



Mentorship and Onboarding

Interview with Aimee Bertrand, EO, The Greater Houston BA

How do you onboard new members? Staff?

We onboard new members in several important ways. We host biannual Member Orientation sessions and follow them up with a President's reception. This gives the members the opportunity to hear from several GHBA members about their own experiences with GHBA and what they have found most valuable to their businesses. The orientation and a GHBA board meeting go on simultaneously at our GHBA office and both meetings culminate at the same time, so that all of the participants can attend a subsequent President's reception in the GHBA lobby. This gives our newest members an opportunity to interact with association leadership. We also offer opportunities for members (new and old) to meet with our Membership Director, Cynthia Fagan, to talk through their expectations, interests and business development needs to chart a path for their GHBA membership journey.

When we onboard staff members, one of the very first things we have them do is meet with every member of the GHBA team individually for 15-20 minutes each. During that time, there is some one-on-one time for getting to know each other and the new team member learns about each existing staff members' role in supporting the association. Each new staff member also receives a list of key volunteers that they work with and are asked to meet with each one for a 20-30 minute meeting. Whenever possible, those meetings are expected to be one on one with the member and at the member's place of business. This accomplishes a few key goals – it allows new team members to see our members in their workplace, learn more about member needs and expectations, and allows trust to be built between the member and the new GHBA team member.

How does successful onboarding contribute to your office culture?

We're a team! No one staff member can be effective without relying on GHBA team members for vital training, information and emotional support! By giving everyone the opportunity to get to know each other from the first week they join the team, it sets all relationships up to be more effective and supportive.

What are your professional development goals for the upcoming year? If so, what are they?

I want to start working toward my Certified Association Executive (CAE) designation via the Texas Society of Association Executives. This has long been a goal of mine, and I'm going to actually get it done in the next year or two. I'm also serving the Texas Executive Officers Council as President starting this November. I'm looking forward to working with EOs from across Texas to better support our shared members and improve association operations.

Who has been your mentor and what have you learned from them?

There are so many who have taught me so much! From a personal standpoint, my mom is my best example of working through adversity and still supporting the needs of our family. She lost her hearing at the age of 13 due to lingering nerve damage from an early childhood case of the measles. My grandparents never wanted her to be excluded from their community, so instead of sending her to a school for the deaf, they had her work with a lipreading coach. She ended up working for Exxon in Communications, even providing telephone phone training contract services once she started her own communications business. She taught me to be as inclusive as possible, whenever possible – which is a great guidepost for providing opportunities for our volunteer leaders with GHBA.

How do you foster a learning environment at your HBA?

Our team at GHBA meets every Monday morning for staff meeting. As part of that meeting, we typically have a professional development or connection opportunity. We are currently working through a series of "Back to Basics" programs to refresh the team on what we do and why we do it. Each week, we take on a different topic, many of which have been suggested by team members, and talk through any issues around our current practices in that area. We are constantly working to improve our service to members by getting to know other association professionals, too. For Halloween, we hosted two other allied association teams for a spooky-themed lunch and some opportunities for costume competition and community coordination!