

WANT TO BE AN ARCHITECT? ...PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY



1. *starting the journey towards mentoring*

- “I believe it takes a long time to be an architect. It takes a long time to be an architect of one’s aspirations. You can become an architect professionally overnight. But to feel the spirit of architecture from which one makes his or her offering takes much longer.” Louis I. Kahn, *Between Silence and Light*.
- Webster’s New collegiate Dictionary defines mentor as “a trusted counselor or guide; a tutor or coach.” A mentor may have many roles, but most importantly is a commitment to a protégé’s professional and personal development.



2. *why should you be interested in mentoring?*

- The profession is rich in the history of the architect as Master Builder. Palladio, Sir Christopher Wren, Thomas Jefferson, H.H. Richardson, Louis Sullivan...these great architects were mentor’s to generations of younger apprentices. Decades later, the younger apprentices then skilled masters themselves took on the next generation of younger apprentices. These architects were highly trained and highly skilled. As masters, they were given great respect for creating great buildings of stature and context. Our profession and its culture flourished. Since the industrial revolution though, bringing with it high demands for “cost effective design”, low bid contractors, unskilled laborers, and unrealistic critical path time schedules, architects have lost their realm and respect as the master. There are more architects doing less considered and quality work so much faster. What has this taught our latest generation of young interns; and what has it done to our professional culture? Perhaps we can rebuild the culture of being master through conscientious mentoring and conveying of skills, best practices, and learned construction techniques.

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3. *collaborative learning---what is it?*

- Within the spirit of lifelong learning, two people in a collaborative dialogue can always learn from each other. There are many interchanges we can have where questions and experience come together to satisfy the insatiable need to learn. Mentoring as collaboration can be a very fulfilling endeavor. Who is the teacher and who is the student? It depends on who talks first.



4. *how people think*

- “I need someone at the firm who takes interest in my career growth and development; someone who understands the firm’s politics and/or dynamics to look out for me.”
- “People may leave if they feel their firm is not interested in them.”
- “A mentor can help you realize your goals.”
- “Mentor’s are like investment portfolios – diversify. Get different takes on each situation.”
- “Don’t confuse mentoring with professional development. The idea that mentoring is solely for career gain is unrealistic.”
- “Outside mentors provide a different, and sometimes more objective, view.”
- “Different points of view challenge your thinking. Make sure you consider mentors that are younger than you.”
- “E-mentoring is more likely to provide precise lessons. Set up an e-mentoring arrangement that when a situation comes up it is OK to e-mail.”

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5. *can anyone be a mentor?*

- As father to son, older sister to younger sister, teacher to student, anyone who can share knowledge, wisdom and experience is a mentor. The mentorship experience though is based on a relationship of trust, needs, and a collaborative dialogue to be successful. For architecture, a seasoned mentor is a professional possessing high qualities, exceptional skills, and a well-rounded knowledge of the architecture profession. In the same fashion, a draftsman, skilled in the use of variety of computer software, can be just as effective as a mentor to the senior partner in the firm wanting to know how to prepare a power point presentation.



6. *developing a proactive attitude*

- You can make a difference by becoming a mentor to a protégé. You have the opportunity to help prepare a future generation of architects for the challenges ahead. A protégé should be like a dry sponge who has an insatiable desire to learn...about design, detailing, talking to a client, writing a proposal or writing a specification book. You can make a difference in that learning process and at the same time in the profession of architecture. Both the Mentor and the Protégé need to be positive and proactive to have a successful experience.



7. *coach, advocate, or mentor?*

- In the current process of professional development, the Intern Development Program (IDP) is the recognized vehicle that gives the protégé the needed training criteria. There are two sides of the intern's mentorship experience - the IDP sponsor is more of a coach whereas the IDP Advisor is more of an advocate. The sponsor tells the intern what plays to carry out, the Advisor tells how to win the game.

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8. *collaboration of mentor & protégé—the role of each*

- A mentor advises and directs others in reaching their potential; through teaching and coaching they encourage and nurture.
- A protégé, as a dry sponge, is to ask why and how, and take in all the information possible until they can do it again.



9. *ingredients of mentorship*

- It is in every one of us to be wise. An attribute of that wisdom is to surrender to the knowledge you have been given and trust in it. If you accept these gifts of learning, you are participating in one of the greatest attributes of professionalism...giving back.
- Not everybody should be a mentor. For some communication is a problem, for others, rigid thinking or a narrow approach to practice may make a mentor undesirable.