

# FRANCHISEUpdate

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**FCXC**<sup>2024</sup>  
Franchise Customer Experience Conference

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Local store marketing goes digital

Franchising numbers spike in the US



Annual Women's Issue

# MENTORING MATTERS

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**Can you describe the role mentoring has played in your career?** In the early stages of my career, I worked in a predominantly male field, so having a female mentor was unfamiliar to me. Instead, I learned from my father, who owned a security franchise. He was named one of the top sellers in the business and then eventually started his own security firm. When I worked at the family business, I was able to hone my skills, take initiative, and learn from business professionals.

When I joined the restaurant franchise industry, I realized I was in another male-dominated field, surrounded by closely knit, seasoned professionals. Lacking a female mentor ultimately inspired me to empower and help mentor women in franchising.

**Why is mentoring important for female franchise leaders?** Mentoring can foster a sense of community within the franchise industry. These relationships offer validation from other experienced professionals who have navigated similar challenges.

**What are the key elements of a good mentoring relationship?** The foundation for a mentoring relationship is built on trust, shared visions, and transparency. Trust is extremely important for open communication while a shared vision ensures alignment on goals and expectations. Transparency helps create a safe space for exchanging genuine thoughts, ideas, and constructive feedback.

**What are the benefits of mentoring programs for female leaders looking to advance their careers?** Connecting with women in the restaurant space, whether in franchising or not, can help expand your circle of influence. These programs offer support and can open new avenues for collaborative opportunities. In franchising, it is important to share collective knowledge and experiences to help professionals learn the do's and don'ts

YEARS IN FRANCHISING	COMPANY	NUMBER OF UNITS
2.5	Vicious Biscuit	6 corporate locations with a 7th in development; 7 franchisee deals with an additional 37 locations committed



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of building a stronger business. Being part of a program solely focused on the success of women helps creativity and innovation thrive!

**What should the mentoring process include?** Mentoring should happen organically and adapt to the unique needs, experiences, and goals of the mentee. While there may be an initial framework, the dynamics must evolve based on the aspirations of the mentee.

**How is a mentor different than a coach?** A mentorship is an organic relationship that focuses on the overall development of a mentee. Mentors often share lessons they've learned from their careers to help guide their mentees. One valuable lesson I learned from my mentor: "Don't focus on your weaknesses. Identify your strengths and apply them across all aspects of your life."

**What role did mentoring play in your path to the C-suite?** My journey to the C-suite was shaped by an indirect mentoring process. I was able to expand my skill set by seeking knowledge from experts, tackling challenges, and learning new techniques. As mentioned before, I started in a male-dominated industry and understand the challenges women may face. As

the chief operating officer of Vicious Biscuit, I will prioritize career development for women and offer them support as they work toward their goals.

**How has what you learned from a mentor helped you navigate difficult career challenges?** Since joining the C-suite, I've strategically formed partnerships with colleagues who possess expertise in specific areas. In our current phase of expansion, we have six operational locations—four of which were constructed in a single year. We are also in the process of awarding 37 franchise units, so we are extremely busy. During this time, I've been able to consult with a new mentor of mine, Vicious Biscuit Co-Founder George McLaughlin. Since the first day I joined the team, George has given me words of encouragement and autonomy and served as a supportive presence as we began Vicious Biscuit's journey into franchising.

**How did mentoring help you in other business relationships?** My leadership approach has changed immensely. In the beginning, I was moving at an extremely fast pace and was overcommitting to multiple projects. Through mentorship programs with C-level executives, I realized I needed to delegate more. As a result, I've empowered my employees to hone their skills and been able to manage my workload more efficiently. I've also been able to use new strategies from my mentorship program to help drive results for franchisees, vendors, partners, and founders.

**In what ways has mentoring helped you build confidence in your decision-making?** Receiving support from mentors has helped me build confidence in my abilities. I am relatively new to the restaurant franchise industry and sometimes struggle with imposter syndrome. For example, I'll have thoughts, like "Am I suited for this role?" or "Do I possess the skill set to lead a smart, effective, and organized team?" There are also concerns about executing the visions of our founders and attracting the right talent. For that reason, I am always motivated to enhance and diversify my skill set, contributing value, vision, and strategy while simultaneously empowering our team.

**In what ways has mentoring helped you set goals and achieve objectives?** Mentoring helps improve results! The advice I received from my mentor is geared toward the strategic aspects of my role. The regular check-ins keep

me focused on organizational objectives and timelines and provide an opportunity to discuss any roadblocks that may arise.

**What were the three most important things you learned from mentoring?** To think more strategically and expansively. A mentor once told me I needed to make \$50,000 decisions, not \$50 decisions, and this perspective has become a guiding principle for me.

Clear communication and a deep understanding of the "why" behind it. Offering directional guidance to a team without a clear purpose hinders our ability to achieve results. This principle holds true across all levels of the organization. When communication lacks clarity, the entire system suffers.

A culture of accountability. This instills a sense of responsibility, trust, cohesion, improvement, and adaptability in every one of the organizations. When individuals hold themselves accountable, there is a heightened focus on decision-making.

**How can mentoring help the next generation of women on their path to the C-suite?**

After finding a mentor with extensive franchise experience, I've witnessed a transformative effect on my confidence and self-assurance. Women face distinct challenges in leadership positions, so these mentoring relationships foster insightful dialogues that contribute to breaking down barriers and empowering women to confidently pursue their goals.

**What advice do you have for female executives considering mentoring?** I'll be candid about this: I initially resisted the idea of mentoring. The rationale often revolved around efficiency and correctness and the belief that mentoring others would demand the most valuable commodity: time.

However, I quickly realized that investing time in mentoring others and being open to mentorship is valuable and can enhance your development. Witnessing your team thrive under your guidance is rewarding and contributes to a more cohesive work environment.

Building a foundation of trust through mentorship ensures your team views you as approachable, transparent, and willing to guide them toward success. Ultimately, the time invested in mentoring pays off in the growth and development of individuals and the organization alike. ■