work/22
A virtual symposium to navigate the workplace revolution
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Recapping Work/22

Thank you for attending Work/22, our two-day virtual symposium to help leaders anticipate the challenges they will face in the year ahead — what we’re calling Post-Pandemic Year One. Our guests, who joined us for presentations and fireside chats, showcased new research and insights into what the workplace will look like after the past two tumultuous years. We loved their sense of optimism and possibility about what the future can be if we manage it well.

On our first day, Megan Reitz discussed how to manage in an era of employee activism; Jacqui Canney dived into the intersection of people, technology, and inclusion; Stephanie Creary shared new research into how companies are combining strategies for targeted DEI outcomes; and Rob Cross explained how to identify collaborative dysfunction — and then improve it.

On our second day, Doug Palladini talked about all the ways that the future of work is playing out at his company, Vans; Zeynep Ton explored why we have so many bad jobs when good jobs are better for companies, and what an alternate system requires; Tsedal Neeley detailed the leadership challenges for working with employees who are not just remote but isolated — and looking for connection; and Curtis Odom closed out our program by presenting ways to develop coaching, mentoring, and sponsorship in the new workplace.

We convened this roster of great thinkers to help you get started. There’s no question that work will be very different five to 10 years from now. The decisions and actions that we all take in 2022 can lead to a future that works better for everyone.

All of the issues we covered during Work/22 are evolving. MIT Sloan Management Review will continue to bring you the latest thinking and advice on leading, inspiring, and growing a workforce that is equipped to tackle tomorrow’s challenges. We’re committed to being your best source of powerful ideas that can make a real difference to your organization.
Hybrid Work Is the Future

The Work/22 event recognized that the past 18 months of global disruption have created pressing new challenges for leaders.

A recent study conducted by Cisco examined how people’s habits and technology interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic have permanently reshaped work. It found that workers expect greater flexibility: Sixty-four percent agreed that the ability to work remotely instead of coming into an office would directly affect whether they would stay at or leave a job. As many companies transition to a hybrid work model, we have an unprecedented opportunity to create workplaces that support greater inclusivity and ensure that remote workers won’t be left behind.

We know that humans are wired to prefer in-person interactions, and in-office employees could potentially get more attention — and more promotions — than their remote counterparts. Leaders must focus on what it will take to create a company culture that can unlock human potential, whether employees work in the office or at home. We believe that leaders must ensure that they enable hybrid work arrangements that are flexible, inclusive, and supportive, and that the tools provided are secure and well managed.

Organizations have a unique opportunity to rethink their approaches to work and culture. Getting it right means more engaged and energized employees, better productivity, higher employee retention, and, ultimately, better company performance. I hope the insights shared by the Work/22 speakers here will help you retain and attract talent and engage employees in cocreating a new future of work that works for everyone.

Aruna Ravichandran
Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer of Cisco Webex/Collaboration
@aruna13
Leading in an Era of Employee Activism

Megan Reitz, Hult International Business School

Rising generations of employees are demanding that leaders engage on topics such as climate change and racial equity, and leaders must understand how to respond. How can organizations develop a plan for encouraging employee voice and acting on issues raised by workers?

SUMMARY

Megan Reitz and her research partner, John Higgins, have spent seven years exploring the experience of speaking truth to power in organizations — what gets said and what doesn’t, and who gets heard and who doesn’t. She has observed activists who are seeking to influence their organizations’ policies on wider social and environmental issues and found that the process is upsetting the power dynamics: When it comes to activism, leaders are not in control, and they often don’t know the answer.

Her first point: The word activism brings specific images and judgments to mind. In some countries and on some issues, it’s cool to be labeled an activist; in other areas and topics, it’s life-threatening. Activism is in the eye of the beholder; as author Ruchika Tulshyan has said, “What looks like rebellion to you might be another’s human fundamental right.” All of this matters because leaders will take actions driven in part by their assumptions about this loaded term.

Her second point: As leaders become more senior level, they become more optimistic. Younger employees might say that those leaders are more deluded: They overestimate how well they listen to employees, and they’re often taken by surprise because of the bubble of optimism they live in.

In the past, leaders would say, “We’re neutral. We’re apolitical.” Reitz says that doesn’t cut it anymore: “What we’re discovering is that that excuse is getting pretty difficult to say now. You can’t sit on the activism fence. Inaction is as political as action.” Leaders don’t have to be engaged on every issue, but they do have to show curiosity about understanding more. They need to invest some humanity and some relationship capital in that process. How leaders make their choices matters.

Reitz uses a taxonomy to describe how leaders react to activist overtures, ranging from non-engagement to full engagement. Leaders fall into one of three stages around activist demands, she said: defensive engagement, dialogic engagement (where they concede that they don’t know the answers but start listening and sharing decision-making), and activist
engagement. Leaders in the last stage, such as those at Ben & Jerry’s and Patagonia, vigorously encourage activism by their employees.

Reitz noted that if a leader isn’t hearing any activist voices, that doesn’t mean there aren’t any. It could mean that there’s a perception that the organization doesn’t have the ability to tolerate difference — something that will hurt the company in the long run.

**TAKEAWAYS**

- Leaders often live in an optimism bubble, overestimating their listening skills and underestimating others’ silence.
- Leaders’ responses to activism have consequences.
- The first step in engaging with employee activists is examining what assumptions the term activist conjures up.

**ABOUT THE SPEAKER**

Megan Reitz is a professor of leadership and dialogue at Hult International Business School. Her research explores the intersection of leadership, change, dialogue, and mindfulness. Her latest book is *Speak Up* (FT Press, 2019), and her article “Leading in an Age of Employee Activism,” coauthored with John Higgins, will appear in an upcoming issue of *MIT Sloan Management Review*. 
A Chief People Officer’s View of the Future of Work

Jacqui Canney, ServiceNow

The intersection of people and technology has created immense opportunities for businesses and new challenges for managers to lead an increasingly diverse and distributed workforce. Inclusion is the key skill for the future of work, and managers must be equipped to lead in an inclusive way.

SUMMARY

What does it take to create a sense of culture, inclusion, and belonging in the hybrid work environment?

Jacqui Canney noted that although she has been at ServiceNow for just a few months, already she sees that — because of “the Great Resignation” or “the Great Shuffle” — the war for talent has never been more intense. ServiceNow has hired 5,000 people in the past year and is looking to double the size of the company; that means that “the people who work here are in the driver’s seat,” Canney said.

Building an inclusive culture, where employees feel a deep sense of belonging, is a top priority. “This is very much table stakes,” she said. The company wants to make people feel safe and welcome, and also cherished.

“We are in a once-in-a-generation moment,” Canney said. This means putting employees at the center of the development of the technology they use to do their jobs. Too often, she says, companies think about technology’s capabilities first rather than how people will interact with it. Instead, the key question is, “How do we build experiences for our people that are consumer grade?” Part of her answer involves working closely with ServiceNow’s CIO “so [IT’s] tech road map and our people strategy are aligned.”

Technology, she continued, can be an enabler or get in the way. Companies have to develop in-house applications “just the way Apple ships a phone.” That means conducting user experience testing to make sure the employee experience is solid. This, she said, is the future of HR work.

Canney said that she won’t start meetings unless everyone is able to participate. And if there are technology problems, she waits. “We’ve lost the first 30 minutes of a meeting,” she said, but “my job has been making sure people feel like they get to interject, have a voice.” It’s a challenge that takes practice, she acknowledged.
Canney also talked about how to handle working in crisis mode. She described working long hours in her basement for her previous employer at the start of the pandemic and realizing that it was unsustainable — for both herself and her staff. Her solution was to move employees into three categories: people who were working on the crisis, people who were working on the stable parts of the business that were ongoing, and people who were tasked to look toward the future and determine how to grow the business.

**TAKEAWAYS**

- Workplaces need to be safe, empathetic, and compassionate. Authentic conversations are necessary, even when conducted via videoconferencing.

- The technology used by employees for everyday work must be of consumer-level quality.

- Crises can be managed at the people level by tasking some employees to work on the crisis and others to work on the basic business.

**ABOUT THE SPEAKER**

Jacqui Canney is chief people officer for ServiceNow. She leads talent strategies for the company’s rapidly growing global workforce of more than 14,000 employees. Prior to joining ServiceNow, Canney served as the global chief people officer for WPP, a creative company with over 100,000 full-time employees and nearly five times that many contractors and freelancers. Before that, she held a similar role at Walmart.
DEI Practices That Have an Impact

Stephanie Creary, Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

Many organizations have recently renewed and strengthened their commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, but management often lacks clarity on what specific practices will make an impact. Creary coauthored a large-scale research study that shows what practices really underlie positive DEI outcomes, and she shared them in her session.

SUMMARY

Stephanie Creary’s research is driven by an attempt to understand efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) through their potential for good. Positive outcomes from DEI, she says, include employees feeling that they are known and understood for who they are, and that they’re developing allied relationships in the workplace. “We have decades of research saying how fraught diversity, equity, and inclusion can be,” she noted. “How do we change that?”

A May 2021 research report she coauthored at Wharton, “Improving Workplace Culture Through Evidence-Based Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Practices,” describes evidence-based insights that identify which specific actions lead to which kinds of changes.

“When we talk about evidence-based diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, we’re using similar language that they use in the field of medicine,” Creary said. “If you have medicine sitting in a medicine cabinet, you don’t just take it randomly for any problem that you have. You pick medicine that’s designed to address the specific needs that you have.” In the same way, she set out to map DEI practices onto outcomes.

Creary said that she has heard “so many dehumanizing things” about middle management and DEI — specifically, that managers present roadblocks and obstacles to efforts. Instead, she said, think of middle managers as people who have a lot of work to do, and consider that the company might have to do a better job of meeting them where they are. “How do we begin to translate all of the opportunities into middle manager language?” she asked. “What are specific tactics that they need to become familiar with?”

Part of her work has been to identify seven practices that lead to DEI outcomes — diversity recruiting initiatives, education and training, internal diversity partners, managerial involvement, mentoring and sponsorship, physical visibility, and workplace policies — and then map them onto 12 different outcomes.
She found that certain bundles of practices are more influential in driving certain outcomes. For instance, if the goal is to create a stronger sense of belonging, bundling three practices (managerial involvement, mentoring and sponsorship, and workplace policies) are most effective. On the other hand, if the goal is to get more people to speak out against bias, the practice of education and training is critical.

The point, she reiterated, is to see DEI strategy as a variety of medicines in the medicine cabinet that can best be used in certain combinations, depending on the outcomes you are most focused on.

TAKEAWAYS

• Tools to build DEI are like medicines: They can be used in different ways to different effect.

• Seven workplace practices can be mixed and matched to reach 12 DEI outcomes.

• Specific bundles of practices have proved to be effective at driving each of the 12 outcomes.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Stephanie Creary is an assistant professor of management at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and an identity and diversity scholar. She coauthored the research study “Improving Workplace Culture Through Evidence-Based Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Practices,” published in May 2021.
Agility at the Point of Execution

Rob Cross, Babson College

The collaborative intensity of work has skyrocketed, yet most organizations don’t manage internal collaboration productively. Collaborative dysfunction can be identified and improved on at the point of execution, where teams are working on new products, on strategic initiatives, or with top clients.

SUMMARY

What does it take to lead agile, high-functioning teams that collaborate effectively? That’s the question Rob Cross has been exploring with his research group.

Collaboration increasingly happens through networks, and these networks have startling characteristics when you look at them closely. Hierarchies have collapsed thanks to employees’ instantaneous access to one another. Many people live in a state of collaborative intensity. Cross said that 3% to 5% of people tend to account for 20% to 30% of value-added collaborations — and these are the people who really matter in any collaborative mix. But they are dramatically overwhelmed, and they sometimes create pinch points that slow work down and impede their own ability to get work done and be innovative.

Organizations need to reduce the collaborative overload on these frequent collaborators, and they need to find more of them.

Are those people replicable? They are, but with some caveats. Cross’s research found that it takes most people about three to five years to enter an organization and replicate the connectivity of a high performer. That involves developing the bridging relationships and reputational capital trust that will distinguish them and help them innovate differently.

However, Cross’s research also found that 10% of the population manage to become high performers not in three to five years but in about nine to 12 months. How can organizations foster that type of agility in order to “slingshot people into productive positions,” as Cross puts it? How can analytics be used to see the sets of connections that need to happen and facilitate those connections?

A number of factors come into play, including rapidly integrating newcomers; engaging remote workers; shaping ecosystems in which teams reside; facilitating collaboration across silos where necessary; discouraging cliques that diminish alignment; reducing collaborative overload on the key players; and identifying and rewarding effective collaborators.

Put another way: Manage the center, manage the edge, minimize silos, build agility, and minimize insularity.
Managing the collaborative process better matters because people are burned out. In an instant poll of Work/22 participants during Cross’s presentation that asked, “Which of these patterns is the most problematic for you right now?” 37% selected “priority overload,” and 22% chose “overwhelmed pattern,” a scenario in which all team members are involved in all processes and communication.

The bottom line is that workplaces asking employees to adapt numerous collaborative tools and digital architectures need a better handle on the collaborative footprint they create.

TAKEAWAYS

• Efforts to create more agile organizations have succeeded in removing elements that get in the way of speedy decision-making.

• A small number of people are key collaborators, essential to many groups.

• Between the speed and volume of collaboration, many critical players within organizations face collaborative overload.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Rob Cross is the Edward A. Madden Professor of Global Leadership at Babson College. He is cofounder and current research director of the Connected Commons, a consortium of over 100 organizations accelerating network research and practice. *MIT Sloan Management Review* published an interview with Cross, “Easing the Invisible Burdens of Collaboration,” in September 2021.
A Global Brand President’s View of the Future of Work

Doug Palladini, Vans

In response to the pandemic, many companies are transforming their workforce approaches. For global sports lifestyle brand Vans, that has included managing retail store disruptions, developing programs to broaden accessibility into creative brand careers, and going all-in to increase diversity and inclusion for underrepresented minorities among both full-time staff members and the contractors and creatives who contribute to the brand.

Summary

Like a lot of companies, Vans has had to be flexible with its workforce during the pandemic. “These changes are permanent,” said Doug Palladini. “We’re not going back.” Listening to the employee base, “what we’re hearing very loud and clear is they need more flexibility in their lives. People are really enjoying taking their kids to school, being home at lunch, being able to exercise when they feel like it, and still doing a great job at work.”

Flexibility at work has been served well by asynchronous communication. That was always important for Vans, which operates in 100 countries, but it established itself as the chosen collaboration method during the pandemic. “I’m not paid to promote Slack, but I’m a big fan,” said Palladini. “The mentality of the meeting as this default, central way that business gets done is very old-school and needs to go away.” Face-to-face meetings, he said, will now happen only when there’s a clear strategic reason to get people together.

His company has lost something by being run through videoconference and written notes, though. Palladini said that before COVID-19, the company’s in-person culture was palpable and effusive. Everyone could feel the energy. “When you’re on Zoom, you cannot,” he said. “It’s not the same thing.” The feeling of separation from the company culture, he said, has been the biggest loss.

Some actions help bridge the gap. Palladini said that leaders have “made it a practice to never begin a conversation without making it personal” — they recognize the human moment before diving in. And cultural training, which used to be done at the home office in California, is done today through what Palladini called “microclimates”: local versions of cultural immersions in Kuala Lumpur, Montreal, Shanghai, and other international bases.

The company has made a big commitment over the past year to become more inclusive. It has published goals to increase diversity, from the athletes it works with to the full-time
staff members it hires. It has also put resources toward supporting artists, musicians, and organizations doing work around racial and gender equity.

“When we took the decision to say that Black Lives Matter — which, by the way, we think is a pretty low bar — we knew that there were going to be people who had been fans who were not going to agree,” Palladini said. Some customers made it clear that they would take their business elsewhere, but the company didn’t blink. “Honestly, we’re good with that,” Palladini said. “If you are unwilling to stand for what you believe in and make people understand who you are and who you are not, then you’re at greater peril than ever before.”

TAKEAWAYS

• “The meeting” as the default way to do business is an antiquated concept. Companies must embrace asynchronous collaboration.

• Global companies need to allow for regional differences to allow customers to see themselves in the brand. Strive for global consistency with local relevancy.

• Companies can no longer sit on the sidelines of social issues.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Doug Palladini is global brand president of Vans and oversees the strategic direction of the company’s more than $4 billion global business. Since joining Vans in 2004, he has played an integral role in its transformation into an icon of creative expression in youth culture and the largest action sports footwear and apparel brand on the planet.
Creating Good Jobs

Zeynep Ton, MIT Sloan School of Management

Underlying the “Great Resignation” is the reality that we are not generating enough good jobs with fair pay and good working conditions. That’s a problem for society and also for companies, and company leaders must drive systemic change. Managers need to understand why people don’t like their jobs — and which leadership beliefs and expectations must be reexamined.

SUMMARY

The tsunami of resignations and difficulty hiring workers that has hit many industries leads to an urgent question: How can organizational leaders create better, more desirable jobs? Zeynep Ton started her presentation by noting that most leaders would rather offer good jobs than bad jobs — and yet millions of people have positions that offer poor pay, unpredictable schedules, and little security.

Leaders lack awareness about how bad things have gotten, Ton said. Additionally, where there is awareness, there’s a lack of conviction to do anything about it. And where there is both awareness and conviction, there’s a lack of courage.

“I hear, ‘We already pay above-market wages,’ and, ‘Our engagement scores are high,’ and, ‘Why are employees still leaving?’ I hear this over and over again,” Ton said. Companies wondering why they can’t attract job candidates need to look at the base level of what people want and whether those hygiene factors are being met. Ton defined those needs as good pay and benefits, a stable and predictable schedule, a career path, and security and safety. Only after those elements are in place can workers worry about satisfaction, belonging, and meaningfulness.

Ton put wages into context. Before the pandemic, she noted, 46.5 million Americans worked in jobs that paid less than $15 an hour. This includes retail sales workers, movers, restaurant employees, home health care aides, and preschool and special education teachers. Annualized, that pay of $31,200 is below subsistence level for most families across the country.

Low pay leaves workers vulnerable to a vicious cycle of poverty: It makes it difficult to meet financial obligations, which leads to stress and health issues, which reduces a person’s ability to do a good job, which leads to high turnover and attendance issues — which leads back to low pay.

Not investing in workers creates a different kind of vicious cycle for companies, Ton continued. “Unit managers in these companies are constantly fighting fires,” she said.
“They have no time to hire the right people, because there are operational problems, there are attendance problems, there are turnover problems.”

The way out is to embrace what Ton calls the Good Jobs System. It calls for a 100% commitment to customers, employees, and improvement. Practically, it means operating with slack (that is, at less than full capacity), focusing and simplifying, and cross-training employees. It requires a deep conviction that ordinary people can do extraordinary things. It starts with a willingness to take a dive into a pay analysis to see what percentage of employees are making subsistence-level wages and what the racial and gender makeup of those employees is.

TAKEAWAYS

- Poor jobs are endemic, and they are a core part of why employers are finding it difficult to hire and retain workers.
- Companies can’t live their values if their employees can’t afford to put food on the table.
- Whatever your assumption about workers is, you will be proved right.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Zeynep Ton is a Professor of the Practice at the MIT Sloan School of Management. She is on a mission to develop and share knowledge on how companies can profitably offer good jobs with living wages, stable schedules, meaning, and dignity. Ton is president of the nonprofit Good Jobs Institute and the author of The Good Jobs Strategy: How the Smartest Companies Invest in Employees to Lower Costs and Boost Profits (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014).
A Leader’s Guide to Hybrid-Remote Work Success

Tsedal Neeley, Harvard Business School

As organizations pivot to a mix of in-person and remote work arrangements, leaders face new challenges in maintaining trust, organizational cohesion, corporate culture, and employee engagement. Neeley’s session examined how leaders can be most effective in virtual or hybrid workplaces and what new skills they need to develop.

SUMMARY

“The name of the game is adaptive and inclusive leadership,” Tsedal Neeley said. “Not just in the sense that many people talk about,” meaning diversity, equity, and inclusion, but in the sense of making sure that remote workers are equipped and empowered to feel part of the team.

Thirty years of scholarship has looked at how people connect with colleagues they barely see. Much of the focus, Neeley said, has been on how to build trust. “Trust is at the heart of everything that we do interpersonally,” she said.

Within the remote environment, she said, two types of trust are necessary: cognitive swift trust and emotional trust. Cognitive swift trust is grounded in the degree to which virtual collaborators feel others in the group are reliable — something that’s knowable, through observation or from what other people tell them — and how competent and qualified they feel they are. If people know both these things about each other, said Neeley, they can be very effective remote collaborators.

Emotional trust is grounded in the belief that a person cares for others — their concerns, their interests, their difficulties. This type of trust, she said, is something that “leaders must earn.” As the saying goes, “Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.”

Part of caring today, Neeley said, is mitigating the professional isolation that remote workers, especially younger ones, may be experiencing. That means checking in on, coaching, and supporting people, and making sure that there’s a strong sense of collaboration rather than one of people working very much alone.

Neeley said that one of her worries as more organizations commit to hybrid work design is that some people will be assigned to be onsite and never get to experience remote workdays. Rotating people in and out of essential onsite positions is one option to make sure that hybrid arrangements feel equitable to all.
Neeley noted that remote work is inherently an equalizer. “I like to say that my husband is 6’4”, and I’m 5’4”, but on WebEx we’re the same height.” She argued that the resistance leaders have to embracing remote work is related to control more than anything else. The challenge is that since March 2020, employees have shown they can do quite well working from home. “Compulsory in-person presence has been debunked,” she said. “So, what do you do if you’re a leader whose strength has been in the in-person realm? It’s a tough, tough change, and it’s a radical change.”

**TAKEAWAYS**

- Remote workers draw from cognitive swift trust to determine whether their colleagues are reliable and competent.

- They also draw on emotional trust with their manager to combat isolation and feel included.

- For leaders, the shift to hybrid is a radical change and one that challenges a lifetime of working habits.

**ABOUT THE SPEAKER**

Tsedal Neeley is the Naylor Fitzhugh Professor of Business Administration and senior associate dean of faculty development and research strategy at Harvard Business School. She is the author of *Remote Work Revolution: Succeeding From Anywhere* (Harper Business, 2021).
Effective Coaching, Mentoring, and Sponsorship in the Virtual Office

Curtis Odom, Northeastern University

Identifying promising employees and guiding their development is a crucial task for leaders who want to keep such workers engaged. There are unique challenges for coaching, mentoring, and sponsorship in the virtual world, but supportive relationships are possible even at a distance.

SUMMARY

Executives haven’t been doing a lot of mentoring in the past 20 months. They haven’t been around a lot of the people who could use their help, and they may not have thought about how they could do such work from afar. That needs to change, said Curtis Odom.

Many managers got where they are because they were supported along the way — someone took an interest in them, helped them grow into a new job, or advocated for them at a crucial moment. Someone, as Odom put it, was “literally willing to carve off a piece of their brand and hand it to you.” Sometimes that opened doors that might have been invisible before. If that beneficiary was you, said Odom, now is the time to pay it forward.

He defined three roles that leaders can take: coach, mentor, or sponsor. They differ slightly from one another. A coaching role is short term and situation-driven, can be done by a direct manager, and requires only a slight personal connection. A mentor role is long term and relationship-driven; it should be done by someone other than a manager, but a personal connection is beneficial. Importantly, the mentee needs to own the relationship. A sponsor role is longer term and trust-driven, does not involve a direct manager, and requires a deeper personal connection. In this relationship, the commitment is made and nurtured by both the sponsor and the candidate.

Within these roles, leaders offer emotional support, feedback, and advice for personal and professional development. They can teach mentees how to navigate corporate politics and provide guidance that increases mentees’ sense of competence and self-worth.

For leaders considering taking on these roles — and for potential mentees — one of the critical factors is understanding where the onus of responsibility for initiating interactions sits. “As you go into these relationships, maybe you’re thinking that the other person’s driving all of it,” Odom said. “Maybe you’re sitting around waiting for someone to tap you gently on the shoulder.” Figuring out the dynamics is harder when people aren’t seeing each other in person.
The bottom line, though, is that a good mentee is not passive. “If someone is really in that position, ready to move on, move up, and grow, there should be instances where they have demonstrated and expressed their ability to perform at the next level,” said Odom. That means that their abilities, aspirations, and engagement have been both demonstrated and expressed. It also means that they should be specific about what their ask is. “My job is to help you get to wherever you want to be,” said Odom, “but it’s your job to let me know where that is.”

TAKEAWAYS

• There are nuanced, important differences between being a coach, mentor, or sponsor.

• Potential mentees should have demonstrated and expressed their abilities, aspirations, and engagement to get to the next level.

• It’s a trap to think that one person can be your mentor for everything.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Curtis Odom is an executive professor at Northeastern University’s D’Amore-McKim School of Business. He has over 20 years of international business experience with Fortune 100 companies in a wide range of industries. He is coauthor of the January 2021 MIT Sloan Management Review article “Getting Representative Sponsorship Right in Your Organization.”
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