

## WORKING WITH A MENTOR

CHAZ BRUEGGEMANN, BOVIS LEND LEASE

Nowadays us marketing folks in the A/E/C industry are overloaded with websites, online libraries, and organizations screaming they have the “answers” we seek. With so much information, how do you know what is right for you? Furthermore, how do you navigate the various challenges in this industry in order to get the most out your career?

One way to weed through the good and bad information is to use the guidance of a mentor to aim you in the right direction. I joined the SMPS Georgia mentor/mentee program about a year ago and my mentor, Diana Baycura, has been instrumental in helping me decipher the craziness of the A/E/C industry.

### Here are some of the benefits of being a mentee:

- **Focus** – With so much information, sometimes it can be a little challenging to know which sources are valuable and which are not. With the right mentor, you instantly have access to years of experience and someone to streamline your career growth by helping you focus on specific areas. Your mentor may recommend supplemental reading to facilitate your growth or remind you it is okay to take a break, to refresh your focus.
- **Friendship** – You may not instantly click with your mentor, but when you do, it is a truly wonderful experience that helps you easily handle the critiques and guidance your mentor offers.
- **Attitude** – I can tell you that having a mentor has made my work attitude better. It’s nice to voice concerns with someone who’s been there and can give you positive actions to improve.
- **Creativity** – A mentor is a great person to bounce ideas off of. Sometimes it can be intimidating to present new ideas to Principals and Senior Staff so it’s nice to have a third party who is not connected with your firm give you feedback. I value this aspect of my mentor relationship most.
- **Confidence** – My mentor has really helped me feel more confident in my abilities and the skill set that I bring to my company. Sometimes, being marketers, we can feel like we’re on the outside of the A/E/C industry but my mentor has helped me find creative ways to incorporate my skills into the corporate culture of my firm.

### What are some tips in working with a mentor?

- **Set a trial period**– When you first begin meeting with your mentor, before you know each other very well, set a time limit for the initial relationship. For example, you may want to set a 30 day or a 60 day trial period. After this trial period, re-access if you like working with the person. If you *don’t*, there’s nothing wrong with that. Some people just don’t click. Be honest with the process, and you’ll get more out of it. Get to work to find another mentor. Just because one didn’t work out, doesn’t mean that there isn’t someone else out there that you may work better with.
- **Be consistent** – Your mentor can’t help you unless you’re meeting regularly. It’s hard for someone to gauge you unless they see you regularly. The more consistent you are in meeting, the easier time your mentor will have in assessing where you are, addressing issues, and helping you grow professionally.
- **Your mentor is not your therapist** – If you need therapy, see a therapist.
- **Your mentor is not your parent** – If you need your parent, call your mom or dad...they probably miss you.
- **Set a structure with your mentor** – When you work with your mentor, make sure you are both aware of the kind of commitment you both want. Do you read and discuss relevant books, have topic questions, etc. Whatever your goal, make sure you are clear with your mentor. My mentor regularly gives me books to read because I am a voracious reader. So is my mentor and she has given me a lot of great books to read and then we discuss them.

If you haven’t already found a mentor, I highly recommend it. Or, if you’ve been working with a mentor for several years, perhaps it might be a good time to switch. There is so much knowledge in the Georgia Chapter of SMPS, make sure you get out and experience it by getting to know someone new!