

Preface

THIS BOOK IS a much-needed examination of the important leadership practices of mentorship, sponsorship, and coaching. It's widely known that these three endeavors are valuable, but as we traverse our career journeys and life in general, we far too often tend to drift away from them, partake of them too infrequently, or fail to integrate them into our own development or the development of others. You see, mentorship, sponsorship, and coaching are bidirectional. By that, I mean that there is nary a season of our lives, personally or professionally, where we do not need to be well mentored, well sponsored, and well coached. And it is incumbent upon us, as leaders, to turn around and serve as mentors, sponsors, and coaches to those around us.

It is my observation, confirmed by an abundance of research, that the most effective leaders “curate their circle,” surrounding themselves with sound counsel. They assemble boards of advisors, which help them in the same vital ways that similar governing bodies do for corporations and institutions, enabling them to better steward themselves in life and in leadership. We are well served by having wise individuals around us who share our journey: offering connection and support, lending expertise from their learned experience, sharing power and influence to help us advance, and courageously and candidly offering feedback from their position of objectivity and concern for our continual improvement. This “kitchen cabinet” both equips and encourages us. At some moments, they deliver doses of tough love, challenging and exhorting us or holding us accountable

to the goals and standards we've set. At others, they offer empathy and compassion, coming alongside us in more difficult seasons to carry us when we're weary, believe in us when we're struggling to do so ourselves, or simply dust us off and nudge us back into the arena.

Throughout this book, we'll review the myriad reasons why partaking in mentoring practices is vital to our thriving, both individually and organizationally. Mentorship, sponsorship, and coaching result in enhanced development, advancement, and performance, respectively. The resulting positive and powerful outcomes are integral to our achievement of the leadership impact of which we are capable and are necessary for organizations to rise to the endless challenges and opportunities they encounter.

Mentorship, sponsorship, and coaching also contribute to enhanced well-being; improved diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; and bolstered bench strength and succession planning. Well-mentored individuals perform at higher levels. They are more creative, innovative, resilient, adaptable, loyal, and satisfied with their lives and careers. They are better prepared for the next levels of leadership; have stronger networks; and are more likely to mentor, sponsor, and coach others. To me, all that reads like a laundry list of the most desirable attributes for a team member, employee, or boss. Wouldn't you agree?

I felt drawn to write this book because I am the immeasurably grateful beneficiary of so many people who have generously invested in me by developing me through mentorship, advancing me through sponsorship, and honing my capacity to thrive in many facets of my life through coaching. In my career journey, I've had many opportunities, both formally and informally, to serve as a mentor, sponsor, and coach to others, and I have found it to be one of the most meaningful and rewarding parts of the work I've been privileged to do.

I began my career as a leader, then an executive, in a traditional healthcare environment before venturing out to start a management consultancy that helps physicians start and manage private practices. Over the years of my entrepreneurial journey, I began receiving

opportunities to teach in academic settings as an adjunct faculty member, established a professional speaking practice, and became certified as a leadership coach. Because of my active engagement as a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) and other professional associations, as a board member for my local ACHE chapter, as a member of national committees, and as a content expert and speaker, I naturally became heavily invested in seeking out ways I could surround myself with people who had the experience and expertise to prepare me for and propel me to the next levels of leadership. As others were pouring into me, I felt led to immediately turn around and share that gift with others. Leadership is relational, not transactional, so it is logical that we would approach the pursuit of our own formation in an interdependent fashion that brings flourishing and excellence to the world.

It is my hope that upon reading these chapters, you'll feel encouraged and better equipped to put mentorship, sponsorship, and coaching to work for your edification and that of others around you.

Go forth in growth, my friends.