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Going Commercial: Mentorship key to rising in Valley real estate sector

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For young people starting out in commercial real estate, mentorships can provide valuable connections and lessons for building a career.

“This is real life, it can be highly stressful, antagonistic and difficult to get business,” said R. Craig Coppola, a founding principal at Lee & Associates. Coppola works as a mentor to Stirling Pascal, an associate in the Phoenix office. “It’s almost mandatory to have a mentor.”

About 70 percent of brokers leave the industry within five years. At Lee & Associates, the principals also are company owners, which makes it more important to train and retain young talent, Coppola said.

“This is our legacy, a local company that is a best-in-class brokerage company,” he said.

For Pascal, that mentorship means spending time together going through the process of each deal.

“Stirling is in a lot of my transactions doing the lion’s share of the work,” Coppola said.

Jerry Marrell, principal and designated broker of the Lee & Associates Arizona office, started a formal mentorship program when he noticed the firm was bringing in more young recruits than ever. The goal is to create a state-of-the-art training program in the industry, he said. Marrell brought industry veteran [Pete Bolton](#) to hold training sessions with young brokers in addition to their work in the field with mentors.

[Grant Kingdon](#), an associate at Lee & Associates who is mentored by [Jeff Conrad](#), said his experience has helped him build his own books of business and create a network in the industry.

“There is no skill set you can build, even with the finest university degree, that prepares you to go into brokerage,” Conrad said. “It’s drinking out of a firehose for the first couple of years.”

Conrad said he impresses on young brokers to “under promise and over deliver.”

“Do not stain your credibility by making promises you cannot keep,” he said. “Reputation is everything. Treat everybody equally and with respect as this year’s assistant property manager client could be next year’s asset manager responsible for a large regional portfolio.”



JIM POULIN | PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

From left standing, Jeff Conrad, Jerry Marrell and Craig Coppola. Seated from left, Grant Kingdon and Stirling Pascal.

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Reporter

Phoenix Business Journal

