

MENTORSHIP... important it is

MYTHS OF MENTORSHIP



“I don’t have time.”

Sure, a lot of us are busy, but mentoring someone doesn't have to take that much time. You can meet up for lunch or coffee once a month or as needed. You can communicate through email or do a quick online meeting.

“Mentorship doesn't have to be an ongoing relationship. It can also be a one-off thing, with the mentor lending a supportive hand, sympathetic ear, or even shoulder to cry on.”
- Nathalie Crosbie [1]

“I’m not an expert in the field.”

You don't actually have to be an expert. Your knowledge could be valuable to someone just starting out.

“I don’t really have anything of interest to offer.”

Your experience could be valuable to someone with a different level of experience or in a different role.

We all have different backgrounds and there's always something to learn from someone else.

“I’m too advanced to need a mentor.”

A mentor is helpful at any level, whether you're just starting out or you're at the director level. You can also consider learning about other related disciplines from a mentor. You might be inspired by how others work with their team or among cross-functional teams; in-house or at an agency; or on websites or applications.

“I won’t be able to find someone.”

Don't assume that someone won't want to meet with you. While some people may not have time to mentor you on an ongoing basis, they may be willing to at least meet once or twice. If not, they can probably point you toward someone that can. People are generally nice!

“I can only have one mentor.”

It's actually really helpful to have more than one mentor. Everyone's experiences are different, and that's especially true in the UX field. Having more than one allows you to get different perspectives.

If there's a topic you want to know more about, why would you limit yourself? - Nathalie Crosbie [1]

“I’d probably bother my mentor.”

As long as you set expectations with your mentor early on, you won't bother them. Your mentor may only have time to meet once or they could be available to meet regularly. Check out “Starting a Mentoring Relationship” in this poster for details on starting a successful relationship.

VALUE OF MENTORSHIP

Continue to Learn in this Ever-Evolving Field

“You may be an old hat at UX design, but an old dog can still learn new tricks. It's all about perspective and seeking out new experiences within your field and outside of it. If we stop learning, we stagnate. And a stagnant, experienced UX practitioner is just not happy.”
- Donna Spencer [4]

There's always more to learn about UX. New articles and research is published everyday on methods, understanding people, and technology. There are also new tools created in attempts to make our work lives easier. It can be tough to keep up with trends; having someone to mentor naturally encourages you to stay on your toes.

“You haven't really mastered your craft until you've taught it.”
- Kim Goodwin [3]

While mentees inherently will learn more from a more experienced mentor, there's also good chance that a mentor will learn something from a mentee.

“There's as much to learn as there is to share and teach.”
- Scott Baldwin [2]

It's Fun!

You enjoy UX (We hope!) and you get to talk about it in a mentoring relationship.

“I've enjoyed sharing my experience, but the most fun has been the collaboration with someone equally excited and interested in this field of work.”
- Scott Baldwin [2]

Cultivate Stronger Practitioners

Not only does mentoring lead toward better designs, but also better designers. Not everyone studied UX at school and the field is constantly changing. Helping others strengthen their skills based on what you've learned can benefit them in their career growth, but also benefit you if they're on your team!

Junior designers will become senior designers one day and pass on what their mentors taught them. - Mike Monteiro [5]

“Pass on what you have learned...”
- Yoda to Luke Skywalker

There's Not Enough Designers in the World; Mentoring Helps the Field

Companies have realized the importance of design, but many struggle hiring designers. Mentorship programs and relationships can help create stronger designers to fill those jobs.

“Right now, in the US, there are— including this— about 25,000 open positions for UX designers. That number is not getting smaller. It's getting bigger. And we are just not creating enough designers fast enough to meet that demand. And this is huge.”
- Jared Spool [6]

“We solve the problem of finding designers by mentoring them.”
- Mike Monteiro [5]



STARTING A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

1. Look Locally

See if your workplace has a program or if there's someone in a role you're interested in learning more about.

Check with the IA Institute's mentorship program, but also look around to your local UX organization chapters (UXPA, IxDA, CHI, Refresh, AIGA, etc.)

Local universities might be able to suggest professors, alumni, or current students as mentors. [1]

Look to your professional network on LinkedIn or even Twitter. [1]

2. Set Expectations

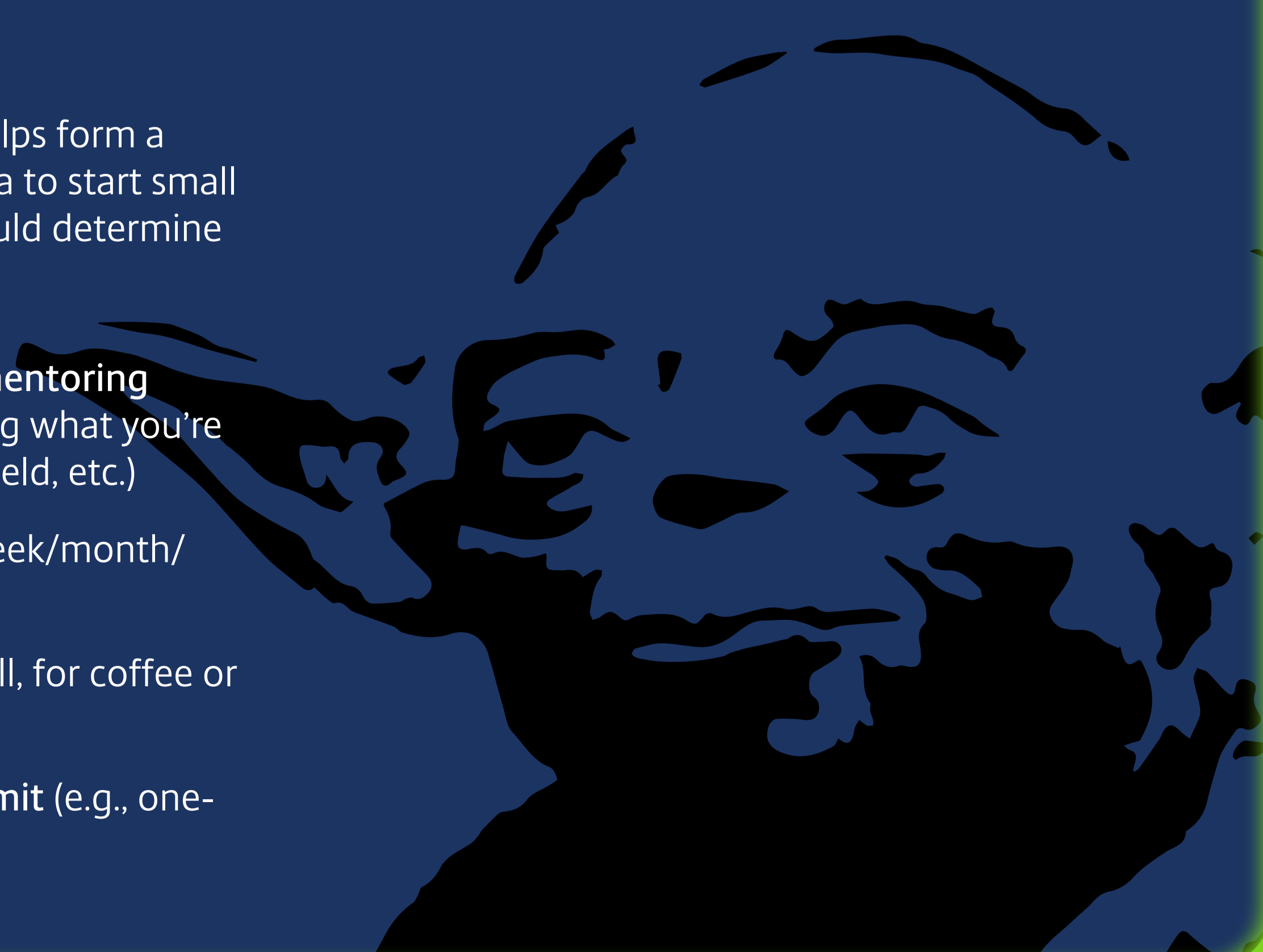
Ensure both of you are on the same page helps form a good mentoring relationship. It's a great idea to start small and pivot as needed. Some of what you should determine include:

- What you're looking to get out of the mentoring relationship (e.g., portfolio review, sharing what you're working on, advice on advancing in the field, etc.)
- How often you will meet (e.g., once a week/month/quarter, etc.)
- How you will meet (e.g., email, phone call, for coffee or lunch, etc.)
- How much you both are willing to commit (e.g., one-time, a few months, a year, etc.)

3. Be Accountable

Once you set expectations, it's important follow through with what you've agreed. If your needs change or things aren't working out as planned, be honest with the other person.

If you are a mentee, it's important to realize the level of effort you put into the relationship often affects the value you gain from the mentorship. You're in the driver's seat.



STARTING A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

1. Start Small

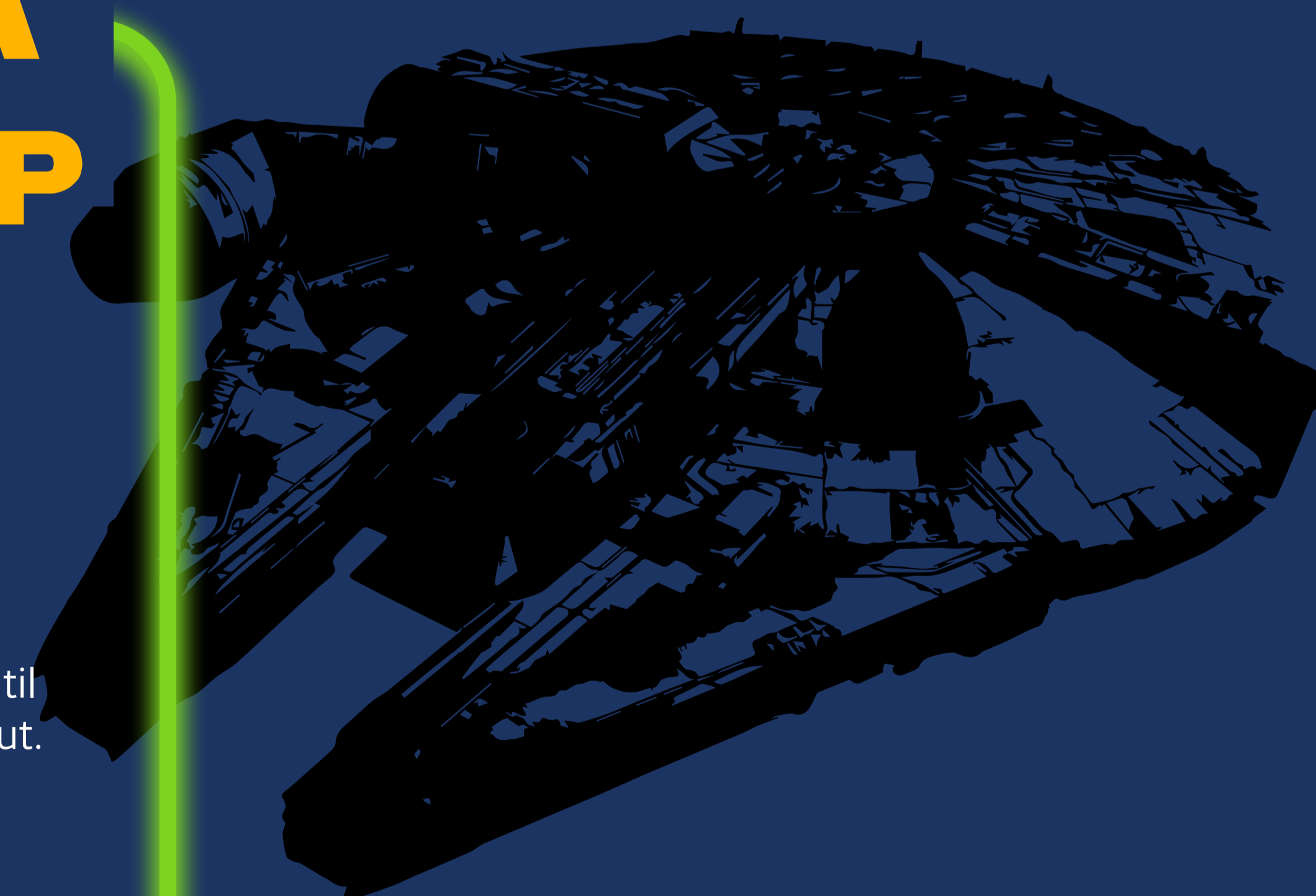
Starting a program can take some effort, so keeping the program small and manageable until a format evolves and the logistics are worked out. This will help increase the success of your program.

2. Get Support

Look to the IA Institute or local UXPA, IxDA, etc. chapter to get support for the program. They might be able to help promote the program, facilitate mentorship events, and provide other opportunities to spark interest and facilitate mentoring matches.

3. Don't Give Up

Getting a mentorship program established might be tough at first, but the value of trying to start one is worth the endeavor. You'll meet some cool people along the way and you'll be doing your part in helping the field. As you try different things along the way, take note of things that worked and didn't work and pivot your approach with different solutions as needed.



Want to learn more?
Check out our referenced articles:
<http://bit.ly/ias16-mentor-references>



Andrew Wirtanen
[@awirtanen](https://twitter.com/awirtanen)
Lead Product Designer, Citrix;
Director of Professional Events, Triangle UXPA

Michelle Chin
[@soysaucechin](https://twitter.com/soysaucechin)
Lead Product Designer, Citrix;
Director of Community Events, Triangle UXPA;
Founder, exploreUX