

Debunking Common Myths About Mentoring

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These days, most careers take numerous twists and turns. Downsizing, rightsizing, the economic downturn, technological advances and many other factors are adding more transitions to our career paths. Many of these transitions are unexpected and are certainly not part of the plan. Since mentoring can help to ease these transitions, it may be necessary now more than ever. While mentoring has morphed over the years, our collective thinking on mentoring has not and many myths still prevail.

When people think of mentoring, they often think of the older, wiser seasoned professional teaching the ambitious, young “go-getter.” The mature leader advises the young professional about career options and pathways, navigating office politics, and the steps necessary to build a successful career. Mentoring has evolved a great deal in recent years and it is time to debunk some of its most common myths.

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MYTH #1: Mentors are old and mentees are young.

REALITY: *Not true!* Mentors don’t have to be old and mentees don’t have to be young. Mentors just need to have knowledge and willingness to impart that knowledge. Mentees just need to have a desire to learn, improve their skills, and increase their network. Gone are the days of the young mentee sitting at the feet of the older, wise one. You never know who might be a

powerful learning influence. Innovation happens so quickly and personal experience is such a great teacher. Thanks to advances in technology, “reverse mentoring” in which a junior professional advises a more seasoned professional, has become more common. Younger, tech savvy people are often best suited to mentor older peers on topics like new technology, social media, and more.

MYTH #2: Mentoring is only needed at the start of a career.

REALITY: People at every stage in their careers can benefit from the assistance mentoring offers. Career transitions are an especially good time to seek out a mentor. However, taking a proactive approach, you shouldn’t wait for the transitions to come up. Whether considering a career change, taking on a new role, seeking certification, trying to stay on top of organizational politics, or even trying to keep up with the fast-paced changes occurring around you, advice from someone who has been through the same challenges before can be very helpful.

MYTH #3: Mentors are not needed when you are learning from your employer.

REALITY: Whether intentional or not, we seek out a variety of advisors we can trust and who will have our best interests in mind. Your spouse, your boss, and family members can all give you a variety of perspectives on issues you are facing. However, when addressing career challenges, advice may be richer and more relevant when it comes from an unbiased professional that knows your industry, understands your goals, and doesn’t have a stake in the outcome.

MYTH #4: Mentoring only happens on a one-to-one, face-to-face basis.

REALITY: Thanks to modern technology, mentoring can take place anywhere, anytime. IAVM’s mentoring partnerships are flourishing with the use of high tech communication tools that have become vital in our world. Partners meet via email, phone, text, Skype, and sometimes on a one-to-one, face-to-face basis. Crossing various time zones and geographic challenges, partnerships are thriving with the opportunities communications technologies offer. IAVM has provided a platform **VenueNet** for members to chat online or when possible, partnerships are meeting at conferences, chapter meetings, **VenueConnect**, specialty meetings and Oglebay.

MYTH #5: The mentee is the only one that learns.

REALITY: In fact, mentoring is not something anyone can do to someone else. Mentoring is a condition that arises out of an effective relationship. It takes time to build. Mentoring happens when partners trust and feel accepted by each other. We find that mentors often learn a fresh perspective. They learn by teaching. They challenge their own thinking. They re-establish and re-confirm what they already know by sharing with a mentee. Mentors broaden their network almost as often as mentees do. The old adage, “you get what you give” could possibly be amended to “you get more than you give” through mentoring.

MYTH #6: Mentoring requires a greater time commitment than professionals can afford.

REALITY: In fact, mentoring significantly contributes to personal and professional development of both the mentor and the mentee. Based on the results, it can prove to be a great investment of time and an opportunity one cannot afford to miss.

MYTH #7: Mentoring only benefits the participants.

REALITY: Mentoring not only benefits the participants, it benefits our association, our industry, and all of us! The image and value of our organization is based on the collective wisdom of our members.

Mentoring increases the quality and caliber of our membership. Recognition as experts in the venue management industry benefits the profile and stature of the association and the industry as a whole. In turn, the continued growth and vitality of IAVM enhances the image and value of its members.

MYTH #8: Seeking assistance from a mentor is a sign of weakness.

REALITY: To the contrary, proactively seeking mentorship may be seen as a sign of strength rather than weakness. Utilizing all of the tools available to further your career shows drive, determination, motivation, and good common sense. Taking an active role in your continuing education and professional development can be viewed as a positive approach to your career development.

So, do you need mentoring? Can you “pay it forward” by volunteering as a mentor? The *IAVM Mentor Connector Program* is an excellent vehicle to enhance and possibly advance your venue management career. Supported by some of our industry’s best and brightest, the Mentoring Task Force is fortunate to facilitate participants making meaningful connections to further their professional development through the *IAVM Mentor Connector Program*. Whether navigating through the transitions or just learning something new (social networking, podcasts, or Blogs 101), mentoring just might be the best way to gain the general or specific knowledge you’re seeking.

Now that you have a better understanding of what mentoring can be, do you need it? Looking at your experience, knowledge, and skill set, can you “pay it forward” by sharing what you’ve learned? The key to a successful mentoring relationship is getting the right kind of advice from the right person at the right time. Is it your time? To learn more about the *IAVM Mentor Connector Program*, visit us at www.IAVM.org.

Terry Genovese, CFE, has more than 25 years of experience in public assembly venue management and currently serves as the Chair of the IAVM Mentoring Task Force and is a member of the IAVM Membership Committee. Under Terry’s leadership, the IAVM Mentor Connector Program was developed and has grown significantly in just four years. Contact Terry at terry.genovese@gmail.com



About the Author

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