

Laddership: Integrating Leadership and Mentoring

Contributed by the AIA Alliances Department

September 2007

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SUMMARY

Emerging architects in the Seattle area are finding guidance and support through an informal peer mentoring program called Laddership. The program utilizes shared personal experiences to provide a sense of responsibility and direction. The program promotes interns and architect-mentors to continue their education and encourage each other in their professional and personal growth.

IDP MENTORSHIP

The Intern Development Program (IDP), overseen by the National Council Architecture Registration Board (NCARB), encourages interns to seek out mentors. As defined by NCARB a mentor is “a registered architect, usually outside the intern’s firm, with whom the intern meets periodically to review training progress and discuss career objectives.” However, due to differences within profession practice and nuances of the path to licensure some interns have found mentoring in peer groups as an effective way to receive guidance as their career advances. Furthermore, peer groups facilitated by a licensed architect can provide a range of perspectives and experience levels.

LADDERED MENTORING

Laddered mentoring acknowledges that any person further along in the process of professional development can assist those on a “lower rung.” Taking this concept and a similar mentoring model by Rob Rosenfeld, Grace Kim, AIA, principal of Schemata Workshop in Seattle, began mentoring a small group of interns.

For Kim’s group, the laddered mentoring model became a peer mentoring program in which a licensed architect guides five or six interns to licensure. By having interns at different points in their career (or rungs on the ladder) everyone contributes a unique perspective. Recent graduates learn how to maximize their mentor and supervisor relationships; interns can find out how others completed difficult IDP training unit areas; and Architect Registration Examination (ARE) candidates

can discuss the exam with the people who have just completed it.

The program became known as Laddership after a former participant noted the importance of *leadership* in their *laddered mentoring* program. Each intern rotates as leader by planning the group’s monthly meeting, selecting both a topic and meeting location. The licensed architect’s role is to provide insight as needed, not to lead the discussion.

LADDERSHIP’S SUCCESS STRATEGIES

The Laddership program was created informally by Kim in response to interns’ requests for a mentor. Kim has facilitated the creation of three more groups in the Seattle area as more interns and architects express interest in participating and is working with the local AIA chapter to evolve it into a chapter-wide program.

Kim believes the program’s success lies first in the size of the groups—by keeping them small it is easier to maintain a focused dialogue—and second in the shared responsibility of leading each session. Some firms use a peer mentoring model as a part of their in-house intern support program. The Laddership program creates a unique growth opportunity by requiring that each group *not* include coworkers or close friends this ensures a level of open, candid dialogue that may be difficult if office politics or friendships temper constructive criticism/ observations. Venturing out and meeting new people enables interns to expand their support network and mentors are able to keep abreast of an intern’s perspective while learning ways to better inspire and motivate their own staff.

CONCLUSION

Those interested in starting a peer mentoring group like Laddership should contact their IDP State Coordinator. She or he will be able to provide mentoring contacts in the local area. The AIA Mentoring Web page can provide additional resources.

More information on the Laddership program and a sample of past discussion topics can be found in Grace Kim's *The Survival Guide to Architectural Internship and Career Development* (Wiley Books).

RESOURCES

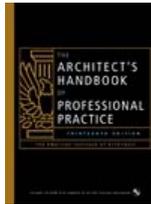
More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 03.02.03 Seek Out the Many Rewards of Mentoring
- 03.02.11 Making the Match: Formal Mentorship Requires Goals and Guidelines
- 07.06.01 Why Put Off 'Till Tomorrow What Someone Else Can Do Today?

For More Information on This Topic

See also "Staff Development," by Laurie Dreyer-Hadley and Kathleen C. Maurel, Assoc. AIA, *The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 9, page 242.



See also the 14th edition of the *Handbook*, which can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by email at bookstore@aia.org.



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Key Terms

- Practice
- Personnel management
- Employment
- Professional development