

# MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PARKING PROFESSIONALS

By **Deara M. Person, CAPP**

It only takes a moment to look back at the history of the parking industry to see numerous reasons why it is important to keep reaching, teaching, and developing young adults to take over the business of parking. John Crosby wrote, “Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.”

I remember listening to IPI co-founder James Hunnicutt, CAPP, telling a room full of conference attendees how he began his career in the parking industry. He said he knew most of us did not plan on becoming parking professionals when we grew up. In that moment I thought about my early days in the parking industry.

Numerous researchers have found that by the year 2020 the workforce will shift and a vast number of baby boomers will retire. How can the parking industry capture the knowledge and expertise of boomers and create a sustainable future for the parking industry?



## Mentoring

Mentoring is one way to open the door to young parking professionals with innovative ideas. Solid evidence proves that mentoring programs work. Mentoring is beneficial to both the organization and staff. Organizations can use mentoring as a recruitment tool to help them develop potential employees. Some organizations hire high school and college students to replenish their talent pools more rapidly.

Many mentors have turned individuals into high-profile successful people who are working in a number of industries. For example, Hillary Clinton credits her former spiritual advisor as the person who placed her on the path to success.

What is a mentor? Some people define professional mentors as individuals who bring a variety of skills to the table that will enable them to enhance the careers of their mentees. Mentors use a number of techniques to assist their mentees, including modeling the way, encouraging, nurturing, teaching, listening, providing opportunities, and helping younger professionals build relationships that will open doors for years to come. Effective mentors provide their mentees with professional guidance to enable them to navigate their field of interest—in this case, all things parking. To make the most of this partnership, both parties must agree

to meet regularly and each person must be respectful of the other person’s time.

## Setting Expectations

At the first meeting, mentors and mentees should ask questions, establish goals, and set expectations for completing the various tasks. A written contract is a good way to ensure everyone is on the same page and provide clarity during the mentoring process. Mutual respect, shared values, and reciprocity are other essential keys to a successful mentoring relationship. In other words, the mentee must be willing to share information with the mentor and not seek to be on the receiving end of the relationship all the time.

Mentors and mentees should look to uncover any likes or dislikes they may have in common, as this will help bind them closer together. Building a sustainable mentoring relationship is important for both parties. Mentorship can be a mutually rewarding experience that both parties can enjoy.

For anyone seeking to enter the 21st century business environment, mentoring is one way to go that will enable more organizations to be sustainable and long-lasting. Baby boomers have the knowledge and expertise to help prepare the way for those who will follow in their footsteps. Mentoring, internships, or sponsoring young professionals can bring a breath of fresh air to the parking industry. **P**



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