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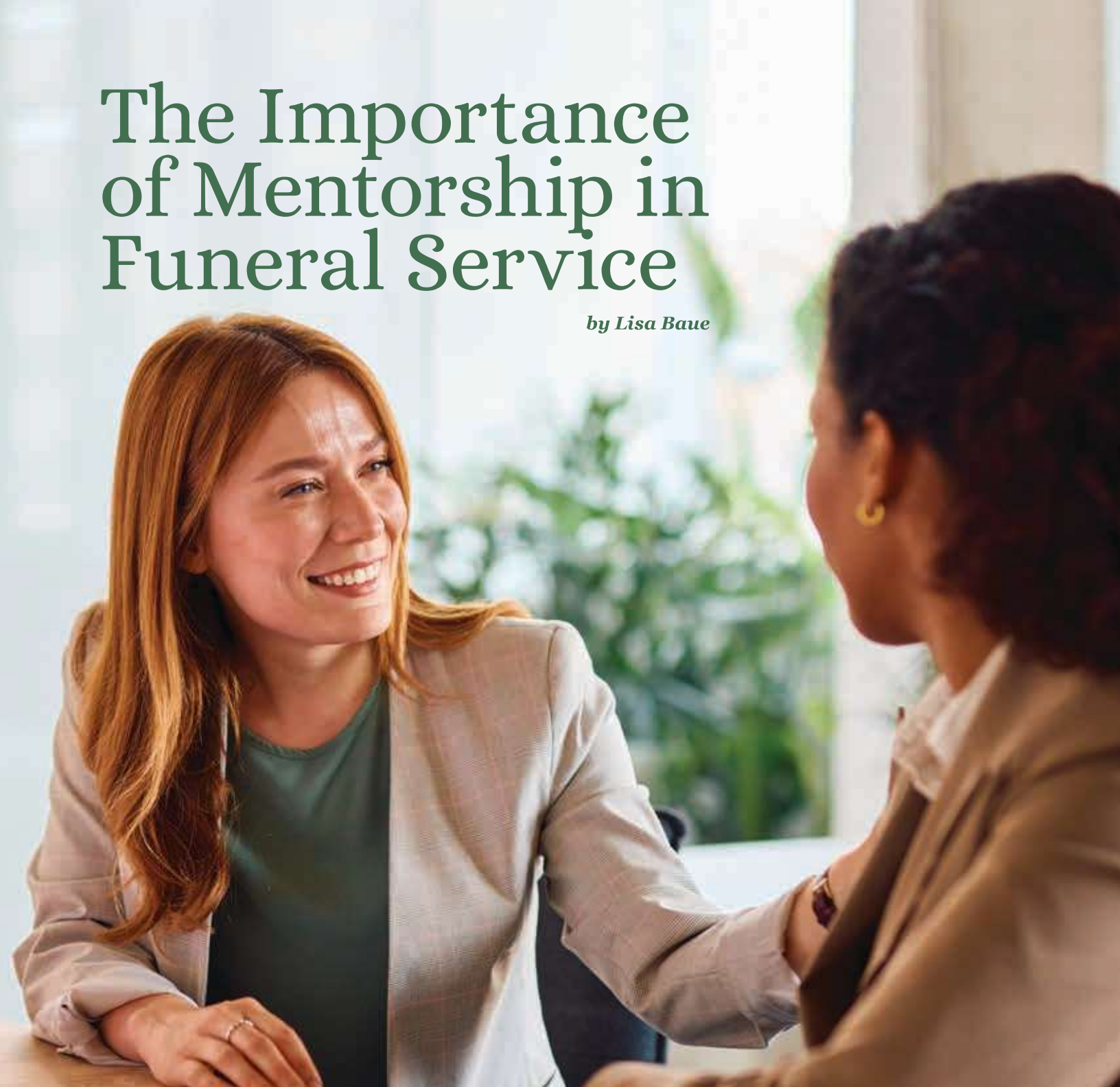
Funeral Service Education & Social Media & Websites

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The Importance of Mentorship in Funeral Service

by Lisa Baue



Over my four decades in funeral service, one truth has never changed: none of us succeeds alone. Every step forward in my career was possible because someone believed in me, encouraged me, or opened a door I didn't even know existed. That is the power of mentorship.

In our profession where we carry immense responsibilities such as caring for grieving families, managing business operations, and preserving sacred traditions—mentorship steadies us, shapes us, and prepares us to lead. I know this firsthand; it was mentorship that gave me the confidence to grow in this career.

While women have especially benefited from mentorship as they've sought to expand their presence in leadership, the truth is that mentorship enriches everyone. It strengthens our profession across regions, cultures, and generations, ensuring that wisdom is carried forward and innovation is embraced.

MENTORSHIP AS RELATIONSHIP AND ADVOCACY

Mentorship comes in many forms, but two dimensions stand out: **relationship and advocacy**.

- **Relationship** provides honesty, wisdom, and presence. A mentor shares what no textbook can: how to lead with compassion, how to balance business demands with community care, how to recover from mistakes with grace.
- **Advocacy** means more than giving advice. It's about championing others—recommending them for leadership roles, nominating them for boards, and ensuring their contributions are visible.

True mentorship doesn't just build individuals—it creates systemic change. It ensures that emerging leaders aren't simply present, but actively shaping the future of funeral service.

FACING FEAR WITH CONFIDENCE

When my father died and I suddenly had to step into leadership, my first thought was, *"I'm not ready."* A mentor's voice made all the difference, reminding me that fear is not a stop sign but a signal of growth.

Throughout my journey, I encountered pivotal "wake-up calls" that taught me resilience, empathy, and courage. Those lessons, paired with the encouragement of mentors, shaped not only my career but the woman and leader I became.

I hear this echoed from many colleagues: we enter the profession with doubts—fear of mistakes, fear of not belonging, fear of being overlooked. Mentorship helps us move through that fear. Sometimes all it takes is hearing, *"You are ready for this."* Those words can alter the course of a career.

THE MANY FACES OF MENTORSHIP

Mentorship in funeral service takes many forms:

1. **Peer Mentorship** – Colleagues supporting one another at similar career stages, offering accountability and encouragement.
2. **Career Sponsorship** – Senior leaders using their influence to open doors and create visibility for emerging professionals.
3. **Community Mentorship** – Larger gatherings—whether at conventions, local association meetings, or leadership academies—where stories and experiences are shared, multiplying the impact.

Each model is powerful. Together, they create an ecosystem where no professional has to walk alone.

MENTORSHIP AS WELLNESS

Too often, mentorship is only discussed in terms of career advancement. But in funeral service, it is also an act of care. Our work is emotionally demanding and often isolating. Having someone who understands and listens without judgment is critical to sustaining wellness.

Mentorship offers a safe space to share the weight we carry, to admit exhaustion, and to learn healthier ways of leading. It is not just about succeeding in the profession—it's about sustaining the people who serve.

THE CAREER IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP

Mentorship produces real outcomes. Professionals with mentors are more likely to remain in funeral service, more likely to seek leadership roles, and more likely to believe in their capacity to lead.

Mentorship ensures:

- **Knowledge is transferred** – From navigating regulations to guiding families through grief.
- **Representation grows** – More voices at the table inspire the next generation.
- **The profession is sustained** – Leaders bring creativity, empathy, and innovation to ensure its future.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF MENTORSHIP

Whether in a funeral home, association, or classroom, mentorship flourishes when it becomes part of the culture. It doesn't always require a formal program. Sometimes it's as simple as a conversation over coffee, a word of encouragement, or an introduction to a colleague.

By weaving mentorship into our daily practices, we create a profession where people thrive—not just endure.

A CALL TO ACTION

As you reflect on your own career, consider these questions:

- Who has mentored you? Have you thanked them?
- Who could you mentor right now? What knowledge or encouragement could you share?
- How can you make mentorship part of your leadership practice?

Mentorship does not require perfection. It requires presence. It means being willing to walk alongside someone, offer encouragement, and open doors.

MENTORSHIP AS LEGACY

The true legacy of funeral service is not only in the families we serve but in the leaders we nurture. Mentorship ensures that our wisdom, compassion, and courage live on in the next generation.

I believe mentorship is both our greatest responsibility and our greatest gift. Because when we mentor well, we don't just change careers—we change the future of the profession.



Lisa Baue is a nationally recognized funeral service leader, consultant, and speaker who served for more than 40 years as president and CEO of Baue Funeral Homes, Crematory, and Cemetery. She is the author of the Amazon best seller *Wake-Up Calls: A Journey of Learning to Lead and Succeed in the Funeral and Deathcare Profession*, which recounts her journey from grieving

daughter to industry leader. Today, Lisa continues to mentor and champion funeral service professionals, fundraise for scholarships, and support initiatives that build a more inclusive and empowered future for the profession.