



Regions Next Step Podcast

Young Professionals Series: The Importance of Communication in the Workplace

In this podcast, we discuss the importance of communication in the workplace and discuss how developing better communication habits can help professionals overcome obstacles, as told by:

- Will Davis, Branch Manager and Vice President at Regions Bank's Alder Trails Branch
- Pierce Bush, CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters Lone Star
- Kelly McCormick, Managing Director at UH RedLabs
- Grant Pinkerton, Founder of Pinkerton BBQ
- Ryan Soroka, President and Co-Founder of 8th Wonder Brewery

Episode Transcript

Narrator:

You're listening to Real Talk with Regions. In this special podcast, recorded at a panel discussion before a live audience, Chris Matthews, Finance and Innovation Reporter at the Houston Business Journal continues his panel discussion with five young business leaders.

In part two, we'll hear all about overcoming career obstacles, dealing with workplace challenges and developing better communication habits in the workplace. Will Davis is branch manager and Vice President at Regions Bank's Alder Trails Branch. Pierce Bush is CEO of Big Brother Big Sisters Lone Star. Kelly McCormick is managing director at University of Houston RedLabs. Grant Pinkerton is the Founder of Pinkerton BBQ and lastly, Ryan Soroka is President and Co-Founder of 8th Wonder Brewery. Now, let's hear from the city's young professional leaders themselves brought to you by Regions Bank.

Chris Matthews:

So, Ryan, what's a big career obstacle that you faced so far into your career and what advice would you give to people facing similar situations?



Ryan Soroka:

I would say coming across naysayers or haters or people who doubt you. Starting a brewery a lot of people told me that's the dumbest idea I've ever heard or why would you do that or you can't do that. There's already a huge brewery. Terrible idea. That is, for someone who's a natural optimist, it's defeating. It can really take a toll on you, but honestly you got to use that as motivation. You got to use that to drive, to almost prove people wrong.

But I don't think it's just entrepreneurs or business owners. I think in our day to day we get challenged by people who say you can't do that, bad idea, don't do this. And honestly, you just got to stick to your guns and stay true to your vision and kind of push through. And we get it to this day. Maybe not so much the same scale of starting up a business, but hey we want to introduce a new product line. Oh, terrible idea. Well, okay, let us prove you wrong and, look, sometimes we succeed and sometimes we fail but we definitely learn lessons both ways and just kind of battling through the negativity and staying optimistic. I know that's cliché but it's gotten me through some tough days.

Kelly McCormick:

So, I think the biggest obstacle in my career would be and I kind of touched on this in the beginning that I've really bounced around and after I went and got a degree, I got a degree in finance and then I went to law school after that and I did a year at a nonprofit actually in between that. I was like thinking that I was going to be an attorney. I took the Bar. I did all the things and after starting practicing law, I was like I can't even for like ten more minutes practice law. So, people that do, power to you because that's amazing. I couldn't do that.

And so, realizing that and being like what am I going to do now. How am I going to change this? Like I've worked for this for years to just get to this point, and I don't like it and I can't stay another minute. Like realizing I guess figuring out what to do next was a huge challenge. And I think that, honestly, it just came from an opportunity out of the blue that sounded great and ended up leading to something even better. But it was all about again just trying things and figuring out what I liked and what I did not like. That is definitely a challenge when you find yourself in a place where you're like I have dedicated so much time but I no idea how to move forward with this and I think just taking a chance, taking a leap, doing something new is what I would suggest.

Chris:

What is one of the biggest workplace challenges that young professionals face today?



Grant Pinkerton:

Probably disconnecting from their cellphones while they're at work. I mean I know I can be very honest. If you all work in workplace, like that is so common. We're starting to lose customer face to face communication. How many times have you guys gone to a fast, casual restaurant and gone to check out and the cashier has her phone open next to the cash register? That blows my mind. And then they want you to tip. But I think this disconnecting while we're at work to concentrate on work is a huge one.

Ryan:

Our industry there is very few places you can get experience other than working in a brewery. And so, we've seen some new folks enter the brewery who -- and they put in two months and they immediately want to be the head brewer. And it's like, listen, the person who's the head brewer now has been doing -- has been cleaning kegs for a year, then went to the cellar for two years then was the lowest ring on the brewing ladder for two years then became a brewer and then after three years of that he's the head brewer.

So, I think there's this misperception that you can just come into the workplace, whatever it may be and immediately be jump to the top. And look there are industries, there are certain special cases and really bright stars who can maybe do that but 98 percent of the time you got to put in time and work and that's just what it is, and I'm sure everyone here has put in time and work in what they do and very few of us expect to show up on day one and be the CEO in a week or two. And definitely have seen that in kind of younger applicants who really get fed up after cleaning kegs for a month. I can tell you that's not a fun job. You do not want to wash kegs. But, you know, before you're going to jump onto the next spot, you're going to perfect that and that might take six months to a year and if that's not your thing, you might be in the wrong industry.

Grant:

I think that's a great point. I say that a lot too as I'm sure you all do. People that come in kind of not too much experience, they get into the field and then within six months or three months or sometimes sooner than that they are expecting to be like "Why am I not AG? Why am I not pit master?" It's like you know, I think patience -- you know we live in an era of instant gratification through our phones, through all the stuff and we -- our generation is looking for that in their jobs as well. I think 20 years ago getting a job working your way up from the bottom and not having that instant gratification was much more normal. But nowadays it's like it's been eight months. I haven't gotten that big promotion I wanted yet. I'm out of here. And I think that's something that's stunting the growth. I think I saw something along the lines of like our generation of millennials is jumping jobs like 15 times by the time they're 40. I mean that -- I mean that's it in a nutshell you know.



Narrator:

Certainly. Career growth poses plenty of challenges. And to reach success you must first work through those career challenges. 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.

Chris:

How do you develop better communication skills across industries in the workplace? Negotiating for a salary or asking for a promotion, shifting a career path? How do you develop better communication skills like that?

Pierce Bush:

I think it starts with the conversation. So in the corporate world if you're working for a manager, I think you've got to build a level of trust there where you can have that conversation. But I think it should be an ongoing conversation. So, just like people -- your manager wants to talk to you about your development or your performance, that needs to be a part of that conversation. Here's where I'm at today. Here is where I'd like to be. I'd like to get there. I'd like your help to get me there. Or I'd like to help you -- have you help me identify a mentor or someone who can elevate my career to the next level. You know, if it's a conversation around your pay, then you need to share the reasons why you feel you're worth that and I think that if you've got that level of trust or that open conversation there, you should be able to have a candid conversation with your manager about that.

Kelly:

I'm actually a really big fan of just practicing as much as possible. For any of these things that we've talked about. If it's negotiation, public speaking, talking to employees, talking to your boss, I know some people can just go in and do it and they can have those hard conversations right away, they can talk about negotiating their salary. But for me, I am -- I have to sit down and practice with someone what I'm going to say and just doing it over and over again and practicing those difficult conversations, practicing scenarios is really, really helpful and also reminding yourself that for the most part if you're going into a difficult conversation, for instance like negotiating your salary, and it doesn't go well, it's probably one of those places you don't want to be at anyway. If you're really having someone react very negatively to asking what you think you're worth, that's just not a good situation. But I will say too like my communication skills when I first left college, I probably would have never been able to get up on this stage. It just would not have happened, but I've talked in front of so many different classes, so many different people I feel much more comfortable now. It's all just because practice.



Chris:

You know, how important is communication skills within a small business? Between your employees and yourself. How does that look, and how do you build those skills?

Pierce:

I'll readily admit I think that's something that I personally continue to try to improve and that's something that might be a weakness of not only myself but maybe my partners. When we started it was myself and two partners. We did everything. And so, to communicate it was pretty easy to just say what do you think about this, what do you think about that. We've grown to about 50 people and have multiple departments and different business units and different territories, and as we've grown, again I'll openly admit I wish our communication, my communication has grown with it and it's something I try to improve day to day. But just being transparent and being regular I think is key. Not telling half the story. Not saying something once and then not following up for many weeks later or not following up at all. I mean it's got to be steady, transparent and it's got to be a two-way street. It's not just one person talking to another. You have to be receptive and listen and really encourage a two-way conversation.

Grant:

Yeah, I think one of the things that's important as a business owner is making yourself available to your employees. A lot of times owners or I guess CEO's or whatever sometimes your employees don't feel that that you're approachable, right. Or they have management telling them "Oh don't bother him with these issues." That is the farthest thing away from the truth that I want. I want my employees to feel like they can come to me with anything, whether it's wanting to ask for a weekend off or saying, "Hey, the drink machine is leaking out the back." You know what I mean? The whole spectrum of things. But establishing an open communication with your employees I mean it all starts with when they walk in "Hey how are you doing today." If you don't address them when they come in to the building, they're probably not going to want to come and talk to you.

And so it's all about kind of treating them like they're humans too and having that personal relationship with and then going back, kind of going back to the situation with like raises and things like that if you're on this end of the spectrum, make sure you always kind of go into those conversations knowing where you stand. Know the ground that you're not going to concede. Don't ever get into that situation where somebody is asking you for something and you've never thought about them asking you for that. You need to stay one step ahead of that so that when it comes you can have a really good conversation with that person and say, "Hey, you know what I've already thought about this. These are the areas I need you to grow so that I can grow your income, I can grow your benefits. If you can do that for me, I can do this for you." And that's something that I felt is really important in kind of all business.



Narrator:

And that concludes part two of our special three-part podcast recorded live in Houston. Presented by Real Talk with Regions Bank. If you missed part one, check it out to hear all about how our panelists learned how to find their career passions and jumpstarted their careers. Look out for part three where we'll continue our discussion with these leaders and hear all about avoiding career burnout, mastering delegation in the workplace and finding the right mentor. Thank you for listening.

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