

## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***The Sponsor Effect: How to be a Better Leader by Investing in Others***

Author: **Sylvia Ann Hewlett**

Publisher: Harvard Business Review Press

List Price: \$30.00 USD Hardcover

Format: Hardcover, 208 pages – also available as eBook

Publication Date: June 2019 ISBN: 978-1-63369-565-8

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Review Date: March 2020

### Introduction

How will you ensure your legacy? Will the initiatives and vision of your company continue to grow and thrive in perpetuity? *The Sponsor Effect: How to be a Better Leader by Investing in Others*, is an easy-to-read book providing both instruction and guidance on how to create an effective sponsorship. Sylvia Ann Hewlett, economist and CEO of Hewlett Consulting Partners, uses a combination of statistical data from the Center for Talent Innovation, and anecdotal stories from interviews with both protégés and sponsors to support the practical application of sponsorship in any industry and at every level of business. The author makes the case for the proper implementation of sponsor- protégé relationships based on the value it adds to the sponsor, protégé, and organization. Emphasis is placed on the benefits of sponsorship including increased promotion opportunities, with 53% of senior executives engaged in sponsorship reporting promotions, inclusion and diversity increasing profitability for businesses by increasing their market reach and ensuring the legacy by grooming the protégé to continue the growth of the organization.

Examples of sponsorship relationships range from success stories like Steve Jobs and Time Cook to less successful examples like the late John McCain and Sarah Palin. The author identifies attributes and actions which can determine the success or failure of a sponsorship while providing guidance on how to handle the challenges which can arise.

The author identifies the following seven steps to effective sponsorship:

1. Identify potential protégés.
2. Include diverse perspectives.

3. Inspire for performance and loyalty.
4. Instruct to fill skill gaps.
5. Inspect your prospects.
6. Instigate a deal.
7. Invest in three ways.

## Overview of Book's Structure

*The Sponsor Effect: How to be a better leader by investing in others* is arranged in three sections: What Every Leader Needs to Know, The Playbook for Success, and Dangers and Legacies. The sections are followed by five-pages of chapter notes, a nine-page alphabetical index, an acknowledgement and about the author page.

Material is arranged as follows:

PART ONE: What Every Leader Needs to Know – Three chapters:  
Sponsorship and the Power of Protégés ~ Presenting the Research – and  
Common Mistakes ~ Payoffs for Sponsor

PART TWO: The Playbook for Success – Eight chapters: Identify Potential  
Protégés ~ Include Diverse Perspectives ~ Inspire for Performance and  
Loyalty ~ Instruct to Fill the Gaps ~ Inspect Your Prospects ~ Instigate a Deal  
~ Invest Three Ways ~ Integrate and Bring it all Together.

PART THREE: Dangers and Legacies – Two chapters: #MeToo and the Third  
Rail ~ Legacy.

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## Highlights

Many business professionals have engaged at one point or another in a mentor-mentee relationship, while some may even believe they have engaged in a sponsor-protégé relationship. A true sponsorship is deeply reciprocal, benefits both the protégé and the sponsor, is based on trust, and has longevity. Professionals at every level need to understand the importance and benefits of sponsorship while also knowing how to properly implement a relationship.

Sponsorship can be used to create or promote diversity and inclusion in organizations, if properly executed. Ed Gilligan, the late, former president of American Express, challenged his executives to pick three rising employees to sponsor making sure two of those protégés did not look like them, known now as “Gilligan’s one-plus-two rule”. Based on data from CTI a mere 23% of sponsors seek protégés with attributes differing

from them with 53% of whites, 49% of blacks and 40% of Hispanics sponsoring someone of their same ethnicity. Applying this strategy, Kevin Lord was able to implement a successful sponsorship which transformed the culture of Fox News creating more inclusion for both women and people of color. Lord used sponsorship as a way to change the corporate environment and transform the culture at Fox News at a critical time in their history. Understanding his skills and his gaps, he was strategic in developing a relationship which helped further his goals and initiatives and allowed him to gain valuable feedback he may not have been able to receive directly. A beneficial relationship, such as this, grows the individuals and the organizations exponentially because of the increased sphere of influence created by sponsorship.

The author also addresses the obstacles of sponsorship in relation to the current climate and the #metoo movement. Chapter 12 takes on the topic of sexual misconduct head-on and describes it as the “third rail” for sponsor-protégé relationships. In addition to providing statistics on reported harassment, the author also discusses the dangers and resulting damage of consensual sexual relationships on the business environment. Rather than dissuading the creation of cross-gender sponsorship, the author details the appropriate manner to create and grow those relationships, with transparency being essential.

### **Highlights: What I liked!**

I like the anecdotal approach used by the author making the information relevant and relatable with real-life stories of both successes and failures. Real-world examples detailing the development of the relationship all the way through the growth and current state of the relationship is both informative and interesting. One can see how they can emulate successful sponsorship in their environment and organization as well as pitfalls to avoid and knowing when to terminate the relationship.

I also like how the layout of the book correlates with the seven steps to effective sponsorship and highlights examples specific to the step discussed. Part Two of the book is the “meat and potatoes” of the process and features a section called Breaking It Down at the end of chapters four through ten. This section includes bullet points to emphasize the topics discussed in the chapter along with additional tips and advice based on the material presented. I find this provides emphasis on the actionable tasks presented in the chapter.

### **Who might benefit from the Book?**

There is a misconception of sponsor-protégé relationships only applying to executive level professionals. The author makes the case for sponsorship in all levels of business and in all industries. This book is beneficial to professionals from the C-suite through all levels of the business – entrepreneurs, project managers, team leaders, etc. The competitive advantage provided by benefits derived through sponsorship can help everyone who desires to learn and grow, evolve in their career, and create a legacy.

## Conclusion

Whether you are in the C-suite and wondering if your vision will continue once you move on either to another venture or retire or are at the start of your career and looking to grow professionally, there is benefit in establishing a sponsor-protégé relationship. Sponsorship is not for everyone, but the combination of inspiration, instruction and perspiration can create a lasting bond for the right combination of people. *The Sponsor Effect: How to be a Better Leader by Investing in Others* provides a guide to making sponsorship both sustainable and successful. Not only is this informative but it is also inspirational and can serve as a quick reference as you engage in sponsorship. Following the practical steps and watching out for the pitfalls experienced by other professionals will help business professionals create lasting relationships which increase their sphere of influence, create greater promotion opportunities, and benefit their organization both financially and culturally. When you are ready to take your leadership to the next level, let *The Sponsor Effect: How to be a Better Leader by Investing in Others*, be your guide.

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For more about this book, go to: <https://store.hbr.org/product/the-sponsor-effect-how-to-be-a-better-leader-by-investing-in-others/10194> or <https://www.sylviaannhewlett.com> or <https://www.sylviaannhewlett.com/the-sponsor-effect.html>

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## About the Reviewer



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**Renee Lucero** is a PMI certified Project Management Professional (PMP®), Professional Scrum Master (PSM), and a Six Sigma Green Belt. She is a member of the PMI Dallas Chapter. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies from the College of William and Mary and is completing her MBA from the University of Maryland, Global College in June 2020. She is a life-long student slated to begin the Doctor of Business Administration program at the University of Dallas in Fall 2020.

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