



# It's a Two-Way Street

How to succeed with IRWA's Mentor Match Program

BY NOELLE HOELSKEN

The benefits to be gained from a good mentor relationship have the potential to outweigh education, natural ability and even luck. To help facilitate new mentor-mentee relationships in the Association, IRWA's Young Professionals Group recently launched an online professional platform that makes it easy to connect. With Mentor Match, members can take advantage of one of the most effective pathways to career success for both the mentor and mentee.

## Say Goodbye to Comfort Zones

In my budding professional career, I have been fortunate to be a participant in both formal and informal mentoring relationships that have helped me identify and set attainable goals, experience professional growth and shape my leadership skills. The most successful pairings are based on honest assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of both mentor and mentee.

When I set out on the journey to find my own mentor, I made it a point to look for someone who possessed a skillset that I was sorely lacking. For me, that was anything involving appraisal. The majority of my work involves land acquisition and negotiations. I used to dread the part of my job that involved appraisal and anything in its capacity. Unfortunately, this was also a daily facet of my position at the time.

To get the most out of the experience, I found that working with a mentor who specializes in a skillset you have yet to master is critical. Not only for your own career, but for your clients, your company and future companies you aspire to work for. Mentors push others to grow where there is weakness and

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flourish where there is strength. In order for mentoring relationships to be rewarding for both parties, it is recommended that the mentee’s areas of improvement line up with the mentor’s strengths. This requires saying goodbye to our comfort zones.

**Don’t Sell Yourself Short**

In the early stages of cultivating my relationship with my IRWA matched mentor, I quickly learned that mentorship is a two-way street. Like most young professionals, I had underestimated what I could bring to the relationship. There’s a popular misconception that only the mentee gains value, while the mentor offers insight and guidance. But it is important to realize this is not a transaction—it’s a relationship. As a young professional, it is imperative to offer value to your mentor, and that often means working harder than those around you.

One of the most important things a mentee brings to the table is a different viewpoint. While you are there to be guided by someone with an abundance of knowledge within your industry, you don’t want to underestimate what you have learned along the way. Mentors have succeeded in their careers by learning from others, and they will be interested in what they can learn from you. For example, technology and applications are constantly evolving and new methodologies are being applied, while traditional processes and procedures may have been streamlined or

eliminated altogether. A good mentor demonstrates an attitude where ideas are respected more than title and position. They didn’t get to where they are by always doing things the same way. Similar to the mentee, they are often hungry for new ideas.

**Roles and Responsibility**

Mentoring is an active partnership between committed professionals designed to foster growth and career development. In addition to defining expectations of each role, there is a responsibility in managing and cultivating these connections. The good news is that there is more than one way to approach this.

Both parties are well within their rights to stress the importance of communication and mutual respect for each other’s time. Creating an individual development plan is an excellent way to accomplish this. Establishing short and long-term goals, acknowledging and addressing concerns, and monitoring and reporting on progress are all critical in order to nurture these networks.

The most successful mentees are those who are motivated and feel empowered to plan and manage the direction of their career. They take responsibility for their development, learning and growth. At the same time, seasoned professionals who take their responsibility of mentoring seriously have a profound impact on not only their mentee’s career, but their own as well.

**In Summary**

The key for mentees is to have the foresight and humility to identify areas of weakness. For mentors, the key is to connect with someone who is in need of your particular area of expertise. In doing so, you’ll ensure that you get the most out of the mentor-mentee relationship and find success in your life and career.

IRWA’s Mentor Match program is an excellent way to develop successful professional and personal relationships in our industry, which is really what our Association is all about.

*I would like to take this opportunity to express thanks and gratitude to my mentor, Orell Anderson, MAI. Thank you, Orell, for your continuous wealth of knowledge and for investing your time. ✪*



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