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# MARRIOTT

ALUMNI MAGAZINE



SUMMER 2023







# MARRIOTT

## ALUMNI MAGAZINE

ISSUE Summer 2023

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◀ SOME OF THE MORE THAN 1,500 BYU MARRIOTT GRADUATES LEAVE  
THE MARRIOTT CENTER AFTER BEING INDIVIDUALLY RECOGNIZED AND  
AWARDED THEIR DIPLOMAS DURING APRIL'S CONVOCATION EXERCISES.  
PHOTO TAKEN BY JAREN WILKEY/BYU PHOTO.



**OVERHEARD  
IN THE  
TANNER**

I classified myself as mostly deranged. • It's not a freshman class, but it feels like it is. • I'd do so much better at your job. • No one has classes in the morning. • What's your name again? • No one knows what the building acronyms actually stand for. You could stand outside the HBLL and literally ask people what it means, and they couldn't tell you. • Well, I'm going to trump you then. • I'm not used to teachers not knowing what to say. • I'm just trying to survive until June with no regrets. • Do you guys want to get drinks? I know you have class, but who cares? • I thought Roosevelt was nice and easygoing. • If I have 10 homes, I don't want to sell all 10. I just want to sell one of them because I want the profits from renting. • I'll see you in 1 hour, 15 minutes, and 42 seconds. • They offered me, like, 70, 80 grand, and I straight up told them I was worth more. • I explained it at least 50 times. • Wow! I didn't even recognize you with glasses! • There has got to be a better way than these stairs. • Such a gentleman, throwing that in the trash for me. • I was in the testing center for what felt like five hours taking that test. • So can my car be repaired, or is it totaled? • Who carries pencil and paper anymore? • Maybe not all men, but enough men. • She apparently changed her shirt mid-class. • He told me I was failing the class, and I was like, "Aw, man." • Smells like bacon in here. • Cool, the stairs are closed. How am I supposed to get to class? • I'm just pandering for an A because that's all that matters. • Are you dating someone? *No—I wish.* • Attendance is mandatory? • I don't understand anything he teaches. • Is it my turn to lead the group chat for a bit? • I'm starstruck. • Yeah, like, I don't have a death wish. • This is my fifth year here, sort of. • She brought me Swig, so I'm grateful. • I'm going to be very late to work. • What's the best move for paying for that? • I swear they're only open when I'm in class. • I'm so behind in everything in my marketing class. • At this point, I spend more time memorizing soda combinations than prepping for my finals. • Setting up a campsite made me feel like that TikTok "Am I better than everyone?" • Just throw in words like *attracted price*, and you'll be good. • My phone's at 2 percent. Gotta go! • Did I tell you I'm applying to MIT just for kicks and giggles? • I feel like you always catch me just staring at you guys. It's just, I'm so bored.



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Whether your business is large or small, preparing for emergencies of all types is time and money well spent. Planning ahead can keep your business afloat and even position you to come out ahead of the competition during challenging times.

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As he reflects on his life journey, emeritus general authority and MOB grad Larry Kacher says the unexpected stops have been most meaningful and the bumps along the way have proved most beneficial.

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### DELIVERANCE

We are all living a deliverance story, explains Michael S. Drake, K. Fred Skousen Professor of Accounting, in this condensed version of his BYU devotional address. Deliverance is “a central and recurring theme of this film called mortality,” he says, and each of us can participate in the work of deliverance together with our Savior to ease the sufferings and burdens of others.

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### WORDS MATTER: THE ELEVATING EFFECT OF PRAISE

New research shows that kind words have measurable impact on people in all walks of life, from those working in often unnoticed or undervalued positions to the coworker in the cubicle next to us. Praising others is a principle worth putting into practice, says Taeya Howell, assistant professor of organizational behavior and human resources.

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Cover photo by Benjamin Suter, Unsplash



**BYU MARRIOTT**  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

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ALUMNI RELATIONS OFFICE

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# Advice *from the* TOP

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*Ten members of the BYU Marriott community who hold or have held leadership roles at an array of organizations share insights to help members of the class of 2023—or any employee—find career success.*

PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY BRADLEY SLADE

On April 28, 2023, more than 1,500 students graduated from BYU Marriott School of Business. Many of those students walked across the stage in the Marriott Center, accepting congratulations and diplomas from Dean Brigitte Madrian and other faculty members who helped and supported them during their educational journeys. These outstanding graduates join a strong worldwide network of individuals who are united in their desire to take what they have learned within the walls of the Tanner Building and “go forth to serve.”

*Marriott Alumni Magazine* invited a few members of that BYU Marriott network to reflect on their own experiences since graduating and share insights they have gained as they have worked their way to the top.



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**MARK GOTTFREDSON**

*Bain & Company, Partner  
BYU Marriott  
National Advisory Council*

"I like to think of a career like an airplane ride," says Mark Gottfredson. "When the airplane is on the ground and gets to the runway, what does the pilot do? He puts the plane on full throttle for the take-off. Only when the plane achieves cruising altitude does the pilot let up on the throttle a little bit to continue to cruise.



"The same thing is true the first year of a new grad's career," he says. "You are in a learning mode. Becoming productive means learning the job, perfecting it, and excelling at what you are asked to do. Don't come in complaining about the hours or requirements of the job. Come in with enthusiasm, learn the job, and exceed expectations. Be eager to learn."

Gottfredson acknowledges that when applying for business school and interviewing for jobs, business students and grads may need to sound as if they have their entire future planned out. "But when you get into school or your first job, you realize that all the plans you have made were just ideas," he shares, noting that the timing and exact details of a grad's career plan will likely change many times. "However, the number one goal you have to have is to succeed in your current job. You want to be perceived as a high achiever, a star. If you accomplish that by excelling in your current position, the opportunities for the next step will be multiplied. If you fail in the short term, it will take several years to get back on track. Don't look beyond the mark. Succeed today, have some general goals in mind, and the pathway will open before you."

Finally, Gottfredson urges new grads to focus less on getting credit for success and more on the common good. "There is an old saying: 'Success has many fathers, but failure is an orphan.' This is true," he explains. "When you have success, there is plenty of credit for everyone. Don't worry about getting credit for what you have done. When you focus on making sure others succeed and then revel in their success, it will come back to you, and you will eventually be recognized."

**TRACY MAYLETT**

*CEO, DecisionWise  
MBA, Class of 1997*



Tracy Maylett graduated in secondary education before earning his MBA. "At BYU Marriott, I discovered a new world that I didn't even know existed—business! When I came to BYU, I learned that business could play a very powerful role in shaping good in the world," he says. "It was through this that I began to understand that the principles taught by the gospel of Jesus Christ could guide in all areas of life, including business."

This is one of the insights Maylett hopes to pass on to new graduates, along with another observation: Graduation isn't the end of learning; it just creates the foundation for it. "Your first job doesn't have to be your ideal job," says Maylett, who notes that he had two "careers" before creating his own company and incorporating the things he'd learned in those earlier positions. "It can, however, be a great opportunity to explore firsthand what you really enjoy."

Maylett recalls that in his first job, he dreaded going to work on Monday mornings. "But those grueling experiences shaped the rest of my life very positively because I took the opportunity to learn how I would handle things when I led an organization. The first career was six years of hard yet invaluable learning. I wouldn't trade those first six years for anything."

In addition, Maylett counsels new grads to work to understand themselves and take responsibility. "Oprah Winfrey once said, and I'm paraphrasing, 'You are responsible for your life, and if you're sitting around waiting on somebody to save you, to fix you, to help you, you are wasting your time. Only you have the power to take responsibility to move your life forward.' We are our own biggest challenge and obstacle," Maylett observes, "but once we understand ourselves, we can move forward and make progress."

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*"Read the books,  
learn the tools, take  
the classes, find the  
jobs that expose you  
in the right ways."*

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**VADIM OVCHINNIKOV**

*CEO, Greenvolt Power Actualize  
MAcc, Class of 2000*

Look for opportunities to gain experience, advises Vadim Ovchinnikov, who explains that experience provides credibility. “Sometimes when you are young and don’t have experience, people don’t want

to listen to you; they may think you don’t have anything to contribute,” he says. “Acquire experience so you have meaningful things to share and so that people will listen to you. There’s no way to avoid it—experience matters.”

Specializing can also prove to be beneficial, notes Ovchinnikov, who suggests that new grads identify an industry or field they enjoy, then learn about that industry and develop a functional skill within that space. In fact, his focus on becoming exceptionally good at what he does is one of the things that has contributed most to his success. That, along with “persistence and the ability to ignore what others thought of me,” he says.

Ovchinnikov also points to networking as time well spent. “Sometimes networking starts after 5 p.m.,” he observes. “Be willing to go out and meet people. People and connections can make a difference.”

**ROB TROUNCE**

*Account Executive, MasterControl  
Management, Class of 1996*



Visitors to Rob Trounce’s office may notice a whiteboard on prominent display. Trounce writes his goals on the board for all to see. “It’s been helpful for me to share my goals with others, including my spouse, children, mentors, and managers,” he explains. “Everyone who comes in my office can see those goals and my progress. This helps me confirm my commitments to achieve the goals and, as an added benefit, those who are invested in my success are able to look for ways to help me achieve those goals.”

That’s not all. Once Trounce achieves a goal or milestone, he wears his pink Nike Vaporfly running shoes to work for a day. His colleagues and family members enjoy celebrating these “pink-shoe days” along with Trounce.

Setting goals is top on the list of advice Trounce hands out to grads. He also recommends being willing to speak up in respectful and professional ways because “some of the greatest ideas come from the newest people on the team who have fresh perspective and great energy,” he says. Finally, he advises graduates to focus on family and other relationships and to look for ways to serve and contribute outside of work. “It will make work even more meaningful,” he observes.

**BRITTANY BROWN**

*Founder and CEO,  
LedgerGurus  
MAcc, Class of 2010*

Early in her career, Brittany Brown found herself in a job that involved following written instructions all day while doing repeated tasks, a situation she now calls her “own personal purgatory.”

However, from that experience, Brown gained valuable insight that she willingly shares with new graduates.

“Choose a first job based on who your boss would be and how up-to-date they seem to be on your industry,” she says. “Careers can be made by finding a great mentor early on, and this mentor is often in the form of a good boss who is capable of teaching you industry-best practices, effective ways of thinking, and the most relevant tools of your industry.”

Brown also encourages new grads to find a field that they can be passionate about and then do whatever is necessary to become world-class in that field. “Read the books, learn the tools, take the classes, find the jobs that expose you in the right ways,” she says. “Invest in yourself. Do whatever you need to do to totally master the field that you have chosen. Do not take the path of mediocrity. Mastery will open many doors and ensure your success.”

Ultimately, Brown left her first job and found a job that played to her “genius”—founder and CEO of a company that offers accounting services specifically for e-commerce clients. “I needed to be in a role that allows me to network, mentor, teach, guide, and play to the big picture—a place where I was able to play to my genius and a place that helps me find the genius in each of our team members,” she comments. “Everyone benefits when this is the case. Know or find your genius and then find the role that plays to that strength.”





**HEATHER  
HAMMOND CRUZ**

*Former VP, Global Corporate Social  
Responsibility and Sustainability, Nu Skin  
MBA, Class of 2014*

Mentoring and networking are key for new grads, says Heather Hammond Cruz, who notes that “a lot of people are very focused on networking while looking for a job but don’t think much about it once they have a job. However, networking within your organization, outside your organization, and everywhere pays off in the long run.”

As does finding a mentor, she continues. “Set goals with your mentor—and your manager, if they’re not the same individual—so there is some accountability,” she suggests. “It also helps to have your manager in your corner, someone who knows you are working toward a promotion or the next step in your career.”

Finally, Cruz encourages new grads—and anyone interviewing for a job—to know what they’re good at and be able to articulate those strengths during interviews. “When you can clearly state your strengths and offerings to a potential employer, that says a lot about you,” she says. “Employers are looking for confident, articulate, hardworking people for their organizations.”

**JOSH STEIMLE**

*Founder, MWI  
MISM, Class of 2002*

When Josh Steimle was preparing to graduate from BYU Marriott, he had an opportunity to talk with JetBlue and Breeze Airways founder David Neeleman. Steimle asked Neeleman what advice he would give to a new grad. Neeleman’s answer was short and to the point: Get dirty.

“When I asked what he meant, he told me, ‘Even if you’re not sure what you want your career path to be, do something—anything—and you’ll find more than enough opportunities to figure things out,’” Steimle recalls. “It was a good answer at the time, and after two decades of considering his answer, I continue to see the wisdom in it.”

After “getting dirty” himself, Steimle has his own words of wisdom to add to Neeleman’s: Dream big, and don’t hesitate to update your dreams. “A professor once asked me, ‘Where do you want to end up?’” Steimle says. “I told him I wanted to be the CEO of a company with at least 1,000 employees. However, after becoming the CEO of a company with 30 employees, I realized I didn’t like the CEO role. What I truly enjoy is starting companies. I still have a dream to start a company that will have 1,000 employees, but I don’t want to run the day-to-day. I didn’t give up on my dream, I merely updated it.”



**RAYMON  
BURTON**

*Executive Director,  
One Refugee  
MPA, Class of 2010*



Although he admits he hated networking in graduate school because it felt “forced and awkward,” Raymon

Burton now recognizes that the connections he made during his time at BYU Marriott have been invaluable. “I have been shocked by how much my professors and MPA cohort have continued to be a support to me throughout my professional life,” he says. “I had no idea that I would stay connected as much as I have. Those relationships are enduring. I gained valuable skills through BYU Marriott, but the relationships have been paramount.”

It’s no surprise then, that one of Burton’s suggestions to new grads is to network. “Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there,” he says. “Take advantage of informational interviews, volunteer opportunities, and constant networking; those connections will provide keys for the future.”

Burton also suggests building your identity capital by committing to a job and sticking with it, at least for a while, even if you don’t love what you’re doing. When he decided to focus on HR during his MPA studies, he wasn’t sure the field was a good fit for him personally or professionally. However, he committed to the pathway and threw himself into the career. “I worked hard, contributing to many different projects and working in different facets of HR,” he observes. “Through this experience, I realized that HR wasn’t my passion, and I began utilizing the skills and experience I had gained to shift to a different sector. Without the full commitment, though, I would not have gained the experience I needed to move on.”



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*“Set short-term goals and create habits that will move you in the right direction. Then the following steps will become more clear.”*

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**JOHN ARNOLD**  
*Executive Director,  
Arizona Board of Regents  
MAcc, Class of 1996  
MPA, Class of 1997*

“During His mortal ministry, the Lord gave two types of career advice: First, cast your net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find, and second, leave your nets,” says John Arnold, who has served in a variety of different roles during his two-decade-plus career. “In my career, I have received both types of promptings: do something different in your current job, and it’s time to change your course. When those promptings come, follow them—even if they go against your instincts or your ideas.”

Another tip from Arnold: work hard. “President Ezra Taft Benson taught that the secret to missionary work is work,” counsels Arnold. “The same is true of having success in the workforce. No matter what you see as your career path, learn to embrace the work and do it.

“Decide early on what type of employee you want to be,” he continues. “In general, the workforce is divided between employees and owners. Which one you are doesn’t depend on your position but on your goals and your approach to work. If you want a career in management, start working like an owner from day one. Take ownership for the overall success of your employer; approach projects like the owner would.”

Arnold also urges grads to be kind, learn to communicate, and find the delicate balance between taking the initiative and deferring to their supervisors.

Early in his career, Arnold worked with a mentor who gave him another golden nugget of advice: “Eighty percent of your problems will go away if you just ignore them, and the Holy Ghost will help you identify the 20 percent that won’t.” Arnold, who has worked to follow the Spirit throughout his career, shares that “understanding this principle helps me to appropriately react when problems come.”

**DAVE OLSEN**  
*Founder/CEO, Nimbl  
MISM, Class of 2005*



Being intentional—and not compromising on things that distract from that intention—is high on the list of advice

Dave Olsen shares with new grads. “See yourself as being someone who can create the life you desire, as opposed to someone who simply takes what comes,” he explains. “Then spend time getting clear about what that life looks like. Gain as much experience as possible, as broadly as possible. Work hard, be dependable, and volunteer for extra assignments. Pay attention to what brings you the most fulfillment. Don’t worry about money but focus on providing more value than you’re getting paid for.”

Olsen also suggests focusing on the type of person you want to become rather than on specific accomplishments. “Set short-term goals and create habits that will move you in the right direction,” he says. “Then the following steps will become more clear. Don’t look at goals as destinations, but instead see them as milestones along the way. As you progress, what you want to create in your life will change, and that’s okay. But always be intentional about the direction you are going.”

As an example, Olsen points to his own career trajectory. He knew from the get-go that he wanted to be present in his children’s lives. Consequently, he didn’t pursue positions that required extensive travel, and when he started his own business, he worked from home beginning on day one. “I never settled in when I didn’t feel quite aligned,” he says. “I moved locations and kept myself open to new opportunities until I discovered the situation that felt right for me.”

His education at BYU Marriott reinforced that he could, indeed, “integrate all areas of life into one, as opposed to separate compartments,” he says. “It’s hard to find, and many people don’t believe it can be done. But God, health, family, work, church, and other priorities, can all come together to create the best life possible.” **M**

# Preserving the Natural Wonder

Often called “America’s best idea,” national parks preserve some of our country’s most stunning natural beauty. For more than a century, countless visitors have felt wonder as they’ve explored these unique sites. Learn more about our national park treasures here.



1872

## THE YEAR THE WORLD’S FIRST NATIONAL PARK WAS CREATED.

President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act into law in 1872. Some of our current national parks existed before Yellowstone, including Hot Springs in Arkansas and Yosemite in California, but weren’t designated as national parks until later.

Source: [nps.gov/yell/learn/historyculture/yellowstoneestablishment.htm](https://nps.gov/yell/learn/historyculture/yellowstoneestablishment.htm)

85 million +

## TOTAL ACRES INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL PARK SITES.

National park sites are located in all 50 states and the District of Columbia as well as US territories. The newest site—the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve in West Virginia—was added to the system in 2021. It runs along 53 miles of the New River and includes more than 70,000 acres of a beautiful wooded gorge.

Sources: [nps.gov/aboutus/national-park-system.htm](https://nps.gov/aboutus/national-park-system.htm) and [travelandleisure.com/trip-ideas/national-parks](https://travelandleisure.com/trip-ideas/national-parks)







424

#### THE NUMBER OF NATIONAL PARK SITES IN THE UNITED STATES.

While the National Park System (NPS) includes 424 national park sites, only 63 are designated as national parks. Other locations fall into more than 19 other categories, such as national historic sites, national monuments, national seashores, and national recreation areas.

Source: [nps.gov/aboutus/national-park-system.htm](https://nps.gov/aboutus/national-park-system.htm)

312 million

#### THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF VISITS MADE TO NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SITES IN 2022.

That number was up 5 percent, or 15 million visits, from 2021. The NPS reports that 26 percent of those visits occurred in the country's eight most visited parks and that 12 parks saw record visits in 2022. The park service also noted that more than 13.25 million overnight stays occurred during the year.

Source: [nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/annual-visitation-highlights.htm](https://nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/annual-visitation-highlights.htm)



\$6-\$35

#### THE PRICE OF ENTRANCE PER VEHICLE TO NATIONAL PARKS AND NATIONAL MONUMENTS.

The cost of entrance to national parks varies by park; per-person fees are also available and range from \$3 to \$15 depending on the park. In addition, a variety of multiuse passes are available. Some people—such as senior adults, members of the military, or individuals with permanent disabilities—can qualify for discounted or free access passes.

Sources: [utah.com/destinations/national-parks/national-park-fees-regulations-and-reservations](https://utah.com/destinations/national-parks/national-park-fees-regulations-and-reservations) and [nps.gov/playourvisit/passes.htm](https://nps.gov/playourvisit/passes.htm)



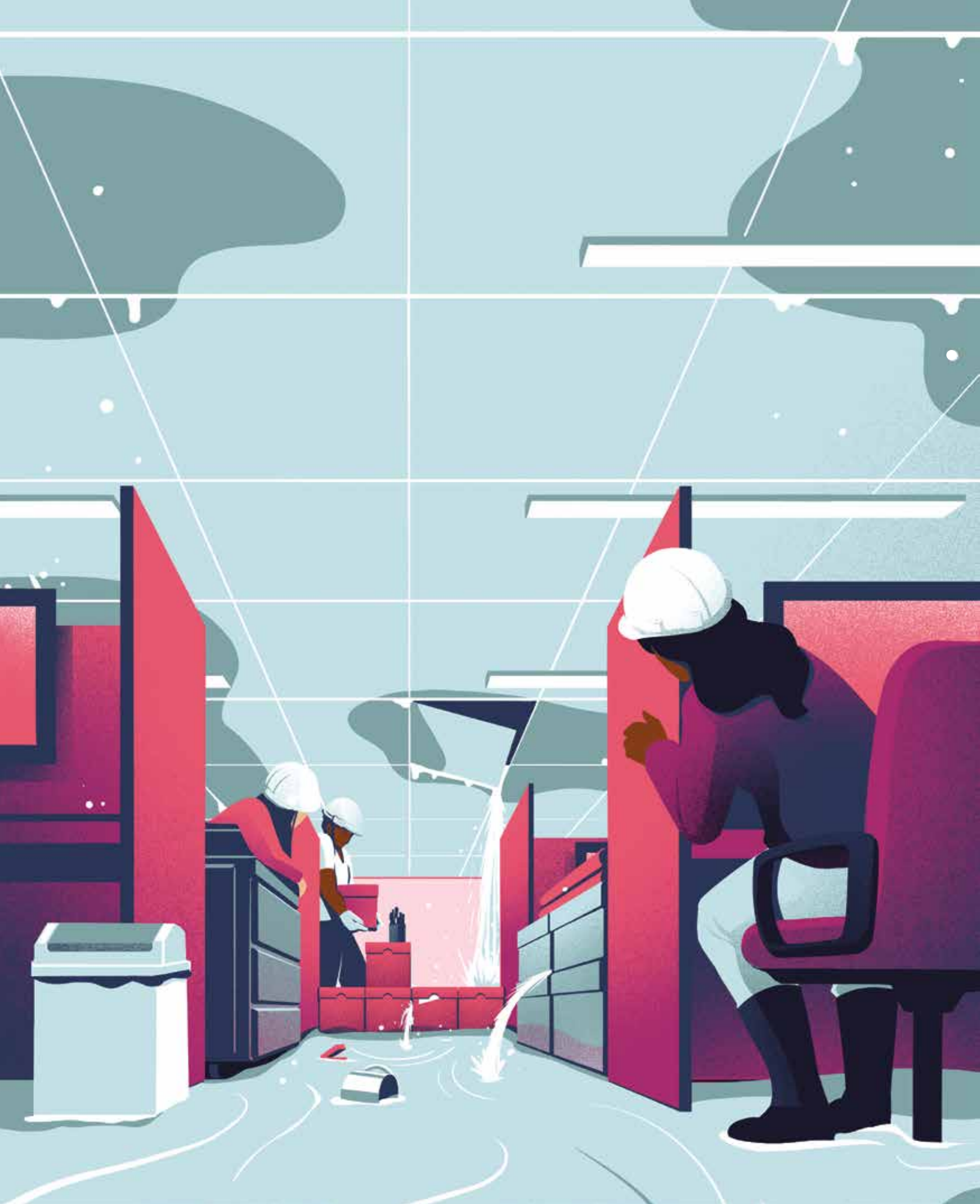
5

#### THE NUMBER OF NATIONAL PARKS IN UTAH.

Only California and Alaska have more national parks. As added advantages, Utah has 11 additional national monuments, historic sites, and recreation areas, and visitors have less distance to cover when they visit multiple parks than they would in California and Alaska.

Source: [tracks-trails.com/rv-travel-blog/how-many-national-parks-are-in-utah](https://tracks-trails.com/rv-travel-blog/how-many-national-parks-are-in-utah)







# THE POWER OF PREP ARATION

*Is your business ready for the worst?*  
Marriott Alumni Magazine's **SECOND** piece in a  
series on preparedness looks at corporate readiness.

BY BRITTANY ROGERS  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC CHOW

**T**he worst thing a business leader could say after the COVID-19 pandemic, says BYU Marriott management professor Paul Godfrey, is “I’m so glad *that’s* over. Back to business as normal.”

If anything, the pandemic showed that a business-as-normal approach wasn’t cutting it.

In PwC’s 2021 Global Crisis Survey, 70 percent of business leaders said they were negatively impacted by the pandemic, and a whopping 95 percent said that their crisis management plans need improvement.

“It’s time to ask, ‘Where did we get hit? Have we closed those holes?’” says Godfrey. “And then it’s time to start proactively looking at the future.”

In short, it’s time to talk corporate preparedness.

In business parlance, *corporate preparedness* has numerous synonymous terms, including *business resilience*, *risk management*, *business continuity planning* (BCP), and *corporate readiness*. Whatever you call it, preparedness is worth pursuing. That’s because with the right investment, such planning not only helps keep businesses afloat, it also puts them in a position to better help their communities and come out ahead of the competition. As Godfrey writes in his new book, *Strategic Risk Management: New Tools for Competitive Advantage in an Uncertain Age*, “Wise managers work not just to eliminate, mitigate, or transfer risk but also to leverage it.”

In the book, Godfrey and other experts share corporate-readiness blind spots and best practices. Alumni practitioners chime in too, unpacking the number one risk that keeps CEOs up at night and sharing successes, such as how prepandemic readiness efforts at American Express allowed the company to pivot and notch its best year yet.

“We’ve gotten really good at responding to crises, but we can’t respond our way out anymore; there are too many things going on,” says Eric McNulty, associate director of Harvard’s National Preparedness Leadership Initiative (NPLI). “You’ve got to focus on being ready.”

### ♦ *What’s a Pound of Prevention Worth?*

It’s a topsy-turvy world out there, arguably now more than ever before.

At present, the United States is trying to rein in its highest inflation since 1982. A war rages in Ukraine. Markets are volatile. Supply-chain snags are still disentangling. Extreme and costly weather events are intensifying. The probability of extreme epidemics will increase threefold in the coming decades, reports an analysis published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in August 2021.

The *Collins Dictionary* word of 2022, *permacrisis*, is a fair descriptor, says McNulty.

Associate dean and information systems professor Bonnie Anderson is an expert on habituation; she works with a BYU neuroscientist to map how the brain responds to those annoying pop-ups on the computer screen that flag security risks. “We get so many notifications that are not serious concerns that our brain ends up tuning out the ones that are actually critical,” says Anderson. “From a preparation standpoint, it’s like when someone cries wolf. You start to tune it out.”

Further, sometimes it takes *experiencing* a particular disaster to learn from it, says organizational behavior and human resources professor Peter Madsen, who observed this principle at work while studying the US coal mining industry. Advice to change safety protocols—or even actual close-call events—were insufficient to marshal lasting prevention efforts.

The cost, however, is real.

There are tools out there to calibrate that cost, says McNulty. “What’s the cost for each day one of our facilities is down? What’s the expense every time we lose a worker to injury? What’s the cost of a cyber event? As you begin to add that up, what percentage are you willing to spend to mitigate those risks?”

It’s actually easier for businesses to know how long they can last

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## **AN ESSENTIAL PIECE OF PREPAREDNESS IS IDENTIFYING THE MOST PLAUSIBLE EMERGENCIES IN YOUR GEOGRAPHIC AREA AND IN YOUR SPECIFIC INDUSTRY. THEN ASK YOURSELF WHAT’S MISSING.**

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McNulty, who has authored numerous NPLI case studies on leadership in disasters such as the Boston Marathon bombing, Hurricane Sandy, and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, came to this work as a result of a rescheduled trip.

“I was scheduled to be on a flight that hit the Twin Towers on 9/11,” he says, and it was a reflection point that redirected his career from product launches to crisis leadership—“work,” he says, “that can save lives.”

Leadership, of course, won’t prevent bad things from happening, but it can mitigate how bad things get as well as ensure that effective plans and precautions are taken beforehand.

Nevertheless, corporate preparedness plans often fall short, says McNulty, in large part because high consequence/low frequency threats are regarded largely as theoretical; when times are good, preparedness might be viewed as an unnecessary expense.

That, and we humans are actually terrible at estimating risk. Research by BYU Marriott professors actually backs this up.

if all the money coming in were to suddenly stop, says BYU Marriott finance alum Brandon Egan, former director of risk management at American Express. “The harder forecasting,” he says, “is when cash flow turns into an unpredictable trickle,” as it did for some AmEx clients during the pandemic. Another financial blind spot he sees: failing to consider what your company would do if investors dried up. Do you have the necessary financial reserves, the right insurance, and other necessities in place to weather a recession, a lawsuit, a force of nature?

Preparedness efforts will help you protect your people, preserve your brand, hasten recovery, and avoid what is dubbed *analysis paralysis*, “allowing you to act with confidence and courage,” says McNulty.

In today’s uncertain world, the experts say, this type of investment is part of the cost of doing business. “It’s not going to contribute to your quarterly earnings,” says Godfrey, “but in terms of cutting costs five, ten years from now, boy, the readiness folks have got it right.”

## ◆ Identify Your Risks

There's a photo that hangs on the 11th floor of the Goldman Sachs (GS) New York City headquarters, and it's a point of BCP pride. The photo shows an image of the Manhattan skyline in the middle of Hurricane Sandy, every skyscraper dark except the GS building at 200 West Street juxtaposed against a furious-gray sky. Every window is illuminated, powered by backup generators; a 10-foot wall of sandbags surrounds the building's base.

And GS preparation isn't confined to the Big Apple. At its Utah outposts, where the imminent threat is earthquakes, GS prepares by putting a hard hat and an emergency kit at each desk at its downtown Salt Lake City locations; the bank has two worksites in every location to ensure continuity if one facility is compromised.

In a similar manner, experts note that an essential piece of preparedness is identifying the most plausible emergencies in your geographic area and in your specific industry.

Then ask yourself what's missing.

Natural disasters, inflation, market swings—these are some of the “obvious risks,” says McNulty. “You’ve also got to ask, ‘What are we not looking at?’”

During his organizational preparedness trainings around the world, McNulty asks participants, “What keeps you up at night?” Responses go well beyond keeping a facility running, ranging from staying out of the news media, dealing with an active shooter, or handling radicalized employees. “Organizations used to worry only about radical groups outside the organization and trusted everybody wearing their logo,” says McNulty, but the internet is a public square for a disgruntled employee to vent.

For his part, McNulty says he is shocked that one concern doesn't come up more often: the effects of climate change. Eventually, he says, that will touch every enterprise in some way.

What are CEOs *most* worried about? McNulty consulted with the Disaster Recovery Institute International to survey nearly 200 C-suite executives and risk professionals, who ranked the scariest threats they face. At the top: sensitive data breaches, IT failures, and cyber attacks. And only 6 percent said that they have dedicated insurance coverage for these risks.

According to BYU Marriott information systems alum Adam Wright, a managing director of cybersecurity at a global consulting firm, the fear is warranted.

## ◆ Cyber: Its Own Beast

Wright loves to bungee jump and zipline, but he is so risk averse online that his employer of 20 years doesn't even have some of Wright's contact information, the kind that most individuals share freely. Wright is the one tasked with helping clients identify and protect their intellectual property and customer data.

“The reason I have a job, after all,” he says, “is because I know how data breaches happen.”

When he graduated from BYU with his master's degree in 2003, positions such as his didn't exist. Now they are so integral to business that the Securities and Exchange Commission is proposing that public companies be required to have cyber advisors on their boards.

“It's that important,” says Wright.



The companies that address data protection the best don't silo the responsibility—it's not just the job of IT or cybersecurity departments. “Cyber risk really does belong to all individuals within the company,” says Wright, “and it needs to be evaluated in every business decision, whether it's a merger and acquisition, a new product, pricing, negotiations, or any other discussion where data is involved.”

The biggest mistakes he sees companies making? Not knowing where their data is and treating all data the same. Gone are the days when a company housed all of its data on its own servers or mainframes. Today this data is often managed in third-party cloud platforms, and that data is stored on servers across multiple regions. Simultaneously, employees who once worked on in-office desktop computers are now on company devices all over the place, accessing a company's data “at home, in a hotel, at a local café,” says Wright. That means companies need to have greater scrutiny of company devices, understand what data employees are accessing, and give access “only to what employees need, when they need it.”



Cybersecurity is an endless corporate readiness exercise, says Wright. He urges businesses to identify the threat actors that are targeting them and the motivations behind the attacks. Do they want your customers' credit card info? Do they want to capture sensitive correspondence? Do they want your intellectual property?

"You cannot protect all of the data equally," says Wright. Identify the critical data, he advises, then implement a layered security approach to secure it and be extremely vigilant about patching vulnerabilities.

### ◆ *Build a Crisis Team*

The organizations that perform best when disaster hits, say the experts, are those that have a team in place *beforehand*.

First, you need your BCP people. And then you need your crisis team.

A large corporation, Godfrey says, should work to have an entire risk assessment team internal to the organization "whose sole job it is to scan the future and report to the board every six months." For smaller, scrappier companies, someone has to wear the readiness hat, and it's got to be someone vested in the long-term health of the organization—not an intern, not an entry-level employee.

"If the informants are at the bottom of an organization," says Godfrey, "you can wind up with uncertainty reduction, where the message gets diluted going up the chain of command. The direct line to leadership is crucial."

Polymaths who like hockey—that's what you're looking for when hiring BCP specialists, says Godfrey. You want people with a lot of interests who are a tad outspoken. Just as hockey players can smash each other up and then spend time together socially, he says, you need people to fight to get the threats that they are seeing onto your radar. "You've got to be able to have real debates over this stuff, and you have to be able to do it in a way that's not toxic or super nasty," Godfrey explains.

A good business continuity planner is likely not an optimist either, or if they are, they've learned to think negatively when duty calls, says

Madsen. In several studies, he's shown that negativity can be a skill. In one study, participants were told a hurricane had a 30 percent chance of hitting their house: Would they evacuate? Most stayed put, unless they were told a neighbor had incurred hurricane damage before. The bottom line, says Madsen, is you need someone to fully explore the worst-case scenario.

Doing so might just head off a crisis. In an April 2011 *Harvard Business Review* article, Madsen and his coauthors detail how, prior to Hurricane Katrina, Walmart's business continuity managers did exactly that. Their infrastructure had yet to be devastated by a hurricane, but based on past hurricane paths, they braced for the worst. As Hurricane Katrina approached, they had already expanded their emergency command center staff and stockpiled supplies, famously outperforming local and federal responders. As a local sheriff said, "If the American government had responded like Walmart has responded, we wouldn't be in this crisis."

While business continuity specialists perform essential work, they don't succeed alone. "BCP is not an 'in case of emergency, break glass' solution," says McNulty. BCP is part of the solution—the catalyst that gets you to take action—but the actual crisis team is much broader, and it "should be identified, trained, exercised, and ready to go."

A common mistake McNulty sees when disaster strikes: CEOs turn to their "star players," picked for their functional expertise. But being good at your day job does not portend top performance in crises. "You have to look at emotional expertise," McNulty says, intentionally selecting those who can remain calm in times of stress and ambiguity. "You may need your star players to keep the company going," he adds; someone has to run the business while others run the crisis.

Once you have the crisis team identified, assign roles and gather biannually, or even quarterly, to practice working as a cohesive unit, says McNulty. You're likely blending people from all kinds of departments and functions, many who have different decision-making methodologies.

### ◆ *No Business Too Small*

To start food storage for a single household, "you wouldn't run out and spend \$500 on canned peaches," says Godfrey. Likewise, he says, don't panic if, especially as a small business, all the preparedness pieces aren't in place yet.

"Don't think you have to throw the entire Fortune 500 business continuity playbook into the dryer and shrink it down to your size," adds McNulty.

There are simple and inexpensive things you can do now, including providing basic first aid and CPR training for all employees, McNulty suggests. One company he worked with had all of its employees back their vehicles into their parking spaces one day; research shows backing in reduces accidents and, in a true disaster, makes evacuation easier. It may sound insignificant, but it could reduce the accidents in your parking lot and protect your people elsewhere. "At a minimum, these sorts of things put your employees in a preparedness mindset," he says.



# PREPAREDNESS TAKES PRACTICE.

**“TRAINING YOUR EMPLOYEES IS LIKE  
HAVING YOUR TWO-YEAR SUPPLY.”  
THEN WHEN SITUATIONS ARISE, IT’S ALL**

# MUSCLE MEMORY.

In addition, think of your ecosystem. Who are your neighbors? Who does the same kind of work you do? Leverage your collective power by pooling resources for training, and link up for planning.

Another free exercise McNulty loves? Pull an article out of the newspaper and, during an employee lunch or a staff meeting, ask, “What would we do if this happened to us?”

## ♦ *Communications and Supply Chains*

The experts can’t emphasize enough the importance of working through hypotheticals. IBM even has a mock newsroom set for its CEO to practice going live.

Preparedness takes practice, says Godfrey. “Training your employees is like having your two-year supply.” Then when situations arise, it’s all muscle memory.

IBM is exceptional in their communications endeavor, he continues. “Few firms actually think through their crisis communications in advance. They’re flat-footed in their response. They’re too slow, and then the lawyers begin to speak.” The company stays silent and “loses in the court of public opinion long before it loses in the court of law,” Godfrey says.

Once you’ve created a process, put it in writing: Who in the company issues a statement, who writes it, and who reviews it? How will you find and account for everyone in an emergency? Is there a protocol or checklist?

“If your crisis communications packet was last updated in 2015, it might as well have been developed in 1815,” he says. It may sound extreme, but consider all that has transpired since then, from #MeToo to George Floyd’s death to pronouns, he says. “It’s important to think through how audiences hear your message.”

Another huge consideration: supply chains. Pretty much everyone had a pandemic-related gnarl, so every business can and should take this quandary to heart, says Godfrey: “What do I start to do today to rethink my supply chain so I’m not completely exposed?”

Perhaps it means stocking an inventory of critical parts, or maybe it’s reshoring production so things don’t get stuck in a port. Godfrey observes that we spent three decades perfecting the just-in-time

model, the management strategy that strives to produce only what will be used immediately, “but it will always be susceptible to disruptions,” he says.

## ♦ *Coming Out Stronger*

A company that has done the readiness work will not only weather the storm, it could potentially capitalize on it, says Egan.

“When you say corporate readiness, well, ready for what?” he asks. “Sometimes it’s being ready so you’re in a position to get back in during the upswing of growth.” He shares his pandemic war story as an example. With everyone stuck at home, consumer spending dropped, and with less income, some American Express account holders were in distress.

“We had to pivot,” says Egan. Fortunately, the company had financial reserves in place that gave the business the freedom, while in pandemic limbo, to innovate. Since no one could travel, AmEx shifted from travel kickbacks to new card offers with incentives, such as Netflix, Disney+, and even gym memberships. “People loved it; people started flocking to the card,” says Egan. The company could have just gritted through the pandemic; instead, it sold more products than ever before.

A 2021 McKinsey report looked at what resilient companies did that others did not do in response to the pandemic. “Business-model innovation was by far the most important strategic lever,” the report concludes. Corporate readiness strategies tee up your company to innovate, says Egan.

Further, corporations that have stored up for such a time will be in a position to boost their communities—and their brands. Madsen and Godfrey have both published research on this: Madsen’s latest work in this area, published in the *Strategic Management Journal* in 2014, calls it “looking good by doing good.”

The finding may sound intuitive—donating after a disaster does a reputation good—but Madsen’s paper adds nuance: your stakeholders have to notice. To get their attention, the announcement of relief efforts has to be made shortly after the disaster, otherwise it gets lost in the pack (enter your prefab communications packet). Second, partner with a legitimate nongovernmental organization (NGO)—and it’s even better if the NGO publicizes your help.

And the twist? Madsen’s analysis shows that in-kind donations garner more attention than cash. That means your business performs services, the stuff it knows best. An example: When a 7.0-magnitude earthquake rocked Haiti, Verizon Wireless waived any fees for all donation-related text messages and announced free calling to and from the earthquake zone. “Although Verizon’s relief activities were, no doubt, prompted by compassion,” writes Madsen, “Verizon also received significant tangible benefits.”

Finally, if the last few years have exposed some readiness failings, take heart. “We find that organizations learn more effectively from failures than successes,” Madsen writes in his research, and “knowledge from failure depreciates more slowly than knowledge from success.” **M**

## ♦ *About the Author*

*Brittany Rogers, a freelance author, lives in American Fork, Utah, with her husband and three children.*

# Peaks & Plummet, Slopes & Summits

By Emily  
Edmonds

Photography by  
Bradley Slade

It was March 1971 and Larry Kacher had 13 cents to his name. He'd started his day \$10 richer but was down to only pennies as he hitchhiked from Provo to Salt Lake City.

Kacher had just spent a month in Provo visiting two friends: Jim Gerszewski and his older sister, Suzanne. Suzanne had joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Minnesota, where the three friends had grown up. Now that it was time to make the 1,300-mile journey home, 19-year-old Kacher found himself just outside Salt Lake City, a few coins in his pocket and thumb in the air.







**Larry Kacher**  
ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR, 1978

LEADING  
ALUMNI



“Even though I didn’t know much about the gospel, I knew how to work hard, thanks to my father, and how to be obedient.”

Raised Catholic, Kacher had attended Latter-day Saint church meetings once while in Provo, and he’d heard a man bear his testimony about praying before hitchhiking. “Everybody hitchhiked back then,” Kacher recalls. “I believed in prayer and decided to give it a shot.”

Within a minute of concluding his prayer, Kacher watched a car pull over. The driver, a young man, was from a neighboring town in Minnesota, and he delivered Kacher to his doorstep 18 hours later. “He was grateful to have me so we could take turns driving,” Kacher says. “He even paid for my food.”

As he reflected on the coincidence, Kacher wondered: “Why did that happen? Did God want me to get away from Utah, or did He want me to prepare to go back?” Kacher decided it was the latter, and he enrolled at BYU that fall. He began taking missionary lessons with Jim’s younger brother, Don, who had also moved to Provo, and the young men were baptized in January 1972.

The important events that occurred during those early days in Utah have steered Kacher’s life as he has traveled the globe working in organizational behavior and serving in the Church—notably as a general authority seventy, an area seventy, and president of the Switzerland Geneva Mission. As with most journeys, the unexpected stops

have been most meaningful, and the bumps along the way have proved most beneficial.

### Finding Peace in the Powder

There were two things instilled in Kacher from the time he was young: a strong work ethic and a love for skiing. “My father taught me to work. I got my first job at age 13 shining shoes, washing dishes, and cleaning toilets at Minnesota Valley Country Club,” he says. “By age 16, I had started my own business cleaning new homes.”

Kacher’s main goal, however, was to ski, something he learned as a 10-year-old on dated wooden skis with leather straps. Post-high school, Kacher set out for Europe to experience the slopes there. After six months, he returned to Minnesota and soon found himself on the fateful journey to Utah and, ultimately, the gospel.

Kacher continued to ski throughout his life, even working as an instructor when his children were young. The sport turned therapeutic when he was diagnosed with early-stage prostate cancer while on assignment in the Africa West Area presidency. “When you’re diagnosed with cancer, you reflect on your life,” he says. “Even though I wasn’t necessarily worried about dying, it still weighed on me.”

After 27 total rounds of radiation, one every day with only Sundays off, Kacher

completed treatments in January 2019. “My therapy after radiation was to ski,” says Kacher, whose radiation proved successful. “That’s how it’s been my whole life. Being close to God’s creations and the feeling of going down the mountainside—especially in good powder—brings me peace.”

### Carving a Career

Despite his love for mountains blanketed in snow, a significant moment in Kacher’s life came on another summit—one at a much lower elevation.

Kacher received a mission call to Tahiti a year after his baptism. The mission home sat on a little hill overlooking the South Pacific Ocean, which Kacher often found himself gazing at. “At one point I said to myself, ‘How did I ever get here?’ It wasn’t a very positive question.” But as he reflected on his baptism, Kacher decided he was all in. “Even though I didn’t know much about the gospel, I knew how to work hard, thanks to my father, and how to be obedient,” he says. “I just went to work and loved the people—loved them with all my heart.”

Post-mission, Kacher returned to Provo and completed three years of college in about 12 months, earning his bachelor’s degree in psychology and marrying Pauline, an adventurous redhead who was studying modern dance, in 1976. He also began BYU Marriott’s master of organizational behavior (MOB) program that same year; upon his graduation in 1978, Kacher was named the outstanding organizational behavior student.

Despite his academic success, Kacher was the last of his classmates to secure employment. “Recruiters couldn’t quite figure me out because I was so laid back,” he says. Kacher landed at Honeywell’s HR training department in Phoenix. Although grateful



for the job, he felt bored. “I went to the HR director and said, ‘I can’t do this anymore. I’m not doing what I thought I was going to be doing.’”

His supervisor asked Kacher what he thought he’d be doing, and Kacher shared organizational behavior interventions he’d learned at BYU Marriott. “He had no clue what I was talking about but said, ‘Why don’t you just go do what you thought you were going to do.’”

With permission to carve his own path, Kacher began helping the organization function more effectively. “I had a good time and received a lot of positive feedback,” he says. Honeywell’s corporate office—located in Kacher’s home state of Minnesota—hired him two and a half years later as its first head of organizational development.

Then came an opportunity to be HR development director for Honeywell Europe. Kacher, his wife, and their three young children packed their bags and moved to Braine-l’Alleud, Belgium, in 1983, settling in a house on the edge of the Battle of Waterloo battlefield.

At the time, Honeywell Europe had recently acquired several companies and had a new president who was unsure of what to do with those companies. “I had a good track record of linking organizational structure and design with business strategy, so I took the senior management team through a restructuring process,” Kacher says. The changes made the new president look good, and Kacher set his sights on what he thought was his next step: “The head of HR position was open,” he says, “and I wanted a promotion.”

Kacher didn’t get the job, but the president asked if Kacher was interested in

being director of business planning instead. “That was a real compliment,” says Kacher, although he ultimately decided to return to Honeywell’s corporate office.

### Riding Out a Downhill Plunge

Kacher had spent eight years climbing the corporate ladder, but he felt as though he wasn’t reaching his potential. He opted to leave Honeywell to consult and soon was approached by the owner and CEO of a circuit-board assembly company. It seemed like a good fit, so Kacher split his time between consulting with other companies and working at the assembly company, which was two hours from his home.

“The owner of the company was charismatic and had plans to build the company and sell it. Without doing any due diligence or research, I wrote him a check for my life savings to buy into the company,” Kacher says.

Two weeks later the man approached Kacher with news that made his stomach drop: the owner was filing for bankruptcy, and Kacher’s money was gone. But the man had another surprise as well: he asked Kacher to take over as president. As unappealing as it sounded, “I realized my only hope of recovering my investment was to take this job,” Kacher says.

It didn’t take long for Kacher to learn the truth about the company. “We don’t have money for payroll,” the plant manager reported. “We have a list of debts that haven’t been paid. We’re behind on our lease payments to the city. We have not paid employee taxes to the government.”

Discouraged, Kacher pulled the management team together. They spent the next several months turning the company

around—even surviving an IRS visit—but Kacher never got his investment back, even after the company was acquired.

### Moving Mountains

Once free from the manufacturing company, Kacher jumped into consulting full-time for the next 12 years. By fall 1999, he was able to cut back on work and spend more time with Pauline and their six children.

But that setup didn’t last long. One month after paying off his house, Kacher received a phone call that led to an assignment as president of the Switzerland Geneva Mission from 2000 to 2003. “We have our own goals and think we know how things are going to happen, but the Lord usually has something else in mind,” he says.

Upon returning home, Kacher felt restless even though he was consulting again. He decided to run for city council. “I thought there was no way I could lose because I had support from both parties,” he remembers, “but I got killed. I couldn’t understand it at the time—it really hurt my ego—but looking back now, I can see why it happened.”

The loss, coupled with an opportunity to dabble in land development, was the impetus for Kacher to move his family to Midway, Utah. But as the Great Recession hit, Kacher returned to his organizational behavior roots. Norm Smallwood, a peer from BYU Marriott’s MOB program, approached Kacher about a job with the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, which Smallwood’s firm was consulting, in the United Arab Emirates.

“One of the senior Emirati executives, Majed, asked me if I knew anyone who might help their HR division. I immediately thought of Larry,” says Smallwood. “Larry





was extremely successful there and had a big impact not only on the company but also in forging lifelong relationships with many in the Arab community.”

During the process of being hired, Kacher had mentioned the potential job to Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, who had a home in Midway. “Is there any need to help build the Church there?” Kacher asked.

“Yes,” Elder Holland replied. “In fact, I’m over that part of the world.” After Kacher accepted the job, Elder Holland followed up: “I may call on you; we could use help from time to time.”

It didn’t take long for Elder Holland to make good on that request. One week later, he asked the Kachers to stop by his house.

“The First Presidency has approved you to be called as the first area seventy to serve in the Middle East/Africa North Area,” Elder Holland relayed.

That calling opened up an “incredible period” of Kacher’s life. Weekdays he worked with the senior management team that oversaw one of the largest sovereign wealth funds in the world. On weekends he and Pauline would travel to places such as Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait for Church assignments.

After almost five years in Abu Dhabi, Kacher negotiated a contract that put him back in Utah eight months a year to align with hiking and skiing seasons. But those plans didn’t last either; within days, Kacher

“If we humbly strive to do what the Lord would have us do and understand our relationship to a higher power, then things work out, because that humility invites the Spirit, and the Spirit can resolve issues in a way that none of us can.”



was called as a general authority seventy, a call made official in the April 2014 general conference. The assignment included three years as counselor in the Africa West Area in Accra, Ghana, and two years in the Europe East Area presidency in Moscow, Russia.

“If we humbly strive to do what the Lord would have us do and understand our relationship to a higher power, then things work out, because that humility invites the Spirit, and the Spirit can resolve issues in a way that none of us can,” says Kacher, who received general authority emeritus status in October 2022.

### Blessing Lives

Kacher, who has accrued 18 years of living overseas, credits Pauline for making their adventures abroad easy. “She’s someone who can thrive wherever she is,” he says. “So much is mindset. If you come prepared to embrace the culture, to get to know the people and love and respect them, it’s enriching and enlightening.”

While Kacher’s hitchhiking days may be over, his traveling continues. Last fall, he was called as traveling patriarch for the Middle East/Africa North Area, giving upward of 20 blessings each time he visits, with Pauline serving as his scribe. “To see the kingdom of God roll forth in all these parts of His vineyard and to have faith that, despite challenges, God is in charge—gaining that confidence has been amazing,” he says. **M**

### About the Author

*Emily Edmonds is a former editor of Marriott Alumni Magazine. After receiving this story assignment, she realized that two of her friends had served as missionaries with Kacher in the Switzerland Geneva Mission.*

# A Full-Circle Transformation

**THE SEEDS** for the Marriott School of Business 380: Executive Leadership Series course were planted more than 20 years ago when a young **Ryan Smith** saw well-known Utah business mogul Larry H. Miller coming to BYU campus to teach. That example made such a strong impression on the aspiring entrepreneur that Smith was inspired to create a similar experience for the next generation of BYU Marriott students.

“It’s one of those full-circle moments,” says BYU Marriott dean **Brigitte Madrian**. “The student has become the teacher.” Madrian, Smith, and **Mike Maughan**, who is president of the Chairman’s Office at Qualtrics, work in tandem as instructors and facilitators for the course which focuses on leadership and decision-making.

Once best known as the cofounder and CEO of Qualtrics, Smith has since purchased the NBA’s Utah Jazz basketball team from the Miller organization and become a lead investor in Major League Soccer’s Real Salt Lake and the National Women’s Soccer League’s Utah Royals.

“BYU is incredible. I owe so much of what is good in my life to BYU,” says Smith. “I wanted to give to a new

generation of BYU students what so many had given me while I was at BYU. I was teaching regularly at Stanford and Harvard but not doing anything in our own backyard, so I reached out to Brigitte, and she, Mike, and I put this class together to provide an unparalleled learning experience for BYU students.”

The weekly class is open to any student across campus and features a “fireside Q&A” format. “In the workplace, learning doesn’t come through PowerPoint decks,” explains Maughan. “It happens through conversations; this class engages students to learn the way executives learn.”

The course brings in an impressive roster of people. Course lecturers include Utah governor Spencer Cox, three-time NBA champion and Utah Jazz CEO of basketball operations Danny Ainge, author of *New York Times* number one bestseller *Grit* Angela Duckworth, host of *Freakonomics Radio* Stephen J. Dubner, and—in another full-circle moment—Gail Miller, who became chair of the Larry H. Miller Company after her husband’s passing.

Class assignments are simple: students submit weekly reflections based on takeaways from the lecture,

*“In the workplace, learning doesn’t come through PowerPoint decks. It happens through conversations; this class engages students to learn the way executives learn.”*

## INSIDE the CLASSROOM



The weekly class is open to any student across campus and features a “fireside Q&A” format.

and the final paper is a letter to their future selves about what the class meant to them. “This class has been one of the most influential and applicable classes you have ever taken,” James Harrison wrote to himself in his letter. A sophomore studying pre-business, Harrison is one of the 350 students who took the class in fall 2022. “Here are some principles I hope you remember in the future. The first principle may be the most important one: work hard and be kind. Mike would always repeat this, and this is his motto. Other speakers who talked about working hard and being kind were Ryan Smith, Omar Johnson, and Scott Cutler. These should be role models in your life and the kinds of people you want to become. . . . Like Ryan Smith said, ‘You should never do anything halfway; you have to be all in.’”

Being all in is an ideal that Smith embodies—and one that was reinforced during those lectures he attended years ago. Now as host and instructor of the MSB 380: Executive Leadership Series course, Smith and the other course instructors and presenters are all in as they work to transform the next generation.

—KELLENE RICKS ADAMS

# Deliverance

BY MICHAEL S. DRAKE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GREG NEWBOLD

To introduce my topic, let's review a list of the top 15 highest grossing films<sup>1</sup> of all time and identify a common thread among them:

1. <i>Avatar</i>	2. <i>Avengers: Endgame</i>	3. <i>Titanic</i>
4. <i>Star Wars: Episode VII—The Force Awakens</i>	5. <i>Avengers: Infinity War</i>	6. <i>Spider-Man: No Way Home</i>
7. <i>Jurassic World</i>	8. <i>The Lion King</i>	9. <i>The Avengers</i>
10. <i>Furious 7</i>	11. <i>Top Gun: Maverick</i>	12. <i>Frozen II</i>
13. <i>Avengers: Age of Ultron</i>	14. <i>Black Panther</i>	15. <i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2</i>

What do most of these movies have in common? These are stories of action and adventure. These are stories about heroes coming to the rescue. To use language common in the Book of Mormon, these are stories of deliverance.







What don't we see on this list? We don't see straight comedies. We don't see many dramas, love stories, or rom-coms. Sorry, no Jane Austen. The financial takeaway is straightforward: if your objective is to make as much money as possible in Hollywood, then make a story about deliverance. Production studios such as Marvel have clearly figured this out. Since 2008, when *Iron Man* was released, Marvel has produced 29 stories of deliverance.

Why do we love stories of deliverance? Why do we keep going back for *Ant-Man* number five? (It's coming, and many of you will see it.)

I don't think it's for the capes and masks. I don't think it's for the visual effects. When you've seen one explosion, you've seen them all. (I've been to Scout camp—I've seen them!) No, I think we love films of deliverance because we are living in the ultimate deliverance story here on earth.

From day zero, deliverance is a central and recurring theme of this film called mortality. After all, we cannot even enter mortality and take our first breath without being delivered by someone. And then what?

We find ourselves unable to do anything on our own until we are at least, say, 14 years old. We are entirely at the mercy of our first heroes—mom and dad, grandparents, and guardians. As we get older, we realize that we are in a fallen world and that each of our character arcs includes periods of serious trial and struggle. At times we are even pushed so far as to say, "Well, this movie isn't very good and certainly isn't worth the price of admission. The floor is sticky, and the popcorn is stale."

But I testify that hope comes through the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a Savior. There is a Redeemer. There is One Who Is Mighty to Save. There is a Great Deliverer.

I wish to share a few thoughts on deliverance. As with any proper epic, I will proceed in three acts.

### **ACT 1. THE BOLIVIAN GAS WAR: A DELIVERANCE STORY**

It is important to recognize that trials and challenges are what we signed up for. The road was never going to be easy. We learn from Lehi that "it must needs be, that there

is an opposition in all things"<sup>2</sup> and from the Doctrine and Covenants that "my people must be tried in all things."<sup>3</sup> President Russell M. Nelson has said, "You who may be momentarily disheartened, remember, life is not meant to be easy. Trials must be borne and grief endured along the way."<sup>4</sup>

Yet at the same time, the Lord promises that "if [we] endure it well," He will "exalt [us from] on high" and we will "triumph over all [our] foes."<sup>5</sup> And the Psalmist proclaims, "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles."<sup>6</sup>

Now I don't know what specific trials and challenges you face—we each have our list. But what I do know is that when Jesus walked on the earth during His ministry, He didn't spend very much time—if any at all—with people who were worry free, struggle free, or trial free. "Have ye any that are sick among you? . . . Any that are lame, or blind . . . , or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them."<sup>7</sup>

To illustrate our Lord's power of deliverance, I want to share with you a modern-day deliverance story—the story of a miracle that



occurred when my parents were serving as mission leaders in the Bolivia La Paz Mission. I share this story because it gives me hope and reminds me that there is a God in Israel, there is One Who Is Mighty to Save.

In October 2003, Bolivia was experiencing a period of significant civil unrest that is now known as the Bolivian Gas War. The details of this conflict are beyond the scope of my message, but suffice it to say that the label of *war* is appropriate.

One of the goals of the protesters was to shut down all transportation in the cities of El Alto and La Paz—cities that are located about 12 miles apart. To accomplish their goal, the protesters erected barricades and scattered broken glass in the streets to limit transportation inside of and between the two cities. Their leaders vowed that no goods, including fuel, would come in or out of the cities.

Violence soon broke out, and the government responded by declaring martial law. The news reported that three thousand miners from the rural areas of the country were on their way to El Alto armed with dynamite to reinforce the protesters. The danger was

almost entirely in prayer—received the following impression: “Leave now and you will find gas.” Now this was a particularly tricky endeavor because in order to find gas, they would need to use gas.

With this risk in mind, my dad turned to my mom and said, “We must leave right now if we want to find gas.”

Without a word, my mom jumped up from bed. Off they went, like Nephi, “not knowing beforehand the things which [they] should do.”<sup>8</sup>

My parents recorded the following in their journal:

*After a time, we came across a parked car with two men in it. We stopped and asked, “Do you know where we can find gas?” The men simply told us to drive another block and look left. We followed their advice, and when we looked down the street, we saw a gasoline tanker driving slowly.*

My parents followed the tanker to a gas station and filled up their car to about half a tank, limited by a quota imposed by the station. They then called the assistants and

highway between La Paz and El Alto. As they approached the highway, they noticed an enormous convoy entering the highway ahead of them. This convoy consisted of military and police vehicles, including troop carriers with armed soldiers. To my father and his assistant’s surprise, they also noticed that many of the vehicles in the convoy were large and white, and some were Toyotas. My father recorded that without being invited, they “slipped in behind the lead troop carrier. No one said a thing. We looked very official in our big white car.”

They had thought that driving a very conspicuous big white Toyota would be a dangerous weakness. But instead, it turned out to be precisely the vehicle they needed to drive to be inconspicuous within the convoy.

What they didn’t know at the time was that they were now part of the military convoy evacuating the president of Bolivia and his family out of the city of La Paz to the airport in El Alto. This powerful military escort was not only protecting the president of the country of Bolivia but was also protecting the president of the Bolivia La Paz Mission.

*"From day zero, Deliverance is a central and recurring theme of this film called mortality. After all, we cannot even enter mortality and take our first breath without being delivered by someone."*

real and getting worse by the hour; it was clear that the missionaries needed to get out of El Alto and into the safety of the mission home in La Paz.

But there were two massive problems.

First, the two mission vehicles each had less than one-fourth of a tank of gas—not enough to pick up all the missionaries. Furthermore, the news had reported that no gasoline had entered the city of La Paz for the past five days.

Second, both my parents and their car would be targets for the protesters—my parents because they were foreigners with possible ties to the US government and their large white Toyota vehicle because that vehicle was commonly used by government officials.

It was in this context that very early in the morning, my father—after a night spent

told them to leave that minute to try to find gas for the other vehicle. The assistants were also successful and were able to fill up their car to half a tank. Both gas stations closed soon thereafter, having run out of their limited supply of fuel. But both mission vehicles now had enough gas.

The stage was now set for the evacuation of the missionaries. Because the missionaries were scattered throughout El Alto in their various areas, different rendezvous points were determined as pickup locations. Now I do not have time to share all the amazing stories that happened to get each missionary out, but I will share one.

During one of the evacuations, my father and his assistant needed to drive on an extremely dangerous six-mile stretch of

My father and his assistant drove inside the convoy for as long as possible and then proceeded to the rendezvous point. When they arrived, they found a group of armed soldiers standing there, and in the midst of these soldiers, they found five very anxious missionaries. My dad hugged each of the soldiers, who explained that when they had seen the missionaries in such a dangerous location, they knew they had to protect them.

Miraculously, every missionary was safely evacuated that day.

## **ACT 2. “WAIT, WHERE IS MY DELIVERANCE?”**

But what about when deliverance doesn’t come? When there is no convoy, no rescue? This can seem unfair. And while I don’t



understand why deliverance sometimes doesn't come or is delayed, I do know that this unfairness is a feature of mortality and that some of the Lord's most elect and chosen have experienced it. I also believe that there are lessons to be learned while we wait for deliverance.

I will make my point here using several jailbreak stories. Perhaps nowhere is the theme of deliverance more clear in scripture than in the case of prophets who found themselves in jail.

**Jailbreak Number 1:** King Herod threw Peter in jail. Peter was asleep in his cell when an angel appeared, filled the room with light, and essentially said, "Put on your clothes. Don't forget your shoes. We're out of here." The prison gate opened on its own, and Peter and the angel walked out.<sup>9</sup>

**Jailbreak Number 2:** Alma and Amulek were thrown in jail. After three days, they had had enough: "Alma cried, saying: How long shall we suffer these great afflictions, O Lord? O Lord, give us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance."<sup>10</sup> Then what? Their jailbreak was made easy when the jail was literally broken to pieces. Alma and Amulek simply walked out.<sup>11</sup>

**Jailbreak Number 3:** Years later, brothers Nephi and Lehi had a jailbreak experience similar to that of Alma and Amulek. After a few days in prison, fire surrounded them, the prison walls came down, and they, too, walked to freedom.<sup>12</sup>

These are important faith-promoting accounts, and like the stories I shared about Bolivia, they have happy, miraculous endings. But let's consider another prisoner's experience. Joseph Smith was imprisoned in Liberty Jail. The conditions were terrible. Three days went by, then three weeks, then three months. Four months. Five months.

Joseph knew of Peter's jailbreak. He knew that the walls came tumbling down for Alma and Amulek. And we know from a letter Joseph wrote to the Church while he was in jail that he wondered, "Wait, where is my deliverance?" He wrote, "O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?"<sup>13</sup>

At times we feel like Joseph. We ask, "When will this end?" Like you, I struggle



*"While we don't know the character arc of each player, we know the grand story arc. We know who the Great Protagonist of the story is, and we have His promises."*

inside of my own prisons with challenges that lead me to say, "Okay, I've had enough here."

For reasons that I do not fully understand but that I believe are part of the test of mortality, deliverance is sometimes—perhaps even often—delayed. However, there is hope. Elder Dale G. Renlund taught:

*In the eternities, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will resolve all unfairness. . . .*

*. . . If we let Him, Jesus Christ will consecrate the unfairness for our gain. He will not just console us and restore what was lost; He will use the unfairness for our benefit.<sup>14</sup>*

While waiting for deliverance, we can ask ourselves, "What lessons can I be learning that I couldn't learn otherwise?" While in Liberty Jail enduring the delay of his deliverance, Joseph received some of the most powerful and important revelations of this dispensation, including revelations that are

now sections 121 through 123 in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Just as with any important life lessons, those we learn while waiting for deliverance will draw us closer to the Savior and help us to understand His love and His plan more fully.

### ACT 3. DELIVERERS ON MOUNT ZION

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we have made promises and covenants to participate in the work of salvation, to be saviors on Mount Zion.<sup>15</sup> In other words, we have made promises to be deliverers. And all around us are people in need of deliverance.

We can pray to know who to help, how to help, and when to help. This can be challenging, but it will get easier, and our efforts will be more effective if we pray to see others in the way the Savior sees them. And sometimes, like Esther, whose courage saved the Jewish nation, we may be the person

uniquely suited to help. As Esther's cousin Mordecai observed, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"<sup>16</sup>

I needed to learn this principle during my grad school years. A new student arrived; let's call him Dave. Right from the start I had a challenging time being around him. I chalked it up to personality differences. Dave was struggling in his first year and was at risk of washing out. So what did I do? I am ashamed to say that I took the easy course and simply avoided interacting with him.

Then one Sunday my ward mission leader approached me with an invitation. Now before I get to the invitation, it is important to know that this particular leader had been well trained in the martial arts. He was a master, and at one point he held—and may still hold—the record for breaking the most wooden boards with his bare fist. He broke eight boards with no spacers. His invitation for me was this: "Mike, you are going to have a missionary experience this week and then report on it in quorum meeting next Sunday."

Joseph Smith taught, "When the Lord commands, do it."<sup>17</sup> Well, I would add, when

someone who can break eight boards with his bare fist invites you to do something, do it. What were my options? My response was simple: "Yes, Sensei!"

I immediately started thinking about people I could potentially invite to church. The first name that popped into my head was Dave, but I pushed it away. His name came again. I pushed it out. It came a third time. I accepted the challenge.

Then something unexpected happened. From the very moment I made the decision to extend the invitation to Dave, I started to feel differently about him. My heart softened.

That next week I had two nice conversations with Dave before I invited him to attend a church activity. He sincerely appreciated the offer, though in the end he was not that interested.

So what came of all of this? Dave didn't join the Church. But those interactions did help both of us get to a better place. We were each delivered, even if just partially, from our own challenges. Dave found in me someone who could uniquely help him, particularly with learning some of the more technical research skills required to be successful in

our program. And I was delivered from my shameful attitude.

To summarize the key points of my message:

**First**, we are *all* living in a deliverance story, and the Lord our God is the Great Deliverer.

**Second**, it is left to the Lord to know the when and how of our deliverance. And while we wait, there are important lessons to be learned—our personal section 121s to receive, if you will.

**Third**, we can participate in the work of deliverance together with our Savior to ease the sufferings and burdens of others. We can pray to see others the way the Lord sees them. We can ask what we can do to help.

And now for the really good news (massive spoiler alert): We know how this movie will end. While we don't know the character arc of each player, we know the grand story arc. We know who the Great Protagonist of the story is, and we have His promises. He removes our chains of grief by taking the chains upon Himself. He frees us not only by opening the gates of our prisons but also by taking our place there. He does not deliver us remotely or from a social distance. He is there suffering with us.

He is the Great Deliverer and the Hero of each of our stories. **M**

*This speech is adapted from a BYU devotional given October 4, 2022, by Michael S. Drake, an accounting professor at BYU Marriott.*

## NOTES

1. "Box Office Mojo: Top Lifetime Grosses," IMDbPro, as of September 30, 2022.
2. 2 Nephi 2:11.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 136:31.
4. Russell M. Nelson, "With God Nothing Shall Be Impossible," *Ensign*, May 1988.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 121:8.
6. Psalm 34:17.
7. 3 Nephi 17:7.
8. 1 Nephi 4:6.
9. See Acts 12:1–10.
10. Alma 14:26.
11. See Alma 14:14–29.
12. See Helaman 5:21–52.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1; see also verse 2.
14. Dale G. Renlund, "Infuriating Unfairness," *Liahona*, May 2021; see 2 Nephi 2:2; Job 42:10, 12–13; Jacob 3:1.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 103:9–10; see also Obadiah 1:17, 21.
16. Esther 4:14.
17. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church* 2:170 (November 1834).



## around the COOLER

BY CLARISSA MCINTIRE

### 1. PRACTICE

Practice engaging in civil dialogue by organizing safe-space discussions on controversial topics. Though this may not work in every setting, some corporations have found success in fostering this type of interaction among team members. You can find resources to help through organizations such as FeelReal (FeelReal.net) or Unity Lab (UnityLab.co).



# The Good Argument

*Is there such a thing as a good argument? It may not come naturally for many of us, but what writer Buster Benson calls “productive disagreement” can be learned and harnessed to make real change—both within ourselves and in our relationships with others. Good arguments encourage kindness, open-mindedness, and humility. Follow these tips from Benson and collaboration experts Francesca Gino and Whitney Johnson to make discussions at the workplace—and in every other aspect of life—healthier, less stressful, and more enjoyable as well as more constructive and beneficial.*





## 2. QUALIFY CLAIMS

Make room for others in your conversations by hedging your assertions (“This approach *might* work for *some* people”) rather than claiming omniscient knowledge. Admitting freely what you do not know or are uncertain about can provide opportunities to highlight where both parties agree and encourage building on common ground.

## 3. REPRESENT YOURSELF

Avoid speaking for others (“You think/do this because . . .”); instead, stick with who you know: you. Speak for yourself (“I feel . . .” or “I think . . .”) and invite others to approach the conversation in the same way. This will make conversations more welcoming and safe. This approach will also make others feel respected and honored.

## 4. ACKNOWLEDGE OPPOSING IDEAS

Show your interlocutor that you are truly listening by acknowledging their perspective, and thank them for sharing their thoughts. Showing gratitude—while also articulating your own contributions in positive terms—will level up the quality and impact of the conversation.

## 5. PREVENT UNHEALTHY FRICTION

Recognize that people tend to escalate conflict when they feel their rights (e.g., choice, security, dignity) are threatened. Focus on disarming that response by connecting with and investing in others before arguments begin. Cultivate relatedness by creating shared experiences and establishing similar goals.

## 6. REDEFINE GOALS

Aim to build knowledge when entering a potentially heated discussion in the workplace—or in any other aspect of your life—rather than trying to eliminate all opposition or prove that you are right. Collaborative meaning-making in the face of disagreement is a hallmark of effective teamwork; it allows everyone autonomy and can lead to innovation.









# words matter

## *The Elevating Effect of Praise*

By Todd Hollingshead

**W**e've all been taught this simple lesson: words matter. Do a simple Google search and you'll turn up hundreds of variations on that theme:

*"Whatever words we utter should be chosen with care, for people will hear them and be influenced by them for good or ill."*

—Attributed to Gautama Buddha

*"And, yes, words matter. They may reflect reality, but they also have the power to change reality—the power to uplift and to abuse."*

—William Raspberry

*"Words matter, and the right words matter most of all. In the end, they're all that remain of us."*

—John Birmingham

Using the right words can be quite simple, and, as philosophers both ancient and modern agree, using the right words unlocks the power for good. BYU Marriott School of Business professor Taeya Howell is joining the throngs of those touting the importance of using the right words—and not just because she likes the sentiment. The assistant professor of organizational behavior has coauthored two hefty academic studies that show the measurable impact of kind words (or the lack thereof) on people in work environments.

Howell has learned that whether words of praise come from strangers or close associates, they have the capacity to strengthen workers' resolve in the face of stressful challenges and help employees turn to healthy recovery practices when they feel drained. This is particularly true for those who work in the most thankless of environments.

Howell and her colleagues' research is uncovering how praise and kindness make a significant difference for those on the front lines, such as healthcare workers, trash collectors, and janitors, as well as those in the workplace, just the next cubicle over.

### **Invisible and Unseen**

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, some essential workers were immediately thrown into the limelight. While most people in office environments were able to shift to remote work, essential workers had no choice but to report to their jobs day in and day out, facing not only the strain of work but also the concern of infection. Fortunately, society recognized the sacrifices the most visible essential workers (healthcare workers, grocery store clerks, police officers, etc.) were making, and efforts quickly surfaced to thank these unsung heroes.





*"A short email reply,  
a phone call, even a text  
can make a difference."*

— KYLEE SPJUT

Like many people, Howell remembers when TV commercials encouraging people to find ways to thank frontline workers started to appear. Given her background and expertise in organizational behavior, Howell paid particular attention. The commercials sparked her research curiosity, so even though she was on maternity leave at the time, she reached out to colleagues to discuss the new development.

Howell's collaborators from across the country—representing New York University, Rider University, and the University of Arizona—had seen the same commercials, but they also noticed that something subtle was missing. While the public campaigns took off and billboards, digital signs, posters, and social media posts thanking nurses and doctors came flooding in, there were hundreds of thousands of less visible essential workers who were receiving little to no praise.

One of those unseen worker groups was corrections officers. The more than 300,000 US corrections officers may be some of the most unappreciated, unrecognized essential workers in the country. Even in the best of times, they rarely cross the conscious of the public as they carry out taxing but critical work behind the scenes. A pilot study

from Howell and her team found that only 3 percent of those surveyed thought of corrections officers when asked to list those considered essential during the pandemic. But they are—and when COVID hit, their work became brutal.

"We're doing three times the amount of work and feel more unappreciated than before this virus," said one unnamed corrections officer during a May 2020 interview. "Sometimes I question why I'm still an officer."

It was corrections officers who inspired the first round of research from Howell and her colleagues. In the view of the researchers, corrections officers were a highly relevant sample to test because they are classified as essential workers who work in a highly stressful setting—one that has been described as a "vector for disease"—that also happens to be largely out of public view. Coauthor Hee

Young Kim, an associate professor of management at Rider University, had connections with corrections officer associations in the Northeast, and only a few months into the pandemic, the team was recruiting and interviewing those officers for a study.

The researchers had hoped for at least 140 study participants to ensure valid results but ended up with a final sample of 186 corrections officers from New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania.

"Usually we're begging people to fill out surveys; no one wants to fill out a survey," Howell says. "This is one of those few instances where participants actually thanked us for doing the research because they felt so marginalized and unseen. And here we were trying to shine a light on what they were experiencing."

### Gratitude—or Lack Thereof

With two waves of surveys in May and June of 2020, the authors set out to measure four basic items among corrections officers:

- Did the officers feel public gratitude toward them?
- Did they feel invisible or forgotten?
- Did they feel positive (enthusiastic/excited) or negative (agitated/distressed) about their work?
- How did they recover from work burnout? Did they engage in adaptive activities, such as exercising, meditating, or spending time with loved ones? Or did they engage in maladaptive activities, such as heavy drinking, tobacco use, and overeating?

The survey results lined up nicely with the team's predictions: When corrections officers felt that they had received gratitude, they were more likely to feel seen and to engage in positive recovery efforts. The problem, however, was that a staggering 41 percent of the officers reported receiving no gratitude at all.

"When they hadn't felt gratitude, they felt more invisible, which led to more negative emotions," Howell says. "They were then more likely to engage in unhealthy coping behaviors outside of work."

The researchers bolstered the study by moving beyond corrections officers; they carried out a second survey of 379 additional essential workers who were randomly



assigned either to receive social media posts praising their work or the work of other essential workers or to be in a control group receiving pictures of food. Once again, researchers found that workers who felt invisible were more likely to turn to unhealthy recovery activities. They also found that some essential workers actually questioned how genuine the praise was when they were overwhelmed by too many messages of gratitude.

However, by and large, the study clearly demonstrated that gratitude from the general public—either indirect beneficiaries or complete strangers with whom the essential workers may never have had any direct interaction—could powerfully impact the recovery actions of those workers because it helped them feel more seen.

That was a huge finding because healthy recovery from burnout means more productive and effective employees who see more purpose in their work. “It was surprising to me that even a simple thank-you message is powerful, especially for those who feel invisible and unseen to the general public,” observes Sijun Kim, another coauthor now teaching and researching at Texas A&M.

So if simple praise from complete strangers can do so much good, the researchers thought, it stands to reason that praise from a close associate could be even more powerful. That’s what Howell, Hee Young Kim, and Sijun Kim are looking at now. And so far, the results are promising as the group looks at praise in a different scenario: the workplace.

### Words with Friends

Kylee Spjut works in a profession that most people would agree is high stress. As a PR strategist for Salt Lake City-based Penna Powers communications agency, the BYU graduate balances a heavy client load with the high expectations of her management team.

“I am a people pleaser, so I want to make sure I am doing my best for all my clients,” explains Spjut, who earned her degree in communications from BYU in 2018. “I am genuinely stressed most of the time because I want to prove myself capable and be good at my job.”

That stress, it turns out, can be shaped into a positive thing with only a few simple gestures of thanks from coworkers. Howell

and her research colleagues are now studying just how impactful praise in the workplace can be when it comes from a colleague. What they’re finding is that praise transforms the nature of workplace stress from a hindrance—something that keeps you from achieving your goals—to a growth mechanism, the “good stressors,” as Hee Young Kim puts it.

“When people are given gratitude for their work by a colleague or a supervisor, there is a flip of the switch as it pertains to stress,” Hee Young Kim says. “Just like that, people start to see hindering stressors as the more positive challenging stressors. A reappraisal of sorts happens, and the outcome for that employee is a net gain.”

Sijun Kim likens it to Marvel or DC superhero films. In these movies, he says, the main characters are usually facing significant hindering circumstances, but by overcoming those things, they become the hero of the movie. “But we’re learning that this isn’t just happening in the movies,” he says. “It’s happening in business, in offices, in entrepreneurship, in startups: people do overcome things that appear to be depleting or hindering, and the ability to reappraise these stressors is based on the appreciation they receive.”

The research findings are so clear that the authors suggest managers move past the often unfruitful focus on trying to eliminate stressors. The reality is that in many occupations, stress will always be part of the job. Reframing those stressors with words of gratitude will change the way employees see their work, the team is discovering.

Spjut agrees “1,000 percent. In a work environment, words of praise and acknowledgement are often the easiest and most appropriate way to show appreciation,” she

says. “I definitely take notice of the extra effort my coworkers and supervisors make to give positive comments about my work. When I have the confidence of my superiors, that allows me to reframe my stress and not worry about proving myself to them but focus on the problem at hand.”

Spjut says she’s lucky to have management team members who take time to give positive feedback despite their own heavy workload. Sometimes all it takes is a quick, sincere message complimenting her on how she is handling a challenge. A short email reply, a phone call, even a text can make a difference.

It’s a lesson that past generations stuck in the “no news is good news” mindset could learn from the current and upcoming workforce: keep the feedback coming, especially the positive feedback.

“To me, no news is bad news,” Spjut says. “Spend the extra minute to reply and show appreciation.”

*“It was surprising to me that even a simple thank-you message is powerful, especially for those who feel invisible and unseen to the general public.” — SIJUN KIM*





## The Real Cost

Every good manager desires a team that works efficiently, effectively, collaboratively, and—now more than ever—stress free. According to the American Institute of Stress, workplace stress costs American businesses \$300 billion annually in losses due to absenteeism, lost productivity, and accidents. Job stress results in an additional \$190 billion in annual health-care costs across the nation, with an average of five hours of office work lost weekly to employees grappling with stressors.

That's why companies spend good money to improve the workplace environment and why entire industries exist to advise, consult, and train on establishing a model work experience. Of course, the pandemic turned everything on its head. Now, in addition to workplace stress, managers are facing a bout of collective burnout never before rivaled in history. One *Harvard Business Review* study found that by fall 2020, 62 percent of people surveyed who reported difficulty managing their workloads were experiencing burnout more frequently.

It's no surprise, then, that investing in programs and interventions to minimize or reduce stress and burnout seems worth the cost. But the magic of the words-of-gratitude approach tied to Howell and her coauthors' unfolding research is that it can provide a cost-free solution with a proven impact on the well-being of all types of workers.

In short, words matter to employees—and they don't cost a penny. And this new peer-reviewed research from some of the top experts studying praise shows it's not only free to use the right words, it's also one of the most effective ways to build up and empower workforces.

"From an organizational perspective, this is a pretty powerful insight because companies spend a lot of money on other programs or initiatives that are intended to improve the well-being of these workers and yet may not be positively impacting these workers in the same way that felt gratitude does," says study coauthor Sarah Doyle, assistant professor of management and organizations at the University of Arizona's Eller College of Management.

This revelation was eye-opening to the research team, says Sijun Kim. And, he says, there is an added bonus to the praising



approach: appreciating the work of others doesn't incur any additional cost, and it doesn't require any shift of resources away from other efforts.

Howell adds that for managers who are trying to retain employees and help them perform at the highest level, expressing gratitude can make a significant impact toward helping employees cope with the stress of work and reframe it in a way that's beneficial.

"A little bit of thanks goes a long way," Howell says.

## Where to Go from Here

As Howell and her colleagues continue this line of research, they can't help but put the principle into practice in their own lives. The work has impacted Howell's daily interactions with her students and fellow faculty members and has caused her to make a more conscious effort to express gratitude to essential workers she interacts with regularly, such as grocery store clerks or others in service industries. And it's definitely made her more aware and appreciative of corrections workers and the many other less visible essential employees in the workforce.

"People just want to be seen," she says.

For Hee Young Kim, the research has prompted her to speak with her dean and encourage efforts in her college to establish a more consistent

environment of praise and gratitude. Like every large institution, the university where she teaches and researches faces red tape and a lack of resources, and there is a need to boost morale without breaking the bank.

"This is a topic of great interest to university administrators because it doesn't cost much, but if it does work, it can do wonders," she says.

After all, it just takes a few kind words to show how much words matter. **M**

## About the Author

Todd Hollingshead is a media relations manager in BYU's University Communications office. He lives in Springville, Utah, with his wife, Natalie; their four children; and a dog and a cat.





# School News

## BYU Marriott Hosts Faith at Work Competition



BYU Marriott, in conjunction with the BYU Sorensen Center for Moral and Ethical Leadership, hosted the inaugural Faith and Belief at Work case competition in February. The one-of-a-kind event hosted more than 50 students from 11 MBA programs across the country, marking the first-ever MBA case competition to deal exclusively with faith and belief in the workplace.

"This event was a transformative experience as future business leaders united together from diverse backgrounds and belief systems with the common goal of enabling all to bring their authentic selves to the workplace," says **Brenna Porter**, an MBA student at BYU Marriott and coordinator for the event.

With the assistance of major sponsors American Airlines, Equinix, PayPal, and the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation, Porter and fellow MBA students **Matt Young**, **Christina Bates**, **Matt Singer**, and **Sarah Lyman** organized the event. They sought to inspire inclusion, compassion, and sharing across belief systems. While religion is often taboo in the corporate world, the case competition highlighted how acknowledging the faith and belief systems of a diverse workforce can lead to better business outcomes and a better work environment.

Marsie Sweetland, client executive at global infrastructure company Equinix and founder of the company's faith-based employee resource group, FaithConnect, spoke during the event. "Experiences like this case competition will make workplaces of the future more welcoming and ultimately more productive

## Master Healers

BYU Marriott held its annual Healthcare Industry Network Conference during the fall 2022 semester. The two-day conference at the Utah Valley Convention Center focused on transformational leadership in the healthcare field with an underlying message of learning from the Master Healer, Jesus Christ.

"From premed to nursing, from public health to business, we can create new and innovative ideas while following Christ," says **Britt Berrett**, managing director of the Healthcare Leadership Collaborative (HLC), the on-campus group that organized the conference. Berrett, who was a hospital president for 25 years before transitioning

to academia, has been pivotal in BYU Marriott's involvement with healthcare leadership. He contributed greatly to the creation of both the new healthcare leadership minor—designed to help students understand the basics of healthcare administration—and the HLC and its subsequent annual conferences.

Eight speakers discussed a range of topics, including "Interdisciplinary Considerations for Chronic Diseases: Addiction, Obesity, COVID, and Beyond" and "The Culture of Christ: Leading with Competence and Compassion."

During his keynote lecture, Dow Wilson, former CEO of Varian Medical Systems, spoke on thinking differently within healthcare. It was a message that resonated with attendees. "In healthcare we often get stuck in constructs that are comfortable," Berrett notes. "Now we need to embrace the idea that we need innovation. There is no better place than BYU to incubate new ideas."

In addition to incubating innovation, the conference promoted the importance of diversity in the healthcare field. The speakers came from different backgrounds within healthcare and presented a variety of perspectives. More than half of the attendees traveled to the conference from outside Utah. "We wanted to introduce students to speakers who may not think or look like them," Berrett shares.

The conference also focused specifically on transformational leadership in the healthcare business. "I'm hoping to help the students here realize that transformational leadership is just Christlike leadership," Berrett says. A main part of his objective is to aid members of the healthcare community—from presidents to paramedics—in loving the patients they work with. Berrett believes that "we bless more lives when we share, elevate, and collaborate with each other."

Berrett explains that Jesus did not just talk to a small sector; He talked with everyone. Berrett wants both his students and those who attended the conference to consider what more they can do to progress in their fields and their faith. Berrett asks, "How can you develop Christlike attributes? Can you love the people you're working for and working with? Can you provide solutions and ideas that are forward thinking?" He hopes that the conference left the attendees inspired and motivated to continue striving toward Christlike leadership as they care for others both in and out of the patient room.



environments," Sweetland said. "When employees bring their whole selves to work, they bring a more motivated, creative, and fulfilled version of themselves—the type of person a company would love to have on their team.

"Experiences like this case competition can improve the workplace environment and make the workplace better, because to have faith and belief at work is critical," she continued. "When you feel like you can bring your whole self to

# Thriving Through Experiences



This academic year, BYU Marriott welcomed the international Experience Research Society (EXPRESSO) for its third annual Seven Experiences Summit. More than 100 people from eight different countries attended the society's first in-person event, including participants from the United Kingdom, Finland, the Netherlands, Austria, India, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa.

Presenters at the conference came from different areas of expertise in the experience design field. Keynote speakers included Jim Gilmore, author of *The Experience Economy*; Aga Szóstek, author of *The Umami Strategy: Stand Out by Mixing Business with Experience Design*; James Wallman, CEO of the World Experience Organization; and Sonia Rhodes, founder of the Experience Lab, a company focused on transforming healthcare from the inside out.

Following the conference theme of "Thriving Through Experiences," presenters explored how individual experiences determine the extent to which both individuals and organizations thrive. EXPRESSO's goal is to foster cross-disciplinary collaboration with people in the experience

design field, and the conference provided opportunities for researchers and professionals to collaborate and discuss connections between experiences and thriving.

BYU Marriott professors **Mat Duerden** and **Brian Hill**—who also serves as the chair for EXPRESSO—worked with two student planners, **Melissa Andrew** and **Audrey Young**, to tailor this year's conference to both professionals and students. Students in the experience design and management (ExDM) program joined in listening to keynote speakers and exploring different niches of Utah culture.

"We created the opportunity for 30 students to attend the conference in person and made several keynote lectures available to all of the students in the ExDM program," Duerden shares. In addition to attending lectures, students presented their own research in the form of paper posters during a poster session, where conference attendees had the chance to interact with the research groups.

During the three-day event, the organizers also provided opportunities for attendees to explore the natural beauty and local flavors of Utah. "As an experience design conference, we wanted to make the event itself an experience," Duerden says. "For example, we took a scenic van ride up the canyon during the conference." Participants also chose between activities such as going on a taco crawl around Utah County, hiking at Sundance Mountain Resort, attending a BYU football game, and canyoneering at Capitol Reef National Park.

The excursions offered at the conference helped build bridges and create shared memories among attendees—an essential goal not only for experience designers in general but also for EXPRESSO as an international organization. "The activities were awesome in terms of the networking and opportunities they created for our students and other attendees," Duerden observes. "The whole event validated the importance of creating a space for experience and design researchers to come together."

work, that goes a long way in giving you the ability to express yourself."

Competing schools included Northwestern University, the University of Notre Dame, the University of Pennsylvania, and others. Following an opening social and a kickoff event, teams received the case criteria, which highlighted a problem involving faith in the workplace—one that is currently challenging a major corporation. Teams had just under 24 hours to solve the problem and prepare a presentation on their solution.

In the closing ceremonies, judges announced BYU Marriott's team as winners of the case competition. The BYU Marriott MBA team included first-year students **Ben Nzajibwami**, a native of Burundi who was raised in Calgary, Canada, and **Maggie Jensen** from Maple

Valley, Washington, along with second-year students **Curtis Adams** from Bountiful, Utah, and **Eden Peterson** from Lehi, Utah.

Nzajibwami, who also won the prize for the competition's best individual question-and-answer presenter, attributes the team's success to BYU Marriott's focus on developing leaders of faith, intellect, and character. "When we shared gospel truths along with business frameworks and models in class, I learned to see the impact that my faith can have on my academic learning, my spiritual growth, and my career development," he says.

Nzajibwami's teammate Jensen praises BYU Marriott for promoting a healthy environment of faith and professionalism. "The school has allowed me to bring my 'whole self'—faith and all—to

the learning environment," she says. "In being my whole self, I am able to be a better learner and contributor."

Closing ceremony attendees also heard from Sumreen Ahmad, global change management lead at international IT company Accenture. Ahmad explained that injecting faith into the workplace can be a catalyst for more consciousness, courage, and compassion. "As people of faith, we have an obligation to elevate the dialogue of what change is possible when we live from a set of shared core faith values," Ahmad said.

Participants left the case competition with the tools necessary to expand the role of belief in the corporate world. Students, advisors, and speakers all agreed that they hope to see the event continue to take place for years to come.

## Renowned Researcher Receives Gary C. Cornia Lecture Series Award



Rosemary O'Leary, a renowned researcher and professor in the public management field, received the 2023 Gary C. Cornia Lecture Series Award from the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics at BYU Marriott. O'Leary, who has written numerous books and more than 135 articles on public management, presented her work on ethics and guerilla government at the award luncheon.

O'Leary's research on collaboration and conflict resolution has been pivotal in the field of public administration. She has a unique interest in the ethics of what she calls government "guerillas"—public servants who deliberately act against the wishes communicated by their superiors. O'Leary explains that people typically engage in guerilla tactics in government out of a sense of obligation to their personal ethics and in an attempt to do the right thing. She suggests that bosses should listen and try to understand the perspective of their employees rather than get defensive when employees dissent.

Despite her many accomplishments, the relationships O'Leary has with her family, peers, and students will always be her greatest contribution to the world. "Early in my career, after I won a big research award, my mother said, 'This is cool. Good for you! But I predict that in the end, your biggest accomplishment will be how you raised your daughter,'" O'Leary recalls. "At the time, I was coming off a high from the award, and this didn't make sense to me. But now I know it's a privilege to be a parent." O'Leary continues, "Just the fact that our three children are contributing to society in whatever way they choose makes me the proudest. My family is the contribution that's going to last."

This attention to relationships has made an impact in both O'Leary's personal and professional spheres. **David Matkin**, an associate professor in the BYU Marriott MPA program, says, "Anybody who has rubbed shoulders with Rosemary has felt a measure of her confidence in them or received her encouragement." Matkin adds that O'Leary is one of the most outstanding mentors and developers of young students in public management.

One of the best examples of O'Leary's tireless dedication to students is what she did prior to the Cornia lecture series award luncheon: she offered to meet with several pre-PhD students at BYU Marriott and connect them with programs they were interested in. O'Leary believes strongly in the power of informal mentoring—the kind that happens in the hallway or over a burger.

Although O'Leary retired from teaching in August 2022, she looks back on her time in academia fondly. She loved choosing her own research agenda and mentoring students. "Being in academia is a privilege," O'Leary says. Now that she has retired, O'Leary plans to continue traveling and researching. One of her favorite places to visit is the Philippines, where she attended the University of the Philippines Manila as a Fulbright scholar and completed a stint with the Peace Corps, working among indigenous tribes in the country.

O'Leary is grateful for the opportunities she's had and the awards she's received, including the Cornia lecture series award. And while she knows that her work is far from done, she looks forward to seeing the accomplishments of the next generation, including those of her children and her students.

## FACULTY NEWS

### Housing Market Prices, Purchasing Decisions Being Driven by Unseen Forces

As the supply of unsold houses increases in Utah—and across the nation—and as home prices continue to fall, new research from a team that includes BYU Marriott associate professor of strategy **Timothy Gubler** has discovered under-the-radar forces that are quietly impacting home pricing and purchasing decisions.

The new study, published in the *Organization Science* journal in fall 2022, was coauthored by Scott Wiltermuth of the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California and by Lamar Pierce of the John M. Olin School of Business at Washington University in St. Louis. Gubler's team found that home prices, including how the numbers are arranged around round numbers, can have an outsized impact on the current and future value of a home.

"Psychologically, buyers pay much more attention to left digits than right digits in a price, and consequently, prices from the last time a home sold can influence future valuations," says Gubler. "If buyers get a 'good deal' today by underpaying for a home, this can influence what they sell the home for in the future."

Gubler's research team discovered that because people pay more attention to the left digits versus the right digits in a price, buying behavior can sometimes be manipulated. Anyone who has ever been to a store is familiar with the "charm pricing" technique where most items are listed with .99 as the last two digits on the right. This causes buyers to perceive a significantly lower price for a product when really it is just one cent less expensive.

What most people have not caught on to is how this influences buyers' perceptions of value. Buyers perceive greater value in products that have whole, rounded numbers versus numbers that are just below these "threshold numbers." This can carry into the future if prices are public knowledge, such as for house prices or products with a manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP). For example:

- A house listed at \$400,000 is perceived to be more valuable than one listed at \$399,000.





- A car with an initial MSRP of \$30,000 is seen as more valuable when resold years later than one with an initial MSRP of \$29,999.

The research showed that when it comes to buying real estate or other durable goods, you might want to consider paying more if it will push you over a threshold number because its perceived value will be greater in the future, resulting in more money from your investment in the long term if you resell.

Gubler's team found that when reselling a property, a house listed just below a price threshold (\$499,000 versus \$500,000, for example) will be priced 2 percent less than a house that was

listed on that threshold figure. That's a \$4,000 average loss in value for homes in Utah. Researchers also found that using an experienced real estate agent does not change these outcomes in a large way, which might be expected because of their role in helping determine prices.

"This concept is so fascinating because we've always considered how round numbers affect the way we perceive value in the moment of purchase, but the impact of round numbers on valuations and prices over time is not something that has been studied much," Gubler says. "Knowing that people care about rounded threshold numbers, we can leverage pricing strategies to result in higher valuations in the future. From housing

prices to the initial MSRP of a product, the initial prices set in relation to these threshold numbers matter."

## STUDENT NEWS

### Finding Common Ground for Action

In the 2022–23 school year, BYU Marriott welcomed students from 48 states and 41 countries and focused on cultivating an environment of belonging. With the goal to enrich belonging on campus, the Experience Design Society (ExDS) and the Marriott Inclusion in Business Society (MIBS) cohosted Sit with Me during the winter 2023 semester. Experience design and management (EXDM) seniors

# BYU Marriott's School of Accountancy Programs Receive STEM Designation

As of fall 2022, BYU Marriott students graduating from the School of Accountancy (SOA) undergraduate and graduate programs will receive a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) designation with their degrees. BYU Marriott's information systems major already provides a STEM designation, as does the school's MBA STEM management specialization.

STEM is vital to addressing future needs in the business world, especially as technology and data analytics play an increasingly central role. A STEM designation formally recognizes how the programs in the SOA educate students in technological aspects of the accounting field, including public and corporate accounting, taxation, transactions, and accounting information systems.

"The SOA has been effectively incorporating cutting-edge technology into its curriculum for many years," says **Bill Tayler**, SOA associate director. "This STEM designation for the SOA is a formal recognition of what has already been widely acknowledged by both students and recruiters."

Both the undergraduate and graduate accounting programs offer courses in intermediate and advanced data analytics, database analysis and design, applied accounting analytics, accounting information systems, cyber risk assessment in accounting, IT audit and risk assurance, applied accounting technology, and enterprise resource planning.

The STEM designation "benefits students by showcasing their proficiency in using technology and data analytics to develop innovative solutions, as well as providing international students with additional chances to gain practical work experience in the United States," says **Doug Prawitt**, SOA director.

With this status, eligible SOA students holding a student visa may apply to extend their 12 months of optional practical training for an additional 24 months after graduation.



"Being STEM designated will help the SOA continue to attract highly qualified students to its program," says **Troy Lewis**, SOA associate director. "It's a win for everyone involved."

"The STEM designation for the SOA programs signals to future employers that our students are not only tech savvy but also possess a future-oriented mindset," adds Prawitt.

The formal designation adds to the SOA's reputation for educating and graduating highly qualified financial professionals. Since 2008 the SOA has produced 29 Elijah Watt Sells Award winners, an award given by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants to top scorers on the CPA exam. The SOA has had at least one student win this award every year since 2008—making BYU the only university that can claim this distinction. SOA programs also currently have a 100 percent job placement rate for students seeking employment after graduation.



Michaela Horn, Camryn Tippetts, and Melissa Andrew helped coordinate the event, which focused on practicing collaborative dialogue.

"I'm here to make a positive change in myself and the environment around me," said Noah Arntsen, a junior studying graphic design from Mount Ulla, North Carolina. He was excited to practice a new communication skill after finding out about the event from a friend who is in the EXDM program.

Sarah Agate, an EXDM assistant professor, instructed attendees on conducting deliberative dialogue to enact change. Deliberative dialogue, a concept Agate teaches in her course EXDM 490R: Emotional Intelligence for Experience Designers, is a process for talking about challenging topics in a nonconfrontational way. The purpose of deliberative dialogue is to help people both express their opinions and listen to others, which is an especially important practice in a polarized society.

When people practice deliberative dialogue, they explore different angles of an issue. Agate explained that "engaging in deliberative dialogue is a great approach to deal with problems where there are multiple answers that feel right." For example, there are several ways to answer Agate's question "How can we help BYU feel like a place where people belong?"

The purpose of a deliberative dialogue is not to reach agreement, Agate said, but to find shared objectives guided by similar values. In order to find common ground, Agate recommended seeking strengths from opposing views, assuming that multiple people have different parts of the answer, asking how you could be wrong, and listening to understand.

Agate asked the attendees "How are you going to implement what you have

# Key to Innovation Is Fostering Intellectual Honesty

New research from BYU Marriott professors **Jeff Dyer** and **Taeya Howell** along with coauthors Nathan Furr and Curtis Lefrandt finds that innovation can be hampered when organizations prioritize psychological safety at the expense of intellectual honesty.

The study, "Why Innovation Depends on Intellectual Honesty," was published in *MIT Sloan Management Review* in January 2023. It reveals that balancing psychological safety with intellectual honesty significantly increases a team's ability to innovate because it unleashes the knowledge of team members as they openly debate and disagree.

"Psychological safety and intellectual honesty can sometimes work against each other," says Dyer, Horace Beesley Professor of Strategy at BYU Marriott. "When people are candid in discussions, it can make people feel less safe. But a focus on social cohesion and making people feel safe can undermine honest, candid debate. The challenge for most leaders is to learn how to be more like Mr. Spock by promoting candid debate on the problems the team needs to solve in a hyperrational, non-biased way that defuses interpersonal conflict."

The researchers surveyed teams in more than 60 tech startups and established companies to understand the interaction between psychological safety and intellectual honesty. To measure psychological safety, they used survey questions developed by Amy Edmondson for her seminal study published in *Administrative Science Quarterly*. To measure intellectual honesty, they developed questions based on their interviews with dozens of teams, as well as the existing management research on employee voice in organizational change.

After assessing the cultures of teams, the authors identified four different team innovation cultures—*anxious, comfortable, distressed, and innovative*—and detailed how each will influence a team's ability to innovate as well as the kinds of innovations in which they will excel.

To help teams fast-track intellectual honesty, the researchers outlined four principles that are most important to achieving a balanced, innovative, high-performance team culture:

**Principle 1: Foster emotional intelligence.** Social awareness and relationship management are key to encouraging debate without destroying psychological safety.

**Principle 2: Hire and develop proactive employees.** Personal initiative is the most critical trait in predicting whether someone will offer their ideas or raise questions.

**Principle 3: Legitimize and encourage honesty.** Task conflict within teams leads to more entrepreneurial strategies, more innovation, and higher performance.

**Principle 4: Subordinate egos to unifying goals.** The ability to package disagreement with respect is key to preserving psychological safety while ensuring intellectual honesty.

"Being able to be candid but not brutal may be the missing ingredient that teams need for innovation to prosper," Dyer says. "Steve Jobs was, in his own words, 'brutally honest,' but that honesty tended to destroy psychological safety. When leaders can set aside their egos and invite scrutiny of their own ideas in a respectful, rational way, intellectual honesty will follow."



learned tonight in your jobs and careers? What are you going to do now?"

**Emily Erikson**, a senior in the EXDM program who attended the event, hopes to create a safe environment for dialogue by listening to others when discussing difficult topics. She said, "It's so important to me that I am someone who others can feel safe around."

**Brinley Dayton**, an EXDM senior and student facilitator from Alpine, Utah, said, "Remember that listening is as important as speaking."

Although the Sit with Me event only spanned a few hours, Agate invited attendees to continue to sit with others as they strive to emulate the Savior. She said, "If we can be more Christlike, we can help people belong."

## BYU Marriott Students Shine at MarketStar



Preparation for the annual MarketStar case competition typically begins a week before the event, when teams from across Utah receive their case prompts and eagerly dive into their presentations. But for the eight students who represented BYU Marriott, preparation for events such as MarketStar began when they first walked into their marketing classes—and it didn't end until seconds before they faced the judges.

"Presentations are really important in the junior core," explains **Megan Davies**, a native of Syracuse, Utah, who is a senior in the marketing program. "This competition was an extension of everything I've learned in my marketing classes—strategy, research, and sales."

The marketing and sales team Davies worked with was coached by **BJ Allen**, assistant professor of marketing and global supply chain at BYU Marriott. The team included three additional marketing juniors and seniors: **Joseph Wood** from Snohomish, Washington; **Joseph Carwin** from Broomfield, Colorado; and **Taylor Watt** from Newark, Ohio.

In addition to the marketing and sales track, the MarketStar competition offered an analytics track; a second BYU Marriott team participated in this competition, advised by assistant professor of marketing and global supply chain **Marc Dotson**. The analytics team included pre-business student **Madison Bevans** from Washington, Utah, as well as three marketing majors: **Jesse Clobes** from Ventura, California; **Madsen Baum** from Pearland, Texas; and **Cody Lee** from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Although marketing coursework had prepared both teams with solid skills, it was still a challenge to polish their presentations under pressure. Clobes says that in the week leading up to the event, her analytics team spent hours working in Excel files, figuring out the story behind the data. "The biggest difficulty," Clobes recalls, "was that we were all working on parts that suited our different strengths. It's a challenge to make that come together in one presentation."

However, as Dotson mentored the analytics team, he saw the students' diverse talents as an asset. "The team members' skills were incredibly complementary," he says. "Together they had all of their bases covered: technical ability, communication, presentation skills, and business sense."

While the analytics team pooled their collective talents, the marketing and sales team pressed forward with their sales pitch. Tasked with creating a marketing plan for a colorful keyboard made by Logitech, the team crafted the slogan "Be You Anywhere." They pushed themselves to create more content than the case required, forecasting the judges' objections and preparing additional presentation slides for potential scenarios. "We all gave 100 percent," Davies says.

The eight students continued rehearsing and refining their presentations on the drive to Logan, Utah, for the two-day competition. They arrived at Utah State

University along with five other teams from universities all over Utah. When the analytics team found the room where they would be presenting, they tried a new preparation tactic.

"I don't even remember whose idea it was," Clobes says, "but one team member suggested that we all walk around the room and just try to become comfortable in that room." Spending time in the competition space gave them confidence. Clobes explains, "It's empowering just to feel 'We're comfortable in this room. We know what we're doing.'"

That confidence helped the students advance through the first round and stay focused when judges introduced a twist to each case just minutes before the final round. The students drew on their complementary talents to rapidly reframe presentation pieces to reflect the new data.

Anticipation mounted as judges, participants, and faculty advisors gathered to watch the final teams face off against each other. When another university's team unveiled a commercial they had filmed as part of their marketing plan, "I got a little nervous because we didn't have a commercial," Davies admits.

But as soon as BYU Marriott students took the stage, all their preparation paid off. Davies says, "I remember one of the judges was smiling the whole time." Later, that same judge told the marketing and sales team, "I relate so much to this content." Clobes recalls that as soon as they finished their presentations, a lot of people came up to team members and complimented them.

"The highlight of the competition for me," faculty advisor Dotson says, "was being able to see students perform their best—from BYU and the other schools." And while all the teams impressed the judges, both BYU Marriott teams outshone the others and took first in their respective tracks. For the marketing and sales team, this marks back-to-back first-place wins at MarketStar.

Faculty advisor Allen links the success at MarketStar to the well-rounded program at BYU Marriott. "BYU has won this competition two years in a row because our Sales Society students have a wide range of skills. We not only teach traditional sales methods and skills but also subjects like analytics, creative presenting, and strategy."



# Alumni News

## MANAGEMENT SOCIETY

### Utah Sports Great Talks Integrity at Chapter Luncheon

The Utah Salt Lake City Chapter of the BYU Management Society welcomed **Dave Checketts**, former president and general manager of the Utah Jazz and former president of the New York Knicks, as a speaker during a chapter luncheon

that was held the day before the NBA 2023 All-Star Weekend kicked off in Salt Lake City.

"Integrity in Pro Sports" was the theme of the event, and Checketts shared his thoughts on the topic as he spoke about his own career, which began when he was hired at age 28 as president and general manager of the NBA's Utah Jazz. He was the youngest NBA general

manager in history, and he was hired, Checketts explained, because no one else wanted the job; even his own father-in-law advised him to decline.

"The Jazz were a bankrupt franchise," Checketts said during his presentation. "The Jazz were being outdrawn by the Golden Eagles hockey team." He took the job anyway and, working closely with Utah Jazz coaches Frank and Scott

## Leading with Kindness

**Bryn Sieverts** was always fascinated with business. As a young boy growing up in Bountiful, Utah, Sieverts set up a popsicle stand on a street corner in his neighborhood to earn some extra cash. In high school, he participated in DECA competitions, which teach students about business and leadership. Now, as a BYU Marriott graduate with a degree in management with an emphasis in global supply chain management, Sieverts continues to use his passion for business and the valuable lessons he learned at BYU to help him in his career.



After graduating high school and serving a full-time, Portuguese-speaking mission in Atlanta, Sieverts began his undergrad studies at BYU in 2012. "I absolutely loved going to school at the university," Sieverts says. "I enjoyed the thrill of learning new things, engaging in the social scene, and taking general classes along with business courses."

While experiencing new things at BYU, Sieverts also discovered a major that fit his interests perfectly: global supply chain management. He was interested in an evolving career that would always give him something new to learn. He also loved the mix of management principles, math, and service opportunities the field offered.

When Sieverts was admitted to the program, he came in contact with exceptional professors and mentors who taught him many valuable lessons. "I learned to effectively negotiate, to value small teams and companies, and to prioritize connecting everything I do to the company's mission," he says. "However, the most important lesson I learned was to be kind to those around me."

Sieverts was in his purchasing and supply chain management class one day when he saw this lesson highlighted. His professor brought in a box of cinnamon rolls from a local bakery. That simple act of kindness stuck with Sieverts, making an impression on him about both the



importance of his responsibilities as a future professional and—even more significant—the value of caring for and building strong relationships with those he works with.

That idea of being kind and caring has stuck with Sieverts throughout his career, starting with his internship at Boeing his senior year at BYU. Following that internship, he was recruited to work at Sunrise Technologies, a supply chain consulting company in North Carolina, shortly after graduating in 2015.

Sieverts worked his way up at Sunrise, starting as a supply chain consultant before becoming a project manager and, later, vice president of customer support services. He continues to build on the lessons he learned at BYU Marriott as he leads, trains, and strengthens relationships with others. He works with a tight-knit, efficient team that does consulting work for clients. He compares the finished result of their consulting to a beehive. "All the bees are buzzing around, knowing exactly where to fly because there's a system and process in place that you teach them," he explains. "When the hive is humming and the bees are happy, things are sweet."

Sieverts values and takes great joy in such collaborative teamwork. When he's able to elevate the experiences of the employees he supervises by improving processes while being kind and caring, it reminds him of the lessons he learned during his time at BYU.



Layden, Checketts turned the team into a winning franchise. He left the Jazz to become president of the New York Knicks and later CEO of Madison Square Garden Entertainment Corporation. He then founded the Major League Soccer club Real Salt Lake, which won the MLS championship in 2009, and was owner of the National Hockey League's St. Louis Blues from 2005 to 2012. He left the sports world behind in 2018 when he and his wife, Deb, were called to serve as mission leaders of the England London Mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Checketts was named to the Utah Sports Hall of Fame in 2022.

During his remarks, Checketts talked about two major differences that have evolved in the sports world between 1983, when he was hired by the Utah Jazz, and today: a wider range of ticket-purchasing options and legal sports gambling. Calling sports gambling a "slippery slope," Checketts noted that the practice could impact the future integrity of sports.

"To all of us who are gathered here, I submit that only personal honesty, personal integrity, only a commitment to live a life where the truth is highly valued can prevent the enormous shame and suffering that comes when we lose our way and find ourselves in the wrong places doing things we never thought possible," he said. "In other words, brothers and sisters, holding on to the light of Christ and following the path of discipleship is a path which I suggest is full of integrity. Jesus's life upon the earth was filled with integrity, honor, and truth. . . .

"Over all of these many years, as I have been in the rooms [with] the most powerful decision-makers in sports, I thank my

Father in Heaven every day for the path of discipleship, the opportunity to follow the Lord Jesus Christ," he concluded.

## CLASS NOTES

### 1988



After more than three decades working for Ford Motor Company, 1988 MBA alum **Curt Magleby** recently retired from his career.

For nearly a full decade before his retirement, Magleby was vice president of US Government Relations, where he led Ford's advocacy efforts at federal, state, and local levels to shape policies that supported economic growth. *The Hill* named him one of the top lobbyists in 2018, 2019, and 2020, which he says reflected his personal commitment to "work closely with elected officials and staff to shape policies that support businesses, families, and communities across the United States." One of Magleby's favorite former responsibilities was working with the youth as an early-morning seminary teacher in Michigan and Virginia. He and his wife, Sherri, recently relocated from McLean, Virginia, to Provo. The couple has five children and eight grandchildren. In his free time, Magleby enjoys spending time with his children doing a variety of activities, from skiing to restoring a classic '67 Mustang Fastback.

### 1989



**Maryclare Maslyn's** career path has been filled with unexpected twists and turns. Maslyn graduated from BYU

in 1987 with a BS in sociology, and she completed an MPA at BYU Marriott in 1989. After graduation, she embarked on a "wonderful" local government career in Spanish Fork, Utah, where she worked for 15 years. Unexpected life events caused her to make adjustments in her professional life, including a move east to take care of loved ones. During this time, she accepted any side hustles she could find, including cleaning apartments and houses, bussing tables at a restaurant, being a nanny, and working

retail at outlet malls. She also accepted two jobs that she still works in today: instructor at Butler County Community College, located in Pennsylvania, and fitness instructor at a university student recreation center. Additionally, she was an adjunct and contract instructor and lecturer at George Mason University for 14 years, where she taught local government management, public affairs, and other related subjects.

### 1997



While riding the bus to his job as a software analyst at Sterling Wentworth Corporation, **Marcus Frentheway** read

books about Java, hoping to become a developer. Working in technology wasn't the career path Frentheway expected after he graduated in 1997 with a bachelor's degree in management with an emphasis in international finance. However, when he started working after graduation, he quickly found a passion for the technology behind financial planning tools, and he sought out a job in a financial software company. Frentheway convinced his boss to let him try coding and was soon promoted to manager of software development—a promotion that launched his career in IT. He eventually returned to his hometown of Cheyenne, Wyoming, where he was hired by Sierra Trading Post to build an in-house IT department. In 2011 he was promoted to chief information officer. Two years later, the company was purchased by the TJX Companies. Frentheway has contributed to the release of websites for many TJX companies, including T.J. Maxx, Marshalls, and HomeGoods. Frentheway and his wife, Angela, have five children.

### 2004



While in college, **David Royce** worked in the pest control industry during the summers to earn money to pay his tuition. In 2004, as

Royce graduated with a bachelor's degree in management with an emphasis in entrepreneurship, his boss encouraged

him to start his own company. Eventually Royce followed that advice, founding Alterra, a pest control company, in 2012. The company grew quickly and was purchased by Terminix in 2015. Shortly after, Royce founded another pest control solutions company, Aptive Environmental. The company currently provides services to customers in more than 3,700 cities across the United States. In both 2018 and 2019, Aptive Environmental was named one of the Best Entrepreneurial Companies in America by *Entrepreneur* magazine. A member of the Rollins Center Entrepreneurship Founders board, Royce currently lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Christina, and their two children. He enjoys playing beach volleyball, snowboarding, playing guitar, and traveling internationally.

## 2006



In 1995, shortly after graduating from BYU Marriott with a bachelor's degree in management with an emphasis in international finance,

**Marious Tcherpokov** returned to his home country of Bulgaria. He got a job with BNP-Dresdner Bank, where he spent nine years as an internal audit manager. He returned to BYU and earned his MBA in 2006 with an emphasis in supply chain and marketing. Tcherpokov once again went home to Bulgaria and worked in the banking field, switching from audit to operational risk. He is currently a financial controller for Leader 96 Ltd., a manufacturer of traditional and electric bikes. In his free time, Tcherpokov enjoys walks in the mountains, exercising, cycling, and playing chess. He lives with his wife, Katya, in the town of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Tcherpokov helps provide summer internship placement in Bulgaria for BYU students through the Central Europe internship program. One of his proudest accomplishments is being involved in Bulgarian projects that promote cultural heritage and in the development of socially underprivileged groups.

## 2007

Although her father earned a MAcc at BYU Marriott, **Lurana Teshima Edwards** wanted to do something

# Advocating for Equality

During **Kate Toronto's** first day of as a student at BYU Marriott, she watched in awe as Marcy Fetzer taught a class on human resources. Toronto says that was the first time she saw a woman with a PhD teaching at the university—growing her family and her career at the same time.

That experience gave Toronto the confidence to dream big with her education and career goals. "That moment impacted me powerfully because it gave me permission to be the smartest I could be and to earn the highest level of education possible," she says. After earning a bachelor's degree in management with an emphasis in organizational behavior/human resource management (OB/HRM) from BYU Marriott in 2016, Toronto attended Columbia University, where she received her MA in psychology in education and completed her graduate research on LGBTQ+ Latter-day Saints.



Learning from professors such as Fetzer broadened Toronto's perspective and laid the foundation for her career in the field of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Now the DEI manager at Guidewire, a global tech company, Toronto appreciates the vital role her professors at BYU Marriott played in her career growth. "A lot of my professors provided me with sponsorship and advocacy, and without their support, I wouldn't be where I am today," she says. Her professors helped Toronto land her internship with Nu Skin, which led to her first job after graduation.

While Toronto worked in the human resources department at Nu Skin, the company started to consider diversity and inclusion initiatives. Because of her research on diversity during graduate school, Toronto, at the request of her boss, put together a DEI proposal for the company. After that, DEI work quickly became her full-time job.

Toronto ultimately left Nu Skin for Guidewire because she was curious about the differences in DEI conversation in a global tech company versus a local Utah space. "I wanted to know how diversity conversations shifted region by region across the states, and then nationally, and then globally," Toronto explains. "Problems around racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism persist, but the conversations often differ depending on the community." Currently, Guidewire's headquarters are in San Francisco, but Toronto works remotely from Washington, DC, as senior manager of DEI.

At Guidewire, Toronto helps the company react to shifting consumer demographics by diversifying customer and employee experiences accordingly. "In my work I often ask, 'How is our consumer base expected to change, and how should we shift as a company in order to meet that?' That is a fun conversation to have because it's grounded in supporting human diversity," Toronto says. She believes an important piece in creating widespread social equity and belonging is to first get it right at work.

Designing intentional systems to help a more diverse array of people succeed at work drew Toronto to studying human resource management. At BYU, Toronto says she spent most of her time figuring out where she belonged. "A lot of college felt like a professional existential crisis for me where I often thought, 'I don't know what I want to do,'" she says. In the end, Toronto chose OB/HRM to encourage workplaces to create spaces where people felt like they could belong.

Toronto credits professors such as Fetzer for helping her carve out a place for herself at BYU. Fetzer strengthened Toronto's belief in herself and what she could accomplish. "She was incredibly generous with her time, and those discussions absolutely impacted the trajectory of my career," Toronto says. Similarly, Toronto strives to create space in her life for conversations that help people recognize their full potential at work and in their communities.



## A Wake-Up Call



**Tyler Hardy** was one day away from finishing his mission in Veracruz, Mexico, when he got an unexpected phone call. His older brother, Greg, had been seriously injured in a work accident and was hovering between life and death. That pivotal moment in Hardy's young life reaffirmed to him the importance of family. Later, when Hardy attended BYU Marriott and then pursued his career, that value of prioritizing family never changed.

"I remember receiving the call from my dad about Greg," Hardy recalls. "I took the next available flight to Salt Lake City and then drove north with my other brother to Ogden, Utah, where Greg was hospitalized."

After several weeks, Greg was finally well enough to be discharged. He was sent home to finish recovering. Originally Hardy had planned to attend BYU after returning home from Mexico, but he decided to do a year of school at a local community college in Idaho to be around his family and help where he could.

During his time at home, Hardy not only enjoyed creating memories with his family but also reconnecting with his high school girlfriend, Whitney. They were married after dating for a year, and they headed to BYU together in January 2009.

Once Hardy began attending BYU, his education and career began to take off. During his undergrad, Hardy discovered that he loved the analytical and creative aspect of marketing—more specifically, data analytics

and consulting. This passion led Hardy, who graduated in management with an emphasis in marketing management in 2011, to become a business analyst and associate at Cicero Group, a business consulting company.

"During my time at Cicero, I was part of a growing social impact practice within the company," Hardy says. "This practice focuses on designing programs and developing strategies for nonprofit and mission-driven organizations. The work included collaborating with former US presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton to translate their experiences into helping leaders develop in the nonprofit sector."

Working in the social impact practice at Cicero reminded Hardy of the importance of serving others and striving to make a difference. From that point forward, he felt driven to positively impact his community everywhere he went.

After working for Cicero for four years, Hardy attended the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and received his MBA in 2017. During that time, he landed an internship at Nike headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon, where he gained experience as a business strategist and analytics manager.

Hardy loved the atmosphere of Nike and the team he worked on. However, he never forgot his time at Cicero in the social impact practice and how much he loved being part of an organization that directly impacted people's lives. As much as he enjoyed Nike, Hardy turned down a full-time offer from the company and returned to Cicero as an engagement manager for the social impact practice.

Throughout Hardy's career in consulting, he has continued to act on the priorities he set for himself after returning home from his mission. As each new opportunity and position has been offered to him, Hardy's top priority continues to be making a difference in the lives of those around him—especially the lives of his wife and four children. He recently resigned from his position at Cicero and accepted a job at software company Qualtrics, which gives him more flexibility to be present at home.

"Years of grinding in the consulting industry can pull you away from your family quite a bit," says Hardy. "My ability to be present in my kids' lives is important to me. I'm looking forward to being home more and watching them grow up. That said, I am still enjoying my time at Qualtrics, weaving in social impact when I can and making a difference in the lives of those I work with."



different. However, taking Accounting 200 quickly changed her mind about business and eventually led her to earn a bachelor's

degree in management with an emphasis in finance. While attending a job fair at BYU, Edwards accepted a job with Walmart. After she graduated in 2007, she moved to Arkansas for work and met her husband, Jared, a fellow BYU grad and Walmart employee. Years later, Edwards's three younger brothers also graduated from BYU Marriott, and they all followed her to Arkansas to work for the same company. Edwards stayed at Walmart for four years, first as a finance analyst, then as a finance manager. Now she is a stay-at-home mom who loves spending time with her three sons. "BYU Marriott prepared me well for my career and life," she says. "I think about how grateful I am for my time in my program every day."

## 2009



**Abraham Gage** earned his bachelor's degree in management with an emphasis in strategy in 2009. After graduating, he received

an MBA from Duke University in 2014 as well as a master's degree in analytics from the University of Louisville in 2020. He currently works as the executive director of finance and operations in the department of neurological surgery at the University of Louisville Health, a role in which he leads all functional and business elements of both the neurological surgery and the physical medicine and rehabilitation departments. The aspect of his job that he finds most rewarding is seeing his team members succeed. Gage is also an adjunct professor at the University of Louisville College of Business. In 2019, *Louisville Business First* named him one of their Young Leader honorees, an award that recognizes rising stars in the local business community. Gage lives in Louisville, Kentucky, with his wife, Polly, and their two daughters. In his free time, he enjoys fishing, golf, woodworking, and going on adventures with his family.



Although he had an enjoyable experience consulting in Silicon Valley after earning his MISM in 2009, **Jared Walker** decided that

he wanted to try a more artistic career path. He returned to school and received a bachelor's degree in art and visual communications from Utah Valley University in 2011. He soon discovered a love for filmmaking, which led him to his current career as a director and cinematographer. Walker previously worked in professional sports and has created commercials for brands such as Google, ESPN, Adidas, and Microsoft. However, one of his favorite projects was an independent short film titled *Fly* that he created with his family and that starred his 10-year-old son. Walker currently works as the senior videographer for CHG Healthcare, the largest physician staffing company in the United States. He resides in Lehi, Utah, with his wife, Jessica, and their four children.

## 2011



After graduating from BYU with a bachelor's degree in communications in 2001 and a master's degree in mass communications

in 2004, **Jennia Parkin** wasn't quite sure what path she wanted to take for her career, so she looked at a wide range of job descriptions and highlighted what seemed most interesting. This exercise led her to a six-year job in product management. In 2010, Parkin returned to her alma mater and earned an MBA from BYU Marriott. Following her graduation in 2011, she switched to working in brand management. She led the launch of Silk Cashewmilk, a product still on grocery shelves today, from ideation through commercialization. In 2017, Parkin pivoted her career for the third time to work in technology. She is currently the vice president of global product management for Cricut's machines team, where she finds opportunities to grow as a leader and mentor. Parkin loves being outdoors and enjoys cycling, cross-country skiing, hiking, and canyoneering. She and her husband, Nick, live with their daughter in Laramie, Wyoming.

## 2013



As an undergraduate student in the finance program at BYU Marriott, **Weston K. Teshima** completed an internship with

Walmart, where he developed a passion for merchandising, product development, and recreation business. After graduating in 2013, Teshima joined Walmart's Merchant Leadership program and became a planning analyst for summer seasonal toys. Teshima worked at Walmart in various positions for five years. One of his proudest accomplishments was helping to grow a private label brand at Walmart into the third-largest toy brand in the company. Currently Teshima works as a national account manager for Highline Warren, a manufacturer of automotive oils. He resides in Bentonville, Arkansas, with his wife, Melissa, and their two children. He loves northwest Arkansas and considers his community to be the perfect place to raise his family. Although he grew up in Las Vegas, all of his siblings and their families now live in Arkansas. In his free time, Teshima enjoys running, volleyball, and hunting.

## 2015



After working for a few years in the events and hospitality industry, 2015 recreation management alum **Daniel Hyer** felt compelled

to transition to employee experience. "My favorite class discussions during my undergrad talked about employee experience," Hyer shares. "Hospitality and travel can be a tough field to work in, and I wanted to improve work experiences for employees." Hyer received his master's degree in organizational development and leadership from Gonzaga University in 2020. He worked at Westgate Resorts for three years, where he started as a recruiter and quickly moved up the ranks to lead the human resources department. In March 2022 he accepted a new position as assistant director of people services for Suncadia, a full-service resort and real estate community located in Washington state. Hyer is also on the board of directors for the Mundi Project, a nonprofit

that seeks to break down socioeconomic and generational barriers by increasing access to music lessons and performances. Hyer lives with his wife, Sydnee, and their child in Ellensburg, Washington.

### 2016

**Lauren Lambson** earned her MAcc from BYU Marriott in 2016. Following graduation, she began her career at EY in Salt Lake City. After working for the company



for five years, she was promoted to tax manager in the People Advisory Services practice, where she directly engages with clients, nurtures client relationships, and manages engagement financials. For the past three years, Lambson has served as an EY Agility champion, working closely with company leadership to provide input on

updating automation processes and trainings. She also recently became a member of the EY Ripples task force in her office, a committee that plans volunteer opportunities to give back to the community. Outside of work, she volunteers with the Girl Scouts of Utah and coleads a troop in Herriman, Utah. Lambson loves having movie nights with her husband, Josh, and their daughter and says being a mom is her proudest accomplishment.

## Ripples of an Education



During her time at BYU, **Chauma Jansen** received a scholarship from American Indian Services for her undergraduate studies. That scholarship helped her through school, and she was able to earn both a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's degree in public administration from BYU. Twenty years later, as the executive director of American Indian Services, Jansen works to assist others in the same way she was helped.

American Indian Services is a nonprofit organization based in Lehi, Utah, that provides scholarships primarily to Native American students across the United States. Jansen, who grew up in Kamas, Utah, is Navajo and is an enrolled member of the Sioux/Assiniboine Tribe. The scholarship she received from the program not only provided financial assistance but also inspired her to give back later in her life.

"Their help allowed me to pursue and finish my education," she says. "The support I received put something in my heart and mind that let me know I needed to go back and serve my community. Knowing that people actually care if somebody receives an education impacted my life and my whole career."

With the goal to serve her community, Jansen graduated with her MPA in 2005 and started working for the State of Utah human resource department in 2006. After working for the department for two years, she chose to become the primary caretaker of her four children. In 2019, Jansen made the decision to return to the workforce and accepted a position at the Urban Indian Center of Salt Lake. The opportunity to work as the executive director of American Indian Services—the same organization that had helped her two decades earlier—came up two and a half years later. She jumped at the chance and was hired.

Even with an 11-year gap between jobs, Jansen never felt inadequate when returning to employment. "I feel good that I came back to work with all my skills still intact after spending so much time away," Jansen says. "The MPA program taught me how to adapt to different situations and different technologies and to roll with any changes I encounter, and that training paid off."

Jansen chose to study in the MPA program to prepare for a career of public and nonprofit service. "No matter what I ended up doing, I wanted to serve the general public, including marginalized communities and communities in need," she says. "Every community needs public service work."

Jansen's fellow MPA students shared a love for service and helped her grow and flourish: "The people in the program welcomed me and became friends, and we worked together in order to achieve a common goal. No one competed against each other; we all tried to help each other graduate and succeed."

Knowing the impact education has had on her life, Jansen wants others to find success in their own schooling. "Finding a support system is essential," she says. "Find close friends with similar trials or complications. A good support system always helps you and pushes you toward finishing your education."

The support that Jansen provides to members of her community through American Indian Services changes not only the lives of individuals but the community as a whole. The ripples of an education spread far and wide, and the impact that it can have on families, tribal nations, and communities is undeniable, says Jansen. The organization's scholarship students become leaders in education and government, and their influence helps their communities flourish.

Jansen hopes others, especially her own children, understand the importance of receiving an education. She knows the challenges that come with pursuing educational goals, but she also knows that the example of one person inspires those who come after. "If I can graduate from college, anybody can," she says. "School was not easy for me. I worked hard. Knowing that one of us can succeed hopefully inspires others to succeed as well."

For anyone worried about their educational future, Jansen encourages them to never give up. "Keep going toward that goal, even if baby steps are all you're able to manage," she concludes. "Just keep going little by little, inch by inch, and you'll go far."







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