

*Your younger members
crave guidance and
knowledge to help them
advance their careers.
Your veteran members
have it in abundance
to share. Use these
strategies to help
them build worthwhile
mentoring relationships.*

By Nancy Mann Jackson

For years, the Indiana State Bar Association had a loosely organized social mentoring program in place, but it didn't accomplish any measurable results. As with many failed mentor programs, there was no outright incentive for members to get involved, and for those who did participate, "nobody knew what to talk about," says Maryann Williams, J.D., director of sections for ISBA.

Although it was clear that the organization's informal mentoring program wasn't working, the association's leaders knew that mentoring was important to members; ISBA staff just needed a new program. After scrapping the original program and researching techniques to encourage mentoring, ISBA launched Mentor Match, a curriculum-based mentoring program that includes required activities for mentors and mentees to do together and provides continuing education credits for those who complete the process.

The program has been successful so far: Since launching last October, 90 members have signed up to be mentored, 65 have registered as mentors, and several law schools have asked the association to bring the mentoring program to their campuses.

"The world we live in today has become so disconnected, and the networking that used to go on a long time ago just doesn't happen," Williams says. "People don't feel comfortable asking for help anymore, and they need those relationships established so that they can ask for help."

Executives at the Texas Library Association also are seeing an increased demand for formal mentoring. "Perhaps the impersonal nature of social media has increased people's awareness of the need for more personal connections at the heart of their careers," says Ted Wanner, continuing education specialist for TLA, which offers several targeted mentor programs for different segments of its membership.

In fact, forming relationships among trusted professionals is an important function of professional associations, but many groups have struggled to develop mentoring programs that work. Here's a look at how to build one that succeeds.

Why Mentoring Matters

For new Indiana attorneys, having a mentor to share practical knowledge and skills can be career changing. Williams recalls the early days of her law career in a small town, when local attorneys met for a weekly breakfast to get to know each other and discuss challenges.

"The patriarch of the group was always available to answer questions for young lawyers and to help us out when we needed advice," she says. "But those types of relationships are not easy to find these days. And the biggest issue we find with lawyers getting into trouble is a lack of professional guidance from those who are more experienced."

Attorneys aren't the only professionals who need mentors. In some professions, such as library and media

take mentoring to the next level

science, a good mentor will offer on-the-job knowledge that a new professional wouldn't have learned in school. "Mentors are needed to help librarians in new positions cope with challenges that are not as thoroughly covered in graduate school programs, usually in the areas of human resource management, advocacy and politics, and intellectual freedom," Wanner says.

In other fields, mentors help advance the profession by ensuring that new professionals will be committed to the cause.

"Mentoring is important to the American Osteopathic Association because

group's existence, so it's imperative that they are effective. "Mentoring is part of our organizational DNA," says Linda Hallman, CAE, executive director of the American Association of University Women.

"Visionaries founded AAUW 130 years ago. These visionaries were female college graduates who challenged the social norms of the late 19th century by daring to pursue higher education and then vowed to help other women do the same."

But for every successful association mentoring program, there are several that fail, for a number of reasons. Like ISBA's early program, many are too informal.

states and professional interest groups are generally the brainchild of one or two very energetic volunteers," says Barbara Visocan, ADA's vice president of member services. "When that person moves on, the program often falters and becomes stagnant or even ceases to exist."

The same survey showed that 92 percent of respondents were interested in a nationally facilitated mentoring program. So instead of relying on groups within the association to sustain their own programs, last year ADA launched a national mentoring program.

Forming a Program That Works

When ADA decided to implement the eMentoring program, the association's executives were determined to benchmark and find the most successful models. "We wanted to develop a system that was self-sustaining and not dependent upon any one staffer or passionate volunteer," Visocan says.

They found that an electronically based matching system would meet that requirement and also serve the diverse needs of the organization's mentors and mentees. An outside vendor maintains the system's main components, including the matching of mentors and mentees, general information about successful mentoring relationships, mentor/mentee guidelines that are "signed" electronically by both, and a final post-mentoring evaluation form. An ADA staff person serves as a liaison to the vendor.

Like ADA, other associations with successful mentoring programs have started by conducting research into models that work. Before launching Mentor Match at ISBA, Williams and a board member attended a professional mentoring conference to learn about the latest research and most successful models. Wanner at the Texas Library Association recommends books such as *Managers as Mentors* by Chip Bell and *Coaching and Mentoring for Dummies* by Marty Brounstein for an overview of the basic components of mentoring.

"Sound project-management principles also apply to mentoring programs," Wanner says. "Association leaders should

Successful mentor programs include three crucial components: an effective matching process, a systematic program for participants to follow, and an incentive to get members involved.

it provides a mechanism to assist osteopathic medical students and young osteopathic physicians (DOs) in ultimately providing high-quality patient care," says Nicole Grady, director of membership for AOA. "Building mentoring relationships with established DOs also helps build an affinity to the osteopathic profession. Mentoring allows established DOs to pass down their knowledge, advice, and the distinct philosophy of osteopathic medicine to new and future DOs."

For professionals who largely work alone, such as the independent writers who are members of the American Society of Journalists and Authors, a mentoring program is important to help connect them with colleagues across the country. "ASJA members are scattered all over the country, and many towns don't have chapters or networking opportunities," says Mickey Goodman, ASJA board member and director of the organization's Peer-to-Peer mentoring program. "Since freelancing can get pretty lonely, we thought it would be good idea to try to link those who write on similar topics, such as business, lifestyles, health, or travel."

And for a number of associations, mentoring programs are the basis for the

Other programs are ineffective because the mentor relationships never become genuine.

"Mentors and mentees need to find some common connection beyond their formal relationship, or their communications will become stale and ultimately neglected," Wanner says. "Successful programs either use a good matching system that pairs people based on common interests and values, or they give people enough time and the right environment to figure out good matches on their own. Programs that throw people together randomly or superficially will not reap as much benefit from the mentor arrangement."

Some mentoring programs are too tightly tied to specific individuals, depending on those people for their ongoing success. For instance, for several years, some of American Dietetic Association's professional interest groups, member interest groups, and state affiliates offered mentoring programs to their constituents. In 2009, a national ADA survey uncovered 18 different mentoring programs available to various groups, which was a 28 percent decrease since 2004. "The mentoring programs located in our

know what they are specifically seeking to accomplish: Are they looking for general career mentorship for emerging professionals, or is it a more targeted program? How much is the association willing to invest in travel costs for these relationships? Will there be a formal expectation of return on this investment from the mentees?"

The most successful mentor programs usually include three crucial components: an effective matching process, a systematic program for mentors and mentees to follow, and a desirable incentive to get members involved. Some of the newest programs, such as the ADA's, incorporate technology to match mentors with mentees.

The AOA's online iLearn Mentor Exchange Program allows prospective mentees to search for mentors based on a number of criteria, including location, specialty, interests, and preferred

method of communication. It's important to "make it as easy as possible for mentees to find a mentor who's right for them," Grady says. "Encouraging as many mentors as possible to sign up will give prospective mentees options and a better chance of finding a mentor who meets their needs."

While a "compatible match is a good beginning, keep in mind that relationships do not blossom overnight, even in the age of social media," Warner says. He recommends a substantial face-to-face meeting of the mentor and mentee to help jumpstart the relationship.

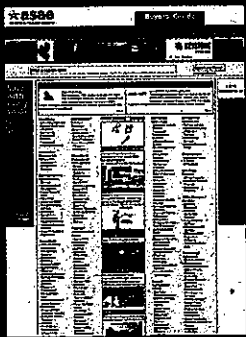
Even if participants are well matched, the relationship will often falter if there's no established process for them to follow. The ISBA program, designed to take place over a calendar year, is divided into four topics. With each topic, a mentor/mentee pair must complete several activities, some required and others optional.

For example, a pair may go to the local jail so the mentor can demonstrate how to check in to visit a client, or they may attend a state bar meeting so the mentor can introduce the mentee to others.

"The curriculum consists of story starters," Williams says. "It's meant to get the conversation started. Before, nobody knew what to talk about, and now they do. Once that relationship is started, if the mentee has a problem in their practice, they have someone to call."

While some mentoring programs may not require participants to follow a detailed curriculum, basic requirements should be established. ASJA asks its mentors and mentees to commit to the program for at least one year and to contact each other via email or phone at least once a month. Mentors are asked to "be available to offer advice or refer [their mentees] to others who can," Goodman says. "And at the conference, try to meet

Online

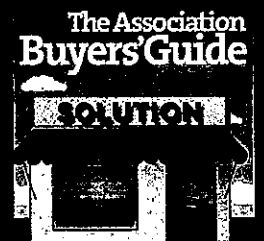


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Even the most well-designed programs won't succeed without willing participants. Some organizations have found that offering incentives for involvement can help boost the program's performance. ISBA awards 12 hours of continuing education credits to mentors and six to mentees who

complete the program. “There has to be a hook, some reason to get people in there,” Williams says.

Measuring Success

Once a program is in place, it's vital to keep tabs on its performance. At TLA, each mentoring program is evaluated in a different way.

For instance, in the program geared toward leadership, participants fill out an evaluation form upon completion. Mentors and mentees also participate in an alumni roundtable to provide ongoing anecdotal support for the mentoring effort.

For TLA's other targeted mentor initiatives, “the success of the effort is measured by the outcome,” Wanner says. “For example, mentors intended to recruit potential librarians to the profession can objectively discern if their mentee entered a formal graduate program.”

AOA's iLearn Program is new this year, and organizers plan to send surveys to participants to gauge its effectiveness. AOA executives are also contacting participants by phone and email to see how their mentoring experience is going and get firsthand testimonials.

Because ADA's new mentoring program is completely electronic, association executives asked their vendor to build evaluation components into the system. ADA staff can pull a variety of data, such as the number of participants in the program, the number of individuals seeking a match, information on successful and unsuccessful matches, and participants' self-reported evaluations of the program.

Not only can a successful mentoring program boost participants' careers, but it can also contribute to associations' strategic goals.

“The eMentoring system will enable us to enhance our members' perceived return-on-dues investment and to engage and involve both seasoned members and new practitioners,” says ADA's Visocan. “These are, of course, pivotal to our continued membership growth.” **an**

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INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

PHILADELPHIA
(THE COMPLETE PACKAGE)

If you're looking for a mentor, turn to page 69 to learn more about the Mentor Connector program offered by ASAE's CareerHQ.org.