2000).

Number of mentor-protégé pairs	Race and gender of mentor	Race and gender of protégé
	Table 1. Summary of Mentor-Protégé Pairs by Race and Gender	
7	White male	African American female
5	White female	African American female
4	White male	African American male
0	White female	African American male
6	White male	Hispanic male
1	White female	Hispanic male
2	White male	Hispanic female
1	White female	Hispanic female
1	White male	Asian male
0	White female	Asian male
1	White male	Asian female
4	White female	Asian female
1	White male	Native American female
1	White female	Native American female

Mentors were given completed background applications on those protégés who were identified as a "match" according to these criteria: the targeted career aspirations of the protégé, similarity between the protégé and mentor on their Myers-Briggs preference data, work and educational experiences, and the requests of the protégés.

Training and Education Process

Prior to beginning the program, all mentors and protégés participated in orientation sessions. Separate training workshops were held for protégés and mentors after the orientation sessions so that each group could ask questions and discuss issues openly and candidly. During these training workshops, mentors learned about the behaviors associated with coaching and mentoring and created their own development plans to expand their skills and talents. The mentors also learned about cultural differences in terms of communication, values, and behaviors that were likely to emerge during their interactions. Mentors were given specific information about the culture of their own protégé. Finally, mentors were given Myers-Briggs Comparator Reports so

that they could understand the similarities and differences in preferences between themselves and their protégé.

Protégés participated in training that gave them skills and tools complementary to those received by the mentors. Protégés received training in how to give feedback to their mentor. Protégés were also given suggestions and recommendations about how to make specific requests for opportunities from their mentors (e.g., to be included in meetings and on projects that would help the protégés expand their skills, receive exposure to new people, and have a role in challenging business projects).

In addition to the Myers-Briggs Comparator Report, protégés also received feedback from multiple raters on their leadership competencies. The competency feedback report summarized the feedback from their peers, supervisor, and key *customers*. The report also included recommendations on how to develop specific competencies and use their talents more extensively to expand their leadership effectiveness. Each protégé shared his or her development plan and action learning ideas with

the mentor. During these developmental discussions, the protégés and mentors also identified two to four other coaches who could assist the protégé in gaining experiences and exposure. This assisted all protégés in expanding their network of relationships to include other key leaders in the organization who could help them develop and become more visible in the organization.

Program Initiation and Structured Interviews
Mentors and their protégés participated in a kick-off luncheon to meet one another and review the program steps that would unfold during the 18-month development cycle. During this luncheon, mentors and protégés were given recommendations on how to build their relationship during the first 90 days. Mentors and protégés were asked to meet once per month for a minimum of one-and-a-half hours. During this initial luncheon meeting, protégés and mentors learned that individual interviews would be conducted at the end of the first 90 days with all protégés, as well as every 6 months thereafter with all mentors and all protégés. All participants in the process were informed that their responses to the interview questions would be recorded and themes would be identified. Summary reports would be developed to share themes and best practices with everyone involved in the program. Protégés and mentors also understood that, as part of the process, if challenges and issues were identified by a mentor-protégé pair, those specific issues would be addressed separately and that each member of the pair would be asked to be involved in a problem-solving discussion to identify ways to address the challenges. All mentors and protégés indicated that they were willing to be a part of the interview process and understood that their responses and feedback during the interviews would be recorded and analyzed.

The initial interviews occurred with the protégés at the end of the first 90 days. Protégés were asked questions about their perceptions of the program and their experiences with their mentors to date. Nine specific questions were asked during the first interview with each protégé. All of the interviews were conducted individually. Two consultants facilitated each interview. All responses to each question were recorded and follow-up questions were asked as needed to obtain detailed information about the relationship and the development activities that each protégé was engaging in. Examples of questions asked during the protégé interviews: "Based on your initial meetings, how well do you believe your mentor understands your career aspirations, coaching needs, and personal background?" "What feedback and development ideas have you and your mentor discussed?" "How satisfied are you with the feedback and coaching you have received at this point?" Once all the interviews were completed, the data were analyzed to identify themes as well as any unique challenges that developed in specific mentor-protégé relationships. From the content analysis of the interview responses, a feedback report was written. The data were presented in a group meeting with all the mentors.

When unique challenges were identified by only one protégé-mentor pair, the information was discussed in a separate meeting with only the mentor and protégé who were involved. Throughout the 18-month formal mentoring process, there were only two specific separate meetings that needed to be held to address the unique challenges identified by the protégé and his or her mentor. The consultants facilitated these meetings with the protégé and mentor who identified the issues. The protégé and mentor discussed their perceptions of the challenges and identified how to address the issues. During the discussions, specific actions were identified by both the mentor and the protégé, describing what each would do to address the challenges. Thirty days after the separate meeting, a follow-up meeting occurred with the mentor, protégé, and consultants to assess progress and determine if any additional action needed to be taken. The challenges were resolved (from the feedback from both the mentor and protégé), in both cases, and the regularly scheduled monthly mentoring meetings continued between the mentor and protégé.

As described in the original kick-off luncheon meeting, every 6 months during the 18-month formal mentoring program, structured interviews were conducted with the mentors and protégés. Eight specific questions were used during the individual interviews. All of the responses from each interview were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to identify themes and patterns. After the interviews were analyzed, summary reports were developed, which described key themes as well as actions that were being taken by specific mentors and

protégés that represented best practices. Sharing the summaries of the themes as well as best practices about activities that mentors and protégés were engaged in helped to create a process whereby mentors and protégés could learn from one another and share new ideas they could use in their mentoring discussions. During the final interviews conducted at the end of the 18-month program, more than 90% of the mentors and protégés identified the ability to learn about what other mentors and protégés were doing and incorporating those actions into their development plans as an important part of the formal mentoring program.

Results

Thirty-four protégés participated in two consecutive 18-month formal mentoring programs. At the beginning of the formal mentoring program, the sponsoring executives set a goal of having two protégés promoted by the end of each 18-month development cycle. Of the 34 protégés who participated in the two formal mentoring programs, 14 were promoted, and 12 received role expansions to significant business projects during the 18-month period. This result answers the first research question posed in this change intervention: the formal mentoring program helped to facilitate the career advancement of people from diverse backgrounds into higher-level leadership positions. The design and implementation of this formal mentoring program contributed to the number of people from diverse backgrounds promoted into higher leadership positions and included in strategic projects. This interpretation was supported by the responses given by the mentors during the final structured interviews conducted at the end of the 18-month program. More than 90% of the mentors stated that they actively sought to identify strategic projects and assignments for their protégés to work on as a part of the formal mentoring program. During the interviews, the mentors stated that if they had not been specifically working with their protégés as part of the formal mentoring program, they would not have identified them as a person who was ready to take on an advanced position or assignment. The mentors stated that the reason they would not have considered their protégé for the position before the inception of the formal mentoring program was that they

had no previous exposure to the protégés who were part of the formal mentoring program and, therefore, were unaware of their talents and aspirations. Through the discussions with their protégés during the 18-month program, the mentors were able to identify the opportunities available and give their protégés exposure and sponsorship that allowed them to be viable candidates for these positions.

During the final interviews, all of the mentors and protégés stated that the matching process (particularly use of the Myers-Briggs data) was highly effective and facilitated their ability to develop a strong working relationship. In addition, both the mentors and protégés stated that the structured interviews and feedback given every 6 months helped them to learn about what other protégé-mentor pairs were doing and gave them new ideas to discuss in their regularly scheduled meetings. During the final interviews, the two protégé-mentor pairs who had to resolve specific challenges asserted that the first structured interviews at the beginning of the 18-month program helped them to identify and address the issues so that they could be resolved in a timely manner.

The data showed that the percentage of people of color in higher-level leadership positions at the end of the first 18-month development cycle increased at all three levels of leadership: supervisor, manager, and director roles between 2002 (the baseline year) and December of 2004 (the end of the first 18-month formal mentoring cycle). Although the gains were smaller during the second 18-month formal mentoring program, the numbers of people from diverse backgrounds promoted to a higher level of leadership continued to increase (see Table 2).

The data gathered through the structured interviews were also used to answer the research question regarding how satisfied the mentors and protégés would be with the quality of relationship they were able to develop during the 18-month program (research question 2). In the analysis of the structured interview data, more than 90% of the protégés expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of the 18-month mentoring program as well as the relationship they had developed with their mentors. All of the protégés stated they had a strong relationship with their mentor and would continue to reach out to their mentor for advice and support

Manager level	Baseline 2002 POC	Baseline 2002 White	12/04 End of first cycle, POC	12/04 End of first cycle, White	12/06 End of second cycle, POC	12/06 End of second cycle, White
Table 2. The Percentage of People of Color (POC) at Three Levels of Leadership Before and After the Formal Mentoring Process						
Director	5%	92%	13%	87%	16%	84%
Manager	15%	85%	16%	84%	14%	86%
Supervisor	13%	87%	16%	84%	17%	83%
Total	13%	87%	16%	84%	16%	84%

informally now that the program had ended. This pattern of responses from the protégés demonstrated that they were satisfied with the relationships they had developed with their mentors. Moreover, all of the protégés indicated they had already asked their mentors about continuing to have meetings when and as requested once the formal 18-month period had ended. All protégés stated they believed they could continue to rely on their mentors for support in the future by contacting them with additional questions, asking them for career advice as well as ideas about how to continue to expand their talents and develop new skills and competencies. More than half of the protégés spontaneously described their mentors as someone they considered to be a friend at work and with whom they were comfortable enough to drop in to see or call at any time. This shows a high degree of satisfaction with the psychosocial element of the relationship protégés developed with their mentors (Kram, 1985).

The high level of satisfaction expressed by the protégés also reflects a significant change in perception from the beginning of the formal mentoring program. During the protégé training, the focus was on building relationships and taking risks to be open and candid with their mentors. During the initial training sessions with the protégés, there was some apprehension expressed among the protégés about how to build a relationship with a senior executive in the organization. The willingness of the protégés to build the relationships and continue to follow up after the formal mentoring program had ended was identified as another indicator of the impact of this formal mentoring program.

The mentors reported they too were satisfied with the relationships they had cultivated. All mentors indicated in the final interviews that they would indeed follow up with their protégés as opportunities arose in the future. They also stated that they would welcome calls and messages from their protégés and would get together with them to discuss their questions and offer additional advice and support. Another indicator of their satisfaction with the process and the growth they experienced was reflected in the fact that all (100%) of the mentors in the first 18-month formal mentoring program asked to be included in the next formal mentoring program. In addition, other senior directors who were not involved as mentors during the first 18-month program approached the consultants to the program and directly asked if they could be mentors in the next 18-month formal mentoring program.

WHAT MENTORS LEARNED THROUGH THE FORMAL MENTORING PROGRAM

At the end of the mentoring program, the consultants conducted in-depth interviews with the mentors regarding what they learned through the process and the impact it had on their development as a coach and mentor. All mentors in the program stated that they found their engagement in the process to be personally beneficial to their growth and development as a leader. During these final structured interviews, mentors were asked, "What did you learn about the culture and background of your protégé that expanded your view as a coach/mentor and will help you work with others from diverse backgrounds more effectively in the future?" To this question, all of the mentors referenced the importance of expanding their listening (to both what is stated and what is implied) in order to develop a deeper understanding of their protégés' culture and the impact of

their own cultural background on their actions and choices. More than 90% of the mentors said it was important to ask for and encourage direct, candid feedback from the protégé.

To assist the protégé in developing more business acumen and broadening understanding of the politics in the region, more than 90% of the mentors directly stated that they understood the importance of opening doors for advancement by offering protégés networking opportunities and introducing their protégés to other senior leaders. The mentors stated that they had introduced their protégé to at least two other senior leaders who could also assist the protégé in some aspect of career development. Mentors also encouraged their protégés to take risks and expand their talents. The mentors did this by giving their protégés specific ideas about activities that could be included in protégés' development plans, challenging the protégés to take on more responsibilities and build their confidence in the process. Mentors learned that empathy was important in nurturing a strong relationship with their protégés. Specifically, mentors found the more they shared their own fears and failures from the past with their protégés, the more reassured their protégés were that anxiety was something many people experienced, even their mentors.

WHAT PROTÉGÉS LEARNED THROUGH THE FORMAL MENTORING PROGRAM

All of the protégés reported that they improved their ability to communicate effectively. Protégés also stated they were more confident in their ability to build relationships with senior leaders. Specifically, in their responses to the structured interview questions, the protégés identified that through the process of building relationships with their mentor and other senior leaders, they developed a clear understanding of how to work with executives who had differing communication styles and approaches. Furthermore, more than 90% of the protégés stated in the interviews that they learned how to give constructive feedback in order to assist their mentors in growing and developing their skills when coaching and providing feedback to others. Fully 100% of the protégés reported significant growth in their understanding of the political implications of business decisions and actions. The majority of protégés also reported better comprehension of business strategies,

political issues, and the ability to influence others. All of the protégés stated that their mentor had introduced them to other senior leaders and the protégés had expanded their network of contacts in the organization as a result. Through their expanded network of relationships, the protégés stated they gained more clarity about their career options and deeper understanding of how to network with leaders across functional areas in order to accomplish business results.

Discussion

The formal mentoring program implemented by this organization helped to facilitate an increase in the number of people from diverse backgrounds who held higher leadership roles. Specifically, the percentage of people of color who held director-level leadership roles more than tripled (from 5% in 2002 to 16% in 2006), compared to the baseline year of 2002. The goal established by the executives in this organization of having two people from diverse backgrounds promoted at the end of each 18-month mentoring program was clearly exceeded (with 14 people receiving promotions after the two 18-month programs were completed). No other leadership development initiatives were implemented for people of diverse backgrounds (or other leaders in the organization) during the time the formal mentoring programs were under way.

The organization also had to address significant business changes in the market it served and the competitors in their market during the time frame of the formal mentoring program. Although the organization initiated the formal mentoring program during a time of strong profits and growth, during the first 12 months of the formal mentoring program the organization had to make changes in its cost structure and marketing to address specific business challenges and issues. Despite these business challenges, the leaders of the organization continued their commitment to and investment in development of the protégés through the formal mentoring program. During the structured interviews, all of the mentors stated that they capitalized on the opportunities created by these business challenges to involve some of the protégés in action learning experiences related to changing the cost structure and new sales and marketing initiatives.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND DIFFERENCES

The content analysis of the structured interviews showed that both mentors and protégés learned about themselves and one another through the formal mentoring process. The structured interview data also brought to light specific differences that needed to be addressed by two of the protégé-mentor pairs in order to facilitate the success of the mentoring relationship. Specifically, during the structured interviews conducted at the end of the first 90 days, two of the protégés stated that their mentors were not supplying coaching and support on the basis of the protégé's personal preferences and career goals. In both situations, the protégés stated that the mentors tended to focus on completing the leadership development plans of their protégés rather than listening to what the protégés identified as their career goals and their requests for specific developmental activities to help them learn. From the responses to the detailed questions the consultants asked the protégés, the challenges that emerged appeared to be related to the fact that the protégés were not giving direct feedback to their mentors about the impact of their behavior during their monthly meetings. In these two specific situations, the structured interviews revealed that the protégés were not giving upward feedback because of their cultural tendencies ("In my culture we do not question authority figures since that is considered disrespectful") and the norm of the organization ("We do not give feedback to the boss in our organization because it may cause conflict").

Data from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) also showed clear differences in personal preferences between the mentor and protégé that needed to be addressed. Research has shown that incompatible personal styles can, and often do, lead to poor linkages between the mentor and protégé (Feldman, 1999). The MBTI data gathered as part of the formal mentoring program showed that the personal style difference posing the most significant challenge in the protégé-mentor pairs was when the mentor was a strong T (Thinking preference on the MBTI) and the protégé was a strong F (Feeling preference on the MBTI). In the initial pairing of mentors and protégés, all the mentors were Ts and many of the protégés were Fs on the MBTI. The T-F (Thinking-Feeling) difference caused challenges in the relationship between two specific protégé-mentor pairs, but during the structured interviews conducted at the end of the 18-month program both the mentors and the protégés responded that this difference gave them a clear understanding of how to adjust their approach to communicate effectively with one another.

Specifically, the positive outcome that was described by two mentors and protégés during the final interviews was that the F protégés learned how to influence leaders who had more analytic and systematic communication styles. To translate this understanding into behavioral changes, the protégés said they actively experimented with new approaches to adjusting their behaviors. For example, the protégés used more analytic and systematic communication approaches during discussions with their mentors. The protégés were then able to receive feedback from their mentors on the effectiveness of the changes in their communication approach. The mentors were also able to offer additional ideas regarding what the protégé could do in order to improve a communication approach to more effectively influence others (when they were working with other people who had a T preference on the MBTI).

From the mentors' perspectives, working with F protégés helped the mentors learn how to adjust their approach and the words they used to communicate the impact of their actions and decisions on people. This was an important skill for the mentors to develop and use in a variety of leadership contexts. For example, during organizationwide town hall meetings and leadership forums, the two specific mentors who had this challenge with their F protégés became more effective in sharing information regarding difficult business decisions that were being made to address business challenges. The mentors directly stated that they were more effective in framing what needed to be shared in a manner that reflected both analysis and a concern for the impact of corporate decisions on people's lives and work because of their relationship with their F protégé.

MENTORS EXPANDED THEIR CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Before the formal mentoring process began, the 360 feedback data gathered on the mentors' cultural competence showed that as a group they needed to improve on this specific leadership competency. As a result, a key

element of the training design was to provide mentors with specific training and skill building that would help all of the mentors expand their cultural competence as a part of the process of working with their protégés. According to the final structured interview data, 90% of the mentors reported their ability to understand differences in behaviors and values related to race, culture, and ethnicity had significantly expanded through their relationship with their protégé. The mentors said they felt more confidence in their ability to adjust their own style and approach to facilitate development of people from diverse backgrounds as a result of what they learned through building the relationship with their protégé. All the mentors who participated in the first 18-month formal mentoring process expressed the desire to continue to mentor people from diverse backgrounds in future formal mentoring programs implemented within the organization.

This formal mentoring program continues to be sponsored and supported even after a new regional president began leading the region and new business challenges developed in the markets that this organization serves. In addition, the organization was nominated by *Diversity Inc.* as one of the top 25 companies for minorities to work for, on the basis of the investment it has made in building a culture that values diversity. This formal mentoring program design is now being implemented in other regions of the organization to increase diversity in the number of people who are considered "ready now" in the leadership pipeline.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS CHANGE INTERVENTION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Conducting rigorous evaluation of interventions in organizations has a strong political component (Jex & Britt, 2008). To rigorously evaluate an intervention, the organization has to be willing to look at both positive and negative results. Not all organizations are willing to take the risk to look closely at the outcomes of their interventions, particularly if a large financial and time investment has been made in the change initiative (Jex & Britt). To address this challenge, this formal mentoring program was designed to include a rigorous interview process to obtain feedback from mentors and protégés regarding which elements of the program were effective

and which needed to be changed. The organization that sponsored this formal mentoring program was willing to make changes to the program from the feedback from all the key stakeholder groups, thus enhancing the effectiveness of the intervention and development of the mentors and protégés.

Another limitation of this study was that protégés were not randomly selected to be in the formal mentoring program. Supervisors nominated protégés on two factors: on-the-job record of accomplishment during their prior two years of employment and the potential protégé's willingness to engage in developmental assignments. As a result, in this intervention the researchers did not compare the career advancement of the protégés (all of whom were people of diverse backgrounds) to other people from diverse backgrounds who were not selected to participate in the formal mentoring process (i.e., there was no control group). It is standard practice for organizations making significant investments in the development of employees to select participants who would receive the most value from the development process, rather than randomly selecting program participants (Jex & Britt, 2008). In addition, all the mentors were members of the senior executive team and were not randomly assigned to the role of mentor. Given the significant investment made by the organization to develop both the mentors and the protégés through the formal mentoring process, this was seen as essential to the success of the intervention and the long-term development of people in the organization. Therefore, we offer suggestions for future research in this area.

It is recommended that additional quantitative and qualitative research be conducted on the formal mentoring program design factors that have an impact on the development of people from diverse backgrounds. In the formal mentoring program described in this article, special attention was given to (1) the process for pairing protégés with mentors, (2) the training and education workshops and tools given to protégés and their mentors (including written development plans), and (3) the use of structured interviews to assess progress and identify obstacles throughout the 18-month program. Systematic study of the program design characteristics that influence the effectiveness of formal mentoring programs is important for generalizing the results to other

organizations. Given the lack of consistent success of formal mentoring programs (Allen et al., 2008; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Underhill, 2006), this article presents evidence that with careful attention to program design and implementation, formal mentoring relationships can positively affect the development of both protégés and mentors.

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