



Regions Next Step Podcast

Young Professionals Series: Millennials Moving Up

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 a manager is very difficult because you do want to do everything yourself. Learning how to delegate is something that I personally have to learn.

Ben Goldberg:

What I learned was I was not ready. But what I also learned was I would outwork any problem.

Eleanor Kennedy:

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

Jennifer:

I really hate this question.



Lisa Grahoben Goldberg:

You're listening to Real Talk presented by 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 bright leaders from Nashville's business community about managing up and down and owning your own leadership style. In part one, we'll meet these professionals and learn what they did to set themselves apart and take management positions early in their careers. 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 Briovation. Brad Smith is CEO of Aspire Health and Megan Ganshow is a branch manager for Regions Bank's Millcreek location. These young business leaders inspire us with their drive and dedication to achieving and exceeding their goals. 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 by Regions Bank and the Nashville Business Journal.

Eleanor:

Thanks to everyone who's here and to our panelists. By way of introduction, we're going to start by having each panelist tell us a little bit about how in their career they became a boss. So, what was the moment that you first became a manager of people and was that a job that someone gave you or that you created for yourself?

Megan Ganshow:

So, I recently, as of a year ago, became a branch manager for Regions. I started at Regions at an entry level banker position and worked my way up. I think it was handed to me obviously through hard work and showing that I was ready to manage people and so I'm still newer to managing but I've been in the position for about a year now.

Ben:

I opened a bar when I was 23 years old with a really good buddy of mine and so, that is my ascension to being a boss was hiring myself.

Jennifer:

Well, I started out as an engineer and I never thought I would be in management when I first started. And I realized that I need to manage these people. They are going in the wrong direction. No, but I



realized that it's something that I really wanted to do, and I wanted to benefit personally as well as help others around me. So, in Nissan I just got on that track and here I am today.

Marcus Whitney:

So, I had a mentor give me my first job when we were starting an education nonprofit and he ended up [INDISCERNIBLE] chairing the board and letting me run it which was really fun. That was about ten years ago.

Brad Smith:

My first management position came by way of growth of a company. So, I was the fifth employee at Emma Email marketing and I was a programmer there and the only one at the time, and eventually the work got to be too much for me and I was introducing a lot of bugs and so they said we need a better coder in. And you can manage that person. And so, that was my first management gig.

Eleanor:

Great. Well, particularly for those of you who were promoted, so not Ben who made himself the boss, what one thing would you point to that helped you land that promotion or that position? Megan?

Megan:

Getting involved in as many things as possible. If there's opportunities just to volunteer with your company, volunteer. If there's opportunities to take on newer projects, take on newer projects. I will say that one thing that I did -- just one event that I think that made a huge difference for me was I was working out at my workout facility and in Nashville and the president of Regions was there and I had a moment of, okay, am I going to go introduce myself to him? I was nervous. I was like he probably doesn't even know who I am. Probably doesn't care. But I did. I got up the courage and I went and introduced myself to him. Two years later he remembered the moment that I went up and introduced myself to him. So, I think that confidence and just getting in front of the right people makes a huge difference in being able to get to where you want to in your career.

Eleanor:

Jennifer, what about you? Anything specific you'd point to?



Jennifer:

I would think not being afraid to challenge the status quo. So, coming from a technical background, a lot of times it's, you know, you have a lot of introverts and they just kind of do what they're told. I decided not to take that route and I challenged a lot of people. And it actually gained me a lot of visibility I guess and I was assigned to a lot of projects where things had been going -- we were pretty stagnant in certain areas and we needed growth. And so, they said, hey, she's going to challenge it. she's going to figure out what's wrong and change it and it was one assignment after the next and the next thing you know I was promoted.

Eleanor:

Great.

Marcus:

For me, it was a little bit about taking a risk. So, I went to work for a nonprofit that hadn't really started yet. We had about maybe six months of funding when I started. So I decided to leave sort of a full time job to go do that. And then overtime it turned into a bigger organization, but I think it was really about being willing to take a risk to be able to have a chance in that leadership position.

Brad:

Yeah, pretty similar. Probably the other side of that coin would be behaving like an owner. So, when I first started working at Emma I didn't have any ownership. But basically anything that they threw at me I would do anything. So I would write the code. I would answer customer calls. I would write marketing copy if I had to and eventually that earned me a position as a partner. I think it was just undeniable that I had the passion to become an owner.

Eleanor:

On the flipside, are there mistakes that you made as an employee or that you've seen employees make that people should avoid if they want to get into a management position? Let's go back to Marcus.

Marcus:

Yeah, I mean I think misunderstanding what management is about. Management is just a higher level of service to the organization. You're responsible for the organization, the vision, the mission, the core values and you have to be a representative of that every single day. And then you're also



responsible for the people that report to you and making sure they have the resources they need to be successful.

Brad:

I think for me it was sometimes maybe not listening enough. So, always thinking that you had a good idea or you knew how to tackle a problem and it turns out over time I've probably learned to listen a lot more than I did when I was a boss initially. So, I think really listening and learning from the people that you're working with and working for you.

Jennifer:

I'm going to have to piggyback off of Brad as well. Listening is my number one thing that I learned, and it was hard for me at first because kind of being short, I have Napoleon complex and at times I feel as though I always have to validate myself. So, in order to validate myself and be my biggest cheerleader as well to also gain that visibility I would be at the forefront, talk the most and say hey I've done this, I've done this. This is what we need to do. But I needed to step back and just listen and observe and a lot of times you'll learn the most that you can possibly learn by listening and not just acting first.

Megan:

I would say a mistake that can be made, and I've made it, is focusing on what I wanted to accomplish and what I wanted to get done versus all my team and really focusing on -- because they will feed into my success and my success will feed into theirs. So, really focusing on them will have its rewards instead of just focusing on what I want to accomplish and leaving others behind in the process.

Eleanor:

Ben, tell us about a huge idea that you had that when you were going to be in charge this is how you're going to do things that totally failed. Or didn't work out the way you thought that it would.

Ben:

That's an everyday experience in my life. I mean I think I learn every day. I had no hopes, dreams and aspirations of having as many restaurants or, quote, unquote, employees as we do now. It's been a very organic process for my brother and I and so we sort of learn every single day what to do, what not to do, what resonates. And I think that what I have found is the stuff that doesn't resonate isn't going to work. If I don't do a good job selling a vision on why it matters to me, to us, to the grand, typically it falls flat. And the stuff that I'm super jazzed about and really excited about if I can articulate it in that



way, it seems to go alright and so I think that just being committed to my decision is something that I've learned and I've gotten millions of those that have failed along the way. But I have a lot of fun failing as well.

Eleanor:

So, my question is for panel when they were working for other people and for all of y'all as well, what's the best way that a boss has motivated you? What is the best thing that your manager can do to get you to produce at your highest level?

Megan:

What I would say is the managers that I remember the most are the ones that actually took the time to get to know each of their team members individually. I bring a lot of coaching into how I manage and every person is different. Some people prefer a certain type of coaching and some people prefer another type. And so, if you just stick with one method and apply it to every single individual it doesn't always work out. So, the managers I remember are the ones that took the time to coach me the way that I best was coached. And then for somebody else it might be a completely different story. But they took the time to figure that out. And that's what I took from a manager that managed me.

Marcus:

I think a lot of it is giving people leeway to run pretty far but not so far they run off the edge of the cliff. So, it's giving them a lot of flexibility to be able to really stretch their skills.

Eleanor:

Well, this is an event for young professionals so I want to talk about age. So, first, for those of you or how have you thought about your age in your career? I think imposter syndrome is something that a lot of people deal with. Have you ever felt self-conscious maybe managing someone who's older than you, or interviewing a candidate who's older than you, or working with a client or just felt that there's no way you could be qualified for this position because you're only 24 or however old you were at the time? Whoever wants to take that.

Jennifer:

I'll start. I'll say that initially when I got into management I never thought about it. But to be very transparent. Working at a large corporation you have a lot of life long employees basically who started out when they were younger and they're planning to retire from this organization completely different from our generation today. So, with that, once I became a manager, I noticed some of the salaries. And I realized that oh wow most of my direct reports make more than I make. So, and this was in my first year in management and that's something that I had to deal with and it actually put in my head



the first time that wow you are younger than most of the people that work for you. So, these are some things that I have to think about and be cognizant of. But other than that, I just kind of not worried about it. Like I don't worry about it. I try to coach as much as I possibly can and remember that everyone has their own career goals. And that we have to be flexible with our direct reports so we can get the best out of them.

Megan:

The first branch that I managed two of the associates were at least 15, 20 years older than me and it was difficult at first. I felt being so much younger that I had to prove myself to them, like I deserve this position. So I spent most of the time the first couple months going above and beyond just to work as hard as I possibly could to prove to them that I deserved to be their manager. So, I think I kind of let that get in my head a little bit, the age. But once I sat down with them, had conversations and understood what they wanted to accomplish and where they were in their career I think we were on the same page and it gave me the confidence to know that I am in the position I'm in because I've earned it and I wouldn't be here if they didn't feel like I could manage all ages.

Ben:

I for sure have struggled with it. I mean to be honest I was laughing in my office. There's a little blip of a quote that I have from the MBJ from when I was -- I'm old now -- when I was younger then and it was like what's the one thing you've learned and it was like I used to -- because of my age I used to let people push me around and I was like 26 when I said that and I'm like used to, I still let them push me around because I still go into meetings with certain people and I'm like man look at what they've accomplished. Like look at what they've done. I'm flipping burgers and dropping fries for a living and these guys are and these women are have accomplished so much. And so I used to try and overcompensate for a lot of that. And what I have learned is now I just want to work with the smartest people regardless. I want to hire and work with people that are way better what they do than I am and allow them to do their thing. But the answer is in honest yes. I have struggled with that and I still struggle with that in certain regards. But at the end of the day when I sort of start thinking about it, I just want to work with the best people regardless of age. We have some of the best people that I've ever worked with that are much younger than I am and we have some that are much older than I am and that is how I've grown I think over the past few years.

Eleanor:

Well, as an employee, I am not a manager. My manager is not here. So I can say whatever I want I guess. But, how should I -- what should I do to make my manager not think about my age? How do I project that I am capable of whatever duties they want me to do regardless of the fact that I've just graduated a year ago. I did not, I'm not that young. But were that the case. Brad, you want to take this one?



Brad:

Sure. I mean I think some of our younger employees and probably myself when I was doing I think the biggest thing is seeming over eager sometimes and wanting maybe more responsibility or wanting -- maybe before you're ready for it and I think being realistic about where you are and just trying to do the best job you can every day I think if you focus on doing a good job, the promotions and the things will come. If you focus on getting the promotions or getting more responsibility sometimes it actually holds you back from getting it. So I think that's been a big lesson.

Marcus:

I would agree with that and I would say the other side of that is showing too much of your feelings when you feel overwhelmed. Like that does not go over well. Because it's usually no manager is going to think you can handle more if you show them that you're overwhelmed and it's usually a sign that you're struggling with time management and prioritization. Not that you're actually overwhelmed with the work. So, that's something that I try to coach young, very, very talented people on who are ambitious, take on a lot of stuff but then sort of lose their poker face.

Eleanor:

So, what should they do if they are feeling overwhelmed?

Ben:

I think tell a friend. They can have a mentor outside of work. I mean there's all sorts of things you can do to sort of get the feedback you need as oppose to going to your manager.

Jennifer:

He's not your friend to tell.

Eleanor:

Does everybody agree with that? Does anybody feel differently?



Marcus:

One thing I would say that I gravitate towards working with people that bring a solution to a problem. It is really easy to bring me a problem. I have 12 moleskin notebooks filled with problems. What I don't have are the solutions to those problems. If you bring a problem to me with an idea of a solution I always gravitate towards that person. 100 percent of the time. Even if the solution ends up being wrong. At least they thought about it. That is the person that I want to work with.

Jennifer:

Exactly. I agree and I also like to see that autonomous nature in someone. So, if they're given a project it's like I know that they can handle this from beginning to end so basically like don't tell me that you're overwhelmed I guess but overall just knowing that I can trust you. If I'm away, that you can take things off of my plate as well. I believe that's when I start to look at the people under me and just say hey yeah they have great leadership skills and they're someone that I can trust. But that autonomous nature is very important. So, you don't really want to be micromanaged. Nobody wants to be micromanaged, right. But you got to prove that you don't need to be at this point.

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