



Regions Next Step Podcast

Young Professionals Series: Finding Your Passion and the Right Mentor

In this podcast, we discover how four successful young professionals found careers that fit their passions, as well as the keys to finding the right mentor to help grow your career and professional skillset. Hit play to hear how these young professionals balance and manage their busy schedules, use their passions to give back to their community and how important mentorship has been to the growth of their careers, as told by:

- Gwen. A Cole, Branch Manager, Regions Bank, Parkside West Branch
- Briana Holmes, CEO and Founder of Millennials of Atlanta
- Joey Womack, CEO and Founder of Goodie Nation
- Labriah Lee Holt, Outreach and Engagement Director at AIPAC

Episode Transcript

Narrator:

You're listening to Real Talk with Regions. In this podcast recorded at a panel discussion presented before a live audience Heather Catlin of WSB TV in Atlanta interviews four young professional leaders from the Atlanta business community about making moves while giving back. Featuring their advice for living a boss life personally, professionally and philanthropically. This event was hosted in association with the United Way of Greater Atlanta.

In part one, we'll meet each of these professionals and learn about how they have found success navigating today's business world. Including their ability to follow and change their passions, how they juggle community commitments and their careers and the importance of mentorship. Briana Holmes is the CEO and Founder of Millennials of Atlanta. Joey Womack is CEO and Founder of Goody Nation. Labriah Lee Holt is the outreach and engagement director at AIPAC and founder of Sweet Roots and Gwen Cole is the branch manager of the Parkside West Branch of Regions Bank. Now, let's hear from Atlanta's young professional leaders brought to you by Real Talk with Regions Bank.

Heather Catlin:

Isn't it funny that when we grow up and we're little kids we think adults know everything. You're like oh mom and dad they know -- well when you're little. When you're a teenager they know nothing. When we were little they know everything. Everybody seems like their driven. They know their way. They're going to work. Everyone is excited, and then you graduate college and you're like nobody knows what the heck is going on.



You're lucky if you're passionate about something and you can do something with that passion and make money doing that passion. But sometimes you got to go this way to fulfill this need and this need and so you're spread out all over the place. And part of growing up and growing older and having a family and having wonderful friends around you is that you're able to navigate that path in a real special way.

A rising tide lifts all boats. And that is one of my favorite sayings because if we can communicate together, and understand how are you doing this? Please let me in on the secret. She tells me and then I can tell you and then you can tell somebody else and we're all going to make our community better. So, that's what we're all about. That's what we're here today. And we're going to meet four fabulous people who inspire me. I heard their stories and I was like whoa you guys are doing so much. Can't believe it.

Labriah, I think you have an interesting background because you went to law school and everybody knows law school is not an easy task and then you decided to quit to do something else and then now you're pursuing other passions. So, is it okay to change passions as you continue to grow?

Labriah Lee Holt:

Absolutely. I would encourage everyone here. I'm being completely transparent. Sometimes your passion will scare you. And the ideas that you have for yourself will scare you but just take a baby step. Because you'll be surprised at how far you can go very quickly if you just put one foot in front of the other. I was terrified and I just keep putting one foot in front of the other, and now I work full time and I run a business that is directly aligned with the things that I care about so I feel full in a way that I didn't when I was just focused linearly on practicing law, which at the time was my goal. And my passion. I wanted to advocate. I wanted to educate people. I wanted to represent. But I found through activities and organizations and meetings like this I was able to find myself and my voice and that my voice was a little bit broader than the way that it was using it while I was practicing law full time.

Heather:

I love that but for some of us you know we're not as fortunate to be able to have a profession and that is also a passion of helping. So when it comes to time management and being able to do both how do you do that because you got to sleep. You got to exercise. You got to be with your friends. So talk to me about time management of juggling -- reaching out into the community, doing your day job.

Gwen Cole:

Honestly, my calendar is my savior. So, making sure that I schedule in a couple hours a day between all the meetings and the conference calls and the obligations and the speaking engagements and bible study, all this, making sure I schedule some time for myself. For example.



Briana Holmes:

And I think saying no allows you to put parameters around your time. Which for a long time when I was younger was a really hard thing for me to do to say no. I wanted to do everything because I have a bleeding heart that always wants to support and give, but I found over time that when you say no to things that fall outside of your passion and fall outside of how you're trying to develop your skillset, it allows you to accomplish your goals of impact and growth much faster.

I would also add that when I think about time management now, it makes me think about how over time opportunities find me that are within my passion. So, even if you're working full time at your job, there's probably something at your job that you're actually really good at. And can take a leadership role in. That you may have to volunteer for but I would encourage you to do it. And I think over time what happens is people start to think of you when you're not even thinking about them. And next thing you know rather than burning the midnight oil trying to work full time two to four jobs like many of us have and may do at this time all of a sudden you'll have a job that comes to you that's directly in line with what you were already doing and caring about.

Heather:

Whenever I interview people I always like to ask them who their mentor is and how did they get that mentor. How did you form that bond with your mentor enough to say you are my mentor and have that trust between the two of you that you can go back and forth?

Joey Womack:

One of my first mentors actually gave me an internship. When I was in school in Tallahassee I'd done three corporate internships, and my fourth internship I decided to stay in Tallahassee to focus on building my business. And this guy was a local entrepreneur named Calvin who was a graduate of our business school and so for the first time ever he offered internships and I got it, paid me a little bit of money for the summer, helped me to learn how to be an entrepreneur. Then when I graduated and kept on doing my startup, he hired me while I did not come into work. So I graduated full time, decided to do my startup, had no money and for about the first six months he paid me a monthly salary while giving me advice, and I never showed up and I was able to pay bills until it kind of took off.

Gwen:

I actually found my mentor on Instagram.

Heather:

Okay, that's great one.



Briana:

She's an amazing, phenomenal woman. Her name is Megan Ward. She actually -- when I met her she was just doing some smaller things, woman empowerment in Detroit. She actually opened up a woman's only coworking space called Feminology in Detroit, amazing, amazing place. She actually invites me to her house randomly. It's great. I don't live there but it's amazing. And when I got -- I was in grad school and I had to quit my job to complete my internship and was losing -- I had a very nice salary and I was going from that salary to nothing. So, I was literally going to have to live off of my savings for -- until I was able to get a job and it was okay. And she literally was like, Brianna -- this time I had already got a bonus in Atlanta. She's like this is your time. You need to take it. you need to run with it. And any time I have a question or any time I needed anything like can you help and now it's to the point where she knows things about me that I don't even know about myself quite yet. She actually when I asked her to be my mentor she was like "Of course! I thought I was already your mentor but of course."

Heather:

So, that's great. So you reached out and you said I would like to learn from you.

Briana:

Yes.

Heather:

You worked for your mentor, you worked for your mentor.

Labriah:

No I don't mean like I just physically worked for her. I worked for her to be my mentor.

Heather:

Oh! Okay.

Labriah:

Which I think is a different - its' just a little bit different from this scenario when I started out and I mean she still a dear friend, mentor now more like on my advisory board. I have more of advisors now than I would say a mentor mentee relationship with people.



But the first mentor that I remember was a partner at Austin and Bird. I love her to this day. Angela Payne James. She made a reputation for herself across the city, is now in New York, the head of global IP for Goldman Sachs and when I met her I their first year attorney and I had -- I had kind of identified her as someone that I thought I could learn a lot from being that she was a woman. We practice in a tech group which was predominantly men. There were very few people of color, and here I was a first year attorney and a partner on the floor who had already broken down a lot of barriers. And she was busy. She had no idea about social media and we're doing intellectual property, and I came out of law school around this time where I understood social media at the time and I said we got to get ahead of this in the law. I earned her interest, right, to take that extra time to stay late with me because I made her look good at first. I did presentations, where I helped her do the research. And I would stay late to put together a deck that she could then go and present on as a part of, you know, client development and advising some of our clients on this new area that none of us knew about at the time how to handle.

And so, I will say that I do think that quite often you can have these organic experiences where someone will see the potential in you and they will just want to mentor you and I think there are other times where they will see that, but there is still a value proposition for them and it's their time. She had a husband. She had a child. She had billable hours and business to meet so I had to show my value proposition. And it was the best thing I could have done. A little bit of hard work and showing that I was on her team put her on my team for the first of my life.

Narrator:

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.

And that concludes part one of a special two-part podcast recorded live in Atlanta, presented by Real Talk with Regions Bank in association with United Way. Look for part two where we'll continue our discussion with these leaders and discover how they manage and how they overcome the many hurdles they've had to face on the way up. Thank you for listening.

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