



# Mentor Guide



MENTORING  
PROGRAM



## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the ARA Mentorship Program. Thank you for volunteering to be a mentor and advance the career of another individual in the rental industry. This document, in addition to the handbook, will help prepare you to mentor an individual enrolled in the ARA Mentorship Program. Mentoring provides an opportunity to walk next to someone as they learn the requisite skills to function in their role or advance to a new role. This relationship is based on respect and guidance as the mentee tries to perform their tasks well. You will discuss a variety of topics, give insights on how to handle situations, learn new skills and advance the mentee's career.

## MENTOR — ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND TECHNIQUES

### PROFESSIONALISM

As a mentor, you must always act professionally and ethically.

- Recognize that the relationship is reciprocal. Mentoring is about helping each other grow.
- Do not exploit the position or work ethic of the mentee. This means that you should not ask for special favors or use them for your political gain. There should be no hidden agendas.
- Never cross professional boundaries. You will be spending time together, but do not become personally involved. Do not lend money, become romantically involved, etc.
- Be careful with what kind of advice you give to the mentee. Other people, such as the mentee's supervisor, may be providing different guidance.
- Help the mentee problem solve, but do not encourage over-dependence.
- Be respectful of the mentee's uniqueness. They may discover an alternative way of doing something.
- Unless the mentee is planning on harming themselves or others, you should keep the content of your conversations confidential.
- Emphasize safety - All advice or guidance given should follow safe operating procedures.

### COMMUNICATING WITH MENTEES

Mentors and mentees must be clear and upfront about what the mentee hopes to gain from participating in the ARA Mentoring Program. How will that be accomplished? What

topics will be discussed? What kind of help will be given? What does it mean to be punctual and reliable? What boundaries need to be respected? Think about these items before you meet with the mentee for the first time.

At the same time, mentors should follow the advice of the Harvard Business Review: “Mentors need to be givers of energy, not takers of it.” This relationship is about helping the other person grow, so focus on the questions and topics at hand. Your role is to give them support and encouragement. For this reason, communicating with the mentee should be positive and constructive. Scolding and sarcasm do not build trust. Your aim is to build rapport early on and consistently. Instead of jumping right into management topics, develop a stronger relationship with the mentee by asking ice-breaking questions. “How is your day going?” is a simple way of showing that you care about the whole person, not just the mentor program.

If the mentee makes a mistake or disappoints you, how do you handle it? “Crucial Confrontations: Tools for Resolving Broken Promises, Violated Expectations, and Bad Behavior” by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler recommends the following:

- **Choose if you want to say something.** Is the problem significant enough? Will the mentee learn from natural consequences, or do you have to guide them through the understanding and processing of the mistake?
- **Don't make assumptions.** The story may be bigger or more complicated than you originally thought. Keep your mind open for other possibilities or perspectives. Ask yourself, “Why would the mentee – someone I trust and respect – do or say this?”
- **Talk with the mentee about the gap you see.** What was the expected behavior? What happened instead? Stick to facts and what they



appear to be. Maybe there is something you still don't understand about what happened.

- **Diagnose why there was a problem.** Was the mentee unmotivated, or were they unable? Figuring out the difference between motivation and ability will help you troubleshoot the issue. If they were unmotivated, ask why. There may be a good reason why they didn't want to do it. If they were unable, help them move the obstacle.
- **Make a plan.** Once the problem has been diagnosed, work with the mentee to come up with a plan. This is something you should both build and agree upon. Be very specific about accomplishing the plan, and by when.
- **Follow up with the mentee.** Prepare the mentee with a specific time and date that something should happen. Make sure to follow up.

## HOW TO GIVE INFORMATION TO MENTEES

Since you have management experience in the equipment and event rental industry, you are a valuable source of information for the mentee. Your experience provides context and history to issues in a way that deepens the mentee's understanding of the industry. Instead of focusing on the plain facts, such as how much revenue the company is making or how many pieces move through the department,



you can describe trends and patterns you see. How does this compare to a month ago? Year ago? 5 years ago? 15 years ago? Since you are employed by different companies, you can compare successes and challenges. Giving insight is one of the most valuable gifts you can give.

## HELPING MENTEES SOLVE PROBLEMS

One of your responsibilities as a mentor is to help a mentee troubleshoot problems. You must resist, however, the temptation of telling them what to do. This enables the mentee to think through the problem, brainstorm with you and choose what they are going to do. Asking the simple question, “What do you think it’ll take to fix this?” puts the onus on the mentee while respecting the fact that they are closer to the problem than you are. You can say, “You’ve been working on the problem. What do you think needs to be done?” As “Crucial Confrontations” states, “A solution that is tactically inferior, but has the full commitment of those who implement it, may be more effective than one that is tactically superior but is resisted by those who have to make it work.” The mentee needs to own their decisions, especially when it comes to hard calls, such as disciplining an employee or making a significant change in their department or company.

According to “Crucial Confrontations”, there are three pitfalls to avoid:

### 1) Helping a problem solver with a biased answer.

Avoid hard-to-resist suggestions such as, “So you haven’t been able to get in touch with the customer? Here’s an idea: Drive over to their office and wait until they return. What do you think?” Even though it sounds like a suggestion, the question actually translates into telling the mentee what to do.

**2) Hinting at a solution.** The mentee may have some good suggestions, but if you only focus on leading them to your solution, then you will miss the benefit of mutual brainstorming. Instead of shaking your head, frowning, and dropping hints, help the mentee think about the positive and negative consequences of their ideas.

**3) Telling the mentee that managers always have the solution.** This is a common misconception about management, and your task is to help help the mentee think outside of the box. Managers exist to bring the right people together and move all of them toward a common goal.

## MOTIVATING MENTEES

Motivation is an interesting concept. The mentee has to care as much, if not more, than you about completing the ARA Mentoring Program; however, there are things you can do to help the mentee along the way. First and foremost is encouragement. Confronting issues, disciplining people and making hard decisions is difficult, and if done correctly, always requires deep thought and courage. Spontaneous and specific praise has an enormous effect, especially when it comes from a respected mentor.

You can also motivate the mentee by implementing a handful of techniques suggested in “Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change” by Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler:

**1) Create direct experiences.** If a mentee is struggling with a particular aspect of their job, create an experience that opens the door to understanding. Encourage them to shadow someone in their company for the afternoon and witness a task they've never done before. Encourage them to work in a different department for a day. Having an experience is more powerful than just talking about it.

**2) Tell a meaningful story.** There's nothing like hearing how something happened, especially if it has an emotional component to it. How did the company get through a hard time? How did the company really please a customer? How did you deal with an unruly employee? How did you celebrate someone's success? Sometimes the mentee needs to hear a story about how something went wrong. When did you make a bad decision? What were the consequences? These stories are powerful because they let the mentee live vicariously through real-life scenarios.

**3) Help the mentee create strong systems.** Issues are exhausting when they happen again and again. Systems can help the mentee address an

issue the first time it happens. Does an employee come in late? What system is in place to deal with this infraction? What happens the first time shouldn't be what happens the second time. Does a machine break? What is the protocol for fixing it? Is the mentee hiring a new employee? How are new employees oriented to the company? Empower the mentee to create systems if they do not exist.

## MENTOR-MENTEE AGREEMENT

It is very important that there is a clear understanding of the expectations of this program and what the mentee plans to accomplish through this program. This should be discussed at your first meeting. At the end of that meeting, the mentor/mentee agreement form should be completed and signed by both individuals. The agreement should list the specific desired outcomes as well as how often and when you will meet.

## CONCLUSION

Thank you so much for becoming a mentor! Your mentee is fortunate to have your support.



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