

The Mentorship Impact – Panel Discussion with IAMCP Women in Technology

Shann McGrail
Devreve Inc.



I recently had the opportunity to host a webinar panel on the topic of “The Mentorship Impact” with IAMCP’s Women in Technology Community (WIT). WIT is a worldwide group of women from the Microsoft Partner channel focused on supporting each other to achieve professional goals and on attracting to, and retaining women in, the technology field.

The focus of the panel discussion was to explore mentorship themes:

- Defining Mentorship
- Finding a mentor and building the relationship
- Addressing the pitfalls
- The impact of mentoring on one’s career

The real power of the discussion came from exploring the points of view of different mentoring experiences of the panel. Sharing experiences and thoughts on mentorship, the dynamic and engaging panel comprised:

Meet Our Panelists



Shann McGrail
Host
Devreve Inc.



Jennifer Didier
Global
IAMCP WIT & CEO
Directions Training



Jane Blaufus
The Blaufus Group
Inc.



Misty Fisher
IAMCP WIT Seattle &
KBA, Inc.

- Jennifer Didier, IAMCP WIT Global Chair. Jennifer is President at Directions Training Center in Chicago and a long time mentor involved in STEM related programs in Chicago;
- Jane Blaufus of The Blaufus Group Inc. in the Toronto area. Jane is an author, speaker, and coach with experience in a variety of mentoring programs;
- Misty Fisher, Operations Manager at KBA Inc. in Seattle. Misty is an active member of IAMCP WIT chapter in Seattle.

Defining Mentorship

There was strong agreement from Jennifer, Misty, and Jane that mentorship is a committed professional relationship that can significantly enhance one's career by providing the opportunity to explore different options and perspectives. It was also observed that in most cases, the mentor learns as much in the process as the mentee.

It was noted that mentoring does not always have to be a 1:1 long-term relationship. Mentorship can happen at any time with interactions of varying forms. The subtlest of interactions can be of the most value. For example, during the course of the day someone may provide an observation or tip that can cause us to think in a new way which in turn could lead to a profound, meaningful change for the better. We just have to work to ensure that the grind of the day-to-day does not prevent us from actively receiving feedback and opening our mind to new possibilities.

Tip: Stay open to mentorship in the moment

Finding a Mentor



A running theme of the discussion was “Just Ask”. When it comes to searching for a mentor, often we can be nervous about making a request and so we end up avoiding it. To overcome this, the advice from the panel was to make sure you do your homework first—and then, just ask. At worst, the odds of getting a “yes” are 50/50. Even if you get a “no” because a potential mentor is too busy to give the relationship time and attention, he or she may refer you to someone else. Either way, there is no downside to making the request.

Misty described the IAMCP WIT Seattle's successful "[speed mentoring](#)" event. She talked about it as a fast, dynamic way for would-be mentees to meet a variety of potential mentors and quickly determine whether there may be a fit.

On the topic of doing one's homework to find a mentor, Jane offered this advice:

- Start with understanding your intention to get a mentor: what do you want to accomplish and what do you need to succeed?
- Develop a short list of people you admire and find out more about them.
- Consider what you have to offer a mentor and make sure you do not underestimate your value to a mentor.
- Again, with your homework done... just make the ask!

Tip: Just Ask!

Building a Relationship

When it comes to getting the best results from a mentoring relationship, mentees need to think about what they want to get from each meeting and work hard to be accountable to their mentors. The panel offered the following as a suggestion for how mentees can approach meetings:

- Determine the agenda.
- Identify the challenges to work through and what guidance is required.
- Figure out what new ideas you can introduce.
- Report back on follow-up items noted and any commitments made during the meeting.

Jennifer offered up that while it is great for a mentee to ask a mentor for help solving a problem, responsibility falls first to the mentee to give consideration to potential solutions and then to work with a mentor to review possible outcomes.

Tip: Prepare, prepare, prepare

Problems & Pitfalls

Like any relationship, mentoring can have its ups and downs. Some of the potential pitfalls include not identifying development goals, lack of follow-up, abandoning the relationship, or finding oneself in a match that is simply not working.

Jennifer spoke about a situation where she felt she was not getting what she needed. Her solution was to voice her feelings and state her observations. Her mentor had not realized this was happening. From there, the two of them were able to work together to get their relationship back on track.

When it comes to moving out of a mentoring relationship, Jane spoke about “professional disassociation”. In essence, do not forget that it is a small world—make sure to step away in a professional manner and talk with your mentor or mentee about those steps and what happens next. You have to manage your reputation and that of your mentoring partner carefully and with respect.

Tip: Voice your opinion and feelings for better results

The Mentoring Impact

Our panelists concluded the discussion by offering up what mentoring has done for them personally and professionally. The main themes revolved around the power of words and conversation to inspire confidence and how the investment in mentoring is one of the best things you can do for yourself. It can have a profound impact on your life, inspiring you to learn, every day.

As a closing thought, the panelist expressed one final but all important takeaway. If you have received help from someone else, be thankful... and pay it forward.

Tip: Give back and pay it forward

The full recording of the webinar is available at this link.

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5409717426394428674>