



## Regions Next Step Podcast

### Young Professionals Series: Challenges That Come with Career Advancement

In this podcast, you'll hear from five successful young professionals about moving up in the workplace.

Tune in to hear what they did to set themselves apart, take on leadership positions early in their careers, and achieve their goals in the workplace, as told by:

- Megan Ganschow, Branch Manager at Regions Bank's Mill Creek Branch
- Ben Goldberg, Founder and Co-Owner of Strategic Hospitality
- Jennifer Hill, Quality Strategy and Administration Manager for Nissan North America
- Marcus Whitney, President of Briovation
- Brad Smith, former CEO of Aspire Health and current director at The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation

### *Episode Transcript*

Jennifer Hill:

Basically transitioning from a subject matter expert to the manager is very difficult because you do want to do everything yourself. Learning how to delegate is something that I personally have to learn.

Marcus Whitney:

I'm not perfect. No one up here is perfect. The ones that are successful are the ones that know that we're not perfect but we're hopefully going in the right direction.

Eleanor Kennedy:

But let's start with millennials. What should people know in the workplace about millennials?

Jennifer:

I really hate this question.



Lisa Graham:

You're listening to Real Talk with Regions Bank. I'm your host, Lisa Graham. In this special podcast recorded at Nashville Business Journal's Next Gen panel discussion before a live audience Eleanor Kennedy interviews five leaders from Nashville's business community about becoming managers at a relatively young age. In part two we'll continue our discussion with these leaders and hear how they handle some of the challenges of management. Including evaluating candidates from Generation Z, the secret to a better work/life balance and working with a board of directors for the first time. Ben Goldberg is a Nashville restaurateur who launched strategic hospitality with his brother. Jennifer Hill is a quality strategy and administration manager for Nissan North America. Marcus Whitney is an entrepreneur and President of Brivovation. Brad Smith is CEO of Aspire Health and Megan Ganshow is a branch manager for Regions Bank's Mill Creek location. Certainly, management poses plenty of challenges and to become an outstanding leader you need to be ready to conquer any challenge that comes your way. Leveraging smart advice, tools and resources like those we learned about in today's discussion are great ways to set yourself up for success. Helping you achieve your goals is something Regions Bank understands. Regions Next Step is a financial education program offering advice, tools and guidance to help you accomplish your goals at every stage of your life. No matter your goals, Regions will help you with each step you want to take. Now let's hear from Nashville's young leaders at Next Gen brought to you in partnership by Regions Bank and the Nashville Business Journal.

Eleanor:

What management styles did you gravitate towards or do you try to emulate now and are there specific managers that you've had that you still find yourself thinking about today as I want to be like that person and what did you learn from them? Megan?

Megan Ganshow:

The management style that I remember the most is the one that took the time to coach and invested their time into me. Sat me down, asked what my career goals were and then made it a priority for them to help me get there. The kind of management styles I think like anybody in this room would agree with is micromanagement. I never did well with that. So, those who gave me the room to do what I do best and then corrected me when I needed to be corrected but gave me that room that make the mistakes those are the ones that I remember because they allowed me to take ownership over what I was doing.

Eleanor:

Brad, do you have any thoughts?



Brad Smith:

I think the ones that I've seen do the best and I learn the most from are the ones who figure out to put together a team for maybe imperfect people realizing that you're not going to always have perfect people for every role but how do you take the strengths of everybody and put them together. I think that's been a really big lesson.

Eleanor:

How do you identify or what traits do you look for in your employees to know that they have potential to be a leader? To be a manager. So let's start there.

Megan:

Team. Somebody who puts the team before themselves. I have an employee currently who whenever I am out of the branch doing business calls I have nothing to worry about. He is about the team making sure that everybody is doing what they're supposed to be doing. If they need help, here's there. I just think it's somebody who steps up in my absence and makes sure things flow and I don't have to worry.

Brad:

I look for people completely engaged. They understand when they're there to work or we work together. They are fully engaged in the process of and they are able to think about it and talk about it and live it and breathe it and come back the next day with new ideas outside of work. That is a really impressive thing that I look for. I'm not the easiest person to work with. That's for sure. But I also want to know someone's committed with me because I am. I'm in it with you. I work day to day with the people I work with and I want to know on the flipside that you're also engaged and committed to the process from start to finish.

Jennifer:

I look for someone that can cultivate goal congruence not just internally with our team but external teams as well. You have to be able to communicate amongst ourselves but also like when we are working with different departments or different OEM's as in other companies or suppliers, or vendors I want to make sure that you can also be a leader amongst those as well. So, just feeling don't worry about getting outside of your comfort zone when you're just talking internally but also externally.



Marcus:

I think it's about the will in a lot of ways. So, sort of jumping on with Ben that folks who really want it are the ones I think that I've gravitated towards and sort of tended to give those opportunities to for sure.

Brad:

Readiness. Which is you know putting somebody in a management position before they're ready is a real disservice to them. To your point earlier, Brad, and someone has to have developed mastery over their own domain first before they can effectively, confidently lead someone else and so you need to see someone that has worked very, very hard, has made a ton of mistakes on their own and will be able to have that sort of intuitive grace that we just heard about where hey I've been there. I know that mistake you just made. I made a worse mistake. You have to have some level of experience there. I think in order to be effective there.

Eleanor:

And so, if you've seen that in a team member that they have these qualities you're looking for, as their manager are you proactive in telling them I think you have what it takes or are you more waiting for them to take the initiative and come to you? How do you foster that potential that you've seen?

Jennifer:

I'm definitely proactive with it. If I see leadership abilities in someone I want them to know that hey I've noticed this and let's talk about it. Let's talk about your career path. Let's coach them along their career path. What do you want to do? Where do you want to be in the next few years, the next five years, the next ten years? What kind of contributor do you want to be to our organization going forward?

Marcus:

I would just sort of build on that. I mean I think all the super stars in our organization, especially when you're a growing organization you want to make sure they see the future with you and what their next roles are because if not if they're really good you lose them to attrition so making sure that they really see hey three years from now this is what I'll be doing, five years from now this is what I'll be doing I think is really important.



Eleanor:

Have any of you -- Marcus, you kind of raised this idea. Have any of you put someone in a management position and regretted it and found that they were not ready and how did you handle that situation?

Brad:

Absolutely. I think there have been situations where someone had spent a certain amount of time with us and they had communicated a desire to do it and they worked hard and they had been loyal and we put them in a management scenario and hadn't fully sort of evaluated their skills, whether or not they had developed some emotional maturity that's necessary and had to basically return them back to a subject matter expertise track and take away the management reasonability. So yeah I mean I've done it. And you have to do what's best for the team and ultimately that's what's best for the person too and if they can understand that then they can sort of dust themselves off and take another pass at it maybe in a year or something like that. But worse thing you can do is just see something you know it's not working and just let it continue. It's bad for everybody.

Eleanor:

What has -- tell me about the first time that you hired someone. I know some of my friends who have gotten into management positions. That's been one of the biggest differences when they got into that job and that's something that they felt a little self-conscious about. So, how did you get over that hump? Evaluating candidates and knowing that you'd made the right choice.

Megan:

I enjoyed that part of being a manager only because I enjoy getting to know people and I'm in the business of people and that is kind of what -- how I manage, how I run my branch. And so, I find it enjoyable to get to sit down with people, get to know them and then it's kind of it's like a puzzle figuring out who is going to fit in best with my team based on their personality. So, I personally enjoy that piece of it.

Eleanor:

But let's start with millennials. What should people know in the workplace about millennials?

Megan:

They need purpose. They need to know what they're doing, how it makes a difference in the big picture.



Jennifer:

I really hate this question. Honestly and I think the one thing I want people to know is that not all millennials are the same. And they can't be put in a box. I mean they are so different and I want to say we but I'm like on that line maybe. Some days I'm a millennial. Some days I'm not. So, and that justifies may point that not all people in that age group are the same. So you really just have to cognizant of who works for you or who you work for and how you communicate with them and how do you pull out the best regardless of their age.

Marcus:

I thinking about the organization first, is the biggest thing. I think it's really easy for all young people, millennials -- whoever to really think about what it means for them and their situation and I think the more people can focus on the whole organization versus them as an individual the better it is.

Eleanor:

But have your organizations started thinking about this new generation that's in college now? I've heard them call the I Gen, Gen Z and obviously we just said we don't want to generalize but do you start thinking about that? We're going to be hiring people that have a totally different experience and how are you preparing for that? This is a hard question and one I didn't give you in advance.

Ben:

I mean I have spent zero time thinking about it. I think that we want--

Jennifer:

You got to get on it, Ben. You got to get on it.

Ben:

We want to hire good people. And good people it doesn't matter when they were born and what category people want to put them in. We want to hire good people that find what we do every single day it doesn't matter if they're 100 or 18 years old. So, I don't think -- I personally don't spend a lot of time thinking about that side of it.



Marcus:

Maybe a practical thing that's not so much about like culture and things like that but I think there is a reality to the familiarity with technology and comfort level with technology and how technology enabled your company is. That I do think plays into how friendly you are to a particular generation. Or how challenging it maybe for a particular generation. I think that's probably not an overgeneralization. That's probably reasonably fair. So, to that end we are a very technology forward organization. So, we're not technology first but certainly forward. We look to use it and leverage it wherever we can. We look to teach our team regardless of age how to use the technology to improve the quality of their work and how effective they can be, and I think that that makes us attractive to the next generation. Having said that, I have a freshman in college right now and like he knows his phone and he knows all the fun apps. He doesn't know anything beyond that. So, I think there's still going to be that training that you're still going to have to do when they graduate college and they think they know something and they don't know anything. You're still going to have to have great training system for them.

Jennifer:

I think along the lines of that too, a lot of large corporations are now focusing on flexibility as well, work/life balance and there's some things that are changing. So for example, when I started at Nissan years ago you would have never asked to work from home or virtual office. So, being technology forward now we have the capability to do that and to offer that to our employees. So, I think that is something that a lot of organizations are starting to do, and I fully support especially having a four-month-old baby. Like yes I need to work from home at times.

Eleanor:

Well that feeds well into -- I was going to ask about work/life balance. When you got into a managerial role do you feel like you have more control over your time and ability to control it or less because you can't pass the buck off to anyone else and at the end of the day if something needs to get done you're the one who needs to do it?

Megan:

I feel if you delegate properly then you're able to keep that balance. But at the end of the day if there's something that needs to get done and it's between me getting it done and my work/life balance being compromised versus my team usually I will take that responsibility because I feel like that's my role. But if you -- I feel if you delegate properly then you shouldn't run into that often. You should be able to manage both.



Marcus:

I don't have work/life balance. At all. So, the flexibility I think is a double-edged sword, right. So on one hand it means if you want to take a yoga class at 10 AM because that's your favorite yoga teacher and that helps keep you together and aligned, I don't care that you're doing that. But it also means you still have to get your work done. So, we do some things like -- so we use Slack -- how many people in here are familiar with Slack? Okay, enough. It's basically like a communication tool, chat internal for an organization. So, we use Slack. We actually don't communicate on email at all internally. So, that means we can also access each other all the time. But we say after 5 Slack is down and on the weekend Slack is down. Now there are still those people who are the workaholics who will reach out to me. I'm not allowed to reach out to them but they reach out to me then it's on. Because they know I'm not.

Eleanor:

Brad, how had your work/life balance?

Brad:

Yeah kind of like Marcus's unfortunately. So, working on it. I think you definitely do get a lot more flexibility when you're in a boss role. But I think that you have a lot more responsibility as well. I like working so that helps I think but I think you definitely -- it stops with you and so you got to kind of do whatever it takes to get the result you're looking for.

Eleanor:

For those of you who may have employees who are trying to manage up towards you, how do you handle that when you get -- what conversations do you look to have with your employees?

Marcus:

So, I was going to say it does apply to me because I have a board and we put a board in place because we wanted to have accountability because it's just good for you. And it forces you to prove that you understand the privilege and the responsibility that you have and that you will hold yourself accountable because really managing up is about making it clear that you can handle what you have and maybe ask for more when you think appropriate. And so, if you get all the way up to CEO unless you don't have a board, if you have a board you're going to have to report to that board and you're going to have to prove to them that on a quarter to quarter and annual basis you've got the business under control and you deserve another quarter to keep running the show. And so, I think it's the same thing. I think whether you're a junior person managing up or the quote, unquote boss, right, you have





to prove that you can handle it and that you can manage yourself and that you've got a good grasp on what's in front of you.

Eleanor:

This is a bummer question we've sort of talked about it but specifically what was the biggest mistake that you made when you first started managing people?

Megan:

Trying to do it all myself. Not trusting anybody to do it. So I just took it all on myself and to the point where I was exhausted and just couldn't continue. So I had to learn to delegate.

Ben:

Thinking I was the smartest one in the room. I still think that some of the best ideas we get in our businesses are from the ground level employees gutting it out every single day in the restaurant and so I think that I was young, I was 23. I felt like it had to prove that I had the answer right away and I should have listened way earlier than I did.

Jennifer:

As Megan stated earlier, basically transitioning from a subject matter expert to the manager is very difficult because you do want to do everything yourself. You're used to doing it and learning how to delegate is something that I personally have to learn, but then also the second thing that I had to learn was knowing when someone is not placed, not well placed. Maybe it's time to sever your ties between them and the organization. It was the hardest thing I've ever done with -- I had to let somebody go and initially because it happened within my first year of management I just did not want to do it. I was like this is their livelihood. What am I doing? But then I had to realize that, A, it's not a good business decision to keep them here and it's also not a good decision for them because they are not placed to where they can perform the best to their ability. This is just not a good fit for them so I had to learn that we're going to have a lot of cases or maybe not a lot of cases depending on how well you start to hire going forward where you may have to let someone go and just realize that you're doing the best for them and you're doing the best for the organization.

Brad:

Yeah, I agree with what everybody said. Not delegating I think was my huge issue. There is this week probably like three or four years ago where I ended up staying up literally all night for two nights in a row working on things and I had a huge meeting on the third day and literally I was like if I keep doing this the whole company is going to fail because of me and because I haven't figured out how to



delegate and I think for me that was a really big moment recognizing you just can't do it all if you don't figure that out there's no way you can build a bigger organization over time.

Marcus:

Losing my temper.

Brad:

You seem so chill though.

Marcus:

I've gotten better at it. Yeah it's the biggest regret for sure because once it comes up you can't put it back in the bottle. That's it. You've done it.

Megan:

I'd like to add one thing to that. One thing is not owning up to your mistakes. I think a lot of times when you as a manager are willing to say maybe that wasn't the best idea you actually become a person, a human to your team and I think that says more about who you are than if you constantly – kind of like what you said – think you're the smartest person in the room and everything you say is correct. You earn more respect by being willing to admit when things could have been done differently.

Eleanor:

Well, any last words of wisdom that you would leave someone who's just entered the workforce with aspire to get to the positions that y'all are in? What's one piece of advice that they can take and implement tomorrow?

Megan:

I would just say hard work. I'm a big believer in the work you put in will -- you will see the rewards.

Marcus:

I mean I agree with that completely. I think that being pop committed if you love what you do it will show.



Jennifer:

Always be willing to take things off of your manager's plate and then they'll really start to see your leadership capabilities.

Marcus:

Committed and self-aware knowing what you're good and knowing what you're not as good at.

Brad:

Self-awareness is a big one. I think if you're self-aware and you're not yet a master of your domain, just keep working to become a master of just what you have right now before you aspire to start leading other people.

Eleanor:

Well, thank you all so much. I think that's about the time that we have for the panel. So, appreciate you guys sharing your wisdom with us.

Lisa:

And that concludes part two of a special two-part podcast at Nashville Business Journal's Next Gen panel presented by Real Talk with Regions Bank. If you missed part one, check it out to learn how these young business leaders got their start, what it took to be successful and separating themselves from others and how they learned from their mistakes to become more effective leaders. Thanks for joining us. I'm Lisa Graham.

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