Getting and maintaining senior management support

Getting management support for your Digital Champion project can be a critical factor for its success. Senior leaders can draw on resources, staff and other key people who can help you deliver, manage and promote your initiative. Without it, you have less leverage if you run into difficulties and need more resources or support.

You might be looking for someone in large multi-layered organisations, or the right trustee of a small charity. Whatever the make-up of your organisation, here are some tips on making that crucial connection…

Aim to get someone on board early
The earlier you can get someone involved the better. They'll feel a stronger sense of ownership and be able to contribute right from the start. It's not the end of the world if it's not possible immediately, but it should be near the top, not the bottom, of your to-do list.

Work out how your project fits your organisation's priorities…
Find out what the senior leadership team is trying to achieve and make sure you know how Digital Champions will support these strategic goals. Make sure you can articulate how this project supports the bigger picture.

Identify your possible "Ambassador" and tailor your request
Work out what you need from this person (you might want regular input from them; to use their influence with other management; access to their budget or their people or be "the face" of the project). They might be in a connected department (like ongoing learning or IT); they might have already shown an interest in these kinds of projects or be someone you've worked with already. Once you've identified who they might be, make sure you know how this project fits with *their* interests and priorities, not just the organisation's.

Pick your moment and method of approach
Do it in a way that suits them, your organisation's style and common sense! So don't raise it at the end of a long meeting with lots of people in it. Pick a moment when they might be receptive to new ideas and request a one-to-one conversation.

Make a case that's impact and outcome orientated
Base this squarely on facts and evidence. Make sure they understand the problem and the opportunity and build a business case that demonstrates the importance and value of a Digital Champion approach including the benefits not just for learners but for the organisation and community as a whole.

We've got lots of stats and case studies to help you do this.
 https://www.digitalunite.com/digital-inequality-facts-stats
https://www.digitalunite.com/case-studies

Keep it brief and clear

Though you may want their complete focus later on, don't bog them down with detail now. Stick to the bare bones of what you want and what you're trying to achieve. Stay succinct and clear – because at the moment, this isn't their project or their responsibility.

Be honest

Don't try and gloss over problems or risks. Show that you are proactively addressing them and have practical solutions.

Be completely clear about what you want from them and what kind of commitment, including the time it will involve. Make sure they know how valuable their input is - and highlight their potential to drive change and add value and expertise.

Don't always assume senior leaders know it all already!

Lots of senior leaders struggle with digital inclusion. They may not be sure what needs to be done or how a Digital Champion approach fits in with the organisation. They may not have great digital skills themselves (32% of those earning over £75,000 a year don't have the [full Essential Digital Skills for Work](#)) or feel fully aware what digital can offer. Bear this in mind in your approach.

Get them hooked

Follow up promptly after your meeting and send a concise summary of the discussion, their role, and next steps. Be ready to adapt and stay open to their suggestions or concerns – there's a reason you want them on board!

Keep them on board…

As the project progresses, make their role as easy as possible – if they need a 30 second elevator pitch or a cheat sheet of Digital Inclusion facts and stats, get it for them. Give them what they need to do their bit.

Maintain their engagement with regular updates and invite their input at key moments. And share the highs, don't just go to them when things need fixing. When things go well, make sure their input is openly acknowledged across the organisation!