

Ramblings of a Title Man

Description

On Mentorship

This month, I was inspired by a colleague who is in the process of changing jobs. This person is an industry veteran and took the time to make a beautiful post on LinkedIn to mention the mentors and teachers he has had in his many years in the title business. His post made me think about the mentors in my life and how we can use mentorship to improve the quality of our industry.

Mentorship is defined as: *“The influence, guidance or direction given by a mentor. In an organizational setting, a mentor influences the personal and professional growth of a mentee. Most traditional mentorships involve having senior employees mentor more junior employees, but mentors do not necessarily have to be more senior than the people they mentor. What matters is that mentors have experience that others can learn from.”* (mirriam-webster.com)

We experience mentorship in many settings: Church, professional organizations, charities we participate in and, of course, work. Our own professional growth is heavily influenced by the mentors and leaders we encounter on our journey.

Because the title business is primarily an apprentice-learn-on-the-job type of industry, there are no formal mentor programs. Most professionals began their careers in title insurance by chance, without any formal training for this industry. While some larger companies do have mentorship programs, the vast majority of companies in title do not – so we find ourselves needing more people who are willing to accept the mantle of being mentors for newer generations of title professionals.

How do you go about imparting the knowledge and experience to those with whom you come into contact? Adapted from Sheryl Sandberg’s book *Lean In*, here are four good practices that may help:

- Look for people you can mentor. Individuals just starting out in our industry are ideal candidates, for many of them do not yet know the complex mish-mash of laws and regulations that govern our business. Find a junior associate who is interested in your area of the title industry. They may be experiencing a situation you have already experienced in your journey.
- Invest time. Scheduled meetings and follow-up calls are not the way to go. Instead, be willing to set aside both professional and personal time to impart your knowledge. Most importantly, listen to what a mentee has to say. Impromptu lunches, coffee at a conference or meeting and a quick call to say hello can go a long way to this investment of time to your mentee.
- Be honest. Open, honest feedback is often difficult to give, especially when the feedback is critical. Be willing to listen and help someone critically analyze their actions and their planned professional direction, and help them see the pitfalls and possible land mines. Holding back criticism or guidance when you know an idea won’t work doesn’t help a mentee.

- Personalize mentorship. Don't just provide advice and experience; go out of your way to help promote your mentee. Link to and recommend them on social media, recommend them for jobs and promotions if they are in your same organization. Make it a point to introduce them to influential members of your circle.

I have been very lucky in my life to have many mentors who have shaped my career in the title industry. Even some of my father's mentors have helped me along the way. I have encountered wonderful leaders from this industry who have imparted their knowledge, their wisdom and, most importantly, their time to help me succeed. I owe them a sincere thank-you. I hope you will be inspired to make the most of your experience and help mentor the next generation of title professionals.

I realized that searching for a mentor has become the professional equivalent of waiting for Prince Charming. We all grew up on the fairy tale "Sleeping Beauty," which instructs young women that if they just wait for their prince to arrive, they will be kissed and whisked away on a white horse to live happily ever after. Now, young women are told that if they can just find the right mentor, they will be pushed up the ladder and whisked away to the corner office to live happily ever after. Once again, we are teaching women to be too dependent on others.

Sheryl Sandberg, 1969-living, author of *Lean In*, chief operating officer and member of the Facebook board of directors, philanthropist and public advocate for mentorship in business



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Vice President Strategic Agency Manager, NORTH AMERICAN TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY (NATIC). Michael has been serving the title industry since 1989. Michael received his Bachelor's

degree from the University of Missouri and has previously owned and operated a large title agency in Missouri. Prior to joining NATIC, he was national agency manager for two different regional underwriters. As an active member of ALTA, Michael serves on several committees and has previously served on the agents's section to the board of governors. Michael has been a speaker for several state land title association conventions and helps provide CE classes to title agents in the Midwest. Michael has a wealth of knowledge about the history of the land title industry in the United States and publishes a monthly article titled: "The Ramblings of a Title Man." In 2007 he was recognized as "Top 40 under 40" by The Title Report. In 2020, his second book, titled "The Ramblings of a Title Man" Second Edition, was released. His family has celebrated 100 years of service to the land title industry and published an archival web site <http://www.holden100.info> to celebrate the century milestone for his family.

Category

1. Human Resources
2. Uncategorized

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