



# Pass It Along

**BY** MARC P. PALKER, CMA

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**IN THE SECOND DAY** of my first job, my supervisor called me into his office and shared some advice that he said would prove valuable throughout my career: “To every person you see for the first time before noon, say ‘good morning.’ To every person you see at the end of the day on your way out, say ‘good night.’ When you ask someone for something, say ‘please,’ and when they deliver, say ‘thank you.’”

Thanks to that gift from my very first boss, I’ve heeded those words of wisdom throughout my long career. They remind me about the importance of mentoring and of sharing our expertise with others as we continue our professional journey.

Mentoring can take many forms. It can be casual, a tidbit of advice shared around a water cooler (showing my age here), or a more structured, long-term relationship, with established meeting times and clearly delineated discussion topics. What do mentors talk about? The list of subjects is often as specific as the mentor and mentee, but I’ve found that most people need mentors to discuss things like:

- Should I work at a large or a small company?
- Is it better to gain expertise in a specific industry or to get experience in many different ones?
- Does it make sense to work at corporate headquarters, or should I invest myself in a corporate division instead, relocating numerous times as requested?

- How can I find the right work-life balance?
- What kinds of service and volunteer opportunities should I get involved in?
- Should I pursue a graduate degree, or should I get certified? Should I do both?

One of the most important things to remember as a mentor is that you aren’t in a position to make decisions for your mentee. In the healthiest relationships, you serve as a listener who helps your mentee think through issues and come to his or her own conclusions.

Further, mentoring is a two-way conversation. It’s easy to think that the mentee is receiving all

the benefits of your experience and insight. But as a mentor, I’ve received numerous rewards from my mentees. I’ve gained perspective on how the younger generation thinks about certain situations. I’ve also gained inspiration from their enthusiasm and commitment. Among my proudest moments is seeing some of my mentees overtake me in their professional success. It’s a wonderful feeling to know that I helped them—in whatever small way—to advance in their careers.

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I hope all of you step up when you’re asked to be a mentor. And if you’re looking for a mentor, use the IMA® network, especially your contacts on LinkUp IMA, to find one. Trust me: Both of you will benefit. If you’d like to discuss this or any other topic, you can reach me at [mpalker@imanet.org](mailto:mpalker@imanet.org). **SF**

**Marc P. Palker**, CMA, is Chair of the IMA Global Board of Directors and principal at MPP Associates, Inc. He is also a member of IMA’s Long Island Chapter. Follow him on LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/mpalker](http://www.linkedin.com/in/mpalker).