HOW TO SUPPORT A CULTURE OF MENTORSHIP IN BUSINESS

Purpose

Achieving true diversity and inclusion in the workplace is not just a matter of numbers; it's about creating an environment where everyone feels valued and respected. This can be achieved through mentorship programs that specifically target underrepresented groups, providing them with the support and guidance they need to succeed.

Mentorship is a powerful tool for fostering diversity and inclusion in the tech industry. Studies have shown that mentorship programs can significantly improve the representation of women and minorities in the tech workforce.

Here are some compelling statistics that underscore the impact of mentorship on diversity:

- Mentorship programs have been shown to raise promotion and retention rates for minorities and women from 15% to 38% when compared to non-mentored employees.

- Women are more likely to have a mentor than men, with statistics showing 54% of women and 48% of men having mentors.

- In companies where at least 30% of the board members are women, 38% of female employees who have exposure to senior mentors believe they can reach the board themselves, whereas only 21% of women in companies with less than 30% female representation target share this belief.

- In a research collaboration with the Women in Tech forum, 89% of respondents found mentoring to be impactful, and 86% would recommend mentoring to another woman in the tech industry.

In this guide, you will learn:

1. How to avoid glue work
2. How to recognise role models
3. How to cultivate them in a business.
4. What not to do in bringing forward role models.

The facts

89%

of those with mentors believe their colleagues value their work, compared with 75% who do not have mentors

89%

of those who have been mentored will also go on to mentor others.

84%

of Fortune 500 companies have mentoring programmes, and 100% of Fortune 50 companies.

63%

of women have never had a formal mentor.

30%

Since the pandemic, there has been a 30% increase in mentoring initiatives at organisations.

25%

of employees who enrolled in a mentoring program had a salary-grade change, compared to only 5% of workers who did not participate.

24%

of mentoring programs increased minority representation at the management level from 9% to 24% (Source).

Glue work

Research shows that women are typically asked to do glue work 48% more often than men, and that managers are more likely to ask women to do glue work than men. Additionally, glue work is often not recognised in promotion discussions, which can make it difficult for women to reach their career goals.

Understanding Glue Work

Glue work consists of the behind-the-scenes tasks that, while necessary, do not typically result in recognition or promotion. These tasks are vital for the organisation's health and often require a high degree of organisational knowledge and soft skills. However, they are rarely celebrated and can be overlooked during performance evaluations.

For example, women are more likely to be assigned tasks that are traditionally seen as "women's work," such as taking notes or getting coffee. They are also increasingly being asked to take on more demanding initiatives, such as diversity and inclusion work, which is sometimes still viewed through a less serious lens. A 2022 report by McKinsey found that 40% of women leaders said their diversity and inclusion work was not being recognised.

Common Examples of Glue Work:

- **Meeting Coordination:** Organising team meetings, setting agendas, and ensuring that all relevant parties are informed and prepared.
- **Documentation:** Taking meeting notes, documenting processes, and ensuring information is accessible to all team members.
- **Onboarding**: Guiding new team members through the onboarding process, helping them integrate into the team, and providing them with the resources they need to succeed.
- **Team Advocacy:** Representing the team in cross-functional meetings, advocating for resources, or managing up to ensure the team's needs are met.
- **Culture Building:** Organising team-building activities, managing team communications, or leading diversity and inclusion initiatives.
- **Process Improvement:** Identifying inefficiencies, proposing solutions, and implementing changes to streamline workflows.
- **Support Tasks:** Assisting with the preparation of presentations, generating reports for management, or handling routine queries that keep the team's work visible and valued.

Scenario:

A team of engineers is meeting to discuss upcoming projects. The manager announces that the team needs to create a new training program for new employees. The program will take several months to develop and deliver, and it is unlikely to generate direct revenue for the company. The manager asks for volunteers to lead the project, but no one speaks up.

Research has shown that women are more likely to volunteer for non-promotional tasks like this training program. They are also more likely to be asked to take on these tasks, and they are more likely to say yes when asked.

For employees, the prevalence of glue work can have a number of negative consequences.

- **Lack of recognition and promotion:** Glue work is often overlooked and undervalued, which can lead to employees feeling unappreciated and undervalued. This can discourage employees from taking on new challenges and contributing to their full potential.
- **Increased workload and burnout**: Glue work can take up a significant amount of time, which can leave employees feeling overworked and stressed. This can lead to burnout and decreased productivity.
- **Hinder career advancement**: Glue work is often done behind the scenes, which means that employees who do this work may have less visibility to their managers and other decision-makers. This can make it more difficult for these employees to be promoted or given other opportunities.
- **Gender bias**: As you mentioned, women are more likely to be assigned glue work. This can lead to gender inequality in the workplace, as women may be less likely to be promoted or given other opportunities.

Explore Tanya Reilly's coined concept of 'glue work' in her Slideshare presentation, 'Being Glue.' In this insightful presentation, Tanya Reilly, Squarespace Principal Software Engineer, discusses how women in technical roles frequently handle supportive tasks but are frequently bypassed for promotions.

Managers can help to mitigate the negative consequences of glue work by:

- **Recognising and valuing glue work:** Managers should make it clear to their employees that glue work is important and valued. They can do this by publicly thanking and rewarding employees for their contributions.
- **Distributing glue work equitably:** Managers should be mindful of who they are assigning glue work to. They should make an effort to distribute it evenly among all team members.
- **Creating opportunities for employees to develop their skills:** Managers should provide opportunities for employees to develop the skills they need to take on more challenging and promotable work.

How to avoid glue work

Here are some actionable ways companies can avoid glue work:

Identify and systemise glue work
A company could create a list of all of the glue work tasks that are currently being done manually. Then, the company could identify ways to automate or systemise these tasks. For example, the company could create a template for onboarding new employees or a process for managing employee feedback.

Automate tasks
A company could use a project management tool to automate tasks such as task assignment, task tracking, and deadline management. The company could also use a chatbot to automate tasks such as answering employee questions and providing support.

Delegate tasks
A company could delegate glue work tasks to other teams or departments that have the capacity to take them on. For example, the company could delegate the task of organising team events to the marketing department or the task of managing employee onboarding to the HR department.

Create a culture of shared responsibility
A company could encourage employees to share responsibility for glue work by rotating tasks among team members. For example, each team member could be responsible for taking notes at meetings for one week out of every month.

Empower employees to say no
A company could empower employees to say no to additional tasks by creating a clear process for prioritising work. For example, the company could require employees to create a weekly work plan and to get approval from their manager before taking on any new tasks.

Recognise and reward employees for their contributions
A company could recognise and reward employees for their contributions to glue work by publicly thanking them, giving them financial rewards, or providing them with opportunities for career development. For example, the company could create a "glue work champion" award that is given to an employee who goes above and beyond in their contributions to glue work.
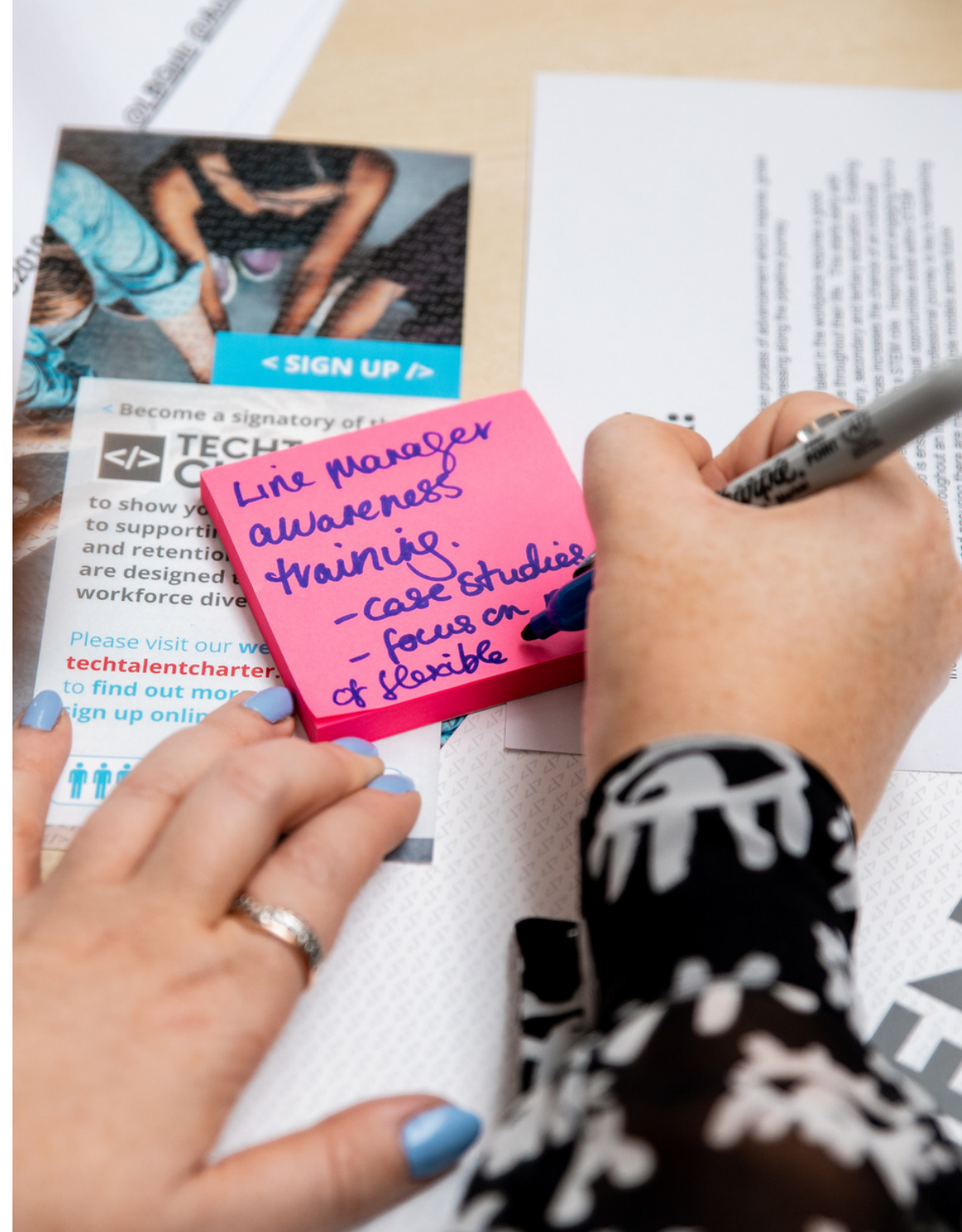
Role Models

The Importance of Role Models

Role models are essential for women's success in business. Research shows that female role models have a magnified impact on women relative to male role models for men. This is because role models can help women to see what is possible, expand their horizons, and develop the confidence to pursue their goals.

It is also important to have a diversity of role models, with different styles, stories, personalities, and perspectives. This is because not all women are the same, and not all women aspire to the same things. By having a variety of role models, women can see themselves reflected in others and find inspiration to pursue their own unique paths.

Research shows that role models have three core benefits for women:

- Role models represent and expand what is possible. When we see women succeeding in different fields and at different levels, it shows us that we can too.
- Role models inspire women to be more ambitious and aim higher. Seeing other women achieve their goals motivates us to set our own ambitious goals and go after them.
- Role models demonstrate the mindsets and behaviours of how to rise. Role models show us what it takes to be successful, from how to set and achieve goals to how to navigate challenges and build relationships.

Recognising Role Models

Role models are people who demonstrate the values and behaviours that you want to see in your organisation. They are people who are successful in their careers and who are willing to share their knowledge and experience with others. There are a number of ways to identify role models in your organisation.

You can look for employees who are:

- Consistently meeting or exceeding expectations
- Demonstrating the organisation's values
- Helping others to succeed
- Willing to share their knowledge and experience

You can also ask your employees who they admire and who they would like to learn from.

Did you know that female students are more likely to pursue a STEM major when they have a female professor?

How to cultivate them in business

Once you have identified role models in your organisation, there are a number of things you can do to cultivate them:

- Provide them with opportunities to share their knowledge and experience. This can be done through formal mentorship programs, informal lunch and learns, or even just by encouraging them to share their advice with their colleagues.
- Give them feedback on their performance. This feedback should be constructive and focused on helping them to grow and develop.
- Provide them with access to resources and training. This can help them to continue to grow and develop in their careers.
- Set clear expectations for them. This includes communicating the values and behaviours that you expect them to demonstrate.
- Be a role model yourself. Leaders play an important role in setting the tone for the organisation. When leaders demonstrate the values and behaviors they want to see in their employees, it sends a powerful message.

A parliamentary report found that 90% of secondary schools and colleges have formed partnerships with Careers Hubs, which are partnerships between educational institutions and businesses. These Hubs have had a significant impact on career education, connecting young people with employer role models. Schools within the network have reported extensive business interactions, with 81% working with at least ten business partners, compared to 48% of schools outside the network.

ROLE MODEL AHEAD

What not to do in bringing forward role models.

In creating a culture that supports and elevates role models, there are certain pitfalls that organisations should be mindful to avoid:

! **Stereotyping**
Avoid reinforcing stereotypes by highlighting role models in ways that confine them to traditional or expected narratives. Instead, celebrate the full spectrum of their talents and contributions.

! **Underutilising Resources:** Role models can be an invaluable resource. Not tapping into their experiences for mentorship, guidance, and insights can result in missed opportunities for organisational growth.

! **Don't assume that all women and non binary people have the same experiences.**
Women in STEM come from a variety of backgrounds and have different perspectives. It is important to avoid making generalisations about women in STEM.

! **Use role models as a way to absolve oneself of responsibility for creating a more equitable and inclusive society.** It is important to remember that role models are not the solution to all of the problems facing marginalised groups. We need to work to create systemic change in order to create a more just and equitable society for everyone.

! **Overburdening**
Often, individuals who are underrepresented in their field may already be stretched thin. Avoid placing the additional burden of being a role model on them without their consent or without providing additional support and resources.

! **Inconsistency**
Role models should be part of an ongoing effort to promote diversity and inclusion, not just a one-off event or tick-box exercise. Consistent efforts and reinforcement of values are required to make a lasting impact.

Stemettes

inspiring the next generation of females into Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

Stemettes is an award-winning social enterprise working across the UK and beyond to inspire and support young women and non-binary individuals into Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths (STEM) careers. Founded on the belief that all girls should have the opportunity to pursue a career in STEM, Stemettes is dedicated to shifting the gender imbalance in these sectors.

Stemettes' work is important for women, girls, and non-binary people in STEM for a number of reasons:

- **Stemettes provides role models for all underrepresented groups in STEM.** Women, girls, and non-binary people are underrepresented in STEM fields, and they often do not see themselves represented in these fields. Stemettes provides role models for all underrepresented groups in STEM, which can help them to see themselves as capable of succeeding in these fields
- **Helps to break down stereotypes about STEM for all underrepresented groups.** STEM fields are often seen as being male-dominated and difficult for women, girls, and non-binary people to succeed in. Stemettes challenges these stereotypes by providing all underrepresented groups in STEM with positive role models and experiences.
- **Inspire women, girls, and non-binary people to pursue careers in STEM.** When women, girls, and non-binary people see successful women, girls, and non-binary people in STEM, they are more likely to believe that they can be successful in these fields too. Stemettes motivates women, girls, and non-binary people to pursue their dreams of careers in STEM.

Learn more about Stemettes and their work

I had so much fun! I learnt all about cool new career paths that I could pursue in the future, and after listening to all the inspiring and influential role models, my horizon of STEM careers expanded exponentially.

STEMettes - Outbox 2020
Connect Attendee

Partnering with a fantastic organisation like Stemettes gives us the opportunity to show young females, as they start out on their career path, that anything is possible and with a bit of help and confidence they can realise their huge potential.

Monster.co.uk, existing partner

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