

Preparing for Leadership

by Capella University



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about strategies to prepare minority business professionals to enter leadership roles. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Mentorships
2. Internships

1. Mentorships

Identifying the barriers faced by minority business professionals allows leaders and companies to create more opportunities to groom them for leadership positions. Mentorship and sponsorship are tools that can be used to develop and sustain a leader. Mentoring is a strategy used in many organizations to attract and retain individuals. In business and other professions, mentors influence the career path of their mentees by building relationships based on trust, respect, open communication, and ongoing dialogue. Mentors are often revered as advisors and honored as a true friend.

Candor, compromise, confidence, complexity, and champion have been described as the competencies necessary to mentor a minority leader (Washington, Erickson, & Ditomassi, 2004). Mentors must permit open conversation and yet be willing to provide honest feedback to mentees. Mentors may need to help their mentee understand circumstances where compromise is necessary. This may also include managing the mentees' feelings of folding to organizational pressure or losing on issues important to their culture or race. Mentors preserve the mentee's confidence and ensure integrity in all their interactions. This is of particular importance in circumstances where the minority leaders may feel like their individuality has not been considered.

Mentors also help mentees navigate issues of workplace diversity that may be heavily charged. Most importantly mentors support mentees and the issues that are of concern to them. They advocate for the mentee and seek out opportunities for the mentees' skills and talents to be recognized and assist them with progression within and external to the organization. These are examples of how the competencies of mentors should be used to develop minority business leaders. One of the great benefits of mentoring relationships is that the only cost is the time that it takes to connect or meet with one another. Sometimes these meetings can occur during lunch or during planned organizational events designed for networking or fellowship. Many times, these meetings are set up on an ongoing basis such as monthly or quarterly and they can occur over the phone or through a web conference. Mentors and mentees can be as creative as possible to ensure that they continue to meet with one another and address the goals and concerns of the mentee.

Mentors also need to be aware of their comfort and skill in mentoring racial and ethnic minorities. One way to ensure cultural competency for mentoring is by completing a cross-cultural mentoring skills inventory. The table below is an example of the Cross-Cultural Skills Mentoring Skills Inventory provided by author Lois J. Zachary. It lists key skills that a mentor needs to work effectively with a mentee from a different cultural background.

Skill	Comfort Level	Example	Needs Work
Reflective listening: Using the skills of attending, clarifying, and confirming.			
Maintaining cultural self-awareness			
Suspending Judgement			
Modifying communication style to accommodate cultural differences			
Sensitivity to varying cultural perceptions of time, space, authority, and protocol.			
<i>Table example from A Mentor's Guide Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships by Lois J. Zachary 2nd Edition (2012) p. 47.</i>			

The mentor rates their comfort level using the skill as very comfortable, moderately comfortable, or uncomfortable. The mentor then provides an example of when they were comfortable or uncomfortable using the skill and marks the skills that they believe they need to work on. Once they have completed the skills inventory, they rate their comfort with cross-cultural mentoring on a scale from 1-5. A rank of 1 represents being most uncomfortable and 5 represents having the most comfort. Once the inventory is complete and a score is assigned the mentor prioritizes the skills that need work and develops a plan to improve (Zachary, 2012).

2. Internships

Mentors of minority business professionals should be aware of the opportunities within and external to the company so that they can share those with their mentees. INROADS is a North American organization that focuses on preparing racial and ethnic minorities for careers in business, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. Through leadership development, year-round coaching, networking, and paid internships with top companies' students are prepared to succeed in the professional world upon college graduation (INROADS, 2019). INROADS participants benefit from the many opportunities afforded to them

over the course of their years in the program and as an alumnus. Companies benefit from having access to a pipeline of employment candidates from diverse backgrounds who have demonstrated skills to excel in the workplace.

INROADS is an important example of an internship program because it is often mentors and other influential persons who introduce internship opportunities to mentees. In the case of INROADS, the companies sponsor paid internships that help students earn income as they learn. This is critical to the success of many ethnic and racial minorities where finances may prohibit the ability to participate in other leadership development programs. Once students have been mentored and attain employment within a business, they will continue to need opportunities to learn and grow personally and professionally.



BIG IDEA

The need for mentorship and sponsorship continues.

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Support

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