

Building More Effective Women Leaders Through Mentoring

By Rosemarie E. Hartnett



Mentors and those mentored or “mentees” are hailing a pilot program designed to encourage the professional development of women in franchising. The International Franchise Association’s Women’s Franchise Committee launched the initiative in June as the latest in a number of programs designed to encourage excellence among its members. The benefits of a personal mentor can be appreciated in terms of encouraging the broadening the mentee’s horizons and sharing experiences and wisdom.

Most successful executives have benefited from being mentored.

According to Melanie Bergeron, CFE, a mentor and president of Two Men And A Truck: “First and foremost it is purely gratifying to help a fellow franchisor. Secondly, it forced me to hone in on my listening skills in several areas. It is somewhat of an art to sit with mouth shut and listen empathetically, with humility and at the same time formulate feedback on various solutions and ideas that may be helpful to the mentee. Being a mentor is a great training skill for leaders at all levels.”

Most successful executives have benefited from being mentored during their careers. The WFC Mentoring Program is designed to form a network of women in franchising with a desire to grow both personally and professionally through a mentoring relationship. The WFC is ideally-suited for this type

of program, because mentoring is best carried out by an independent fellow professional who is able to maintain a broad perspective and be more objective. Further, WFC members recognize the value of networking and sharing knowledge for the individual and collective benefit of women in this industry.

Mentee and EntryPoint Gen. Mgr. Jennifer Campos says, “I have found the mentoring program to be very beneficial. Through my conversations with Melanie Bergeron at Two Men And A Truck, I have been able to learn about her past experiences and apply them to growing our franchise program at EntryPoint. Each and every phone call is a learning and growing experience. It is really a great experience to have a mentor, supporter and friend in the franchise community where we are interested in each other’s mutual success.”

Getting Started

In June, with guidelines in place, the Mentoring Program was introduced via the IFA Web site, www.Franchise.org. Approximately 40 members applied to participate in the program.

Guidelines for the Mentor

The mentor should demonstrate the ability to:

- Commit to the relationship,
- Help colleagues with their professional development,
- Show initiative in communicating with the

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- mentee,
- Volunteer time on an ongoing basis,
- Learn and grow from the relationship,
- Exercise confidentiality,
- Employ active, objective listening skills,
- Communicate in a meaningful way,
- Offer constructive criticism and fresh perspectives,
- Provide emotional support and encouragement,
- Help the mentee formulate specific goals and objectives,
- Act as a resource for information and networking to share experiences, and
- Help the mentee network within and outside their organization.

As Sir Winston Churchill once said, "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give."

Guidelines for the Mentee

The mentee should be willing to:

- Learn and apply new wisdom,
- Be objective in evaluating strengths and weaknesses and identify opportunities for self improvement,
- Take the time necessary to build a

- relationship with a mentor,
- Respect the time a mentor is offering,
- Be a good listener,
- Honor confidentiality with her mentor,
- Be prepared to objectively evaluate the mentoring relationship to ensure success, and
- Assume responsibility for her personal and professional development.

Pairings may choose to
continue one year.

Matching the Pairs

Matching mentors and mentees focused on each individual's areas of experience, goals and interests. Pairings were made that crossed all industries. Those grouped as mentor/mentee began by sharing their backgrounds and career goals. The mentees were expected to identify the key areas that they would like to focus on with their mentors.

Monitoring Progress of the Program

Task force liaisons were assigned to

touch base with the mentor/mentee pairings and monitor initial progress. Serving as a "sounding board," these task liaisons check in on a regular basis throughout the length of the relationship offering guidance and assistance as needed. A more formal six-month evaluation was conducted with the mentoring pairs.

Length of the Relationship

Mentoring pairings may choose to continue for the length of one year. Each pair determines the frequency of contact, and plans scheduled sessions that could take place a minimum of once a month, or as frequently as once a week. Each mentoring session is expected to last one hour.

How to participate

Those interested in joining the WFC Mentoring Program as a mentor or mentee can participate by accessing and completing the enrollment form available on the IFA Web site. Applicants will be contacted with further information once the application is received.

Kiddie Academy Dir. of New Business Development and mentee Amy Petersen-Smith says, "My mentor, Rosemarie Hartnett of Abrakadoodle, has given me some challenges that I wouldn't have thought of myself. Her experience and knowledge have been very valuable to me."

In addition to the Mentoring Program, the WFC conducts an annual Women's Leadership Conference in conjunction with the IFA annual convention. The organization also produces "how-to" guides and has established local networking chapters. ■



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