



Angelika Goliger

Africa Chief Economist

EY-Parthenon

Mentorship, sponsorship and 'lifting as you rise'

There is a difference between a mentor (who gives advice) and a sponsor (who advocates for you behind closed doors). Have you had a sponsor, and how did that dynamic work?

I have never had a formal mentor in my career. To be honest, I always found the concept slightly awkward – a bit like dating – and I was never quite sure how to make the approach. What I have been fortunate to have, however, is a series of sponsors and role models, who have quietly championed me throughout my career, both at the National Treasury and at EY.

These people helped shape my journey in countless ways: from giving me the confidence to overcome shyness and imposter syndrome, to helping me navigate difficult client situations, to encouraging me when I found myself presenting research to Ministers and CEOs. Rather than relying on one formal mentor/sponsor, I organically built a network of trusted people that I could turn to for different types of advice and support. That approach worked well for me because it recognised that no one person has all the answers, and I could seek a variety of perspectives. It also meant that I would have a variety of people backing me in different situations.

While hard work is a prerequisite, somebody has to advocate for you in the background to help you progress. But sponsorship also needs trust as a basis. People are only willing to put their own credibility behind you when they have the confidence that you will show up and deliver.

As a successful leader now, what standard do you set for yourself when it comes to mentoring the next generation of female analysts and associates?

I know that I do not have all the answers, but I am always happy to listen with empathy, share what I have learnt from similar situations, and help young people think through the right questions for themselves.

I try to make time whenever I can, whether it is for an economics student who is brave enough to reach out for a conversation via

LinkedIn, or a colleague who needs a bit of perspective. I know how much those conversations have meant in my own career, and I want to do the same for others. Sometimes the impact of these conversations is small, sometimes it is significant; but helping someone gain confidence, get a different view, or take the next step in their career is always time well spent.

What is the most rewarding piece of advice you've ever given to a younger colleague that you watched them successfully put into practice?

I struggled with shyness and a lack of confidence for a big part of my career, so I always feel a pull towards young people facing similar challenges. The advice I find myself giving most often is that being introverted is not something to overcome, it is a superpower. Many of the most effective leaders I have worked with are introverts. I often recommend reading *Quiet* by Susan Cain, because it helped me see introversion as a strength.

The second piece of advice comes from my own experience. Building confidence requires self-reflection. You need to understand what is driving your inner critic, what the underlying blockers are, and why you may be holding yourself back. That work takes time (months or even years), but it has been one of the most important parts of my own development, and I see many young professionals, particularly women, grappling with the same challenge.

However, what I have seen have the quickest impact is simply reframing how people see themselves. Firstly, being introverted often comes with strengths that are incredibly valuable in leadership and business: listening with empathy, thinking deeply, solving problems thoughtfully, and being comfortable with independent thinking. Secondly, I also encourage people to be willing to make mistakes. So much growth comes from being prepared to try, fail, learn, and try again. The sooner we stop seeing mistakes as failures, the faster confidence grows. 🧠

People are only
willing to put their
own credibility
behind you when
they have the
confidence that you
will show up and
deliver.