

IRWA Launches Mentor Program

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Just one short year ago, a creative team was assembled with a powerful mission - to create a mentoring program that would help right of way professionals grow and develop within the field and the organization. The concept was geared to those individuals who were new to profession, and the program was designed to provide them with the critical professional support, encouragement, expertise and guidance necessary to become successful. The team worked collaboratively to establish three critical goals for the program - service, growth and leadership opportunities within IRWA.

The program called for ten protégés and ten mentors. They were selected following an application and vetting process to ensure quality performance and program sustainability. In the application, interested mentor/protégé participants were asked why they wanted to get involved at this stage of their career. The responses from both groups revealed an overwhelming desire to serve others, grow professionally and personally, and lead others in the pursuit of professional excellence. The group of 20 professionals selected had clearly conveyed a commitment to the program, appropriate experience, as well as a sincere interest to pursue growth and leadership opportunities within IRWA.

INSIDE THE TRAINING ROOM

Following a year of planning, the inaugural IRWA Mentor Program was debuted this past June in conjunction with the Annual Conference. This was not your ordinary training session. Mentors and protégés were asked to participate in an energized mix of purposeful interactive and collaborative learning activities, guided reflection and discussion. Participants quickly realized that they were going to be actively engaged in what would prove to be a session of impactful learning, readiness and inspiration to jump in and cultivate the mentor/protégé relationship.

The session kicked off with the Penny Challenge, where everyone was given a penny, teamed with another individual and asked to talk about an important professional event that had taken place in the year of their penny. Each team presented their teammate's story to the group. Participants continued to learn about each other as they engaged in dynamic activities that illustrated the different facets of the mentor-protégé relationship.

Prior to the session, participants were given a book by Tom Rath titled "Strengths Finder," that illustrates how to leverage key strengths to best encourage professional and personal growth. The 10 mentors and 10 protégés were then matched up and worked together to identify strengths and establish areas of commonality. This was used as a springboard to develop a strength-based approach to professional growth within their relationship.



The 12-month mentor/protégé commitment will be driven by the protégé, one of the vital keys to its success, and will culminate in a session at the 2014 Annual Conference, where all participants will have an opportunity to share their story about what took place throughout the year. There will be four quarterly teleconferences where mentor/protégé pairs will communicate the progression of their work together and share helpful practices. A private mentor community of practice is also available to all program participants on the IRWA Member Network.

PASSING ON THE TORCH

One of the overarching goals of the program is a legacy goal where protégés eventually become mentors and pass the torch forward. If you are interested in learning more about the program or you would like to participate in the 2014 program, please contact us at: education@irwaonline.org.

You are invited to be a part of the IRWA Mentor Program as we all strive to help to build a better world...together! 🌟