

BRIEFING

INSIGHT FOR CHARTER COMMITMENT ONE AND FIVE: ENGAGE IN TWO-WAY MENTORING MODELS – WHAT IS REVERSE MENTORING?

What is reverse mentoring? First popularised by former GE Chairman Jack Welsh in the late nineties, reverse mentoring has often matched more senior and older colleagues with younger, junior colleagues. Recently, reverse mentoring has evolved to comprise senior leaders being mentored by a more junior colleague who, from a diversity and inclusion perspective, is different from them in some way, and therefore experiences their career differently.

Background

Whereas traditional mentoring is centred on the development of junior mentees, in reverse mentoring both the mentor and mentee are provided with an opportunity to learn from each other. The focus of reverse mentoring is to increase the mentee's inclusion competencies; however, mentors are simultaneously provided with the opportunity to learn from their mentee's experience, knowledge and skills so it can be considered as a career development opportunity for both parties. What are the benefits of reverse mentoring? Reverse mentoring is an effective way to build genuine awareness of the barriers faced by Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse employees.

Organisations and leaders can demonstrate their commitment to race equality by taking time to get to know employees they may otherwise have no interactions with. By building an understanding of their mentee's point of view, reverse mentoring can challenge established hierarchies and foster a culture where all experiences, skills and ideas are leveraged. Successful implementation of reverse mentoring improves Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse employee engagement, overall experience and retention.

Benefits for senior mentees:

- Mentees become change agents who harness candid and honest feedback shared by their mentor to influence wider leadership and challenge unhelpful practices.
- Reverse mentoring provides a tangible opportunity for leadership to walk the talk when it comes to inclusion, directing culture change through leading by example.



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- In 2018, 66% of Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse employees felt their colleagues were not comfortable talking about race. This has decreased to 64% in 2021 and 54% of White employees said this. This is an improvement from 2018, however, conversations must continue to see continual progress. Being reverse mentored improves one's confidence to understand and discuss the issues through building awareness about experiences and barriers faced by Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse colleagues.
- Mentees develop their ability to lead diverse teams. Reverse mentoring is a way to build Business in the Community's (BITC's) recommended inclusive leadership competencies of adaptability, developing diverse talent and building inclusive relationships.

Benefits for junior mentors:

- By taking part in reverse mentoring, mentors gain visibility as role models to other Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse employees.
- Mentors broaden their network by building mutually beneficial relationships with senior leaders.
- Reverse mentoring is a unique knowledge-sharing opportunity, providing mentors with a unique insight into leadership roles.

Next Steps:

1. BITC recommends that CEOs and Non-Executive Directors lead the way with reverse mentoring. Taking part in reverse mentoring enables non-executive directors to bring a different perspective and feedback very candidly to the wider board some of the issues and challenges shared by employees. Diversity task forces or steering committees can also be paired with mentors so that they can use their conversations to help steer change more effectively.
2. Employers should work in partnership with employee resource groups (ERGs)/networks to deliver a reverse mentoring programme. Mentors can be sourced through the ERG/network and through talent mapping high-potential Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse employees. This will foster engagement as well as providing development/progression opportunities for Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse talent. Alternatively, seek line manager nominations and select mentors through a competitive application process.
3. Connect your Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse colleagues to BITC's Cross Organisational Mentoring Circles programme. The programme connects Black, Asian, and ethnic minority mentees with mentors from other organisations, providing personal development opportunities, expanding their professional networks and encouraging shared learning with peers and leaders from other participating organisations. 93% of mentees in the latest cohort agreed that their mentoring circle helped with building confidence to progress or stretch at work. To find out more, contact race@bitc.org.uk

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