

How Reviews Guide  
Consumer Decisions P 4

Fundamentals of Powerful  
Corporate Culture P 12

Do Smart Devices Impact  
Our Manners? P 20

Partner Shatters  
the Ceiling P 32

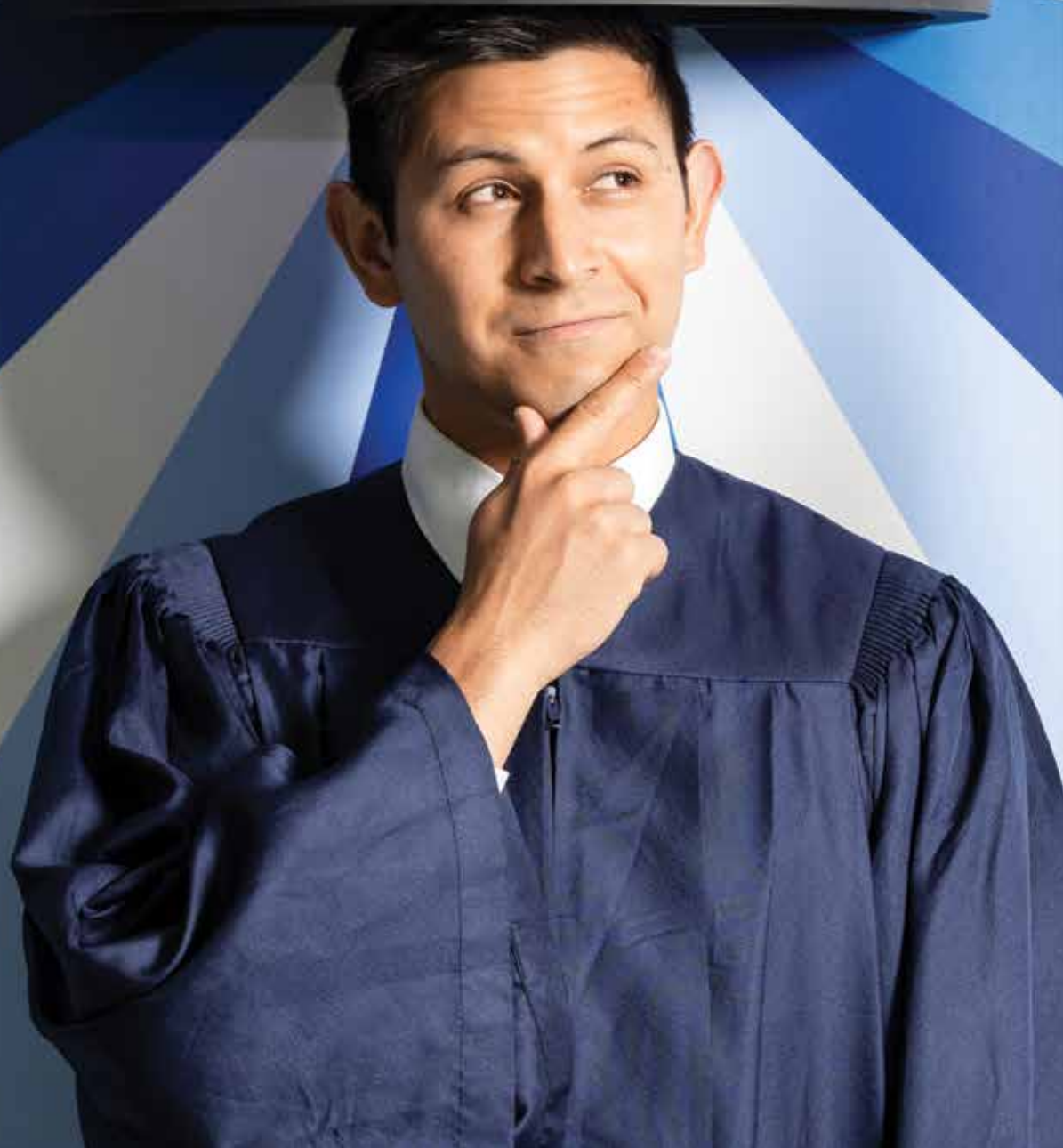
# MARRIOTT

ALUMNI MAGAZINE



SUMMER 2021

**BYU MARRIOTT**  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS





# MARRIOTT

## ALUMNI MAGAZINE

ISSUE Summer 2021

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◀ ALEX BYBEE PONDERES HIS FUTURE AS A  
MEMBER OF BYU MARRIOTT'S CLASS OF 2021.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF BYU PHOTO.



Long time no see. • Do you guys want to do a Zoom call tonight? • I don't know how to clean data. • I definitely zoned out and got nothing. • I have two art projects that I haven't even started yet. • I'm going to get a burrito. • I have golf as a backup. • That was some dream. • I've seen you around, but I don't know your name. • I've heard of you—in a good way. • Oh, is this an elevator? • Did you bring back all my stuff? • Maybe you're not here yet. • They really hammer you hard. • It's just a big building. • I almost signed up for your class this semester. • I don't want to walk up the stairs. I'm tired. • I had two interviews with two people in two days. • I'm ready to pitch that. • We're not going to outsmart them. • Which holiday is it? • 3D pie charts are just atrocious. • Where is the MOA? • Oh man, I love that. • Analysts spend their entire careers just pumping out numbers. They're deep into it. • Let's just pick one and dig in. • This test is going to destroy me. • Collaboration. That was inspiring to watch. • It's a way to give to the world, y'know? • We could use that as storage somehow. • They haven't had a new truck since 2008. • I can't figure out the elevator. • Class today was rough. • I'm about to relocate. • Tell me about your experience with data framing. • We can compare TAs. • Hold up, let me play some *High School Musical* real quick. • Hallelujah! It took me way longer to work with decimals instead of fractions. • Oh, I hope it snows in the mountains so we can go skiing. • Dude dude dude dude dude dude. • What's kickin'? • You weren't listening in lecture yesterday. • Where are you going to keep all your photos? • I put in other headphones and was out for 30 minutes. • Do you guys understand that at all? • Let me get a head start up the stairs. It'll take me an extra minute. • She said to put everything in a binder so it would stay organized, but I didn't listen. She was right. • I feel like my bruise is spreading. It's, like, migrating. • I finally got your joke. It's hilarious. • Dude, can you believe it's been one month already? How time flies. • We're trying to solve the surface level of the problem, not the root. *Just pull the tops of the weeds, not the bottom.* They'll grow back eventually. • If you can take good notes, you can get through a chapter in an hour and a half. • I'm taking a three-credit writing class, but it feels more like a four-credit writing class.

**OVERHEARD  
IN THE  
TANNER**



4



24



32

# Contents

SUMMER 2021



12

## Features

4

### 10 OUT OF 10 WOULD RECOMMEND

Honest recommendations, genuine feedback, positive PR—online reviews are becoming increasingly influential in the decisions that today's consumers are making. In fact, 95 percent of Americans read online reviews before buying something for the first time.

12

### FROM FOUNDATIONS TO FINISHING TOUCHES

Robust corporate cultures engage with employees, feature competent leaders, and provide pathways for career advancement. Focusing on creating a fundamental culture can impact a company's employees, customers, and the bottom line.

20

### ALEXA! WHY ARE MY KIDS YELLING AT YOU?

Artificial intelligence is in almost every home in America, and researchers are wondering if being surrounded by smart devices influences behavior—especially the behavior of children. Recent research looks at whether manners disappear with modern tech.

24

### BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

Former US senator Jeff Flake, who served as a visiting fellow at BYU Marriott's Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics during fall 2020, talks politics, challenges, and working together.

32

### PARTNERING WITH PAIGE

Paige Goeptfert's journey to partner in Andersen Tax's Chicago office has included careful planning, goal setting, and creative strategizing. Today she enjoys a career that combines the financial side of things with the opportunity to connect with people.

## Plus ...

11 **INSIDE THE CLASSROOM**  
*Experiments in Entrepreneurship*

18 **BY THE NUMBERS**  
*Food Truck Fodder*

30 **AROUND THE COOLER**  
*Get Focused!*

37 **SCHOOL NEWS**

43 **ALUMNI NEWS**

Cover photo by Bradley Slade



How online reviews came to rule commerce, and where they might be headed next.

**L**ike many people, Nirnaya Lohani loves to try new foods. But unlike many people, the 2007 BYU Marriott information systems graduate does more than check restaurants' online reviews before visiting. She's become an active Elite reviewer herself on crowd-sourced review site Yelp. And in the process, she has come to recognize a fundamental truth about human nature.

By Clarissa McIntire   Illustrations by Dante Terzigni





MICHELIN guide

ZAGAT

3 STARS

ALL INCLUSIVE

free trial

BEST EV

55 reviews



“There was a time in my life when I used to travel quite a bit for work, and searching for the best restaurants was something I loved doing,” Lohani says. “Yelp was my go-to source, and yet I questioned if people were authentic in the reviews they shared. I knew that the only way for me to believe in a product or service that I used on the daily was to be a contributor to it, because—let’s be honest—we find *ourselves* to be authentic.”

Authenticity is the name of the game when it comes to online reviews. Consumers want honest recommendations, and businesses look for genuine feedback and positive PR. And though ensuring that online reviews are accurate and trustworthy may be more difficult than it looks, that hasn’t stopped reviews from becoming increasingly influential in consumers’ decision-making processes. In 2016, 82 percent of Americans said they read online reviews before buying something for the first time; in 2019, that number jumped to 95 percent.<sup>1</sup>

One challenge with authenticity is that review culture often isn’t forgiving. Too many poor reviews can put a company—especially small companies—out of business because most shoppers will decide against a purchase if they see a business or product has more than six negative reviews.<sup>2</sup>

The review system, in other words, has its flaws. But to understand those flaws and how companies may innovate online consumer-evaluation processes in the future, it’s important to understand how online reviews began.

## Review Culture on the Rise

In 1996, *Harvard Business Review* published “The Real Value of On-Line Communities,” which speculated on the future of the internet. For today’s readers, the piece may seem quaint, not only because of the use of that bygone hyphen but also for what may now seem like naivete. “Rarely do [business-run websites] encourage communication among visitors to the site,” the article reported. “Most existing communities . . . are not business oriented; in fact, most strongly oppose the very idea of commercial activity on the Internet.”

Despite the popular resistance to internet commerce, the authors went on to predict the future success of online marketing: “By creating strong on-line communities, businesses will be able to build customer loyalty to a degree that today’s marketers can only dream of and, in return, generate strong economic returns.”<sup>3</sup>

Several sites were quick to create those communities. As early as 1999, three main sources of consumer evaluations—Epinions, RateItAll, and Deja—offered users a forum for reviews and discussion. Their success led

many tech leaders to either acquire the sites or create their own, often with significant updates, including the addition of response features. Online reputation management became an essential marketing strategy. By 2012, the major online review sites were the Big Five: Yelp, Amazon, Google, Facebook, and TripAdvisor.<sup>4</sup>

Today’s increased consumer reliance on reviews reflects a common desire for more interactive retail experiences, says Jeff Dotson, associate professor of marketing at BYU Marriott. “We’ve moved away from a very personalized consumer experience,” he says. “A hundred years ago, I’d have gone to the grocer and I’d have known the owner. I would have trusted the products because I’d have had a personal relationship with the owner, and I would’ve made recommendations accordingly. Now I go to a grocery store, and I don’t talk to anybody. But I still have a certain degree of trust with the retailer. I assume they’re not going to put products on the shelves that are inferior.”

The advent of the internet not only made regular shopping experiences less personal, but it also expanded retail and service opportunities beyond what already existed. Expensive or uncommon products became more accessible, so consumers reached out beyond those who lived on their streets to those who were active on their corners of the internet.

## Navigating by the Stars

Online reviews often consist of both written evaluations and numerical ratings. In recent years, rating has become so pervasive that it has spawned popular phrases (“10 out of 10, would recommend”), innumerable memes, and social media handles that, purely for entertainment, rate everything from dogs to Zoom backgrounds to Star Wars robots.

When we encounter these star-symbol or numerical ratings while shopping, we assume they indicate how good a product or a service is. In Dotson’s studies on evaluations and the review process, he takes both star ratings and number ratings as “basically a proxy for product quality,” he says. “It’s amazing how much influence star ratings have on consumer choice. They have a big impact on whether someone is willing to buy a product or not.”

Star ratings have dual roles: they offer consumers an indication of quality as well as a way to differentiate between products. “When we moved to digital commerce, we were exposed to what we sometimes call the ‘long tail’ of the internet, or the variety of retail sites it supports,” says Dotson. “If I go to the store looking for chocolate ice cream, there are only so many different types. It’s very limited. But when you start to transact online, there are literally hundreds of options



“It’s amazing how much influence star ratings have on consumer choice. They have a big impact on whether someone is willing to buy a product or not.”



to choose from. The big questions we face now, given all this variety, are what is best and what can I trust? In answer, people have started to treat evaluations as screening mechanisms.”

### The Perilous Quest for the Best

“I was actually a victim of fraud,” shares associate professor of marketing Jeff Larson. “I was looking to buy a bouncy house, which usually costs between \$600 and \$1,000, but I found a site that was selling them for around \$200. I was all in, and I bought it. But after I paid, the house didn’t come, and I didn’t hear from the company. I went back on their site and found all of their products had five-star reviews, and all of them had exactly the same number of reviews. It was clear somebody had gone on and fabricated all those reviews to try and resolve consumer uncertainty about their product. They had deliberately committed fraud.”

Fortunately, Larson was able to reverse his credit charges, but many victims of fraud aren’t so lucky. Even if you’ve never been the victim of outright review fraud, you may have experienced review fraud lite or review manipulation instead of fabrication. Larson encountered such manipulation after purchasing a storage shed and having it installed. “We were super floored with the experience and thought the installers did an amazing job,” he says. “Their staff was here for two days, about twelve hours each day, to get it installed in time. I told the owner of the company I was incredibly impressed, and he asked me to review them online.

“I don’t actually do reviews that often, but I did one for him because I was so pleased,” Larson continues. “Then I noticed he had a total of twelve reviews, but this was a company that had been around for a long time and installed hundreds of sheds every year. I was puzzled before I inferred that he only requested reviews from people he knew he was going to get a five-star review from—in fact, he had a perfect five-star average. But his competitor had more than three hundred reviews and a 4.7 average.”

So are online reviews not to be trusted? Larson and Dotson agree that’s not the case. “The idea that no online reviews are trustworthy is detrimental, actually,” Dotson says. “If there are fake reviews out there, consumers lose confidence in reviews, which many people rely on as mechanisms of trust. So companies do a bunch of things to ensure that reviews are authentic and trustworthy, such as using third-party companies such as Trustpilot to ensure honesty in the review process.”

Larson agrees that while it’s important to take precautions, consumers should feel comfortable relying

# Reviewing the Review Process

There's a lot more at work—and at stake—in the online review process than meets the eye. Keep in mind these best practices for reading reviews, leaving reviews, and managing reviews.

## READERS

**Bias Check:** “While it's true that those who leave reviews are a self-selected group—they all have a reason for reviewing—if their motivations have no bearing on how they evaluate a product, the reviews are usually fairly objective. So if you're looking at the average Amazon review, while there's the potential for bias, those reviews tend to be pretty unbiased.”

—JEFF LARSON

**Read More Than Reviews:** “If you're looking to make a big purchase, check out a third-party evaluator such as *Consumer Reports* or look for some word-of-mouth recommendations as well. When there's more at stake in a purchase, it can never hurt to be too careful and double-check what you read online.”

—JEFF DOTSON

## REVIEWERS

**Be Kind:** “I travel a lot, and I rely on TripAdvisor reviews to know where to go and what to do. And once I get somewhere, I try to leave good reviews because a lot of these businesses live or die based on their reviews.”

—ZACK OATES

## BUSINESSES

**Quantity Over Quality:** “When it comes to online review management, I come down on the side of getting more reviews rather than just getting quality ones. That way, your reviews are more trustworthy and you're less susceptible to an outlier review dropping your overall score.”

—JEFF LARSON

**Community Consciousness:** “Companies should invest in communities to help build their brand and create a member-driven experience. We as humans love recognition in some form and want to stand out. Giving badges and honors to reviewers who have been committed, consistent, and helpful in bringing positive impact in the community should be recognized.”

—NIRNAYA LOHANI



on the majority of online reviews. Because it's in their best interest, most companies are actively working to eliminate fake reviews. “There's been plenty of review fraud on Amazon, but Amazon and other big players are fully incentivized to make sure reviews are as truthful as possible,” Larson says. “They are in the business of providing information, so ensuring the quality of that information is profitable for them.”

## User Error

However, one precaution consumers ought to take is to account for the fact that reviews and ratings can be given by anyone. Even if a reviewer is a verified purchaser of, say, a pair of skis, that reviewer may be an inexperienced skier who is unimpressed not because of the quality of the skis but because they didn't work as she imagined skis would.

“A long-standing issue with reviews in general is the debate on what matters more: the expert review or the general-population review,” Larson explains. “That's the difference between Zagat and Michelin reviews. Michelin has the experts who know everything there is to know about food. If they say your food is the best, then it's the best. Zagat gathers reviews from the general populace. People seem



to most trust populace reviews without taking into account that they can be less reliable because they're not based on a full knowledge of how a service should be or a product should perform."

This tendency toward unfamiliarity and the possibility of inaccurate reviews due to user error are reasons Larson recommends that businesses garner a higher number of reviews rather than aiming to receive a fewer number of positive ones. The more reviews left for a product or business, the less likely it will be that the reviews are untrustworthy.

## The Future of Feedback

Though they serve a necessary function in providing information, public reviews sometimes serve neither the reviewer nor the company effectively. For example, if a couple has a subpar stay in a hotel and wants to give feedback, they might find that leaving a review is the most effective way to get the hotel manager's attention. But their blunt review neither gets them the compensation they desire nor does it help the management see the error in a timely manner.

"Online reviews are great when the experience is good, but when it's bad, customers usually feel they have nowhere else to go," says Zack Oates, who graduated from BYU Marriott with an MBA in 2015. "Often the alternative to reviews is lengthy surveys, and our research shows that 90 percent of people hate long surveys. It's a lot of work for little reward. So the main issues with the two current methods of long-form surveys and online reviews are they are too public and too cumbersome."

These issues are what inspired Oates to find another method of consumer evaluation and feedback. In 2018 he founded Ovation, a customer-engagement platform provider that works mainly with restaurants and offers "an actionable guest feedback tool," Oates says. The process works mainly via text message: after leaving a restaurant, a guest receives a text asking him to answer two questions for a chance to win a gift card. A link takes him to a page where he rates his experience using emojis; if he rates it as anything less than perfect, he's asked to explain his answer. He feels heard, and just as important, the restaurant receives real-time information.

"We take all of that private feedback and all of those online reviews, and we are able to show the restaurant different trends that we discover, such as, 'You've been getting a lot of mentions of cold food last week at this location,'" Oates says. "That analysis goes directly to management, and they are able to fix that issue. That's our secret weapon: we combine this data of who customers are and what they ordered with how happy



they were. When you combine those things, you get a powerful engine that can actually drive revenue."

Eric Rea, a 2012 information systems graduate, also took advantage of text messaging when he founded messaging tool provider Podium to help businesses connect better with customers and ensure reviews accurately reflect customers' experiences. Podium not only gathers reviews but also manages every customer touchpoint from answering questions to collecting payment.

There are many ways to innovate the consumer evaluation process, and recent developments are only the beginning. "For example, we're researching incentives, and we're seeing an increase in *markerations*, which is a blend of *marketing* and *operations*," Oates explains. "Previously, feedback sat on the operation side, but what we're finding is that a lot of companies

# The History of Online Reviews

<b>1997</b>	The term “weblog” is coined, signaling the rise of blogs, which offer long-form product and business reviews.
<b>1999</b>	Some merchant and product reviews are available on sites such as eBay.
<b>1999</b>	Epinions, RateltAll, and Deja emerge as the three main original review sites.
<b>2000</b>	TripAdvisor is founded.
<b>2001</b>	Yellow Pages and Citysearch add online review functions to their sites.
<b>2002</b>	Google purchases Deja’s intellectual property to create what would become Google Groups.
<b>2004</b>	Yelp is founded.
<b>2007</b>	More than 100,000 businesses join Facebook and begin marketing campaigns on the site.
<b>2008</b>	<i>Consumer Reports</i> purchases <i>The Consumerist</i> blog, which later becomes the Consumer Reports website.
<b>2009</b>	Yelp adds a feature that allows companies to respond to reviews; Google adds the same feature the following year.
<b>2012</b>	The Big Five review sites emerge: Facebook, Google, Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Amazon.
<b>2017</b>	Google outranks Facebook to become the site with the most reviews.
<b>2018</b>	Yelp, Google, and other sites create policies against various kinds of review manipulation.

Sources: “The History of Online Business Reviews,” Chatmeter, accessed 14 April 2021, [chatmeter.com/blog/the-history-of-online-business-reviews](http://chatmeter.com/blog/the-history-of-online-business-reviews); D. J. Sprague, “The History of Online Reviews and How They Have Evolved,” ShopperApproved, 20 December 2019, [5stars.shopperapproved.com/the-history-and-evolution-of-online-reviews](http://5stars.shopperapproved.com/the-history-and-evolution-of-online-reviews).

are starting to blend these two together, realizing that when you share that data in a seamless way, you’re able to improve operations much faster and make much more effective marketing campaigns.”

Ultimately, every development in the review process should target improving consumer experiences, because “people just want to be heard,” Oates says. “If you don’t make them feel heard, that’s why they leave negative reviews online. They just want to know someone is listening.”

## World Wide Web, Small-Town Feel

Knowing that someone is listening—or reading, anyway—is part of the reason Lohani enjoys reviewing businesses on Yelp. Perhaps her favorite review she’s ever given was for an Indian-Italian fusion restaurant in California. “I was so authentic and animated in my review, many people indicated that they found it helpful,” Lohani says. “As a result, my review was marked as the sitewide Review of the Day, and that got me so excited knowing that people are actually reading my reviews and are finding them helpful.”

Engendering a sense of community is perhaps what online reviews do best. Though most consumers may not know their local grocers anymore, as Dotson says, shopping can still retain that social, neighborly aspect when the review process is done right.

And in the future, that sense of community may become more important than ever. “The reason I continue to be an active reviewer is because of the climate during the COVID-19 pandemic,” Lohani says. “There are so many small restaurants and businesses that have gone under due to the pandemic. If I can contribute at all by highlighting and promoting these restaurants through reviews or other social media activity, that would make me so happy. I genuinely love writing reviews so that people can feel connected.” **M**

## Notes

1. *Rise of the Review Culture*, Brightpearl and Trustpilot, 2019, [cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2304371/ROTRC\\_Report\\_US\\_3.pdf](https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2304371/ROTRC_Report_US_3.pdf).
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3. Arthur Armstrong and John Hagel III, “The Real Value of On-Line Communities,” *Harvard Business Review*, May–June 1996, [hbr.org/1996/05/the-real-value-of-on-line-communities](http://hbr.org/1996/05/the-real-value-of-on-line-communities).
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## About the Author

Clarissa McIntire is a former assistant editor of *Marriott Alumni Magazine*. She holds a bachelor’s degree in English and is currently earning a master’s in the same with an emphasis in rhetoric and composition. She’s one of those people who always says hi to other people’s dogs.





# Experiments in Entrepreneurship

**WHEN MOST PEOPLE HEAR THE PHRASE SCIENTIFIC METHOD,** they think of physics or biology, not starting a company. Professors at BYU Marriott are changing that perception in Entrepreneurship 113: Startup Bootcamp, a course that Taylor Halverson, associate teaching professor of entrepreneurship, describes as “learning the scientific method for how to launch a business.”

ENT 113, a prerequisite for the entrepreneurial management major and entrepreneurship minor, is open to learners across campus. The course helps students understand that “entrepreneurship is a disciplined process, and it’s more about solving problems than it is about making money,” explains Halverson. “That’s a mind shift for most students.”

In order to create the kind of intense, hands-on experience that “boot camp” implies, professors pack fifteen hours of instruction into a two-week period, with the class meeting all day on a Saturday and then on the following two Tuesday or Thursday evenings. “Teaching this class in a traditional format would be like trying to play a basketball game in five-minute chunks,” says Halverson. “It would disrupt the flow of the game.”

***“Entrepreneurship is a disciplined process, and it’s more about solving problems than it is about making money. That’s a mind shift for most students.”***

The course is based on lean entrepreneurship, a methodology that uses a more scientific approach to developing a business. Before the class meets for the first time, students read articles and watch videos to gain a basic understanding of course content. On the first morning of class, instructors split students into groups and immediately give them exercises that will help them start to identify problems they might be able to solve. A crucial part of this process is leaving the classroom to observe behavior and talk to people.

Once group members feel confident they have found a real problem, they begin prototyping and testing solutions. By the end of Saturday, groups have walked through each major element of business development and tracked the process on the “lean canvas”—a single page where they document assumptions, create hypotheses about those assumptions, and then test them.

In the following days, teams meet on their own to further refine their ideas, returning to class on one evening to pitch their solutions and receive feedback from classmates and professors. After another week’s work, the course ends with each group making a final presentation to explain the progress they’ve made toward starting a business.

Professors pack fifteen hours of instruction into three sessions as they teach the scientific method for how to launch a business.

“We don’t have a predetermined outcome,” says Halverson. “In fact, this is one of the few classes on campus where you can get credit for doing things wrong. What we care more about is that students show they can follow the lean entrepreneurship processes, even if their original business

ideas turn out to be wrong.”

Maddie Baker, a senior from Meridian, Idaho, majoring in illustration and minoring in entrepreneurship, says the format of the class pushed her. “Quick deadlines call for action. It was fun to learn so much at once, and it made me feel like I had the entry-level know-how and resources to start exploring startup ideas on my own.”

Whether or not they go on to start a business, students leave ENT 113 with decision-making skills they can apply to many areas of life. Notes Halverson: “If they follow the scientific process, they will be more likely to succeed.”

—SHIRLEEN M. SAUNDERS








# from FOUNDATIONS to FINISHING TOUCHES

*Crafting a Vibrant  
Corporate Culture*

by ELAINE JARVIK

ILLUSTRATIONS by RED NOSE STUDIO

THIS IS THE *second* IN A  
SERIES OF ARTICLES THAT LOOKS  
AT WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL  
CULTURE IS, WHY IT'S IMPORTANT,  
AND HOW TO CHANGE IT.



things were looking dismal for the BYU Cougar football team in 2004. There had been three losing football seasons in a row, and several players had been suspended for violations of the school's Honor Code. Paul Gustavson offered his help three different times, and all three times was told thank you, but no.

Then, in 2005, Bronco Mendenhall was named head coach. Finally, Gustavson had found someone who would listen.

Gustavson is a Cougar fan, a former player, an MOB graduate of BYU Marriott, an organizational design consultant, and the founder of Organization Planning and Design in San Jose, California. What he wanted to do, he explained to Mendenhall, was to help transform the football team from the inside out.

He ended up spending hundreds of hours coaching the coach about theories and practices culled from the corporate world—about purpose and vision, communication and strategies, and what, in the lingo of business, made the Cougars a “differentiated brand.” With Gustavson’s input, Mendenhall worked to imbue in the players a collective sense that they were unique in American football, a team made up largely of returned missionaries who follow a rigorous honor code, and that they had a purpose that was bigger than

wins and losses. They were, he told them, flag bearers for BYU.

Carefully measure and determine what you want the end result to be, then help them visualize it, Gustavson urged. So Mendenhall ran the team to the top of the Y on the mountain, where they could see, literally and symbolically, how the view was different at the top. He took the players to the banks of the Provo River, where he had them write down what they didn’t like about the football program and then ceremoniously crumple up those papers and throw them in the water.

The idea, says Gustavson, was to craft a new team culture.

### By Design

There are lots of ways to explain the abstract idea of organizational culture, but perhaps none more efficient than the metaphor offered by the late Sumantra Ghoshal, who taught management strategy at the London Business School. Some companies and organizations, he said, are “downtown Kolkata in summer,” while others are “the forest of Fontainebleau in spring.”

It’s easy to conjure up the feeling of his hometown in July, where the heat and humidity can inspire lethargy and naps. Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland (an appearance available now on a grainy YouTube video), Ghoshal explained that Kolkata in summer would translate as a corporate culture that prizes “constraint,” whereas other business cultures create the kind of pep and optimism you might feel in a French forest on an April day.

Ghoshal’s two choices don’t cover all the possibilities—what about corporate cultures

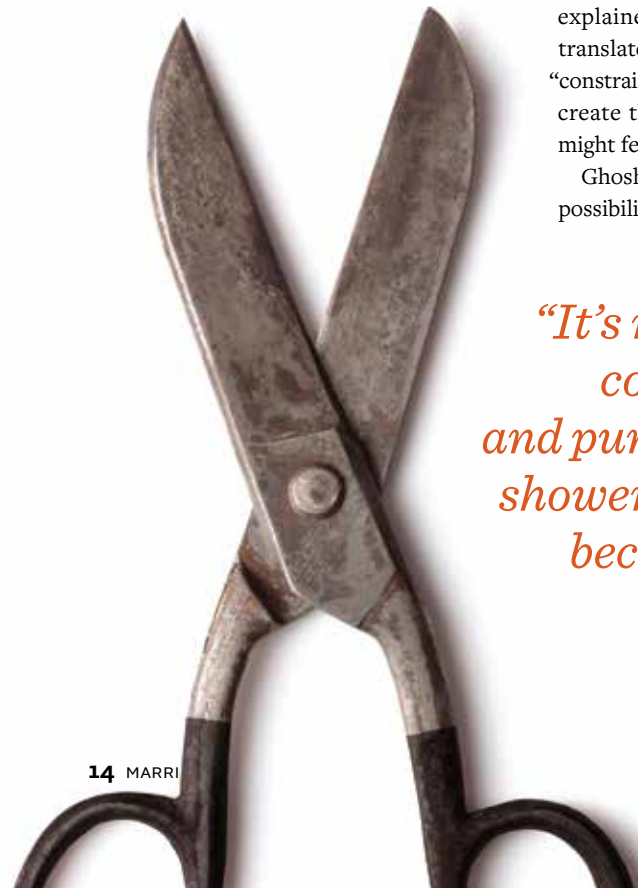
that create havoc (Miami in hurricane season)?—but his point is that all organizations create an environment within their walls, an ambiance that is palpable if not always easy to articulate.

The idea is that corporate cultures are made up of not just employee handbooks, free gourmet lunches, or lofty slogans, but something more fundamental: deep-seated norms, values, and assumptions that can shape employees, customers, and the bottom line.

Companies where the culture has gone awry are the ones that make headlines. Think Volkswagen amid the 2015 diesel emissions scandal, for example, or Wells Fargo during its 2016 fake accounts scandal. Flourishing work cultures provide less dramatic models but are worth inspecting to figure out what they do right.

In the mid-1990s, researchers at Harvard came up with a theory called service-profit chain, which posits that a business culture that is built to be supportive and inspiring will lead in a straight line to employee satisfaction, which in turn leads to customer satisfaction, which leads to customer loyalty, which leads to profits.

At the Utah grocery chain Harmons, Aimee Smith’s title is vice president for the people, which is shorthand for the company’s service-profit-chain philosophy, because the “people” in this case are the four thousand employees who work at the chain’s stores, distribution center, and corporate office. While Harmons shoppers keep the company in business of course, it’s Harmons employees who are the company’s top priority. “If we take care of our people, they’ll take care of our customers,” Smith says.



*“It’s not just about being compliant and coming to my job from nine to five and punching a time clock. It’s about I’m in the shower or at a soccer game, and I have ideas because I’m passionate about my job.”*





By deliberate design and careful calculations, senior management in a solid culture exists with one purpose: to help employees achieve. As Ghoshal put it, these are the cultures that can be summed up by the word *stretch*. In these companies—the ones that feel like Fontainebleau in spring—there is the sense that “every individual, all the time, is trying to do more rather than less.”

Or as Gustavson says, finely crafted cultures are those where employees can say “every day I have the opportunity to do what I do best.”

### Passion and Creativity

In the knowledge economy, says BYU Marriott associate dean John Bingham, companies want employees with ideas. “It’s not just about being compliant and coming to my job from nine to five and punching a time clock. It’s about I’m in the shower or at a soccer game, and I have ideas because I’m passionate about my job.

“When organizations create an environment where people are excited, where they have buy-in and engagement in their work,” he continues, “it means the organizations get the very best out of those people, their very best thinking. And they can do it in ways that help the company succeed.”

In some sectors, that might mean giving employees the freedom to be creative, ask difficult questions, and feel part of a team. In the retail economy, it might look like giving frontline employees the autonomy to figure out how to provide the best customer care.

There is, for example, this famous (although unverified) story: When Nordstrom opened a store in Fairbanks, Alaska, in the 1970s, a man rolled a set of tires into the men’s department and said he wanted to return them. Of course Nordstrom didn’t sell tires and never had, but the department store reportedly sat on the site of a former automotive store. Then, as now, Nordstrom was known for its generous return policy, so the salesperson smiled, took the tires, and gave the man a refund.

The rest of the story is that Nordstrom is also known for its legendary employee handbook: “Rule #1: Use your own good judgment in all situations. There will be no additional rules.” In reality, the handbook now contains additional rules, but the main



idea—the value of employee autonomy to make decisions on things such as refunds—still stands. It’s a value that works to give Nordstrom a strong identity and reputation. It works for the customer, and it works for the kind of employees who like to feel trusted and empowered.

“A culture that gives employees the right amount of autonomy, provides a psychologically safe environment, celebrates employee accomplishments along the way, and has leaders focused on helping employees achieve, are more likely to see innovation,” says Alexander Lovell, director of research and data science at the OC Tanner Institute.

### A Culture Connection

In the Business Career Center at BYU Marriott, students are encouraged to explore future job opportunities in terms of “culture

fit.” Some employees prefer structure and a clear chain of command, others want to be thought of more as equals and given a chance to innovate. Some employers want risk takers, others want rule followers.

Students who recognize their own values and strengths can thus avoid a situation where they’re tempted to sign on with a marquee company in the hopes it will look good on their résumés, only to discover that they value time with their families but the company culture values sixty-hour work weeks. The result is “culture shock.”

A 2019 study by the hiring and workplace reviews website Glassdoor found three key elements of all robust corporate cultures: (1) a clear mission connecting employees’ daily work to a broader social purpose and positive change; (2) leaders who are inspiring, empathetic, and competent; and (3) clearly

defined pathways for career advancement so workers aren't stuck in dead-end jobs.

All truly effective organizations create a sense of purpose, notes Brigitte C. Madrian, BYU Marriott dean. At Harvard, where she was a professor of public policy and corporate management before coming to BYU, that collective purpose focused on research. At BYU Marriott, she says, the purpose is "a high-quality business education that is also part of a university bathed in the light and truth of the gospel. Having staff, faculty, and students who have bought into that mission engenders a strong sense of cooperation and community."

In general, says Gustavson, "the more you can connect someone's personal sense of purpose to the organization's sense of purpose, great things can happen."

One of Gustavson's clients is the dog food company Hill's Science Diet, a division of Colgate-Palmolive. "We hired people who love pets," Gustavson says. "They think, 'Thank goodness I have an opportunity to work in an organization that has an enormous value for people who view their pets as companions.'"

Hiring for culture fit helps retain employees, and that avoids costly severance packages and new-hire training when things don't work out. In business jargon, the whole process is known as attraction-selection-attrition. According to Jim Collins, whose book *Good to Great* is a bible in the industry, "research indicates that person-organization misfit is one of the important reasons for employee turnover."

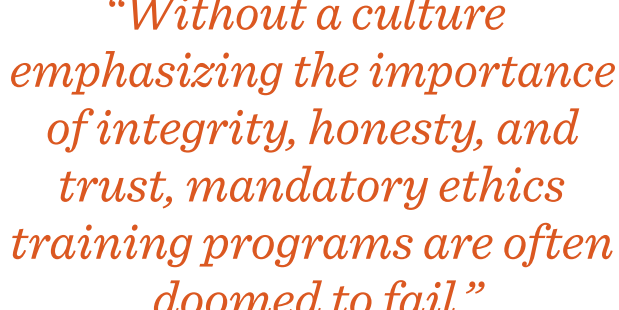
At the online retailer Zappos, whose motto is "Live and deliver wow," the hiring process can last for months, says Maritza Lewis, Zappos learning and development consultant. One of the qualities the company tries to assess in its potential recruits, she says, is whether they have "the politeness gene."

### Back to the Drawing Board

"One of the advantages of starting a company from scratch is that you can build the culture from scratch too," says Traeger CEO, BYU grad, and BYU Marriott entrepreneurship founder Jeremy Andrus. In Andrus's case, he had taken over the thirty-year-old, Oregon-based pellet grill company and inherited a sometimes-hostile culture that was set in its







*“Without a culture emphasizing the importance of integrity, honesty, and trust, mandatory ethics training programs are often doomed to fail.”*

ways. When he moved the company to Utah, he essentially started over, hiring only a few previous employees who wouldn't be “cultural detractors.”

Even now, when he hires new people, he doesn't focus on their résumés. “I want to understand how they think about risk-taking and what skills they want to develop,” he explains. “I try to ensure that we apply a tight cultural filter to anyone we hire. We want to find people who are already living by our values.” Most companies screen for skills, he says, but we “need to be thoughtful and diligent in the hiring process. And then, after that, leaders need to evangelize their values every day.”

Many companies don't have the luxury of starting from scratch when they realize they need a do-over. That realization typically arises, says Gustavson, from either (1) the better-mousetrap scenario, spurred on by an aspiration to be bigger or better, sometimes to beat out the competition; or (2) the burning-platform scenario, where it's suddenly clear that something awful has transpired (an oil rig that has exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, for example).

Short of a PR disaster, signs that a culture isn't working might include the presence of office cliques and silos, employee reluctance to voice concerns, and employer reluctance to listen. “I think the major pathology in all organizations that I've seen,” says Edgar Schein, one of the fathers of corporate culture research, “is that upward

communication is very faulty. Subordinates know lots of things that would make the place work better or safer”—but bosses don't always listen. According to employees' reviews of Wells Fargo posted on Glassdoor, the bank had a problem with corporate ethics years before the scandal.

“Without a culture emphasizing the importance of integrity, honesty, and trust,” writes Collins in *Good to Great*, “mandatory ethics training programs are often doomed to fail.”

To design or craft a culture, “you can't go in and do one rah-rah session and expect it to work,” says Kristen DeTienne, BYU Marriott professor of organizational behavior and human resources. On the other hand, a complete overhaul might be impractical. For starters, she suggests, “choose a handful of behaviors and mindsets to change, and figure out who the leaders are, both formal and informal, who can make that happen.”

### The Finished Product

Sometimes, though, a culture just needs a little finishing up around the edges, which is what Madrian discovered when she took over as dean of BYU Marriott in 2018. What struck her right away, she says, is that undergraduates were sometimes intimidated by the formality of the Tanner Building. So she introduced Donuts with the Dean in the atrium and Festive Finals with hot chocolate and Christmas carols.

At the other Marriott—Marriott International—the company's core values “[give]

us an edge over the competition,” then CEO Bill Marriott told students in a 2012 BYU forum presentation. He pointed to a 2007 study conducted by BYU Marriott business students that looked at corporate culture and the bottom line in the hospitality industry. The findings: in an industry where the employee yearly turnover rate is a whopping 46.4 percent, Marriott International had a 35 percent lower employee turnover rate than the industry as a whole. (It's estimated that the cost of employee turnover is about 1.5 times an employee's annual salary.)

“Put people first, pursue excellence, act with integrity, embrace change, and serve our world,” Marriott said to sum up the values he inherited from his parents when they opened their first motor lodge in 1957.

Marriott International has consistently appeared on Best Places to Work lists and on the Fortune 500 list, suggesting a link between employee engagement and company profits.

That link is underscored by findings from a 2015 “Does Company Culture Pay Off?” report and a 2019 “Measuring Culture in Leading Companies” report by researchers from Glassdoor and the MIT Sloan School of Management. Using data from more than one million employee reviews of US companies, the 2015 study found that a portfolio of Glassdoor's Best Places to Work lists outperformed the overall market by 115.6 percent. On the flip side, a portfolio of the thirty lowest-rated public companies “broadly underperformed the market.”

And corporate culture is not just about the bottom line. The average employee, the 2019 researchers noted, spends 40 percent of waking hours at work. “A vibrant culture can help people thrive professionally, enjoy their job, and find meaning in their work,” the researchers concluded. “A toxic culture, in contrast, can be soul destroying.”

So what kind of culture are you interested in crafting? **M**

### About the Author

Elaine Jarvik is a Utah playwright and former reporter for the Deseret News. Her most recent play, *Four Women Talking About the Man Under the Sheet*, is scheduled at the Salt Lake Acting Company for a four-week run in fall 2021.

# Food Truck Fodder

The history of food trucks in the United States is nebulous. Many credit the chuck wagon of the Wild West as setting a trend that has lasted through the centuries. Chuck wagons were followed up with horse-drawn mobile diners, US Army mobile canteens, and ice cream trucks. Regardless of how they started, food trucks are à la mode.



45

**THE NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT-MANDATED REGULATORY PROCEDURES THAT A FOOD TRUCK ENTREPRENEUR MUST COMPLETE TO START AND MAINTAIN A FOOD TRUCK FOR A YEAR.**

Setting up a food truck is no picnic. Completing the procedures takes an average of 37 business days and costs an average of \$28,276 for permits, licenses, and ongoing legal compliance.

Source: [foodtrucknation.us/wp-content/themes/food-truck-nation/Food-Truck-Nation-Full-Report.pdf](http://foodtrucknation.us/wp-content/themes/food-truck-nation/Food-Truck-Nation-Full-Report.pdf)

26,228

**THE NUMBER OF FOOD TRUCK BUSINESSES OPERATING IN 2021.**

An estimated 31,000 people work in the US food truck industry, and food trucks operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. According to one report, California has the most food truck businesses, with 753. Texas ranks second, with 549, and Floridians have 502 food truck businesses to choose from.



Sources: [ibisworld.com/industry-statistics/number-of-businesses/food-trucks-united-states/](http://ibisworld.com/industry-statistics/number-of-businesses/food-trucks-united-states/) and [ibisworld.com/industry-statistics/employment/food-trucks-united-states](http://ibisworld.com/industry-statistics/employment/food-trucks-united-states)



# 2018

## THE YEAR THE CHOW TRUCK, UTAH'S ORIGINAL FOOD TRUCK, SHUT OFF ITS GRILL—PERMANENTLY.

The truck opened in 2010, offering tacos and sliders with an Asian twist. A mechanical failure proved too costly to fix, but the truck left a rich legacy: dozens of food trucks now line the streets of Salt Lake City and pepper other Utah cities.

Source: [sltrib.com/news/2018/06/21/chow-truck-the-original-restaurant-on-wheels-that-got-utahs-roving-diners-rolling-shuts-down](http://sltrib.com/news/2018/06/21/chow-truck-the-original-restaurant-on-wheels-that-got-utahs-roving-diners-rolling-shuts-down)



# \$27,264

## THE AVERAGE ANNUAL FOOD TRUCK SALARY IN UTAH.

That works out to be \$13.11 an hour for frying up a food truck waffle or taco. One survey reported that food truck owners in major, high-traffic metro cities rake in \$20,000 to \$50,000 in sales each month; trucks parked in less-populated areas tend to pull in between \$5,000 and \$16,000 a month.

Sources: [ziprecruiter.com/Salaries/Food-Truck-Salary-in-Utah](http://ziprecruiter.com/Salaries/Food-Truck-Salary-in-Utah) and [profitableventure.com/how-much-food-trucks-make](http://profitableventure.com/how-much-food-trucks-make)



# 80%

## THE PERCENTAGE OF FOOD TRUCK DINERS WHO CHOOSE TO EAT ON THE STREET BECAUSE OF THE EXCITING, NEW, AND UNIQUE EXPERIENCE.

In addition, more than 90 percent of those who chow down at a food truck rate their experience as positive. Convenience, low prices, and short waiting times are some of the reasons food truck fans keep coming back.

Source: [smallbizgenius.net/by-the-numbers/food-truck-industry-stats](http://smallbizgenius.net/by-the-numbers/food-truck-industry-stats)



# \$1.4 BILLION

## THE ESTIMATED EARNINGS PROJECTED FOR THE FOOD TRUCK INDUSTRY IN 2021.

Prior to COVID-19, the food truck space was seeing an average annual growth of 7.5%. In 2020, however, the industry ground to a halt, with growth barely reaching 0.4%. Industry experts say things will heat back up this year, with a projected 2.4% growth.

Source: [smallbizgenius.net/by-the-numbers/food-truck-industry-stats](http://smallbizgenius.net/by-the-numbers/food-truck-industry-stats)

# Alexa!

## Why are my kids yelling at you?

**N**ot too long ago, artificial intelligence was completely science fiction. Machines that talk to you in conversational tones? Devices that understand commands? The future was going to be weird.

Welcome to the future.

Today, thanks to digital assistants and other smart devices, artificial intelligence is in almost every home in America. Frankly, we're not that far away from having increasingly lifelike robots joining the fray. As AI continues to flood regular daily functions, researchers are starting to wonder how it might be impacting our social interactions, especially those of children.

As convenient and helpful as digital assistants are, almost no one stopped to assess how Siri, Alexa, or Google Assistant might impact people's behavior until after the devices became widely available. Now parents are starting to worry that the way their child yells, "Alexa! Play 'Into the Unknown!'" may impact the

By Todd Hollingshead

Photography by Bradley Slade





way he or she treats people. (For those out of earshot of the ever-listening AI, Alexa is the digital assistant built into Amazon's Echo and Echo Dot smart speakers that responds to commands and speaks in an increasingly human-sounding cadence.)

Researchers nationwide, including some from BYU Marriott, are looking to uncover the answers. And studies are finding lots of information, addressing things like “Will Siri make my children rude?” or “Will Alexa cause me to stop saying thank you?” The results: There is no reason to be overly concerned. Yet.

### Alexa and Siri and Google, Oh My!

It was James Gaskin's five-year-old daughter who got him thinking. The associate professor of information systems at BYU Marriott and daily user of Alexa and Siri noticed how frustrated his daughter became when she couldn't get Alexa to work for her. He noted she started to speak in a commanding tone to Alexa, saying things like “Tell me a joke” with no please or thank you.

Gaskin watched his daughter become impolite and sometimes upset with Alexa, as well as with the Gaskin family's pet robot that couldn't understand her but could understand the older children. He recalls asking her to say “please,” but that would often increase her frustration because saying “please” confused Alexa. He started to wonder if his daughter would start treating others the way she treated the AI.

So being the researcher that he is, he put together a study. Gaskin and one of his grad students at the time, 2020 MISM alum Nathan Burton, surveyed and observed 274 college students regarding their interactions with digital assistants and their interactions with people.

“The big idea that we had, that we wanted to push, was that once an AI becomes a social actor in a real sense, once it really acts like a person, it's going to start influencing you,” Burton says. “We wanted to know what that means for how we design these devices and if we should be concerned using them.”

They fully expected to find that the way people treat AIs would make a difference in their interpersonal interactions—and not in a good way. But they didn't.

“We were surprised that the way you treat your digital assistants seems to have no

relation with the way you treat others,” Gaskin says. “Worried parents and news outlets alike have fretted about how the personification of digital assistants affects our politeness, yet we have found little reason to worry about adults becoming rudier as a result of ordering around Siri or Alexa.”

After contemplating the results, Gaskin and Burton started to piece together the why. They theorize that since adults have already formed their behavioral and communication habits—and are more skilled at compartmentalizing contexts—treating artificial intelligence rudely probably has a negligible effect on how an adult treats other humans. They believe adults also realize that trying to be polite and saying “please” and “thank you” may actually hinder the AI's ability to comprehend and follow a command.

“There is a clear ability to separate intelligent entities with feelings and those without,” Gaskin says. “Our language toward digital assistants is not influenced by our desires to be sensitive. It's totally a utilitarian approach—we just want it to work.”

The researchers believe that as technology improves and artificial intelligence takes on more and more human-like forms (think robots), things might change. But for now, at least for adults, the age of AI doesn't appear to be negatively impacting human relations.

But what about kids? After all, it was Gaskin's five-year-old daughter who prompted the study in the first place.

### What About the Children?

According to the 2020 *ChildWise Monitor Report*, a comprehensive annual study from the United Kingdom that looks at five- to sixteen-year-olds' media consumption, social habits, and technology behavior, the number of households in the UK owning a virtual assistant jumped to nearly 40 percent last year. In their 2020 *Smart Audio Report*, NPR and Edison Research found that there are 157 million smart speakers in US households.

Simon Leggett, research director at ChildWise, has grown increasingly concerned about the unintended consequences for “the Alexa generation.”





“As there is a surge in children’s use of gadgets that respond to verbal commands, we may see them learning ways of communicating that then slip into their interactions with humans,” Leggett says in a 2018 Child-Wise press release. “Will children become accustomed to saying and doing whatever they want to a digital assistant—‘do this, do that’—talking as aggressively or rudely as they like without any consequences? Will they then start doing the same to shop assistants or teachers?”

Some of that research has made it back to the folks at Amazon, and over the last two years, Alexa has been modified so it can offer positive feedback to children who speak politely. One of those modifications includes more parental controls that allow parents to monitor the way their children use the device.

That’s great news to Melody Bennion, a mother of three, who only recently acquired an Echo Dot with Alexa but has already had to intervene multiple times when her children talk rudely to the device.

“I’ll tell them to apologize to Alexa,” says Bennion, a graduate of BYU–Idaho who lives in Mesa, Arizona. “I know it’s silly and it’s just a machine, but I don’t want them to get in that habit and to think that it is acceptable to speak that way, even to a machine.”

Bennion, whose children range from six to ten years old, isn’t “hugely concerned” that the way they speak to Alexa is going to impact the way they speak to humans, but she feels it’s important to be polite.

Parental intervention was a common finding in a study about how Amazon Echo owners interact with their devices. Over the course of four months, Jodi Forlizzi, director of the Human-Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, and other researchers tracked and dissected how people were speaking to Alexa.

“One of the things we learned was that [Alexa] definitely changes how people converse,” Forlizzi says in a January 2019 article in the *Deseret News*. “So many moms in the study told us that their kids demanded things; [for example,] ‘Mommy, bring me orange juice.’”

### The Question Remains

Shortly after Gaskin and Burton completed their preliminary study on adult interactions

*“I’ll tell them to apologize to Alexa. I know it’s silly and it’s just a machine, but I don’t want them to get in that habit and to think that it is acceptable to speak that way, even to a machine.”*



with digital assistants, the duo embarked on a larger study with children as the focus. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and the ability to carry out the study properly was short-circuited.

Gaskin and Burton believe if they ever get the chance to study children, they will find different results. Children process information differently, they say, and have differing abilities to discern what has feelings and what does not. Some researchers have even recorded anecdotes of young children thinking there is a tiny person inside devices that speak back to them.

“Children are far more impressionable than adults, and I think we would find they are more affected by their interactions with artificial intelligence,” Gaskin says. Burton, who is now working on a PhD on conversational agents at the University of Georgia, agrees: “Children have a more difficult time differentiating between a machine and a human. They don’t know how they work. They don’t know someone in California used a keyboard to write a program to make Siri.”

If he has sufficient access to families post-pandemic, Gaskin would like to carry out a longitudinal approach by finding families without any personal digital assistants, giving them one, and then tracking the behavior of every family member over the course of six months.

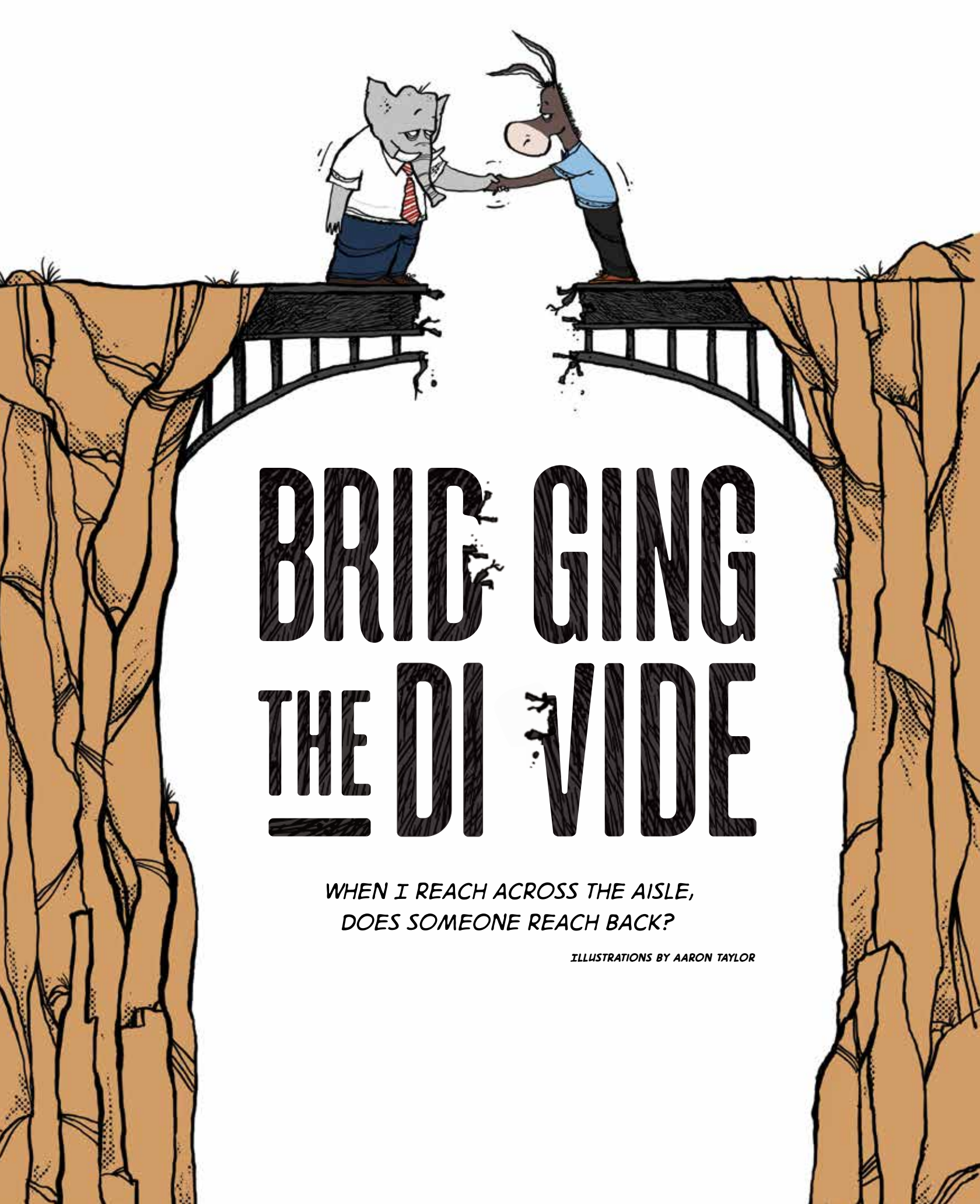
In his opinion, you would need to track at least three dozen families to get sufficiently rigorous and valid results, and finding that many families that don’t have a digital assistant is getting increasingly difficult. Plus, working with children requires a significantly greater amount of care and precision. Whether that study comes from Gaskin and Burton remains to be seen. But the two are confident that someone will do it.

One bit of good news, according to Gaskin, is that digital assistants are getting better and better. The devices themselves are powered by algorithms and programming that helps them learn and evolve, and the companies behind them—Amazon, Apple, and Google—are getting more data every day to make them better. Gaskin says that his daughter (who is now seven) would have had much more success in her interactions with the Alexa of 2021 than she did with the Alexa of 2019.

But perhaps when the time comes for Gaskin and Burton to study children and AI again, Alexa, Siri, and other digital assistants will no longer need to be the focus. “In five years, we’ll likely have real-looking robot pets,” says Gaskin. **M**

### About the Author

Todd Hollingshead works at BYU as a media relations manager for the University Communications office and as an adjunct professor of communications. He lives in Springville, Utah, with his wife, Natalie, their four children, a pug, and—despite his ongoing concerns—a cat.



# BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

*WHEN I REACH ACROSS THE AISLE,  
DOES SOMEONE REACH BACK?*

*ILLUSTRATIONS BY AARON TAYLOR*



**J**EFF FLAKE EARNED A BACHELOR'S IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN 1986 AND A MASTER'S IN POLITICAL SCIENCE IN 1987, BOTH FROM BYU. HE REPRESENTED ARIZONA FOR SIX TERMS IN THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND ONE TERM IN THE US SENATE, AND HE WAS KNOWN THROUGHOUT HIS POLITICAL CAREER FOR HIS ABILITY TO REACH ACROSS THE AISLE.

DURING FALL 2020 SEMESTER, FLAKE SERVED AS A VISITING FELLOW AT BYU MARRIOTT'S ROMNEY INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND ETHICS. IN THIS POSITION, HE SPOKE IN MULTIPLE CLASSES IN THE MPA PROGRAMS, MBA PROGRAMS, AND POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT. HE ALSO MET ONE-ON-ONE WITH STUDENTS AND WAS A GUEST SPEAKER FOR OTHER CAMPUS EVENTS.

ON 12 NOVEMBER 2020, PAUL EDWARDS, DIRECTOR OF BYU'S WHEATLEY INSTITUTION, HOSTED A WEBINAR IN WHICH HE SPOKE WITH FLAKE ABOUT IMPROVING CIVILITY AND DECREASING POLARIZATION IN POLITICS. FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM THAT CONVERSATION. THESE OPINIONS AND VIEWS ARE NOT NECESSARILY ENDORSED BY BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY, BYU MARRIOTT, OR THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS, ALL OF WHICH MAINTAIN A STRICT POLICY OF POLITICAL NEUTRALITY AND DO NOT SUPPORT ANY PARTY OR CANDIDATE.

**EDWARDS**

*Before we start, I want to read a couple of quotes from your book, *Conscience of a Conservative: A Rejection of Destructive Politics and a Return to Principle*, that illustrate what we'll be talking about today:*

*"The secretary of defense, former marine general James Mattis, was asked . . . what worried him most. Unexpectedly for a man in his position, he said this: 'The lack of political unity in America. The lack of fundamental friendliness. It seems like an awful lot of people in America and*

*around the world feel spiritually and personally alienated, whether it be from organized religion or from local community school districts or from their governments.'"*

*Former secretary of defense Bob Gates, when asked about the biggest threat to America, said, "I think the biggest threat to our future sits in Washington, DC, and not someplace else. The rest of the problems of the world wouldn't worry me if we had a functional government. And if we had a Congress that could begin to address some of the long-term problems that*



*the country has. I mean, the reality is our problems are deep enough in every category that none of them can be resolved during the course of one presidency or one Congress. So you need bipartisan solutions that can be sustained through more than one presidency and more than one Congress. And we don't see any evidence of that in Washington."*

*It's fascinating that these two aren't identifying foreign nations; they're saying incivility, a collapse of institutions, and institutional dysfunction in Washington, DC. You wrote this book a few years ago. Do you see any improvement on that score?*

**FLAKE**

I wrote the book in 2017, and I think that any problems that were identified in it have been exacerbated since. So we find ourselves in a tough position now.

**EDWARDS**

*Some people believe that a lot of the challenges we're facing come from a crisis in confidence in our core institutions. In your book, you try to elucidate what you call core principles of conservatism. What are those principles, and*

*how do they relate to the health of our democratic institutions?*

**FLAKE**

I grew up as a conservative in Arizona, where people like Barry Goldwater were defining the principles of conservatism—limited government, economic freedom, individual responsibility, free trade, strong American leadership across the globe. I think those are the animating principles that have guided conservatives for the past few decades. But there are other elements of conservatism that are not necessarily principles but values, if you will. Edmund Burke, known as the father of modern conservatism, talked about temperance and restraint being the chief virtues of conservatism. He was concerned at people who were rash or illogical or acted with rage or intemperance.

A conservative, at heart, is one who has a healthy mistrust of concentrated power but confidence in institutions—one who seeks to preserve the institutions that exist and to honor those norms that undergird institutions. What's concerning today is that institutions are challenged and the norms that

support those institutions are challenged as well.

**EDWARDS**

*Is this new, or is it something that's been creeping up over a period of time?*

**FLAKE**

I think it's been creeping up for a while. Let me back up a little and talk about the Republican Party, which I'm familiar with because I've been a lifelong Republican. In the 1990s, the party was driven far more by ideas, like the Contract with America. I think that's what helped the Republicans finally recapture the House of Representatives. They really pushed principles more than anything. But by the time I got to Washington in 2001, the party—and the Democratic Party as well—seemed to rely more on using the levers of power to keep office and maintain the majority. It moved away from the power of ideas and the art of persuasion.

I think part of the problem is politicians' propensity to overpromise—to say, "Here's what we're going to do," when oftentimes you can't do that in a legislative body. You

have to persuade, you have to bring people to your side, and it's infrequent that any one party will have majorities to push its will. But as parties try to push rather than persuade, that's led to more alienation on the part of the citizenry. I think we're at a point today that we haven't been in for quite a while.

**EDWARDS**

*Your point about persuasion is interesting. Looking again at the quote from Gates, he notes the importance of bipartisan solutions because of their enduring nature. As you look at the Senate, which has sometimes been called "the greatest deliberative body," what are some of the threats to that particular institution of our federal government?*

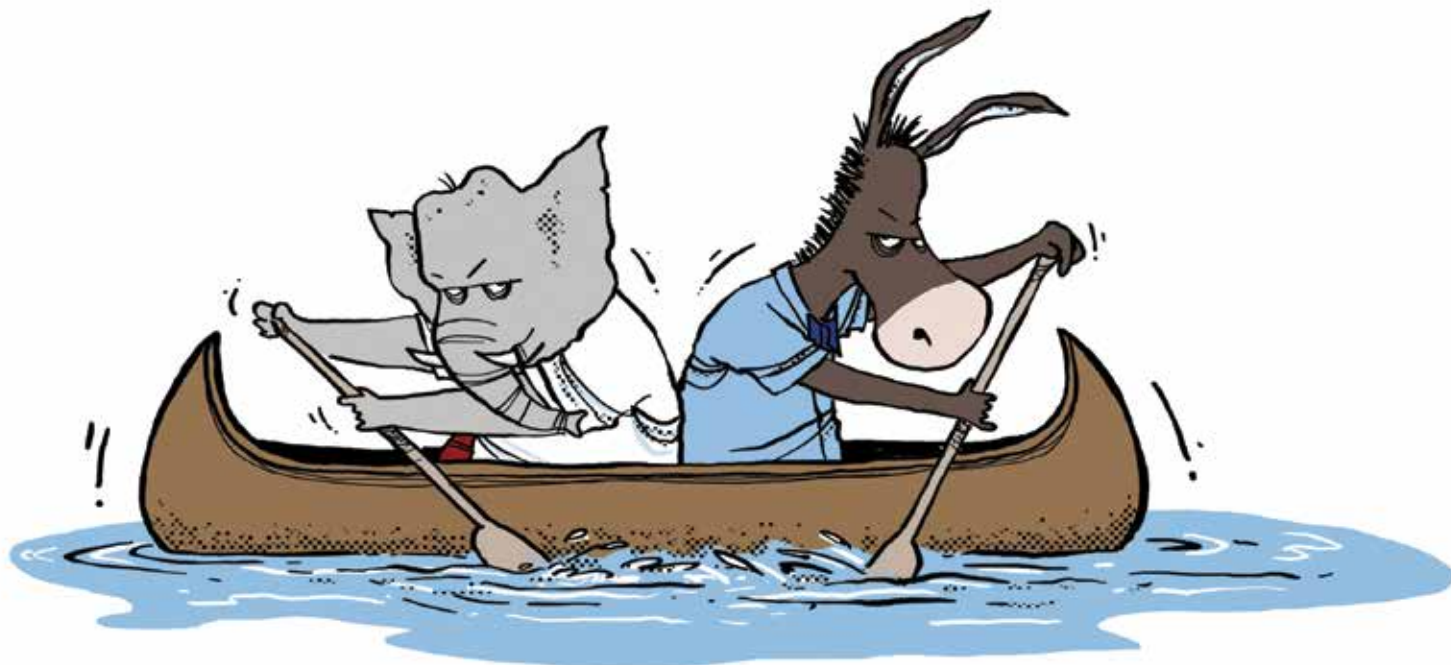
**FLAKE**

We've seen some of them play out already in regard to the Senate's role in advice and consent in what's called the president's Executive Calendar—the appointment of judges or the president's cabinet and other officials. Up until 2003, that was subject to the same cloture and filibuster rules as pieces of legislation. But no senator ever would think of filibustering the president's Executive Calendar. For example, no matter how controversial a Supreme Court nominee was, all it would have taken is for one senator to stand up and require a sixty-vote margin to move that nomination to the floor. But no one ever did it. The filibuster was there, and it hopefully tempered a president's nominations. That started to go away in 2003 as each party began to kind of one-up the other party. Now it's gone.

One big threat we have going forward is that if a party has a majority in the Senate, that party might decide to get rid of the legislative filibuster. Then the Senate would become a majoritarian institution, just like the House. I think that would be tremendously damaging to the prospect of bipartisan legislation.

George Washington famously referred to the Senate as "the saucer that cools the milk"—that the passions of the House would be blocked by a more deliberative body. It helps that the Senate has six-year terms. But this notion that you have to get sixty votes is also extremely important; otherwise, the Senate and the House would just bounce back and forth between majorities trying to undo legislation that was passed

**"FOR WHATEVER REASON, WE HAVE BECOME A LOT LESS TOLERANT OF DIFFERING VIEWS. WE NEED TO GET BACK TO A POINT WHERE WE CAN ACCEPT DIFFERENCES AND WORK TOGETHER IN AREAS WHERE WE AGREE."**





by the previous majority. That's kind of the cycle we find ourselves in, but it hasn't been cemented yet. I think it would be, if we were to lose the filibuster.

**EDWARDS**

*What about the argument that trying to reach those kinds of thresholds has led to gridlock in trying to implement important programs? For example, the Affordable Care Act is a sweeping piece of legislation that failed to receive bipartisan support. Why should we worry about supermajoritarian bipartisan consensus?*

**FLAKE**

There is no doubt that it has led to gridlock. But a sixty-vote margin is not a bug in the system; it's a feature of the system.

Let's look at the example of the Affordable Care Act. It passed when Democrats had sixty votes in the Senate, and part of the act was enacted under rules of reconciliation, which allow the Senate to move ahead on certain budget-related items. But what's happened since? Democrats lost their majority in the Senate, and Republicans have been trying to repeal the Affordable Care Act ever since.

There are other pieces of legislation that Republicans might put forward, but Democrats would try to repeal them as soon as the political pendulum swings—and it does. So we're much better off as a society when the Senate is slow. That gridlock is usually music to the ears of a conservative who believes in limited government.

**EDWARDS**

*It's no secret that you're kind of a lightning rod because of your vocal opposition, as a Republican senator, to a Republican president. How would you describe your relationship with the GOP?*

**FLAKE**

You know, I'm a lifelong Republican, and I hope to remain a lifelong Republican. The Republican Party has been, more than the Democratic Party, the vessel for conservative policy, and I think it can be that in the future. In Arizona, we have a reputation for being independent minded, and my constituents tolerated me for eighteen years, even though I had views that may have differed from theirs on issues like immigration, refugee policy, policy toward Cuba, or whatever else. But, for whatever reason, we have become a lot less tolerant of differing views. We need to get back to a point where we can accept differences and work together in areas where we agree.

Just as an example, when I first got to Congress, President George W. Bush had just been elected. His first initiative was No Child Left Behind, which I thought was far too much federal intrusion into local education policy. I opposed it vocally. One of the next big initiatives was the prescription drug initiative. Mike Pence and I led the opposition on that, and it passed very narrowly. It was a heated debate; the president and his team were not happy with me. And then on Cuba policy, I passed legislation that President Bush wouldn't sign, and that was frustrating for both him and me. But when I ran for the Senate, George W. Bush—who was then a former president—came and did a fundraiser for me in Arizona because I was with him on issues like tax policy and immigration. We got along. That probably wouldn't happen in politics today.

**EDWARDS**

*There is an interesting grassroots effort by some groups to get Republicans and Democrats to sit down with one another, to get past feelings of contempt, and to form genuine friendships. In what ways do you think conservatives feel misunderstood by liberals, and what would you like liberals to know about your worldview?*

**FLAKE**

I think a major misunderstanding is that, because Republicans tend not to favor bigger-government solutions, we are somehow uncaring about issues of poverty or inequality, when we just see a different way to achieve those ends. I would argue that most populations post-World War II have largely followed the American free-market, limited-government model. You've seen untold prosperity—lower poverty rates than we've ever seen in the world. So that's the misunderstanding that always eats at me: that just because we don't favor more government solutions doesn't mean we don't see that these are real issues we have to deal with.

**" I THINK POLITICS WORKS BEST IF WE CAN ASSUME THE BEST AND LOOK FOR THE GOOD. WE CAN ARGUE STRENUOUSLY ON POLICY WITHOUT ASSUMING THAT OUR POLITICAL OPPONENTS ARE OUR ENEMIES. . . . THERE ARE A LOT OF GOOD PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE, TRYING TO DO THE RIGHT THING. "**

**EDWARDS**

*Federalist Papers No. 10 discusses the threat that factions pose to a republic. Are modern political parties like these factions?*

**FLAKE**

Well, frankly, modern parties have served to tamp down factions. If I look into my own party, during the 1950s and '60s, there was a movement called the John Birch Society. It was kind of conspiratorial, and they believed, for example, that Dwight Eisenhower was a closet communist or that fluoride in the water was a form of mind control. The Republican Party made a concerted effort to try to tamp down that faction. It was really pushed by people like Barry Goldwater, who was the party's presidential nominee in 1964, and William F. Buckley Jr., who provided the intellectual heft for the party. They were concerned that a faction might consume a party that needed to appeal to a broader electorate. So parties can provide a function to tamp down factions. But I think parties can act as a faction as well.

**EDWARDS**

*In your book, you tell an interesting account of sitting in a State of the Union address with your colleague from Arizona, Representative Gabby Giffords. Could you give us some background about her and tell us about that moment, and also about the motto you had in your home growing up?*

**FLAKE**

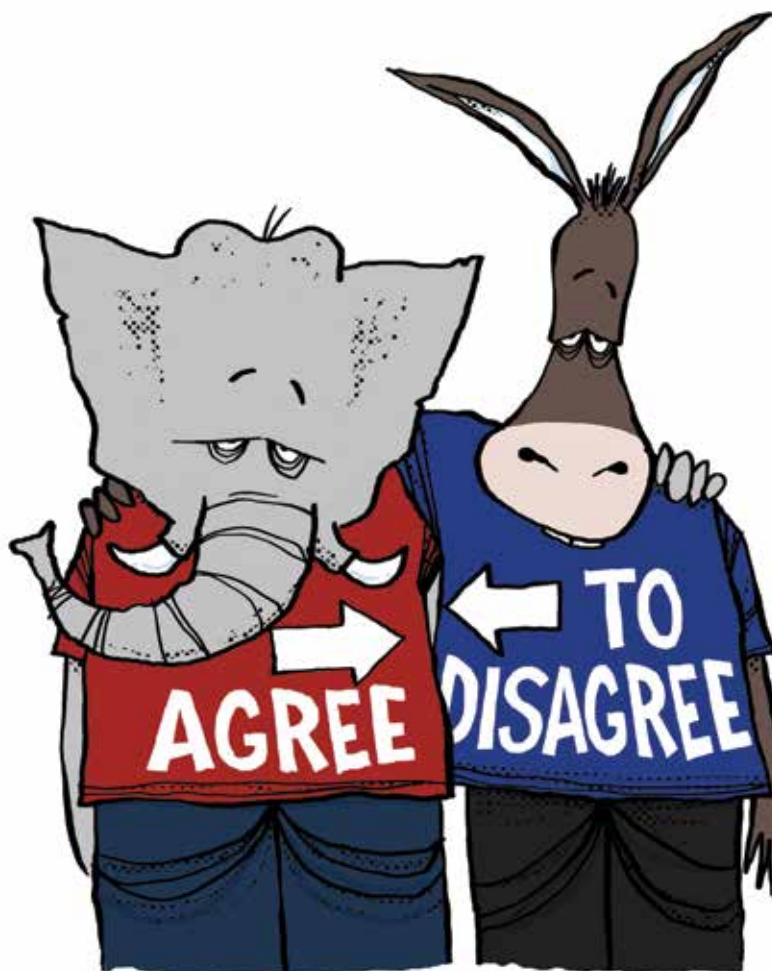
In January 2011, Gabby Giffords was shot by a gunman as she greeted constituents at a supermarket parking lot in Tucson, and she was gravely wounded. She was shot in the head and she lost a lot of her ability to stand, and she still suffers from that. But a year after the attack, she had recovered enough to come back to Congress, and she was at the State of the Union address. I was close to Gabby—we'd worked together on a number of issues—and I sat with her. She wanted to stand when President Obama would deliver his applause lines, so I would help her up because she couldn't stand on her own. It left me, a lone Republican, standing among a sea of Democrats. My phone immediately started buzzing with text messages and emails from angry people who wanted to know if I was standing because I agreed with

President Obama. And I looked at those and thought, *Our politics are pretty bad when someone makes a kind gesture, and it's interpreted that way.* But we've become so partisan.

You mentioned our family's motto. My mother had a three-by-five-inch card that stayed on our fridge for years. It was stained with cookie dough and vegetable oil and everything else, but written on it was "Assume the best, look for the good." I saw that practiced as I was growing up, and you can find that motto in almost all of my siblings' houses now.

I think it's a good motto for politics as well. I think politics works best if we can assume

the best and look for the good. We can argue strenuously on policy without assuming that our political opponents are our enemies. That idea is rampant now, particularly if you look on social media; we need to tamp it down, because there are a lot of good people in Washington on both sides of the aisle, trying to do the right thing. Our incentives are misaligned—there's little incentive politically for compromise. I've mentioned before that it used to be that reaching across the aisle would get you plaudits and now it gets you a primary. Until our political calculus changes, we're not going to have the type of politics we need. **M**



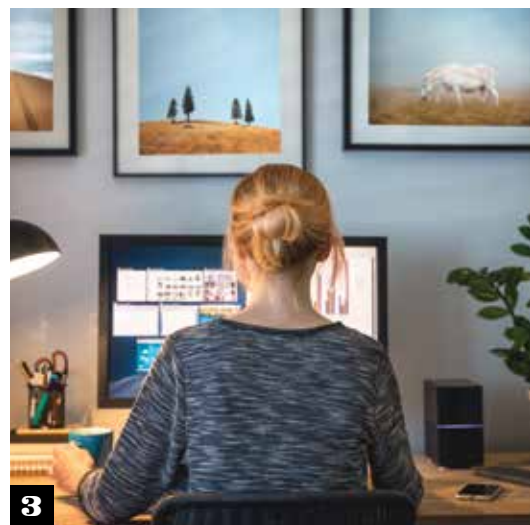
## around the COOLER

BY SHIRLEEN M. SAUNDERS



### 1. TAKE A BREAK

When your brain starts to get fuzzy, take a short break. Stand up and move away from your desk. Head to the water cooler for a drink, climb a flight of stairs, or walk around the block. You'll come back feeling energized and ready to concentrate again.



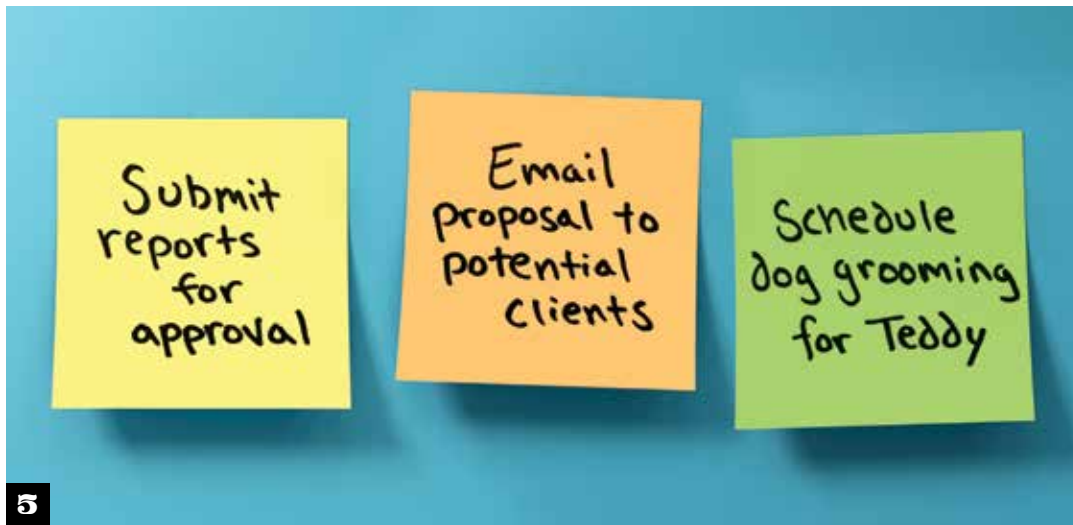
# Get Focused!

*Your phone pings—you have a new message. A box pops up on your computer screen—you have a new email. A colleague stops by—you want to chat about your weekend. When will you ever be able to get work done? Studies show that today's workers are being interrupted more than ever, which affects not only productivity but also mental health. Try these tips for getting back in focus and ensuring you're making the most of your time spent at the office.*

### 2. GOT RHYTHM

Learn your body's natural rhythm and work with it. Schedule important projects when you are most alert—for many people that is from midmorning to lunchtime and from 3 p.m. to early evening. But if you work better at other times of the day, plan accordingly. Save email or rote tasks for times when you are feeling more tired.





### 3. HAPPY PLACE

Make your work area a place where you can actually settle in and get things done. Start by tidying up your physical and digital desktops. Add a few personal items to make the space your own. Bringing nature indoors can help reduce mental fatigue, so invest in a potted plant or move your desk closer to a window where you can enjoy the view.

### 4. SILENT TREATMENT

Constant notifications destroy concentration, so assess each of your apps and tools and then set notifications accordingly. You might even try Do Not Disturb mode for specific periods of time. To compensate, set predetermined times to check and respond to email, text messages, and social media.

### 5. FIRST THINGS FIRST

What are the three most important things you need to do today? Write those things on a sticky note so you can see them. Make a separate list for other tasks and do them after you've accomplished your vital goals. If you're overwhelmed by a big project, break it up into more manageable parts.

### 6. DO NOT DISTURB

Block out meeting-free times on your calendar and find a way to let your coworkers know you're "in the zone"—or at least trying to get there. Your signal can be something as simple as putting on headphones or closing your door. If you work in an open-plan office, occasionally move to a quieter space, such as a conference room, to work.

### 2. FILL THE TANK

Healthy choices have a direct effect on your ability to focus. Eat a balanced diet, including "brain foods" such as leafy green vegetables and berries, and don't skip meals. Instead of reaching for a chocolate bar midafternoon, grab some fresh fruit or veggies or a handful of nuts. Stay hydrated. And never underestimate the value of a good night's sleep.

**Paige Goepfert**  
M.A.C.C., 2004





# Partnering with Paige

Instinctively, Paige Goepfert is definitely organized—but she’s so much more.

“One of the first things people I’ve worked with will say about me is ‘She’s so organized,’ but I actually don’t like hearing that,” she says, laughing. “It makes me cringe a little inside because the planning, goal setting, and strategy creation I do is so much more than just being organized.”

In fact, her natural planning and organizing instincts are an integral component of her success as a partner in Andersen Tax’s Chicago office, where she excels in helping ultra-high-net-worth families, family offices, and executives with tax consulting and compliance.

- By Emily Edmonds
- Photos by Shane Cleminson

"I work with entrepreneurs and innovators who have spent their lives creating everything they earned, and I get to understand their stories," says Goepfert, who earned her Macc in 2004 from BYU Marriott. "I love the personal side of my job."

Her clients' companies, she continues, are not just livelihoods—their businesses are their lives. "I tell clients that when they die, they can leave their money to the government, to charities, or to their families," she says. "They have the luxury while alive to decide which bucket the money goes into, and I help them plan for what they want to have happen."

Goepfert's planning has paid off, and even in the moments when things didn't go as anticipated, those experiences have worked out well too.

### Noteworthy

A classically trained pianist, Goepfert sees a connection between her musical talents and her career. "As a middle schooler, I was memorizing twenty-page Beethoven sonatas. I think my love of piano was an indicator that I was going to be in a mathematical, precision-type job," she says.

Goepfert, who grew up in Chicago's suburbs, still plays as a way to relax. "I love that simple notes on a page can turn into something beautiful. It's therapeutic," she explains.

She is sharing her love of piano with her seven-year-old daughter by teaching her to play. Teaching comes second nature since Goepfert spent much of her teen and young adult years as a piano instructor. She says, "I loved working with kids, teenagers, and even adults and seeing the light bulb go on."

Goepfert's teaching gig entered into the equation as she was finishing high school in Barrington, Illinois, and deciding what to do with her life. "I was going to be paying for college by myself and wasn't ready to leave the nest," she says. "I realized that by enrolling in junior college I could continue to support myself through teaching while I figured out what to study."

Although Goepfert was interested in attending BYU and had tempting scholarship and financial support offers from other schools, she decided to attend Harper College in Palatine, Illinois, a fifteen-minute drive from her home.

### Branching Out

Piano also played a key role in connecting Goepfert with her husband, Michael, who noticed her when she performed a sacrament meeting musical number in her singles branch—an opportunity he almost missed.

"Michael was planning on visiting the branch in Illinois with his friend, about a two-hour drive from where he lived in Wisconsin," she says. It was a snowy

winter morning, and Michael was running late. He told his friend that he wasn't going to go, to which his friend responded, "I'm on my way. Put your tie on."

Goepfert and Michael met each other after church and exchanged phone numbers on the premise of keeping Michael in the loop of branch activities. "A couple of weeks later I was going to Rockford, Illinois, with friends, and Michael was going to help his uncle move to Rockford the same weekend," she says. "It was interesting how that all worked out."

The two began a distance relationship. "My parents weren't thrilled that their nineteen-year-old was dating a twenty-six-year-old, but it was just fun," she recalls. "One thing that attracted me to him was that he was affectionate and loyal to his family, and that meant a lot."

### The Nineteen-Year-Old CEO

As Goepfert settled into Harper College, she focused on knocking out her general ed requirements. One day a group of students gave a presentation in her introductory accounting class, recruiting for a business that had been donated to the college. The small venture, Formulator Inc., sold latex gloves and dental mesh and was run by about ten students and a faculty advisor. It offered different functions in marketing, sales, and finance—and even boasted a CEO position.

Goepfert jumped at the chance. "At my first meeting, someone asked if I wanted to be part of the finance team, and I said, 'Sure, why not?'" she says.

She ended up volunteering five to ten hours each week and soon found herself presenting financial statements to the college's board of directors. "I was nervous, but it was exciting, and they were gracious. I loved telling them about our seemingly insignificant sales," she recalls. "I realized this is why accounting matters: you eventually have to prove to someone that you're doing what needs to be done."

Though her goal was to inform the board about the business's fiscal responsibility, Goepfert ended up discovering her career path. "I liked the financial side of things and also liked connecting with people," she says. During her time with Formulator, she eventually filled all the roles, including CEO.

As Goepfert was finishing her associate's degree and considering where to go next, BYU became a natural transfer choice, especially because of its notable accounting program.

Also factoring into her decision was Michael. "All of his friends—including me—were moving to Utah," she says. "One friend got him a job as a mortgage officer in Sandy, so he made the move. Snowboarding was also a draw, but let's just say I had an inclination he was actually following me." The couple married in 2002, while Goepfert was working on her bachelor's degree.

*"I'm glad I'm a woman  
in this profession.  
It's still male dominated,  
and I want to show other women  
this is possible."*



## Counting On

As a BYU Marriott student, Goepfert immersed herself in the accounting program. She studied for *Wall Street Journal* quizzes, memorized tax code, holed up in the library for late nights, and set a goal to become a firm partner someday.

“I loved the accounting program even though it was grueling,” Goepfert says. One of the most profound elements of her BYU Marriott education was the people she met, including a group of women she grew close with while earning her MAcc who still keep in touch. “We’re all going through different life experiences now, personally and professionally, but we have all found success in our own ways.”

Goepfert says there weren’t a lot of women in the accounting program at the time. “There were even people who felt like women were taking men’s spots because they didn’t think we would stay in the profession long term, and that irritated me. It probably pushed me to succeed even more,” she says.

## Dynamic Duo

Despite excellent plans, sometimes the unexpected takes over—a lesson even experienced planners encounter.

After graduating in 2004, Goepfert landed at Deloitte in the Chicago office. Although she had requested to work in corporate or international tax, she was placed in the state and local tax department.

“I had taken calculated steps to figure out what I wanted to do and realized that I didn’t like doing that type of tax,” she says. So Goepfert left Deloitte and moved to a small tax firm in Munster, Indiana, in 2005 and then to Baker Tilly in downtown Chicago in 2007. “Even though I wasn’t happy with what I was doing at Deloitte, I’m glad I did it. Those experiences helped me become the person I am.”

At Baker Tilly, Goepfert gained traction professionally and began working with wealthy individuals and families and specializing in estate tax. Personally, however, she was feeling inner turmoil.

“Everyone was having babies,” she says. “As a planner, I wanted to figure out when we were going to have our babies. We prayed about it, and I had a pretty intense experience at the temple in 2008 indicating it was not time to have a child. I left the temple confused and upset.”

Within the year, the recession hit, and Michael was among six thousand employees laid off by the mortgage company where he had worked for ten years. It quickly became evident to Goepfert that listening to that prompting in the temple was an important part of the plan.

“I was planning on leaving the workforce when we had our first child, and if I hadn’t followed the guidance I received at the temple, I would have quit my job and Michael would have been without a job too,” Goepfert affirms. “The financial community was so wrecked after the recession that there were no jobs worth his time. We ended up having our first child in 2010, and Michael has been a stay-at-home dad ever since.”

Breaking away from cultural norms has presented its challenges. But their children—Mason, age ten, and Ella, age seven—enjoy spending time and creating memories with their dad. Favorite activities are engaging in impromptu Nerf gun wars or listening to Michael voice different characters while reading. “I married the right person, and my kids are lucky to have him,” Goepfert says. “I’m gone a lot—tax seasons are tough—and he’s always been supportive and encourages me in everything I do.”

## Shattering the Glass

One day in early 2016, menacing weather was turning the midday sky black when Goepfert, who was





working as a senior tax manager with RSM US at the time, had a meeting with a client less than a mile away from the Chicago Illinois Temple. “I hadn’t planned to attend the temple that evening, but the impending bad weather along with rush hour changed my plans to head home after the meeting.” Andersen Tax had recently reached out with an offer, and prior to that evening, Goepfert had planned on accepting the offer.

“I left the temple that stormy night feeling like I should not take the offer,” she remembers. “This was yet again another experience that demonstrated to me that I wasn’t the only one taking an interest in my future.” Explaining her decision to the managing director at Andersen wasn’t easy, although she did say she wanted to continue talking. “The timing just wasn’t right.”

Later that year, RSM US offered Goepfert a partner position in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Although she turned down the offer, the move upped Andersen’s motivation to recruit her, and she moved over to Andersen in September 2017.

In January 2021, when Goepfert made partner at Andersen, she bought a necklace with a piece of cracked glass that represents a shattered glass ceiling. “I’m glad I’m a woman in this profession. It’s still male dominated, and I want to show other women this is possible,” she says.

Recently one of Goepfert’s friends sent her a postcard that read, “Don’t let anyone treat you like free salsa. You are guac. . . . GUAC!” The sentiment resonates with her as the first woman partner on her team. “You have to stand up for yourself,” says Goepfert. “I

have to toot my own horn a little more. It’s a competitive world, and you have to be your own best supporter and advocate.”

Goepfert also credits her involvement with the Chicago Estate Planning Council as key to her success; she joined the council in 2008 and now serves on its board. “Many people don’t realize the importance of networking and building relationships until later in their careers,” she says. “A lot of business development goals are based on relationships. I’ve learned that the people I’ve been able to build long-term relationships with are more inclined to refer clients to me.”

## Giving Back

Goepfert’s path has been dotted with great mentors, and she is determined to return the favor. She has been a fixture in BYU Marriott’s School of Accountancy (SOA) alumni program since its inception in 2014, offering support through mentoring students, participating in event panels, and speaking at conferences.

“Paige is always willing to serve in whatever capacity the SOA has needed her help in. She has gone above and beyond,” says Jennifer Maroney, SOA alumni director. “She is a true inspiration for our women and gives wonderful counsel and insight. Many students have kept in touch with her over the years.”

Goepfert’s readiness to give back isn’t limited to BYU or to close friends. Recently a woman in a C-suite of a big Chicago law firm was considering new job opportunities, and a friend connected her to Goepfert. The two ended up talking for the better part of an hour. Toward the end of the conversation, the woman asked, “Why were you so willing to help me?”

“Women need to support other women,” Goepfert replied. “I will bend over backward to help women.”

People have to own their future, Goepfert adds: “You can’t just think, ‘Maybe someday I’ll get promoted.’ If someone tells me they want to accomplish something, I’m going to help them, both women and men, get there.”

## A People Person

At 5 a.m. on weekday mornings—6 a.m. if she’s not commuting—Goepfert exercises in her basement, mainly for her health but also to carve out time for herself. Her focus then shifts from working out to working with people, and she wouldn’t have it any other way.

“The two things I like most about my job are the people—whether working with clients, my team, or my clients’ other advisors,” she says. “I also enjoy the variety of learning. No day is the same.”

To offset the unknowns, Goepfert says having a good team is key: “In terms of planning, it takes a village. I’m a huge fan of team brainstorming so we can stay on track and execute the way we want to.”

Now that Goepfert has achieved the goal she set as a BYU student—to become a partner—she is searching for her next target. “Whenever I got promoted, my first question was ‘What do I need to do to be promoted again?’” she says. “Now there’s a feeling of ‘Wait, what’s next?’ I think now is the time to focus on building my team and the next generation of partners.”

Which sounds like another excellent plan. **M**

## About the Author

*Emily Edmonds is a former editor of Marriott Alumni Magazine, and she loves to plan. Calendars, to-do lists, phone alerts, sticky notes—they all make her tick.*

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**Listen to Goepfert share her expertise on the *Celebrity Estates* podcast, episode 31, titled “Death, Taxes, and Elvis Presley.”**

# School News

## Rollins Center Announces SEOY Winners, Introduces Three New Awards



Isaac Dushku



Marissa Barlow



Ben Webber

The businesses created by BYU students are as unique and versatile as the student entrepreneurs themselves and span every category, from thrift store clothing to digital marketing to real estate. Each year, the BYU Entrepreneurship Club and the Rollins Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology recognize dedicated student entrepreneurs with revenue-generating businesses through the Student Entrepreneur of the Year (SEYO) awards and recognition program. This year's Student Entrepreneur of the Year, Isaac Dushku, founded his company, Lord of Maps, in spring 2020 and sells hand-drawn maps of various states and countries.

In addition to awarding the SEYO title and ranking the top revenue-generating businesses, the SEYO program introduced three new awards this year: the Women in Entrepreneurship award, the Job Creator award, and the Emerging Elite award.

"The Rollins Center is excited to include three additional categories of recognition this year," says **Mike Hendron**, an associate teaching professor of entrepreneurship and the academic director of the Rollins Center. "First, we added a special award to highlight one of our successful student female founders, in partnership with the Rollins Center's Women in Entrepreneurship (WE) program. The WE program provides

encouragement and support for female students here at BYU who start and run their own businesses." The Women in Entrepreneurship award was given to strategic management senior **Marissa Barlow** for her swimsuit company, Nani Swimwear.

The second new category highlights one of the most important economic benefits of entrepreneurship: creating employment opportunities. "The Job Creator award recognizes the company with

the largest employee workforce, with an emphasis on providing full-time positions," explains Hendron. This year's Job Creator award was given to Ben Webber for Big Red Jelly, a company that has fifteen full-time employees and five part-time employees and focuses on building digital solutions for brands.

The final new category, the Emerging Elite award, spotlights companies that are not yet large in terms of revenue but which are poised for rapid growth and future success. This award was given to three different students: **Lex Maynez** for his vintage and modern clothing store, Sad Boi Thrift; **Keaton Wall** for his real estate company, Wall Global LLC; and Tayla Chapa for her handmade clay earring company, Femi-niscence. All three students experienced notable growth and increased revenue in their companies throughout the previous calendar year.

The SEYO program is a great opportunity to recognize the amazing success of BYU student entrepreneurs, notes Hendron: "BYU has so many students with the passion, skills, and ability to build rapidly growing companies. The SEYO program also highlights the diversity of student businesses—from those building fashion brands and consumer products to retail businesses, technology services businesses, and more."

### Chris Crittenden New Director of Rollins Center

BYU Marriott recently announced **Chris Crittenden** as the new director of the Rollins Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology. The Rollins Center is an on-campus resource dedicated

to helping BYU students start and grow their own businesses. The center provides a variety of resources, including mentorship, class courses, competitions, conferences, and workshops, which are all designed to help students find success in entrepreneurship.

Crittenden has taught at BYU Marriott since 2018 as an adjunct professor of management. During this time, he created three new courses and the product development track within the strategy major. Now he looks forward to heading new projects that encourage

# Aerospace Studies Program Manager Receives Air Force, University Awards



**Erin Ricks**, BYU Marriott's Department of Aerospace Studies program manager, recently received two US Air Force awards and a BYU award recognizing her for her dedication to leadership in helping to improve and uplift the BYU Air Force and Army ROTC programs. Since joining the department, Ricks has accomplished several firsts for the BYU ROTC programs as a nonmilitary program manager.

The US Air Force awarded Ricks the Air Force ROTC and Northwest Region Third Quarter University Employee Award as well as the Northwest Region Annual University Employee Award. Both awards recognize Ricks for completing a comprehensive plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that benefitted both of the BYU military programs.

The Air Force recognized Ricks for also being the first nonmilitary university employee to receive military access and training in order to help BYU's military programs. She was the first nonmilitary

employee to receive an access card to receive resources for the programs, and she was the first to participate in a training course at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama.

Because she was the first to accomplish either of these things as a nonmilitary university employee at BYU, **Colonel Frederick Thaden**, aerospace studies department chair, believes that Ricks gained a greater appreciation and understanding of the different parts of ROTC. "She's a highly deserving, positive, energetic person. Her enthusiasm is contagious, and she's been a great value in our program," says Thaden.

In addition to the Air Force recognition, BYU awarded Ricks the 2020 Staff and Administrative Employee Recognition Award. Thaden nominated Ricks for the BYU award because of her outstanding teamwork and ability to grow the program as a whole. "Since she started in the program three years ago, she has been a force multiplier as far as enrollment of cadets, financial resources, and opportunities for the cadets," says Thaden. "She's been a great advocate for ROTC and for the Air Force, and her work is highly deserving of recognition, not only by the university but also by the Air Force."

She was recognized for hosting national security advisor Robert O'Brien on his visit to Provo in January 2020. At this event, BYU ROTC cadets spoke with O'Brien and toured Air Force One.

Along with O'Brien's visit, Ricks planned and facilitated various staff rides, or military trainings. In 2020 she took twenty-eight cadets to Washington, DC, for a short trip to meet with high-ranking military officials at the Pentagon and the United States Capitol. Additionally, Ricks has overseen \$58,000 worth of renovations for BYU's ROTC buildings and offices since joining the staff. One of these renovations included displays commemorating several alumni and military officers' accomplishments and awards. She hopes these awards can inspire BYU students and remind them of the legacy of service.

Ricks feels honored to have been nominated and recognized for her work. "I love working for this university. And the support I receive from BYU Marriott has been tremendous," Ricks says. "I am so grateful for the unique opportunity I have to work alongside the men and women who serve our country. Working with the United States Air Force has given me amazing opportunities to grow and develop my skills in a way I would not be able to if I were not in this position."



more students to become involved with the Rollins Center. "I'm excited to join the Rollins Center team," he says.

"We have a lot of momentum, and I look forward to using that momentum to build programs across campus that deepen our impact with students."

Before joining BYU Marriott, Crittenden was involved in several entrepreneurial pursuits. He cofounded Yumprint, an artificial intelligence app for at-home cooks; Walmart acquired the company in 2014. Following the acquisition, Crittenden stayed with Walmart, where he led product for online grocery from beta to a national rollout. Most recently, he helped grow Reef Capital Partners to nearly one billion dollars in investments.

"We are thrilled to have Chris as our new director of the Rollins Center," says BYU Marriott dean **Brigitte C. Madrian**. "His personal experiences in growing real-world businesses will be instrumental in helping our own student entrepreneurs. I'm confident that Chris's expertise, combined with our students' passion for innovation, will lead to continued success in the students' entrepreneurial endeavors with the Rollins Center."

## Graduate Programs Earn Top-Fifty Rank



BYU Marriott boasted two top-fifty spots in the 2022 edition of the US News Graduate School Rankings: the school's full-time MBA program ranked No. 31 and the MPA program ranked No. 48.

US News ranks professional school programs in business, education, engineering, law, medicine, and nursing each spring. The rankings are based on expert opinions about program excellence and statistical indicators that measure the quality of a school's faculty, research, and



students. Among specialty graduate rankings released this spring, BYU Marriott also landed four top-twenty-five rankings:

- No. 4: Graduate Accounting
- No. 17: International Business
- No. 22: Public Management and Leadership
- No. 24: Entrepreneurship

“BYU Marriott graduate programs are world class and develop the kind of leaders that quality organizations demand,” says **Brigitte C. Madrian**, dean of BYU Marriott. “We’re pleased to be recognized by US News for our students’ business skills, innovation, global perspective, and leadership abilities.”

### Analytical Tools of the Future



A well-known adage states that the one constant is change. As the world changes in the coming years, business professionals will continue to adapt to new technologies and norms. A new BYU Marriott class is familiarizing students with the technologies needed to make decisions during their careers.

The new class, STRAT 412: Strategy Analytics 2, teaches students essential technologies that many professionals use to interpret data and make decisions in the workplace. “This new class is an experiential course focused on key software platforms commonly used by data analysts including SQL, R, Tableau, and Python,” says **Ben Lewis**, BYU Marriott associate professor of strategy and instructor of the course. “Because trends in software change rapidly, this new course builds students’ confidence with these analytical tools so they can continue to learn and enhance their analytical abilities throughout their careers.”

Students gain familiarity with these new technologies in several ways. “My classmates and I watched self-learning videos before class and then reviewed the basics of each language in class,” says

**Rhea Walters**, a strategy major from Draper, Utah. “During class, a task using the new language would also be assigned for us to complete in a group. These tasks would be in the context of a case, and we would present our hypotheses and findings to the class later on.”

The class is designed to get students working together. “The whole class works as a team to discuss and understand concepts and try them out as we are learning,” says **Ty Tousa**, a strategy senior from Charlotte, North Carolina. “The class was built on open communication, so my classmates and I felt free to comment and ask questions to understand the different strategic tools.”

Walters explains that students learn these tools so that they can understand data to make more effective decisions. “There are many different ways to look at a business problem. The most important thing is to understand what data you need and what question you’re trying to answer and then choose what tool will help you analyze and manipulate that data to reach a conclusion,” she says. “Approaching a question in multiple ways will increase your insights and accuracy as well.”

Lewis shares that he has already seen how the data-driven approach to decision-making taught in this class has given students a leg up in their future careers. “Although the true impact of the course remains to be seen, I’ve had several students from my class last year mention how valuable the course was in their summer internships,” he says. “One mentioned that potential employers have asked him about the class in every one of his interviews.”

Beyond preparing students to use technology to solve problems in their careers, the course also teaches students how to learn effectively. With a comfortable knowledge base, students can learn how to use more analytical tools throughout their careers. “In this class, I was able to scratch the surface of many technical skills that I could possibly use in the future,” says **Derek Lowe**, a 2020 strategy graduate from Orlando, Florida. “Regardless of what my future career may demand of me, I have a working knowledge of a lot of things that position me to learn anything else I might need to quickly and efficiently.”

## FACULTY NEWS

### BYU Marriott Professors Author Ethics Guide for Special Forces



Leaders of US Special Operations Command have turned to the expertise of two BYU Marriott professors for advice on the high-stakes ethical dilemmas their forces face.

That expertise has taken the form of a new *Special Operations Forces Ethics Field Guide* written by BYU Marriott professors **Brad Agle** and **Aaron Miller** and now being used to train Green Berets, Navy SEALs, and other special operators who make split-second, life-and-death decisions.

“There are so many ethical dilemmas faced by our Special Operations Forces that aren’t clear cut, and our guide is there to help,” says Agle, the George W. Romney Endowed Professor at BYU Marriott. “We’ve had some experienced Special Operations Forces operators tell us that this is important and something they have needed. It’s an honor to provide it for them.”

The guide is based on the thirteen dilemmas that make up the core of Agle and Miller’s popular ethics book, *The Business Ethics Field Guide*. Adapted for the Special Operations Forces audience, the thirteen dilemmas became the thirteen ethical battle drills and include “Standing Up to Power,” “Sacrificing Personal Values,” “Keeping Promises When Circumstances Change,” and “Showing Mercy.” Battle drills address how platoons and squads apply fire and negotiate commonly

encountered situations that require rapid decision-making.

“When I heard the concept of thirteen ethical dilemmas, my military brain immediately made the connection to battle drills,” says Chaplain (Col.) Brian Ray, a colonel in the Army Reserves and director of the Poe Business Ethics Center at the University of Florida. Ray is a big fan of the original *Business Ethics Field Guide* and uses it regularly to teach ethics courses. “If you can identify the type of dilemma you face, then you can fall back on the types of training you have specific to those dilemmas,” he says.

Ray is also a chaplain assigned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the most senior uniformed leaders within the US Department of Defense, and played an instrumental role in getting the original *Business Ethics Field Guide* in front of the right people to help start the ball rolling toward the production of the *Special Operations Forces Ethics Field Guide*.

The fifty-six-page field guide, published in late 2020, is now being used extensively in training for all Special Operations Forces, which includes personnel from all four branches of the military.

“You will find that not all problems have easy answers,” Chaplain (Col.) George Youstra says in the foreword of the new guide. “More important than finding the ‘right’ answer is *how* you process and work towards making the best decision while remembering all the implications that our decisions carry.”

After the guide was published and distributed to Special Operations Forces, Agle and Miller were also involved in helping develop training for the warriors. They went on to do the first round of trainings in Tampa, Florida; Coronado Island, California; and Camp Williams, Utah, where there are a number of Green Berets.

### STUDENT NEWS

#### Students Win at Business Model Competition

While growing up in Hazen, Arkansas, 2021 entrepreneurial management alum **Alex Thompson** watched his dad struggle with the water chemistry of their above-ground pool. This experience gave Thompson the idea for Armano, a device that monitors chemical levels in



pools. Thompson’s product idea was one of hundreds submitted to the Business Model Competition (BMC), hosted by the Rollins Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology at BYU Marriott. Thompson and his team received first place in the competition and took home the \$4,000 cash prize.

The second stage of the Miller Competition Series, the BMC prompts students to design tests that validate their business ideas and then to make changes to their business models based on their findings. The final event for this year’s BMC was held virtually over Zoom in February 2021, and more than \$20,000 was awarded in cash prizes. The second-place prize of \$3,000 was awarded to Playlist Plus, a team led by **Harrison Noble**, an entrepreneurial management major, and the third-place team, led by **Chandler Rogers**, a strategic management major, received a \$2,000 cash prize for its app, Tribe.

The competition first required students to go out into the real world and test their business ideas with potential consumers. “Playlist Plus is a marketing service that bridges independent music artists with playlist curators and millions of fans,” explains Noble, an entrepreneurial management senior from Seattle. “Our two main hypotheses were, first, can we connect with hard-to-reach curators and, second, would artists and curators be interested in connecting via our platform? Most of our tests consisted of running Facebook ads, doing ABC tests on our website, emailing curators, and running submissions through our minimum viable product.” Noble’s team included his cofounder, Sam Sabin, a technology and engineering studies junior from Lehi, Utah.

For Thompson, the process of testing business hypotheses provided the students with key insights about their potential consumers. “Initially, we thought that our device could be disruptive to a technician’s job,” he says. “However, after dozens of interviews with technicians, we learned

that our product solves a big problem for them too—not just the pool owners. This observation was surprising to us, and we wouldn’t have gained the insight without talking to our customers.” Thompson’s team included two engineers: Derek Shields, a 2020 mechanical engineering graduate from Panama City, Florida, and Jaxon Smith, an electrical engineering senior from Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The top-five finalist teams were each assigned a mentor, and the mentors coached the teams for nine days before the final event. These mentors served as a valuable resource in helping the teams prepare for their final presentations.

Thanks to the feedback received from their mentors and the overall process of testing and validation, the students gained invaluable insights from the BMC. “The lean startup principles taught throughout the BMC process helped push us out of our comfort zone and taught us how to pivot,” says Rogers, a junior from Gig Harbor, Washington, majoring in strategic management. Rogers’s team included his wife, **Jade Fisher Rogers**, a 2021 entrepreneurship alum from Clarksburg, Maryland, and Jace Kendrick, a computer science junior from Houston.

The competition gave Rogers and his team the motivation to launch their product—an app called Tribe that helps people struggling with pornography to find support through team-based connection and accountability. “No founder ever feels fully prepared or ready to launch a new product. However, we came to understand that feeling this way is okay,” Rogers says. “We know the product isn’t perfect yet, but we’re excited to obtain real users who can give us real feedback.”

#### Going Global with Their Research

When BYU Marriott information systems (IS) students **Madison Corbin** and **Cherileigh Leavitt** first considered presenting their research paper at the 2021 Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, they never thought that they would present from the comfort of their homes at eleven o’clock at night. Despite the unexpected setting, writing and presenting the paper taught both students invaluable lessons about the research process.

Although the two women presented on 5 January 2021, the research process began nearly a year earlier, when BYU Marriott professor of information systems **Greg Anderson** asked Corbin and Leavitt to conduct a research experiment analyzing the effectiveness of INTEX, a weeklong experience unique to BYU Marriott's IS program.

"INTEX is a final project that each IS student has in their junior year at the end of the fall and winter semesters," Leavitt explains. "Students are put into teams

and given a business-related case or problem that is unique to that semester. We utilize all of the concepts that we've learned in our classes throughout that semester to solve the problem. INTEX helps prepare us for the workforce by presenting us with a problem that requires applying our knowledge and working together in a group."

Leavitt and Corbin were involved in every aspect of the research process, including brainstorming methods of data collection, sorting through data, and



Madison Corbin



Cherleigh Leavitt

writing the paper. "Maddy and I started out by brainstorming and asking, 'How are we going to measure the effectiveness of INTEX?'" says Leavitt, a first-year

## Learning Beyond Borders

BYU's motto "The world is our campus" is embodied by a team of students participating in the International Hub at BYU Marriott. These students hosted the Beyond Borders case competition in March 2021, an event that virtually brought together more than two hundred participants from twelve countries to find new diversity and inclusion solutions.

The International Hub (iHub) is a group of students and professors that creates multimedia content focused on international business principles. Events such as the Beyond Borders competition help the group educate others. "iHub is a student-led initiative to help people gain a global mindset," says **Shad Morris**, a BYU Marriott associate professor of organizational behavior and human resources who works with the students in iHub. "The material students create teaches how to interact in a global world and break down barriers across cultures to communicate more openly."

Students wanted to design a case competition to teach these principles, but they weren't sure how to make their vision a reality. "I'd never planned a competition before. I had no idea how much work went into planning one, especially our first one," says **Taylee Harker**, an experience design and management major from Pasco, Washington, who is the events manager for iHub. "That process was uncharted territory."

The iHub events team put together the competition with the help of Cherise Mendoza, a BYU Marriott supporter who currently works for Microsoft as global senior talent director. Mendoza and iHub worked with the Whitmore Global Business Center (GBC) at BYU Marriott to design a case focused on diversity and inclusion strategies for the future.

As students planned the competition, they knew that they wanted to reach beyond BYU Marriott to provide learning opportunities for students from other schools. "The Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) grants that BYU Marriott has received assist the school in reaching out and increasing international business opportunities for others," says **Jonathon Wood**, managing director of the GBC. "This competition is a way to expand access to international business education."

So the students in iHub invited other schools to participate. "This competition has grown so much from where we started. My team and I were naive at the beginning thinking that we could write a case in a month and put the competition together in another month," says Harker.



"We have shifted so many times during the six months of preparation, but the competition has become better than we imagined at the beginning."

Students also called upon the BYU Marriott alumni network to judge the competition. Individuals from companies such as Adobe, Honeywell, Korn Ferry, and PwC gathered virtually to watch and assign scores for teams' presentations on their diversity and inclusion strategies. At the end of the competition, a team of students from the University of Toronto Scarborough won the first-place prize of \$6,000. Student teams from BYU Marriott won second and third place.

The iHub events team looks forward to future events that will invite students all over the world to learn business lessons. "The most rewarding part of the competition was seeing the diversity and inclusion solutions that teams presented to judges," says **Maud Famina**, a 2021 MAcc grad from Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, who was part of the iHub events team. "This was just the first of many iHub events that will bring people with diverse backgrounds, thinking, races, religions, and locations together to find solutions to a common problem."



# Tackling Prison Problems



Popular media typically portrays prison as a dark, antagonistic place. With that image, it's hard to imagine why anyone would want to work there. However, a group of human resource management (HRM) students from BYU Marriott recently looked past this stereotype as they brainstormed solutions to make the Utah Department of Corrections a better place to work.

Students in the HRM 421: HRM Implementation class taught by O. Leslie Stone Professor of Entrepreneurship **Gibb Dyer** were allowed

to choose which project they wanted to work on among a few options. "I thought that working with a government institution would be interesting, because the way that governments run is different than [how] corporate America [runs], which I was familiar with from my internships," says **Cailey Akagi**, a 2021 HRM grad from Draper, Utah. "I'd also never met anyone who worked in a prison before."

The project team consisted of Akagi and fellow April 2021 alumni **Sarah Peterson Gasser** from Alpine, Utah; **Matt Gray** from Valencia, California; **Clarissa Keller** from Bakersfield, California; and **Jeffery Skinner** from Tokyo. The Utah Department of Corrections asked these students to (1) identify strategies to decrease position turnover and to create a better experience for employees, (2) brainstorm ways to increase the number of job applicants, and (3) research the demographics of the surrounding Salt Lake City area. The department wanted to make sure that the demographics of prison guards matched the demographics of the surrounding communities.

As the project got underway, working with a government agency presented unique challenges for the group. "Generally, these organizations involve more constraints," says Dyer. "The students needed to come up with recommendations about how to recruit, retain, and motivate people who were to become correctional officers, which is a difficult and sometimes dangerous job."

However, as they interacted with HR leaders and guards within the Utah Department of Corrections, the students learned about the employees' dedication to making a positive impact in the prison system. "When our group toured the prison, we got to speak firsthand with prison employees. They explained how much of the media and social perception of prison work is skewed, often portraying the prisoners and prison guards as being at war with each other," says Gray. "The reality is prison employees work with a service mindset. They want to help prisoners get better physically and psychologically. Correction officers aim to prepare the majority of the prisoners to reenter society."

The student team created a survey for employees to complete and also conducted one-on-one interviews with some of them. Throughout the research process, these students helped employees feel comfortable sharing their experiences and thoughts. "Our team brought to light different problems that officers didn't feel like they could tell their supervisors," says Akagi. "We gave a voice to people who didn't feel like they could be bold enough to share necessary information."

These new HRM grads feel proud that they were able to make an impact on the prison system as students, and they are also grateful for the insights that each one of them gained for their future careers.

MISM student from Gunlock, Utah. "We crafted a survey with several questions about the INTEX experience, such as what the participants took away from the experience and what skills they developed as a result."

The two of them reached out to several students, faculty, and alumni and asked them to answer the questionnaire. Leavitt explained that one of the most exciting parts of the research process was reading all of the data and seeing

what students and alumni had to say about INTEX.

Corbin, a junior in the IS program from Franklin, Tennessee, explains, "When Cherileigh and I first started, I hadn't gone through the INTEX experience yet. Reading other people's memories of INTEX helped me feel more excited to do it, because almost everyone loved it." The duo's research data showed that over 97 percent of the participants believed INTEX was a positive, impactful experience that benefited them later on in their careers.

After Corbin and Leavitt finished collecting and sorting through the surveys, they analyzed the results and contemplated how to organize the paper. Both students experienced frustration throughout the writing process, but Corbin believes the process taught them important skills. "The writing and revision process challenged me," she says. "I think in any type of project, it's easy to become frustrated, but your hard work feels worthwhile once you actually finish the project and recognize that you've accomplished something."

After completing the paper, Corbin and Leavitt submitted their research to the Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, the longest-running conference for information technology management.

Anderson, who supervised the project, believes that both students brought unique insights to the INTEX research. "Their passion, drive, and quest for excellence in their work was indispensable for the success of this presentation," he says. "They presented the paper at one of our top information systems conferences, where distinguished academics and PhD candidates present their research."

Leavitt says that likely being the youngest presenters at the conference "was intimidating, but it also felt validating that our efforts were seen on a similar level as those who had graduate degrees or were already years into their careers."

Corbin adds, "Realizing how young we were in comparison to the other presenters made me feel proud to be there. We invested countless hours into the project, and our hard work paid off. I learned many new skills about research and how to work with another person to accomplish something amazing."

# Alumni News

## MANAGEMENT SOCIETY

### UK Nationwide Virtual Networking

On 20 January 2021, the BYU Management Society (BYUMS) London Chapter sponsored a nationwide virtual networking event. Approximately forty people participated, including members of the five UK management society chapters and other attendees from as far away as Scandinavia and southern Europe. After listening to introductory remarks, attendees joined virtual breakout rooms

where they introduced themselves and discussed what they were looking for—job leads, internship opportunities, career or business mentorships, or building their businesses and social networks.

“We found a formula that worked well,” says John Deighton, a chapter leader. “New technology made it possible for participants to see who was in each breakout room and choose which room they wanted to join. Even more importantly, if the conversation wasn’t what they expected, they could leave at their pleasure and join another room.”

Moderators encouraged participants to use the platform’s chat feature, and by the end of the evening, “it was filled with many more comments, introductions, and suggestions than there were people in attendance,” reports **Leighton Bascom**, also a chapter leader.

Management society leaders also issued a call for help in starting two new management society chapters and strengthening existing chapters. “The evening generated a lot of enthusiasm and energy, and we received a number of offers for help,” says Bascom.

## A Head for Service

When it comes to community service, **Darren Lemmon** knows how to get his head in the game. Each year for the past seven years, a local Las Vegas team of fifteen to thirty volunteers, including Lemmon, has raised close to \$100,000 for St. Baldrick’s Foundation, an organization dedicated to funding research and treatment for childhood cancer.

During the foundation’s annual head-shaving event in March, volunteers buzz their heads for donations. “We approach coworkers, business clients, friends, and neighbors, and tell them we’re shaving our heads to support kids with cancer,” says Lemmon. “We ask them to either join us or donate. Most people say ‘absolutely not’ to shaving their heads, but they are usually willing to give us money.”

Lemmon admits that having his head buzzed for the first time was “really, really strange,” but as he was sitting on the stage waiting for the announcer to introduce his group of “shavees,” he looked down at the audience and saw two young children. “They didn’t have any hair because they’d been going through cancer treatments, but they were so excited to see everyone there, giving donations that would ultimately help them. It was touching. I thought, ‘Hey, this is not a big deal. I can do this. This is more important than my hair.’”

Lemmon, a 1991 organizational behavior graduate, lives in Las Vegas with his wife, Sona. He enjoys golf, tennis, hockey, and snowboarding. When asked to list his most important accomplishments, his first response is family and the relationships he has built with his wife, five children, and eight grandchildren.

In a roundabout way, family relationships are what led Lemmon to his career in commercial real estate. After graduating from BYU Marriott, he worked in the insurance industry for several years, first in medical cost containment and later as a broker selling health and life insurance products.

In the late 1990s, Lemmon’s brother-in-law invited him and his wife to join with a group of family members and friends to buy a large tract

of land, which they later sold to a home builder. They got a good return on their money, so the group rolled their profits into a series of other projects in the fast-growing Las Vegas area. “Those investments piqued my interest in real estate,” he says. “I found it fascinating that you could buy and sell it as a commodity.”

When the group built and leased an industrial building, Lemmon got his foot in the door of the commercial real estate world. He gained knowledge and practical experience that in 1999 led him to a job at CBRE, the world’s largest commercial real estate investment firm.

More than twenty years later, Lemmon is one of four partners in CBRE’s Las Vegas advisory and transaction services—office properties team, where he coleads a group that specializes in leasing and selling office buildings. The team facilitates approximately 130 commercial leases annually and is responsible for some of the largest and most notable transactions in the Las Vegas market.

The key to that success, Lemmon says, is the solid connections they have built with their clients—both local companies and national corporations. “Real estate is all about relationships,” he explains. “Both tenants and landlords trust us and know that we’ll make sure they get the best deal when we are representing them. Our success comes from having a strong team with strong relationships.”



## Supporting Career Development in Taiwan

The BYUMS Taiwan Chapter recently organized several events to help further its goals of serving the community, promoting high business ethics, and developing future leaders.

On 7 November 2020, the chapter held a countrywide micro, slash, and home-based business exhibition in Taipei. More than five hundred people attended, and forty-seven companies introduced their businesses and showed their products. In addition, professionals gave workshops and participated in panel discussions about starting home-based businesses. In cooperation with leaders in surrounding stakes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the chapter organized three similar events to help families who were interested in developing skills and talents or who were facing financial challenges following the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The chapter also sponsored a five-session Launching Leaders course that ran from October 2020 to January 2021. During the course, instructors used a hands-on approach to help more than seventy students identify aptitudes,

strengths, and areas for improvement, after which students set goals and developed action plans to help launch successful careers. “We taught the first series of classes in English,” reports **Philip Ho**, president of the Taiwan Chapter, “and we received so much positive feedback that people started asking for a Mandarin course.” The Mandarin-language sessions began in March 2021 and were open to both Church members and students from the wider community.

From August 2019 until the end of 2020, the Taiwan Chapter ran a series of forty-seven business presentations—one nearly every weekend—featuring professionals and experts who addressed topics such as networking, career development, and how to succeed in various industries. Presenters included Yi-Ming Wang, president of the Church’s Taoyuan Taiwan Stake, and Arnie Allred, a career director at BYU Career Services. Thirty-six additional sessions are planned throughout 2021.

## CLASS NOTES

### 1975



In 1980 Paul V. Jarvis bought the service-oriented business and insurance agency where he worked, then further developed and built it

under the name of The Permit Shop, Inc. His business specialized licensing, permits, and compliance for the trucking industry, and served clients in Missouri and the surrounding states for the next forty years. A 1975 business education graduate, Jarvis is most proud of the fact that “we always had honesty and integrity in the business. Customers trusted us.” Jarvis was active in professional organizations throughout his career and served as treasurer, vice president, president, and board member of the North American Transportation Services Association. He retired and sold his business in 2020. Jarvis and his wife, Tina Sherwood Jarvis, live in Willard, Missouri, and have four children—all BYU graduates—and nineteen grandchildren. Jarvis loves music and playing and watching sports, and he has spent many hours coaching basketball, baseball, and softball in youth sports leagues.

### 1981



**John C. Ballard**, a 1981 BYU Marriott graduate in marketing, is currently employed by the Salt River Project, an electrical utilities

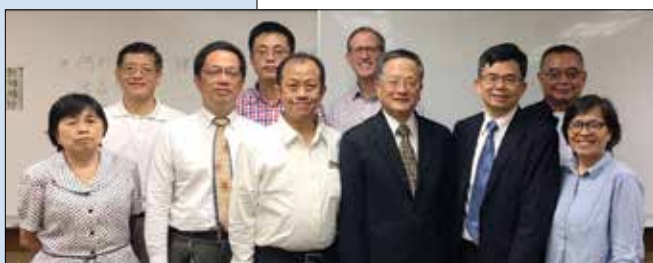
company in Phoenix. As a senior strategic distribution manager for the company, Ballard handles electrical distribution relationships for public entities, the healthcare industry, and the eastern mining area of Arizona. He has had a variety of challenging and rewarding occupational opportunities in his career, including working for United States Lines in international shipping, for the Nationwide Insurance companies, and for New West Energy in deregulated and competitive energy services. Ballard is a loyal and hopeful BYU fan, and his hobbies include music, tennis, and motor-sports. He has been active in community service and is presently on the board of directors for the Chandler Education Foundation. Ballard and his wife, Sharon, live in Chandler, Arizona, and have four children and five grandchildren.

### 1983



After earning a bachelor’s in accounting in 1980 and an MBA in 1983 from BYU Marriott, **George R. West** joined IBM. There

he filled various finance roles before being appointed to several directorial positions. In 2005 West joined Lenovo, a multinational tech company. His last assignments with Lenovo were director of Asia-Pacific market intelligence and strategy and data center group mergers and acquisitions. West believes that his career was enhanced significantly by his ten years of international assignments to Paris, Beijing, and Hong Kong. His family found these foreign assignments to be very enriching experiences. West and his wife, Ruth Wilde West, have six children and twenty-one grandchildren and currently live in Cedar Hills, Utah. The Wests are currently working with Catholic Community Services to mentor Afghan refugee families. They also enjoy hiking and jeeping in the mountains near their home.





1995



"Managing our home is like managing a small business," says

**Victoria Taylor**, and the education she received at BYU

Marriott provided the perfect training for her career as a stay-at-home parent. Taylor graduated from BYU Marriott in 1995 with a bachelor's degree in accounting. Afterward, she held a variety of accounting jobs, including working in the medical malpractice division at Safeco Insurance for several years. Since 2001 she has focused on what she considers her real career: rearing her five children, ages eight through nineteen. "Seeing my kids progressing and being genuinely good people makes me feel that I have done something good," she says. Taylor and her husband, **Shane**, live in Snoqualmie, Washington, with their children. She enjoys photography, exercising, volunteering at her children's schools, and playing the flute in the community band. After nineteen years at home, she recently started studying for a master's degree in counseling and development through Lamar University in Texas.

1996



When he and his wife, Melissa, first moved to Mason, Ohio, in 1996, **Eric Hansen** thought they would be there for only

a couple of years. "That didn't work out," says Hansen, who now serves as Mason's city manager, overseeing operations in nine city departments with more than five hundred employees. A 1996 MPA grad, Hansen has supervised several ambitious and successful projects, including the construction of an interstate interchange, a modernized town hall campus, and an all-access park. He serves as the director of the local Community Improvement Corporation and as chair of the Regional Transportation Improvement District, and he is involved in his local Kiwanis Club chapter and veterans' groups. Aside from spending time with his wife, four daughters, and one granddaughter, Hansen enjoys reading, listening to

## The Power of Persistence



Graduating *magna cum laude* from BYU Marriott's accounting program is an impressive achievement for any student, but there aren't many who can say they did it while studying in their second language. **Alejandra Sayavedra Nygaard** can. "It's one of my proudest achievements. I never thought I could accomplish it being from a different country," she says. And if she hadn't followed her mother's advice at a critical time, she might not have.

Nygaard was born and raised in Mexico City. When the Sayavedra family converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the missionaries also introduced them to BYU. By the time Nygaard was old enough to attend college, three of her four older siblings were enthusiastic BYU alumni, so going there seemed the natural choice.

But when Nygaard got to Provo, things weren't quite what she had

expected. Living in a small city and adjusting to American culture was a shock. Doing university-level work in English was hard. "People were so nice and wanted to help me," Nygaard remembers, "but I felt self-conscious. I didn't have the language skills to really be myself. I felt like I didn't belong."

After one particularly discouraging week, Nygaard made a tearful call to her parents and told them she'd made a mistake and wanted to come home. "It was hard for my dad, knowing I was so sad. He was ready to send me a plane ticket," she says. "But then my mom took the phone and said, 'My kids finish what they start. You can do this—you just have to believe you can. I know it's hard, but this is worth your best effort.' She made me feel like I had to keep trying."

Nygaard focused on thinking positively, telling herself over and over that she could do hard things and that other students also faced challenges. "After that first semester, things began to fall into place," she says. "My mom was right. I'm glad she pushed me to stay."

Nygaard studied economics for a year but became curious about the accounting program after a friend mentioned the program's outstanding career-placement opportunities and the interesting experiences she was having in the junior core. So Nygaard signed up for some classes. "Not only did I enjoy them," she says, "but it turned out I was good at them." But she wasn't sure she wanted to start over in a new major. "I applied to the accounting program at literally the last hour—11 p.m. on the day of the deadline." She was accepted, "and the rest is history," she says.

After earning her BS and MAcc in 2011, Nygaard worked in EY's Chicago office, first as a member of the tax staff, then a senior tax associate, and later a tax manager. In 2018 she joined the Mather Group, an investment advisory firm that specializes in helping people who are retired or nearing retirement. As a senior tax manager, Nygaard identifies, develops, and implements tax-planning opportunities for clients and also provides tax compliance services. "I love my job because it's not always the same," she says. "I have to constantly be learning in order to stay current. I enjoy being an advocate for my clients and helping them understand issues and make decisions."

Nygaard currently lives in New Haven, Connecticut, where her husband, Kaleb, is finishing a master's degree at Yale University. They are the parents of two children. Though Nygaard finds satisfaction in her educational and professional accomplishments, "marrying the love of my life and starting a family are the best things that have happened to me," she says. "The mom title is by far the one I am most proud of."

# Ordinary Decisions, Extraordinary Opportunities

When **Stephen H. Russell** reflects on his life, he is struck by the way seemingly small decisions and ordinary situations have blossomed into extraordinary opportunities. “None of this was part of a strategic plan,” he says, “and I feel grateful when I see all the times Heavenly Father has blessed me.”

Those small decisions started during Russell’s freshman year at BYU. He came to Provo to study accounting but found his first class “extremely boring and mechanical.” What did capture his interest was his first economics class. “It gave me a new vision as to what I wanted to do and be and study,” he says. Also important was his decision to enroll in BYU’s Air Force ROTC, which kept him out of the draft and allowed him to enter the military as an officer.

In 1967, after earning his BS in economics with a double minor in accounting and business management, Russell began his required four-year stint in the US Air Force. He chose financial management as his career field and was assigned to be a cost analyst for the F-111 fighter bomber development project—the most expensive and high-visibility weapons acquisition project of its time. “It wasn’t at all like the mundane jobs young officers usually receive,” Russell remembers. “I don’t know why I got it other than it was a blessing from Heavenly Father.”

Working on the F-111, Russell interacted with some of the finest minds in the aerospace industry and the defense department. “I had wonderful, challenging opportunities, and I grew incredibly,” he says. “After three years, I realized I had new skills, I was enjoying myself, and I could make a contribution. That was when I decided to make the Air Force my career.”

That first assignment opened more doors for Russell. With military sponsorship, he earned an MS in logistics management from the Air Force Institute of Technology in 1974 and a PhD in business economics from Arizona State University in 1977. Afterward, he spent four years at the United States Air Force Academy as an associate professor of economics.

Another “small” decision came when Russell was serving as comptroller at Williams Air Force Base in Mesa, Arizona. The base’s pilot-training program needed new-generation aircraft, and Russell took it upon himself to do a cost analysis to determine whether it was more advantageous to buy or to lease planes. His superiors, impressed with his work, sent him to the Pentagon to share his findings with the Air Force chief of staff and



representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense. At the end of Russell’s presentation, they offered him a job.

“It was a high privilege to serve as assistant for economics in the Office of the Secretary of Defense during the Reagan administration,” he says. In this position, he did analysis on defense procurement financing and profit policy and on issues related to the defense industrial base.

Russell retired from the Air Force in 1991. The ensuing decision to take his wife, Nancy Dipoma Russell, back to live in her hometown of Ogden, Utah, led him to a twenty-two-year career at Weber State University’s Goddard School of Business and Economics. He taught courses in logistics, purchasing, and business statistics and was instrumental in growing and developing the supply chain management program—now considered the school’s flagship program. He became a full professor in 2002 and received WSU’s Lowe Innovative Teaching Award and the Goddard School’s Alston Endowed Award for Teaching Excellence.

Russell’s seventy-seven years have been marked by other ordinary decisions that have led to cherished experiences, such as the opportunity in 2003–04 to be a visiting professor of economics at BYU–Hawaii, which he considers another supernal blessing from his Heavenly Father.

Although he entered a new and difficult phase of life when Nancy passed away in 2014, Russell remains optimistic. He finds happiness in close relationships with his eight children, thirty-six grandchildren, and fourteen great-grandchildren—and in the continued small decisions that bring extraordinary opportunities.

music, traveling, and “making hummus, salsa, pesto, guacamole, or anything that involves chopping, grinding, and mixing.”

## 2001

Developer, director, and patron of the arts: these are just a few words to

describe **Steven Labrum**. He served as chief aide to Fred Lampropoulos, former Utah gubernatorial candidate, shortly after graduating from BYU Marriott in business in 2001 and with an MBA from the University of Utah in 2002. Labrum went on to work at Lampropoulos’s

medical device company, Merit Medical Systems, where he helped develop more than one hundred new medical devices. He then cofounded 3 Irons, a Salt Lake–based company that supports art and culture projects, and hosted a morning radio show, *Cultural Conversation with*



*Kristian and Steven.*  
Fittingly, Labrum currently has “three irons” in the fire: he is finance director at the Eva Carlston Academy,

a residential treatment center for teenage girls; finance director at film production company Skyscape Studios; and producer at another film production company, Salted Forking Road Productions. Labrum is a trustee of the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, a former advisory board member at antibullying nonprofit No Bully, and a volunteer mentor for the Bench to Bedside program at the University of Utah. Labrum has two daughters and lives in downtown Salt Lake City.

## 2002



After landing her first job at a ski resort in her hometown of South Lake Tahoe, California, **Teija Sprinzyk** found she loved the process

of developing a great employee experience. The 2002 human resource management graduate has been following the HR career path ever since. She is drawn to the blend of business and psychology found in organizational behavior and organizational development. During her career, she has worked for a number of tech startups, including XPLANE and Lucid Software. She is currently director of employee experience at AskNicely, a customer experience platform for the mobile workforce, where she directs HR functions across global regions, developing and implementing practices to continuously improve the workplace. Sprinzyk earned an MBA from the University of Utah in 2007. She enjoys volunteering for PDX Women in Tech and at Portland’s Centers for the Arts, as well as gardening, snowboarding, and crocheting. Sprinzyk and her husband, Christopher, live in Hood River, Oregon, with their Siberian husky, Magnus.

## 2003

**Richard A. Bird** earned his bachelor’s degree at BYU Marriott in business management with an entrepreneur-ship emphasis in 2003 and is currently



working on an MBA at Yale University. He is a cofounder and executive managing partner at TYG Commercial Real Estate, where he

leads a team of investment sales and finance specialists with offices in Utah and Idaho. Prior to launching TYG, he led the Denver, Salt Lake City, and Las Vegas offices for Marcus & Millichap Real Estate Investment Services; he also spent four years as the director of their National Self-Storage Group. Bird currently volunteers as a coach for a children’s soccer team and is an interpreter for the Haitian Creole translation team of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, using the language skills he acquired on his mission to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He enjoys golfing, watching his children play sports, and supporting BYU sports. He and his wife, Mahalia, have nine-year-old triplets and reside in Mapleton, Utah.



After earning a BS in finance in 2003, **Kelly Parkinson-Evanson** turned her focus to supporting her husband, Richard, as

he joined the US Army and began his medical training. Over the next several years, Evanson’s family was stationed in Missouri, Ohio, and Georgia, and in 2014 her husband was deployed to Kuwait. The family now lives in Prosper, Texas, where Richard is an orthopedic surgeon. Evanson enjoys being a stay-at-home parent to her five children, ages nine to seventeen, and reports that the past decade of her life has been consumed by helping them excel in their activities. She belongs to two athletic booster clubs at her sons’ high school and is an avid supporter at her daughter’s gymnastics competitions. Evanson is an accomplished gymnast herself; she set the standing BYU women’s all-around record in 2000 and in 2014 was the first-ever gymnast to be inducted into the BYU Athletic Hall of Fame.

## 2012

While **Ava Huang** was interning as a translator during her last year at Fudan University in Shanghai, China, she “fell



in love with business,” she says. Huang graduated in English literature in 1997 and took a position as a marketing assistant and then as a

finance intern with automotive products company Cummins Inc., in Columbus, Indiana. “I was encouraged to go for it because my boss told me, ‘Finance is the language of business,’” she remembers. Huang graduated with an MBA from BYU Marriott in 2012, after which she joined Hewlett-Packard as a financial analyst. In 2015 she was promoted to senior financial analyst. She and her husband, **Jared Wang** (a fellow BYU MBA grad), live in San Jose, California, with their two children. Huang serves on the board of a local community youth choir and enjoys listening to and playing music, traveling, and meeting people from different cultures.

## 2013



**Dan Almeida’s** career in tax accounting has quite literally taken him to interesting places. After graduating with his bachelor’s

degree in accounting in 2013, Almeida accepted a position with KPMG. In his time with the company, he worked in Boston as an associate in the federal tax department; in the Cayman Islands, where he specialized in the alternative investments industry; and in Toronto as a senior consultant and US tax specialist. In fall 2020, Almeida fulfilled a longtime goal of moving from public to private accounting when he accepted a position at SS&C Technologies, a software and service provider to the financial services industry. In his new role, he manages a team that prepares and files tax returns for more than 150 investment funds, including trusts and limited partnerships. He and his wife, Olga Maletina, also a BYU alum, reside in Toronto. They enjoy hiking and keeping in touch with friends from each place they have lived.

## 2016

**Scott Barrow** linked his interests in both the healthcare industry and global supply chain after graduating with a degree in management with an emphasis in global



# Navigating the Learning Curve



Almost everything is a learning curve when you're starting a business, and **Sandy Whitaker**, a 2003 business management alum, acknowledges that there can be plenty of bumps and detours along the way. But as she and her husband, Tim, a physical therapist, worked to realize their long-term goal of opening a physical therapy practice, Whitaker found that navigating the curve was easier because of knowledge and skills she had gathered along the way—from her formal education, her past jobs, and even her hobbies.

The Whitakers opened Bridge Physical Therapy in South Ogden, Utah, in 2018. The practice employs nine people; in addition to being a co-owner, Whitaker serves as CFO and practice administrator. In the run-up to launching Bridge, Whitaker worked full-time to find a location, procure equipment, and obtain insurance contracts while her husband continued in his other job. "During this time, I had to figure out areas that were completely unfamiliar to me," she

says. "But I was amazed at how I was able to draw on personal experiences and past business relationships to answer questions and help guide me in the right direction as I navigated uncharted waters."

For Whitaker, those types of learning experiences started early. When she was a child, she dreamed of being a doctor, and she spent her first year at BYU taking pre-med courses. After a summer working at LDS Hospital, she had a change of heart and decided to study business instead. "My college courses have helped immensely as I've figured out all the aspects of opening our practice," Whitaker reports. "It's not just the numbers and critical thinking I loved in my finance courses but also principles I learned in other classes, such as marketing. And the medical terminology I learned in my pre-med classes has been invaluable."

Whitaker's job experiences since graduating from BYU Marriott in 2003 have also proved vital. While working in the mortgage industry, she honed her management skills as she oversaw a multimillion-dollar loan pipeline and a team of processors. Later she expanded her customer service expertise when she was tasked with maintaining customer relationships. After she became a stay-at-home parent, Whitaker got her first taste of entrepreneurship when she turned her passion for photography into a side gig for eight years. "Even though I had to give up that business to focus on Bridge," she says, "the skills I learned are still helping us because I've been able to take some of the marketing photos for our clinic."

The experiences Whitaker values most are the ones that include her family. She says, "The best part about Bridge is that I get to spend more time with my husband. We love working together, and we have to remember to not talk business all the time." The couple are parents to four children, ages eight to fifteen, and the family enjoys outdoor activities such as skiing, mountain biking, and swimming. They also enjoy working together in another family business: SW Swim Academy, which they run out of their backyard pool in South Weber, Utah. Whitaker started this business in 2016 "to help my children learn the value of work, gain confidence and leadership skills, and be able to earn money for the future," she says. "It's also our way of giving back to our community as we teach this invaluable skill to local children and adults."

Now that Bridge is up and running, Whitaker continues to draw on her reserve of knowledge and skills to navigate the future. She works hard to stay abreast of changes in healthcare brought about by COVID-19 and new legislation that affects physical therapy practices. "There continues to be an enormous learning curve," says Whitaker. "But it's fun and it's challenging because there's always something new."



supply chain management in 2016. He completed an internship with Intermountain Healthcare and continued on in a

full-time position with the company's group purchasing organization, which provides nationwide contracting and supply chain services. As the team lead over insights and analysis, Barrow manages the output and delivery of analytics and develops solutions to future customer needs. Some of his proudest accomplishments include his acceptance into BYU Marriott and receiving top placement at a supply chain case competition at Weber State University in 2016. He and his wife, Andrea Marie, have two children; live in Corvallis, Oregon; and like to play tennis, ultimate frisbee, and board games. Barrow volunteers as a young professional advisor with the Association for Healthcare Resource and Materials Management, a national healthcare supply chain association.

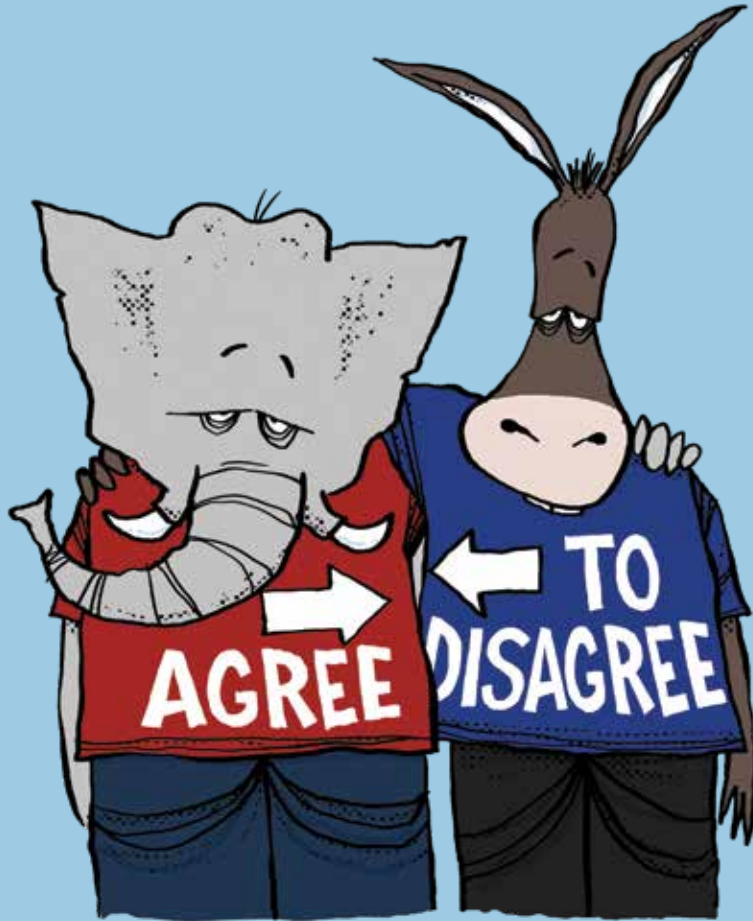
## 2018



When she was a student looking for an internship, **Laura Perkes** did a web search for "best supply chain internship"—and

Home Depot came back as one of the top results. She applied and was rewarded not only with a summer position but also at the end of it, a full-time job. A 2018 global supply chain management graduate, Perkes started her career as a merchandise planner in the soils and mulch category. "I can tell you pretty much everything you need to know about soil, but I kill every plant I've ever tried to grow," she says. She has recently been promoted to senior business analyst. In her new role, she works with suppliers to provide additional product, discounts, and delivery methods for professional customers and also sets pricing strategy and maintains supplier relationships for the building materials category. Perkes lives in Atlanta and is the reigning champion of her company's Halloween costume contest, having beaten out seven thousand other employees two years in a row.





P. 24