



NORTH AMERICAN PERFORMING
ARTS MANAGERS and AGENTS

NAPAMA GUIDE TO MENTORING

Excerpt – For Mentors

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FOR MENTORS

Reasons to be a Mentor:

1. Remember your first conference. It didn't make a lot of sense, did it?
2. It provides a soft landing for New Colleagues, helping them feel like part of a collegial community, and helps them to be more successful.
3. It feels great to help people out.
4. The best way to get better at what you do is to teach it.
5. It strengthens our field to bring in the New Colleagues and get them up to speed more quickly.
6. The relationships that we develop with our New Colleagues can often last for years and can lead to unexpected collaborations.

PRE-CONFERENCE:

1. Sign up to be a mentor when you register for the conference.
2. Watch for New Colleague assignments from the conference. If you haven't heard anything from the conference a month before the conference, get in touch to make sure that they assign you at least one New Colleague. Usually the conferences are good about matching up Mentors with New Colleagues, but mistakes happen. If you've only been assigned one New Colleague and you feel like you can handle more, volunteer to take another one or two. Many New Colleagues register late for the conferences so you can be there to help out some of these stragglers.
3. Reach out to your New Colleagues right away by phone or email, first to let them know that you're there for them, and second to help them prepare for the conference. Very often they don't realize how much preparation is necessary for a successful conference experience. In all cases, you can help the New Colleague focus on their overall goals for the conference, whether it's booking dates for their series, catching up on the latest immigration and tax laws, seeing some new dance works, or meeting some phone colleagues in person. A good focus will help them prepare in advance, and the advance planning is critical to a successful conference.
4. Depending on whether your New Colleagues are presenters, agents, artists or managers, here are some tips you can share with them:
 - a. Presenters: Help them focus on what they're interested in booking or exploring. Help them figure out which artists and agencies to try and talk with. Help them sort through and prioritize the various showcase options. Suggest ways to network with other presenters to get ideas, do block booking, and learn tricks of the trade. Tell them how to use available exhibitor directories before getting to the conference, and how to arrange meetings with agents.

- b. Agents, managers & artists: talk about the value of advance contact and scheduling meetings with presenters. Explain exhibit hall etiquette and discuss booth setup. Talk about all of the ways to make use of both structured time and social time to build relationships that lead to business. Talk about any specific marketing opportunities that may be available at the conference, such as Speed Leads, pitch sessions, etc. as well as how to sign up in advance for these opportunities. Stress the long-term nature of the relationships in this business, encourage patience, and temper any short-term expectations. Point out presenter directories and other information available to help sort and prioritize which presenters to try and meet with. Also talk about protocol for artists looking to find representation, and strategies for approaching agencies.
 - c. Showcases: discuss strategies for getting presenters to attend, for structuring successful showcase performances, and being clear on overall goals for showcasing. Talk about handout materials to have available at the showcase and the booth, advance mailings. For private showcases, discuss pros and cons of providing food and drink, contracting with sound and lighting companies, and other showcase production issues. Lay the groundwork for turning showcases into bookings.
 - d. Everyone: encourage your New Colleague to attend the New Colleague session on the first day of the conference, along with any other sessions especially appropriate to New Colleagues. In fact, encourage them to attend everything they can, and meet everyone they can. Encourage them to be back in touch with you before the conference as questions come up.
5. It can't be stressed enough: advance preparation will really transform a New Colleague's experience at the conference. Without advance preparation, many New Colleagues arrive at the opening session and don't even know what questions to ask. Help them avoid this by taking the time to help them prepare, and do it far enough in advance that the preparation and planning can be meaningful.

AT THE CONFERENCE:

At the conference New Colleague Orientation session:

1. Arrive early to the session. There will be a short pre-session just for the Mentors. If you've already read through this packet, you'll be largely prepared, but it's good to have a short gathering of the Mentors to share any new ideas. If this is the first time that you're acting as a Mentor, you can learn from the more experienced Mentors. The people that volunteer as Mentors tend to be a generous and gregarious bunch, so it's fun to be together.
2. Your main job at this session is to lead a discussion and answer questions of the New Colleagues. Once the opening remarks by the conference staff and any other speakers are finished, try to pull your table-mates in close and focus the conversation so everyone gets some attention.

3. Start by asking everyone to say their names, where they're from, and (briefly) what they're hoping to accomplish at the conference. Keep some notes so you can come back around and address as many of the questions and concerns as possible. Be careful to balance questions and concerns from presenters, artists and agents. Encourage discussion among the New Colleagues and let them answer each other's questions if appropriate.
4. Help the New Colleagues sort through all of the various sessions and other activities at the conference, and explain the value of each.
5. Make a specific point of talking about the fluid nature of relationships and roles within the performing arts field. Artists become agents, presenters become publicists, people change jobs and roles all the time...so a purely social relationship can become a lucrative business relationship overnight. And of course friendships in this field are precious no matter what the business relationship might be. Encourage the New Colleagues to meet everyone.
6. Discuss the NAPAMA Guidelines for Ethical Behavior.
7. Make plans with your New Colleagues to meet again a day or two later, even if it's very brief. Or at least plan to check in with each other via cell phone. Questions will often come to mind once the New Colleague gets immersed in the conference.
8. Arrange for a walk-through of the exhibit hall together, before the official opening of the hall. This can be valuable for both exhibitors and presenters. Talk about effective booth design and layout for exhibitors; talk about how best to navigate the hall for presenters.
9. During the walk-through, help agents, managers and artists with any booth setup questions. Often booth setup can be tweaked at the last minute with the help of an experienced exhibitor.
10. Talk at least briefly about conference followup, touching again on realistic expectations.

AT THE REST OF THE CONFERENCE:

1. Do the walk through of the exhibit hall together.
2. Follow up at least once with each of your New Colleagues, either by phone or in person. Attend any functions which are set up for New Colleagues to re-connect with Mentors.
3. Make a point of introducing them to other colleagues in whatever way would be helpful to them. Remember that one of the toughest things about being at a conference for the first time is the feeling of not knowing anyone. You can be a big part of opening some doors for them. This may be most helpful at the opening night reception.

POST-CONFERENCE:

1. Follow up with your new colleagues to help them with any post-conference questions. While they ultimately have the responsibility of asking for help, it's another collegial thing for you to initiate the post-conference followup.

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