

HOW*TO



How do you mentor the next generation?

Mentoring is a relationship in which a more experienced or knowledgeable person guides a less experienced or less knowledgeable person through an activity or event in their life. While the mentor can be older or younger than the mentee, they must have a specific expertise which qualifies them.

This approach is similar to coaching but in coaching the goals and the plan of action are often set by the coach. In a mentoring relationship, the mentee sets the goals and formulates the plan under the guidance of the mentor. For the most part, we don't even consider this more formal method of instruction as necessary in a family business. Often the kids grow up helping and working in the farm or ranch business. It is assumed that they will pick-up the skills necessary to help with the daily crop or livestock operations; even learn how to operate the business.

We have likely all heard farmers or ranchers exclaim "They just need to get out there on that tractor and figure it out! That's how I learned!" Unfortunately, many opportunities are missed for passing on the hard-won knowledge and experience gained through years of struggling to hold things together when this approach is used.

A Formalized Mentoring Program

Why is a more formalized approach needed? Humans are creatures of habit. If we do not take specific actions to do things differently, then we tend to continue along the same path. Likewise, when looking to make a

concerted effort to pass on management skills, having a formal plan provides guidance, follow-up, accountability, and a way to determine whether the effort has been successful or not.

There are many methods for mentoring that could be considered when implementing a mentoring program for a farm or ranch. These include:

- One-on-one mentoring, with one mentor and one mentee;
- Group mentoring, one mentor and several mentees;
- Team mentoring, one mentee and several mentors;
- Peer mentoring, where peers mentor each other; or even
- Online mentoring or e-mentoring, facilitated via internet or email.

If you decide to pursue a formal mentoring plan, don't feel trapped by a particular model. Instead consider adapting and adjusting as needed for your situation. You may find that parts of these strategies or a combination will best suit your situation. However, there are several important steps that should be followed:

1. Identify the purpose of your mentoring relationship: as the mentee, what do you want to gain from the relationship? What are the goals and expectations for the mentor?
2. Determine the format of mentoring you would like to put in place: What environment would work best for the mentee to learn? Are there other people you can include in the process to make it more effective?
3. Brainstorm potential activities or discussions: This is an opportunity for the mentee to set some initial goals, but allow for the mentor to also add things to the list. Define the important topics to address.
4. Create a structure for your mentoring relationship: when and where will you meet? How often? Set boundaries on how and when you can contact each other. Where will you plan to visit each other or not?
5. Define success for the mentorship: both the mentor and the mentee should take time to define success for themselves. Have a contingency plan in case the relationship does not seem to be working out.
6. Commit to the mentoring relationship: A successful mentoring relationship requires mutual trust and respect. Each person must agree to be on time and prepared for meetings, as well as fulfil any obligations agreed upon throughout the mentoring process.

The Mentor/Mentee Relationship

In addition to mutual trust and respect, there are other specific qualities for each participant that can help make the experience valuable to both parties. A mentor who is willing to share advice but also act as a sounding board, can provide feedback while also knowing the correct questions to ask, and can balance sharing experiences and suggestions while still allowing for active learning by the mentee.



The mentee, on the other hand, must be willing to interact openly and honestly, ask questions, accept responsibility, and learn from mistakes. The mentee must be allowed enough flexibility to make mistakes and learn from them, while also taking criticism graciously. Both the mentor and the mentee must be willing to try new methods throughout the process. It is also important that the mentee be allowed a sense of ownership and involvement, otherwise they will feel like they are just another employee.



What Does Success Look Like?

We would all like success to mean that the next generation has successfully taken over the business and maintained it, (gulp...) even making it better! But what do we do if that is not the result? Is failure really failure or is there something that can be learned from that too?


As mentioned earlier, this process should allow both the mentor and the mentee to outline and determine what indicates success in the mentoring process for themselves. The mentor and the mentee should share this with each other. It is also important that they discuss how to proceed if it appears that the relationship is not working out. Have a contingency plan. One or the other party may find that you don't work well together. The mentee may even discover that the business is not a good fit for them. Instead of frustration, be grateful that you found out now, rather than later when potentially much more time, effort, money, etc. has been invested. As much or more can be learned about yourself, your passions, your desires, dreams and goals from finding something is not a good fit, as can be learned from finding your niche.


There are many challenges when running a family business and finding just the right way to involve family members in the process can be daunting. A properly-constructed mentoring program might be a way to organize and formalize this process, providing the necessary guidance and format to an otherwise difficult process. A successful mentoring program can help individuals gain a better understanding about various roles within the business, and the associated responsibilities. It can help them identify where they best fit in the bigger picture and can help them to gain the skills to be successful, perhaps inspiring them to continue in the learning process.

Online Module

AGLEGACY.org hosts a set of online modules to allow individuals and families to explore legacy concepts further. Modules are available free of charge to all who are willing to register to participate (self-registration is available 24/7).

Modules, posted in Moodle courseware, offer the opportunity for individuals to engage anonymously around the topic of communication. Sections of this module provide participants the chance to interact with one another, explore the topic of mentoring the next generation and what that means, discuss strategies that work and those that have not, and test their knowledge about available resources. Each module includes several components to allow participants to engage the topic from several different perspectives.

 AG LEGACY
[How do YOU mentor the next generation?](#)

 This online component offers the opportunity for individuals and families to engage anonymously around the topic of mentoring. Sections of this module provide participants the chance to interact with one another, explore the topic of mentoring and what it means, discuss strategies that work and those that have not, and test their knowledge about available resources.

Best Practices -

Best Practices begins with a short recorded presentation on the topic. Slides with narration is one format, but materials are also available in audio-only (MP3) format, as well as a version with the slides and accompanying narration as text, for those more comfortable reading the presentation offered. A short Q&A session offers participants the opportunity to hear others' questions and the presenter's response.

MENTORING Best Practices

Best Practices: offers the chance to learn when others teach. In this section you will be able to review a recorded version of the live webinar and view the slides presented, complete with the speaker's notes.

MENTORING Ideas to Build On

Ideas to Build On: offers the chance to learn by observing others. In this section you will have the opportunity to engage in a discussion forum. You will have the chance to share what has worked for you and to learn what strategies others have used and how they worked as you each react to the posted discussion questions.

worked for others. In addition, you might also learn what strategies others have used and how they worked as you each react to the posted discussion questions.

Ideas to Build On -

Ideas to Build On offers discussion questions for families or individuals to respond to. These responses might include relating what has worked for you or stories you have heard of techniques that have

Tips for Success -

The Tips for Success section offers a set of AGLEGACY newsletters for further reading, as well as a chance to teach others about resources you are aware of, approaches you have tried and that have worked, or to describe methods that families you are familiar with have used. In this way, you may uncover new ideas for yourself or help others refine an approach they might try.

MENTORING Tips for Success

Tips for Success: provides a chance for participants to teach others about strategies that have worked. In this section you can teach others about resources you are aware of, approaches you have tried and that have worked, or describe methods that families you are familiar with have used. In this way, you may uncover new ideas for yourself or help others refine an approach they might try.


MENTORING Practice

Practice: allows participants the chance to learn by practicing the concepts covered previously. Practice may include completing an assignment, submitting a document you've prepared for comment, or checking your knowledge level with a short quiz.

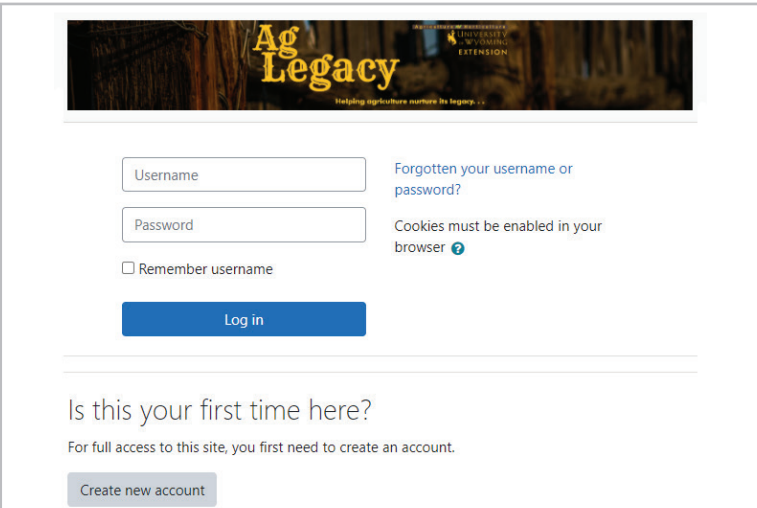
Practice -

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ACCESS:

To access the online module, point your browser to AGLEGACY.org. Click on the Modules tab (at the top) and select any module from the list with a Moodle icon. 

Click a title to begin your registration process if you have never registered for an Ag Legacy module before. Then click the Create New Account button to enter your registration information. An email message will be sent to the address you enter that includes a link allowing you to finalize your registration once you complete the form. Now login and enjoy your AGLEGACY online module!



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