



# MENTORING MAVENS

We asked NAFE members to share their stories, positive or negative, about mentor relationships. Here's a sampling from the flurry of responses—both raves and rants—we received.

## GOAL GIVING

For five years, I worked with youth at risk as a career mentor at the Career Institute in Rancho Cucamonga, CA, one of the largest youth at risk programs in California. I mentored groups of 20 young adults between 16 and 21 as a group and individually in weekly meetings for a year. It was challenging getting them to see themselves with positive futures. I

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taught them basic life and business skills, but I believe my main job was to help them hope for a future worth living. I asked them to dare to imagine what was possible and brought in role models for them to meet. Most didn't have any work experience or much to put on a resume. So I had them envision their dream job and write a resume that would land that job. We mapped out an action plan on what skills, education, and experience they needed to have that resume in real life. They emerged with the feeling that they were in charge and with high hopes that they could create their own futures.

*Amy Lynn Frost, MBA, MA  
Las Vegas, NV*

## MENTOR MISHAP

My first mentoring mistake was obtaining my mentor by accident. I approached a colleague for a referral. She misunderstood and thought I had asked her to be my mentor. I was surprised, but also ex-

cited because she was a leader in her industry. She warned me that our mentoring relationship would be demanding and structured, which I welcomed. Our backgrounds were very different, but she thought this was an advantage.

Our first couple of meetings were great. We shared ideas, and I explained the type of guidance I sought and asked how I could reciprocate. I left feeling good about the potential outcome. My mentor promised me the world: access to her circle, potential opportunities for exposure, and assistance with other projects. Unfortunately, she rarely followed through. I eventually realized the energy I was spending trying to get follow-through just was not worth the time.

Fortunately, I learned from this mistake and began researching a variety of structured executive mentoring programs. The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) recently selected me for their Diversity Executive Leadership Program (DELP), which includes a



mentoring component. DELP suggests having a team of mentors and actually helps identify key players in the industry willing to work with you, as well as defines expectations/guidelines for the mentor/mentee relationship. From my mentoring experience I've learned that sometimes the people who have been where you are going are most helpful. They know the pitfalls and can truly help you

develop a roadmap for success. Finally, I learned to follow my heart and be more politically savvy about accepting and declining potential mentoring offers.

*V.R. Small  
Brooklyn, NY*

## WARNED OFF

I've been both a mentor and mentee for more than 25 years. Being a mentee gives me the ability to leverage the knowledge of my peers and higher-level managers. Every person's experience is different, and these relationships allow me to vicariously experience their joys and disappointments. As a junior manager, my mentor helped me when I considered accepting a promotion into a new area. I knew nothing about the area. My mentor, who was a senior executive, was able to tell me that the area was scheduled for downsizing. I refused the position, and within three months the newly hired manager was out of a job.



Once I establish myself in each new position, I become a mentor to those able to benefit from my experiences. I have mentored direct reports, peers, high school students, and friends. For more than six years, I was active in the Big Brothers, Big Sisters corporate program that enabled high school students to experience corporate life. I am now a formal and informal mentor to more than 20 people.

*Sandi Webster  
Newark, NJ*