



Roundtable Mentor,  
**Jennifer Campbell**  
shared her perspective  
with our team on how  
to tap into sponsors and  
mentors to move your  
career forward.

## Mentoring **MATTERS**

**Q** *I've heard that one of the keys to a successful career is to have a sponsor (in addition to having mentors). What's the difference between a 'sponsor' and a 'mentor' and how can I go about finding a sponsor?*

Both mentorship and sponsorship have a role to play in helping us move our careers forward.

With mentorship, I think about someone you can tap into that has been around the block a few times; is willing to share experience and industry knowledge; is easy to talk to about career opportunities and obstacles; and who will hold a mirror up for you.

Many organizations have formal internal mentoring programs and there are also several industry organizations that will help you find a mentor externally. From an informal perspective, anyone can be a mentor. Some of my best mentors were from outside of my organization and were not formal. Early in my career, I tapped into the President of the advertising agency for the client organization where I worked. She was probably my best mentor. She had great experience that she was willing to share with me; was someone who I could bounce ideas and challenges off of; and she was honest and had no holds barred. I know for a fact that I was not her only mentee.

**Sponsorship is different.** A sponsor is a champion that is more senior to you in your organization and who helps you with your career trajectory, fighting for you to move up the ladder within your organization. This may be your boss, and it certainly needs to be someone at a senior level who has clout and respect. I've not seen much in the way of formal sponsorship through my career, though, in my experience, it is definitely important that you have senior people in your corner. And, with today's rate of change, especially at senior levels, you don't necessarily want to put all your eggs in one basket.

So, rather than focusing on a singular sponsor, I always ask myself "Who are my 'friends at the grown up table'?" In other words, when the time comes for senior leaders to gather and discuss talent, I want to know that I have people around that table who know what I have accomplished, what my team has accomplished, the potential impact of my current priorities and what I'm capable of doing in the future.

*Rather than focusing on a singular sponsor... focus on identifying and building a network of internal, senior champions/friends that will be sitting at the 'grown-up table' when those important conversations are being held.*

Sharing this information with the broader executive team can be a big challenge and also a big opportunity.

So, how do you go about finding and developing those champions that will be there at the 'grown up table' when you need them to be?

Here are some thoughts to consider:

- Be clear on your career objectives and goals and be sure those are stated and known to your boss.
- Know what you want to be known for and how you want to be perceived. Consider what you have to offer that may be of interest to others, and remember that sometimes you need to give to get.
- Consider which people at the 'grown up table' could be your champions. Remember this is not only about title, but also about respect and influence. The former doesn't guarantee the latter.
- Engage your boss to help you gain exposure to your potential champions so that they can see what you're doing and the value you bring.
- Consider what you yourself can do to get visibility across the organization with other senior leaders. Stick your head up from your day-to-day work and look for opportunities to interact with other groups – participate in cross-functional project teams, help out with the holiday potluck or a fundraising event.
- Speak up more often and get comfortable bragging.
- Be the person that others always know is willing to help and can be counted on.

Advancing your career takes work and, in my experience, the more people you have in your corner the better. Leverage mentors where you can to tap into experience, knowledge and perspective. Identify and build a network of internal, senior champions/friends that will be sitting at the 'grown-up table' when those important conversations are being held. And, remember the role that you can play as a mentor, and even a champion, for others.



**Jennifer Campbell** spent the past decade at Canada Post building and leading remarkable teams of experts who brought hands-on marketing knowledge to a wealth of customers, agencies and industry partners across the country. Jennifer and her team also developed business-building marketing initiatives to position Canada Post as a key eCommerce partner, and to show the art of “what is possible” when physical marketing is combined with digital, by creating and introducing Smartmail Marketing™ to the industry. She passionately shared research and case studies on stages at industry events in Canada and the US, and whenever possible, with the next generation of marketers.

Jennifer has experienced the industry from all sides. In addition to American Express and Canada Post, she held senior marketing roles at TD Bank. She has worked on the agency side at Blitz (Cossette) and in database marketing consulting, at InfoWorks. Currently, she is putting her skills to work to support the nonprofit sector, by leading the marketing strategy and planning at United Way Toronto & York Region.



**Glain Roberts-McCabe** is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.