

What leading young Nashville execs learned about becoming the boss

After [Benjamin Goldberg](#) hired a manager, his first big hire, he found out that person smoked crack.

The experience taught the Nashville restaurateur, who went on to launch Strategic Hospitality with his brother Max, the importance of taking the time it takes to hire the right people.

Speaking of those early years of his business, Goldberg said: “I learned I was not ready, but I also learned I could out work any problem. ... I couldn’t just fire myself.”

That was just one piece of advice Goldberg and four other panelists shared with roughly 100 young professionals at the *Nashville Business Journal*’s Next Gen panel discussion Thursday. Joining Goldberg were [Jennifer Hill](#), quality strategy and administration manager for Nissan North America; [Brad Smith](#), CEO of Aspire Health; [Marcus Whitney](#), president of Briovation; and [Megan Ganschow](#), branch manager for Regions Bank’s Mill Creek location.

During the hour-long discussion, panelists covered a range of topics, from how they worked their way to a management position to the biggest mistake they made early in their management careers. What follows are notable highlights from the group’s discussion:

On how to become a boss:

“You have to not be afraid to challenge the status quo. ... Engineers are typically introverts, and I decided not to do that.” • [Jennifer Hill](#)

“You need to behave like an owner. ... Sometimes you see people who think being a boss is just about being ‘the boss.’ It’s actually about being a leader and managing people.” • [Marcus Whitney](#)

On what they learned early in their leadership positions:

“That I needed to step back and listen and learn.” • [Jennifer Hill](#)

“Figuring out what I do versus what my team does. ... They feed on my success, and I ultimately feed on theirs.” • [Megan Ganschow](#)

“I learn every day, but I’ve seen the stuff that doesn’t resonate doesn’t work. ... By being committed to my decision, I’m allowed to have fun failing.”

• [Benjamin Goldberg](#)

On how their age impacts their career:

“I never thought about it. Once I became a manager I started to notice the salaries [of subordinates that had a longer tenure with the company]. It actually put in my head, ‘You are younger than your direct reports.’” • [Jennifer Hill](#)

“I felt being so much younger I had to prove I was good enough to be their manager ... Once I sat down with them, I became more confident [in my leadership abilities].” • [Megan Ganschow](#)

“I still let [people with more experience] push me around. I used to try and overcompensate for my age, but now I just want to hire the most competent, best people around.” • [Benjamin Goldberg](#)

On mistakes young professionals make at work:

“Being over eager or wanting a promotion before you’re ready for it.” • [Brad Smith](#)

“Showing too much of your feelings when you’re overwhelmed. ... It shows me you might have problems with time-management.” • [Marcus Whitney](#)

On the best things young professionals can do to work their way up:

“Bring me a solution to a problem. ... I have 12 Moleskines full of problems. If you bring me a problem with a potential solution, then I gravitate to that person.” • [Benjamin Goldberg](#)

“No one wants to be micromanaged, but you have to prove you don’t have to be micromanaged.” • [Jennifer Hill](#)

On maintaining a work/life balance:

“If you delegate properly, then you shouldn’t run into that often.” • [Megan Ganschow](#)

“I don’t have a work/life balance. ... If you want to take a yoga class at 10 a.m. because it’s your favorite teacher, then I don’t care. But that doesn’t mean you don’t get your work done.” • [Marcus Whitney](#)

On the biggest mistake they made early in their career:

“I had to learn that we’re gonna have a lot of cases — maybe not a lot if you get better at hiring — where you have to let someone go. It’s what’s best for the organization and the person.” • [Jennifer Hill](#)

“Losing my temper. ... Once it comes out you can’t put it back in the bottle ... especially if you think that establishes authority. That’s never good.” • [Marcus Whitney](#)

On the thing they look for in future managers:

“Hard work.” • [Megan Ganschow](#)

“Be willing to take things off your manager’s plate.” • [Jennifer Hill](#)

“Committed and self aware.” • [Brad Smith](#)

“If you’re self aware.” • [Marcus Whitney](#)