



Best Piece of Advice

Interview with Colby Goodman, Director of Membership and Councils,
Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties (Bellevue, Wash.)

Describe your career path to working at an association.

What attracted me to the Association was my ability to apply my skillset. I am not a home builder, but I am experienced in customer-centric disciplines: consumer sales, behavior, and marketing. I've personally found that using my skills in the for-profit space is not hugely different than this space. At the end of the day, we're in the business of people; it's just the product/service that differs. For those interested in working in an association, I'd recommend focusing on your skillset matches versus the industry.

What was the best piece of advice you received in your career?

For much of my career, I was the person who thought they could do everything and was happy to take-on way too much. Not only was that unfair to me, but it allowed mistakes and output that may not have been of the quality I wanted to produce. If you're a people leader, it will rob your team of valuable learning opportunities.

In a prior work life, I had a boss who identified that in doing this, I wasn't leveraging what he though was the most valuable talent I brought to the company, strategic vision, but instead I was "doing" a lot of things. His wise words were "You have people to do the things. You need to use your time to think. Let them do, and you think." I still apply those words today when I find I'm deviating from what I do best.

What advice would you give yourself at the start of your career?

If I were starting over, the best advice I would give myself would be to listen, learn, and observe. No one expects you to be a superhero when you're starting out, so don't be. Learn one thing and do it well, then move on to learning something else, but keep yourself in a tight circle of a few things in which you are an expert – you can't be an expert in everything. There's a wise saying that speaks to this; "a person who wants to be everything will never be anything."

Learn from those who have excelled and listen more than you speak. You don't need to figure everything out right away – enjoy the journey and see where it leads you.

What advice would you give to a new EO or HBA Staff member at the beginning of their career?

Be sincerely interested in the people around you. If you're unwilling to learn about them (what makes them tick, what influences them, their businesses), and don't enjoy learning about them, you won't be successful. You must be genuinely interested in people to excel and be satisfied in this space. Develop your interpersonal skills and learn as much as you can about influence and group dynamics. Listen well.

If you lead people, remember that leadership is not about you, it's about those in your care. It's your job to support and develop them. Trust will be the biggest strength you can have as a team, but once violated, the lack of will destroy everything.