

The GAWDA Mentorship Challenge



9 conversations
9 months

Our Challenge to the Industry

The future of our industry will not be shaped by technology, acquisitions, or market conditions alone. It will be shaped by whether experienced leaders choose to develop the next generation. That is why we are launching the first-ever GAWDA Mentorship Challenge.

This is not a complicated leadership program. It is a commitment from experienced leaders to share what they have learned, from emerging leaders to invest in their own growth, and from our industry to grow stronger one relationship at a time.

How It Works

1. GAWDA members will review the Mentorship Commitment requirements and then complete the application survey for consideration.
2. The GAWDA Mentorship Taskforce will review all applicants to pair mentors and mentees based on experience, interests, company type, professional goals, and areas where each person can both give and gain perspective.
3. While some pairings may follow a traditional mentor-mentee structure, the goal is mutual value. Each participant brings experience, questions, ideas, and perspective to the conversation.
4. Once connected, mentorship pairs will meet monthly to accomplish Mentorship Topics and Activities. This document includes examples of conversation topics, but you do not have to stick to the list.
5. At the end of each month, participants will receive a brief online check-in on takeaways and monthly topics.

Those who complete at least 9 conversations and 8 items from the Mentorship Topics and Activities will be recognized at the following Annual Convention as GAWDA Mentorship Challenge Graduates. Outstanding relationships will also be highlighted and celebrated.

The Mentorship Commitment

This program isn't about being perfect. It's about being present.

Every mentor and mentee agrees to these simple commitments.

1. Show Up

Commit to one meaningful conversation each month. If life gets in the way, reschedule. Consistency matters more than perfection.

2. Be Curious

Come ready to ask thoughtful questions, listen with intention, and learn from one another. The best conversations are often the ones you didn't plan.

3. Keep It Confidential

What's shared between mentor and mentee stays between mentor and mentee unless both people agree otherwise. Trust is the foundation of every great mentoring relationship.

4. Be Honest

Celebrate successes. Share mistakes. Ask difficult questions. The most valuable conversations usually aren't the easiest ones.

5. Respect Each Other

Respect each other's time, experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds. You don't have to agree on everything to learn from one another.

6. Focus on Growth

This isn't consulting. It isn't coaching. It isn't recruiting. It's two professionals investing in each other's development and in the future of our industry.

7. Have Fun

Some of the best professional relationships begin with a single conversation. Enjoy the journey, celebrate progress, and remember that every great leader was once learning from someone else.

Mentorship Topics and Activities

Throughout the 9-month program, each mentor-mentee pair will meet at least once per month and complete at least eight activities from the list below.

Some activities are discussion-based, while others encourage participants to take action, attend an event, make an introduction, or apply what they have learned.

Participants may choose the activities that are most relevant to their goals and are encouraged to follow the conversation wherever it naturally leads.

Relationship Building

- Share your career story
- Discuss your career path and key turning points
- Discuss how to build trust with customers, coworkers, and industry peers
- Talk through how to navigate generational differences in the workplace
- Share advice for building a strong personal reputation in the industry
- Invite your partner to join a Peer Mentorship meeting
- Attend a GAWDA event together
- Make a meaningful industry introduction for your partner

Self-Awareness & Personal Effectiveness

- Identify personal strengths and areas for development
- Discuss confidence, self-doubt, and imposter syndrome
- Discuss how stress affects your communication and decision-making
- Discuss how to respond to criticism or setbacks
- Review habits that improve or limit professional effectiveness
- Create a plan for managing time, energy, and priorities

Business & Industry Understanding

- Review an organizational chart
- Discuss how different departments work together
- Tour a facility
- Discuss how strategic decisions are made in your company
- Discuss an industry trend affecting the future
- Discuss the unique opportunities and challenges of working in a family business

Career Growth

- Review your current role and future career goals
- Discuss what skills are needed for the next step
- Identify the experiences, skills, or relationships needed for your next career step
- Discuss how to prepare for leadership before you officially have the title
- Review a resume, LinkedIn profile, or professional bio
- Practice a difficult conversation or leadership scenario
- Discuss work-life balance and career sustainability
- Discuss long-term career goals and the legacy you want to build
- Create a 12-month career action plan

Participants are encouraged to follow the conversation wherever it naturally leads.

Thank you for participating in the GAWDA Mentorship Challenge.