

# Conversation Kickstarters

*For candid conversations about Black employee mentorship engagement.*

Although 87% of companies report having a formal sponsorship program, only 33% of Black employees report having at least one sponsor (McKinsey, 2021). This lack of engagement indicates it is **time for a conversation about what works - and what doesn't** - with mentorships programs for Black employees.

The guide below outlines 3 simple questions that can kickstart your understanding of how your Black employees do (and do not) engage in mentorship programs of all types. Remember - not every employee will experience mentorship in the same way. A full understanding of employee experience requires a diverse and representative sample of voices.



## Organization-Based Mentorship

This is the most "traditional" mentorship relationship. It largely exists within the scope of the organization and connections exist due to having the same **employer**.

**ASK YOUR EMPLOYEES:** *What is and isn't working for you?*

It's not enough to just have a mentorship program - Black employees should feel welcome to join and there should be a benefit to participation. Evaluating programs that struggle to gain traction can help **uncover barriers** that unintentionally exclude Black employees. It can also help **highlight gaps** in the ability of the mentorship programs to meet needs and desires of Black participants.

## Industry-Based Mentorship

This type of mentorship exists beyond the bounds of the organization and connections exist due to having the same **occupation, education, or experience**.

**ASK YOUR EXPERTS:** *How can we help you get connected?*

Especially in niche fields where Black representation is lower, employees may need to look outside of the organization to identify a representative mentor. **Sponsoring professional memberships** can help open up access to industry-specific mentors.



## Relationship-Based Mentorship

Mentorship can exist in many forms - and may stem from personal relationships, family, hobbies, religion, etc. Relationship-based mentors stem from having the same **values and lifestyle**.

**ASK YOURSELF:** *Am I opening myself up to diverse people and experiences?*

We often subconsciously surround ourselves with those who are similar to us. Take some time to reflect on who you spend your time with outside of work - **does it reflect diversity** of background, experience, and perspective? Mentorship comes in many forms - rather than seeking someone that mirrors what you know, **seek someone who understands what you don't!**