

Why be a Mentee?

Because having a mentor can contribute enormously to a successful and satisfying career in property management.

Much of that learning that contributes to our success happens not through books, but through real world experience. Without a mentor, that learning occurs mostly through trial and error. With a mentor, however, even experienced professionals can benefit from the experiences and expertise of someone who has withstood the trial and can help us avoid the error! Similarly, those new to the industry will discover that being a mentee shortens the learning curve for acquiring the skills and knowledge most critical to a successful career.

Other benefits that accrue as a result of being a mentee in a mentoring relationship include:

- **Learning new things about yourself:** The self-reflection that can result from a mentoring relationship can be a powerful growth experience and provide you with new insights about yourself.
- **Making more of your strengths and exploiting your hidden talents:** A good mentor will push you to do more with your strengths, and help you discover and exploit hidden talents.
- **Contributing to the success of your community and company:** A mentee who builds a strong position in his or her community ultimately contributes to the success of the company.
- **Career satisfaction:** You will be more satisfied with your career if you're better at performing your job; and your company and community will be more satisfied with your performance, as well, lending more stability in your career.
- **Expanding your personal network:** Entering into a mentoring relationship adds your mentor to your personal network, and may lead to an introduction to the individuals in the mentor's network.
- **A source of referrals:** Your mentor may refer you to other mentors once s/he has a better understanding of your needs, abilities, and goals.

HOW CAN A MENTEE PREPARE?

Set Goals and Objectives

Your first step is to identify your goals for the mentoring relationship. What do you hope to learn? You may, for example, have a general goal of becoming a Marketing Director. In order to achieve that goal, you should have specific objectives that will bring you closer to achieving the goal, such as: to develop the skills necessary to increase closing ratios; properly prepare a budget; and gain a better understanding of the various areas of the industry.

Don't Be Afraid

One obstacle that many mentees face is their own reluctance to apply for a mentor. This reluctance is quite common, and for many is rooted in the embarrassment of having to acknowledge that they may need help, or in a fear of rejection. Want to know a "secret"? Just about all of our mentors would love to be mentored by another mentor!

How do you overcome this reluctance? Focus on your goals and needs. There is nothing wrong with admitting that you need or want help. The fact is, mentors consistently say they are flattered at being approached, and welcome an opportunity to "give back" to the profession. Consider, too, that mentoring is making a comeback, prompting many organizations to launch mentoring initiatives; so in entering a mentor relationship, you are far from alone.

Interested in joining us as a mentor?

While mentees usually participate in mentoring for one basic reason, the reasons for mentors wanting to do so are more numerous and varied. They include:

- **A desire to “give back”:** Often, successful multifamily professionals simply want to pass some of their success on to others. Many who have had mentors themselves feel that they should give something back to the profession through a mentoring relationship.
- **Mentoring is part of a company’s culture:** In some companies, mentoring is thoroughly ingrained in the company’s culture, and acting as a mentor is an accepted and encouraged part of each employee’s contribution to the company. It is seen as an important investment in the future and success of the company.
- **It is a calling:** For some individuals mentoring is almost a vocation. It is something that they are very passionate about and feel very positive about participating in.

The many benefits that can come from acting as a mentor include:

- **Learning new things about yourself:** The self-reflection that can result from sharing your experiences with others can be a powerful growth experience and give you new insights about yourself.
- **Satisfaction of passing on knowledge:** Many mentors simply gain great satisfaction from passing on and sharing knowledge.
- **Acquiring new knowledge:** You may find your mentee has skills or experiences from which you can learn. Similarly, the act of mentoring can refresh your own understanding of effective property management strategies and attitudes.
- **Expanding your personal network:** Entering into a mentoring relationship adds another individual to your personal network, and you become only “one removed” from all the individuals in the mentee’s network.
- **A confidence builder:** Having someone regularly turning to you for advice and direction can help build your confidence.

HOW CAN A MENTOR PREPARE?

Assess Your Experiences

We are all the sum of our own experiences. Self-reflection helps you bring those experiences—and the learning that results—to the fore, which in turn can bring added perspectives to the mentoring relationship.

To better understand themselves, mentors should reflect on the significant events in their lives, their successes and failures, the obstacles they encountered and the lessons they learned along the way. Any previous experience as a mentor or mentee should also be considered; as it will help you better understand how you should act in your role as mentor.

Be Prepared to Withdraw

If, after some self-reflection and consideration of the mentee’s goals, you realize that you do not have the skills and experience necessary to attain the goals identified for the relationship, be prepared to say so. This should be seen as a positive outcome that will help the mentee find a mentor who is a more appropriate match.

Identify Goals For The Relationship

Before embarking on a mentoring relationship, the prospective mentor and mentee should review the mentee’s goals. The goals should be specific, attainable and measurable. The mentor can help by pushing the mentee to set challenging or “stretch goals” that push the mentee outside of their comfort zone.

The next step is determining if the mentor can assist the mentee in attaining those goals. This will prevent a mismatch of mentor and mentee. Assuming the mentor and mentee are a match, there should be some discussion of how the mentor and mentee can work together to achieve the specified goals.

Do Personalities And Mentoring Styles Match?

Mentors and mentees will have to adjust as they find their own mentoring style and preferences. Having two individuals with matching chemistries can make for an easier relationship. A mentor and mentee can get a reasonably good idea of how they will get along at a first meeting.

Talk About Expectations

Inconsistent or different expectations can cause a mentoring relationship to fail. Both mentor and mentee should openly discuss everything, from what they expect to get out of the relationship, to how it will work, including the logistics of how and when to communicate, confidentiality and boundaries.

Discuss Time Concerns

Lack of time is the reason cited most often for failure of a mentoring relationship. Mentors and mentees need to understand from the start that mentoring involves a commitment of time, and should deal up front with any time concerns they may have. If necessary, the partners can set parameters as to when and how interactions should occur.

Set boundaries

Both mentor and mentee should clarify, at the outset, any limits placed on the relationship in terms of subject matter, time, or confidentiality.

Activities that are commonly out of bounds in mentoring relationships include:

- Direct involvement in dispute resolution;
- Acting as an advocate for career advancement; and
- Lending money or discussing financial matters.

Ultimately, it is up to the partners in the relationship to agree what is in and out of bounds. Boundaries will not always be clear-cut, and circumstances can change them. An issue that was initially identified as being out of bounds could be dealt with at a later stage, if both partners consent.

Be Alert To Issues Of Confidentiality And Conflict

It is important that both parties recognize and agree what is to be confidential at the start of any mentoring relationship. Is the relationship itself confidential? Under what circumstances will anything that is discussed be disclosed to parties outside the relationship? You should not simply assume that the relationship or your discussions will be confidential.

How mentoring partners handle information discussed in or related to the relationship varies. In some mentoring relationships it is simply agreed that the mentee will not disclose confidential or personal information to the mentor. Although this approach can limit the topics dealt with in the relationship, it does ensure that mentor and mentee avoid issues or problems arising out of the disclosure of sensitive information.

To promote open communication between mentor and mentee, some mentoring programs provide that all mentoring discussions remain confidential. Others allow disclosure in limited circumstances. If you are embarking on a mentoring relationship as either mentor or mentee, make sure you understand how any confidential or personal information is to be handled. If the mentoring partners agree that discussions can

include confidential or personal information, they will have to agree on how and when disclosure can occur. Some options that could be considered include:

- Everything is confidential indefinitely, unless disclosure is required in law;
- Disclosure can occur on a demonstrated need to know basis, with permission;
- Disclosure can occur to a supervisor only;
- Disclosure can occur with permission only;
- Some identified things can be disclosed, others will not;
- The nature of the discussions, but not the details, can be disclosed; or
- Everything can be disclosed.

Partners who have agreed that confidential or personal information will be included in their discussions may want to confirm how and when disclosure can occur in a mentoring contract (see next page). If confidential or personal information must be disclosed to a third party for legal or other reasons, the mentor should advise the mentee that a disclosure of confidential information will occur, and why.

A Mentoring Contract

The form that a mentoring contract or agreement takes is not as important as its contents. Although a formal contract is not necessary, the very act of putting something in writing can help the partners better understand what the relationship is to accomplish, and agree on the practicalities of how it will actually work.

In the best case, a mentoring agreement should set out:

- The goals of the relationship, including what the mentee wants to learn;
- The ground rules for the relationship—including how often and in what manner communications and meetings will occur;
- Any special or specific responsibilities that either partner is to assume;
- Any boundaries on the relationship—what topics or issues are not to be dealt with;
- What is to be treated as confidential information, and the circumstances, if any, in which this type of information can be disclosed to others;
- A release and hold harmless clause;
- How and when the relationship is to end;
- Any other terms agreed on by the parties; and,
- An acknowledgement of the guidelines required by the Lawyers' Professional Indemnity Company to allow a mentor to avoid a deductible and claims levy surcharge in the event of a claim arising from the relationship.

A Simple Mentoring Agreement

The undersigned do hereby agree to enter into a mentoring relationship for a period of xx years
The Mentee's goals for this relationship are:

- To become a better personal injury litigator;
- To improve skills for conducting examinations for discovery;
- To improve skills for cross-examining expert witnesses.

The parties hereto agree and acknowledge:

- To be available for consultation by telephone or e-mail during regular business hours, and occasionally in person;
- To meet in person quarterly to review the progress of the relationship, and to discuss how the relationship can be improved;

- That the Mentor will look for opportunities to introduce the Mentee to other members of the local bar;
- That they will meet in person to deal with any events or circumstances that make continuing the relationship difficult or awkward;
- That all matters discussed in the course of the relationship shall be confidential, unless both parties agree that disclosure can occur;
- That the Mentor will not assist the Mentee on following types of matters:
 - Direct involvement in dispute resolution;
 - Acting as an advocate for career advancement; and
 - The lending of money or financial matters;
- That the Mentor will not have any contact with the Mentor's client that would create a solicitor/client relationship;
- That the Mentee understands that she was responsible for individually and independently satisfying herself of the soundness of any suggestions, recommendations or advice-like comments made by the Mentor;
- That the Mentee will hold the Mentor harmless for any professional liability claim arising on a matter that the Mentor provided advice to the Mentee; and,
- That the Mentor will not be subject to any deductible or claims levy surcharge on any claim against a Mentor arising out of this mentoring relationship.

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