Chemistry and communication are key ingredients to any successful relationship, and they are just as important to a mentoring program. When the Charlotte Area Compensation Council (CACC) (www.caccweb.com), a North Carolina membership group for compensation professionals, set up its first mentoring program for its members, the participants and program leaders were looking for more than just another professional contact and career guidance. After a year of monthly meetings and lots of questions exchanged, the result is a lasting mentor-mentee bond and soaring engagement in the profession and local network.

The CACC mentoring program originated as another benefit to offer the 145 active members. And it has proven to be one of the most valuable.

“We had identified new members who were in their first few years of being compensation professionals, and we had a nice balance of senior-level compensation professionals,”

The mentor/mentee matching process used techniques similar to speed dating, where mentees spent about 10 minutes interviewing potential mentors.

The mentoring program focuses on career development instead of only job training and organizational success.

Members say the program helps build on what they have and makes them more aware of things they need.
In a workplace, mentoring may be more focused on job training or organizational success. But CACC focused on the career development of a compensation professional.

Daryl Bennett, CCP, CBP, GRP, SPHR, CACC director at large, said, “We saw an opportunity to do something for our members.”

The matching process was not unlike the techniques of “speed dating.” A program kickoff reception had mentees spend about 10 minutes interviewing each potential mentor. Mentees gave Bennett their top three potential mentors, and most participants got their top choice.

Bennett, the vice president of human resources at Transamerica Reinsurance Division, had implemented mentoring programs in other organizations he worked for, so he had a framework for what would work well. Whether in a workplace or association environment, Bennett recognized that less experienced professionals often need an avenue to ask for help or learn from the experience of others. In a workplace, that mentoring may be more focused on job training or organizational success. But with a unique member association mentoring program, CACC focused on the career development of a compensation professional.

June Pryor’s company does not have a formal mentoring program, so the new opportunity from CACC was one she could not pass up. “I wanted to get some reassurance on how I’ve used certain compensation practices and learn from the experiences of a mentor,” she said. “I also manage people, so getting feedback on if I’m being open, if I’m doing things the right way, was important.”

The compensation manager for Food Lion LLC said she felt enlightened by the experience. “I became more confident with myself and the skills and knowledge I already had,” Pryor said. “It’s not going to change you 180 degrees, but it’s going to build on what you have and make you more aware of things you don’t have.”

When Jean Gilreath, CCP, CBP, GRP, SPHR, left the corporate world to start her own consulting firm, JS Gilreath Consulting Inc., one of her goals was to start giving back to the HR profession in a larger way. Being a mentor with CACC fulfilled that goal.

“It’s been really rewarding. We’ve developed a relationship that is about sharing — of ideas, thoughts and experiences,” she said. “It’s not just limited to compensation, either. It goes well beyond that. We’ve talked about career development, career opportunities and HR issues in general.”

For Megan Blankemeyer, associate consultant at Findley Davies, the program offered the learning opportunities and network that any new professional could use. “I’ve only been in the working world for two years, so it’s a learning tool to know about the career path of my mentor. I also wanted to get to know other compensation professionals within the Charlotte marketplace,” she said. “I run into them at meetings and classes in the area. All of the mentors in the program are great and willing to help. They are good resources to tap.”

CACC plans to expand the mentoring program to more members for a second year based on interest from current mentors, mentees and new participants. Bennett hopes that within a year or two the council will follow up with each mentee to evaluate long-term benefits of the program.

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