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CLAIRE
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LESLIE
EMBRY



KATY
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INDIA
MAYER



KATE
GUERRA



BECKI
ANNASTAS

NASHVILLE LIFESTYLES

WOMEN *in* BUSINESS

WRITTEN BY ALISON ABBEY HUDAK | IMAGES BY NATHAN ZUCKER

There's no denying Nashville is a town filled with success stories, and we're celebrating the business-women who are writing their own. Whether they're running the numbers, creating and capturing content, or building something from the ground up, these are the women who run this town.

Louisa Wee

Chief Marketing Officer, Asurion

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I was hired at Asurion as the CMO and have been here for one and a half years. I bring together the best of the art and science of marketing to drive growth for Asurion. I've had a lot of fun working at Asurion, [and previously at] FabFitFun, Netflix, PlutoTV, SpinMedia, and eHarmony in marketing.

CHALLENGES FACED

Early on, I faced many common challenges other women face where I struggled with self-advocacy, speaking up for my ideas, and proactively finding mentors. Today, I think a lot about increasing representation of women, LGBTQIA, and underrepresented minorities, and how to help them develop and cultivate the experiences and exposure to get them to leadership positions.

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

I think about, "Did you achieve the goal and did you bring the people along?" If you achieve a goal but the people don't come along, how will you motivate them for the next time? If you brought the people along but didn't achieve the goal, you're not driving results.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Work hard and find the opportunity to learn with all the small tasks and projects. Every setback is really an opportunity to learn and get better. Seek feedback and genuinely work to improve. Find mentors and be a mentor.

Domonique Townsend

Founder and CEO, We Optimize Work

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I help companies “make work feel good™.” I use my 16 years of experience as an Industrial engineer and Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt to help companies make it easier for teams to collaborate and make work feel good while reaching key company objectives. Companies hire us when they are looking for viable solutions for employee engagement that improves both productivity and the lifetime value of their employees.

WORK PERKS

I love that what I do aligns with how I naturally operate. Always looking to engage, solve problems, highlight the underestimated, and bring bright energy and fun in the process. It is heartfelt to receive phone calls and emails from leaders and employees alike stating how they have been able to show up fully and the impact they are able to make in their company because of our partnership. We Optimize Work is about helping companies make work feel good. It’s a mission that is bigger than me. I’m just blessed to be a vessel!

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

To me, success is when you are able to pursue your purpose in peace. When it feels good to do what you seek to do according to your “why” and your core values without the desire to fit into a perceived narrative defined by someone outside of you, that is success.





Deann Hebert

Artist and Gallery Owner, DeAnn Gallery

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I create emotion-evoking artwork that helps others feel seen and understood within their own journey of life. I like to say I use art to speak when words fall short.

CHALLENGES FACED

Years before I opened my gallery on Main Street in downtown Franklin, I found myself in a job of papers and proposals—far from my passion—and knew I needed a change. Little did I know the path I would take would help courageously inspire and instill joy in others through the avenue of art. From a small town of 3,000 people, I have created a career from my paintings, cultivated a following of over 110K on Instagram, and landed collaborations with retailers like Anthropologie, Wayfair, and Amazon.

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

I began to receive emails with personal stories of how my art specifically touched someone's life after a devastating loss. Then another story of how one of my paintings helped them cherish their childhood memories. More and more stories were flooding into my inbox. I then knew I was fully aligned with my purpose. Having financial success is nothing compared to the feeling you give others through your work.

Lucia Rios

CEO, Twisted For Sugar

THE DAILY HUSTLE

Twisted For Sugar is a bespoke treat and snack cart service with an activation-style delivery system. We focus on a multi-layered experience for our clients. Our goal is to bring joy and have our clients and guests enjoying a joyful experience.

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

I define success with small milestones and by accomplishing small goals. Since the beginning of the business, and with Covid hitting our industry especially hard, so much of the big picture has changed. And since the big picture and goals change, I don't want to wait to feel fulfilled in a job well done or success. Of course, I have giant goals and when those are reached I will also define it as success but for more consistent recognition and self-esteem boosters I need small goals to celebrate.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Be kind! Be kind to yourself, be kind to others, be kind to your customers, potential customers, and "competition." Speaking of competition, my favorite line that Cardi B sang is "I'm my own competition, I'm competin' with myself." The only competition you need to pour any ounce of energy on is yourself. Outdo your own goals, out-hustle your own self, and beat your own client list and sales numbers. When you're competing with YOU, you always win!





Caitlin Frazier

*Chief Operating Officer,
Frazier Motorcar Company*

THE DAILY HUSTLE

We buy and sell vintage European collector cars. It's one part car dealership, one part art gallery, one part history museum. And it is never boring.

FAMILY MATTERS

This is not what I wanted to do, but I agreed to help my dad with his business to fund my international travels throughout my twenties. It wasn't until about six years ago that I realized I was actually pretty good at what I was doing and really understood that this was my career. Once I started to take things seriously, I reconstructed our online presence, started networking, and created a uniform (mostly) system of bookkeeping and client management. Things my father didn't have time to do on his own. In doing so, I created my own job and he made me a partner in 2018. There's not a day that goes by that I'm not grateful to my father for giving me the opportunity and space to carve out my own niche in this business. None of it could have been possible without him.

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Success, in my opinion, is measured by how many people come away from your business feeling great about the transaction. It's not about the money made or the name one has made for themselves, but the way they made other people feel when doing business with them.



Janelle James

*Jack Daniel's Barrel Program Manager,
Jack Daniel's Super Premium Brands*

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I manage the Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Personal Collection Program. This is a program where customers can purchase Jack Daniel's Single Barrel by the Barrel. We have different expressions available depending on each market/territory. A large part of my job is working with our quality control department to ensure there are not any discrepancies. I had always worked in events, fundraising, and marketing and had no experience with QC, so it was one of my initial challenges. I'm very thankful for a manager, Jessica Hartline, in the QC Department at Jack Daniel Distillery, as she took time to work with me so I had a better understanding of exactly what QC is looking for.

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Success to me is doing a job you love every day while also being given the opportunity to work with great customers as well as great coworkers.

WORK PERKS

I love working with customers all over the world. It is great to have the opportunity to speak with customers from different states and countries and do my best to make a difference by creating a positive experience for others.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Follow your dreams, always remember that anything is possible, and if you get knocked down then try again. Learn from mistakes as we all make them. Be kind to others. Find a job that you love and that you're passionate about so that your job never feels like a job.



Shellie Watson

Watson Floor Gallery

THE DAILY HUSTLE

We are a boutique flooring company specializing in providing unique and personalized flooring solutions while catering to clients who seek a more customized and exclusive experience when building or remodeling their homes. I collaborate directly with custom luxury home builders and designers whose names are synonymous with elegance and prestige by selecting and installing the perfect flooring, tile, and stone, and custom rugs and carpets for their clients. I am celebrating 21 years in the flooring and construction industry with Watson Floor Gallery.

CHALLENGES FACED

I joke with clients to not fear the blonde with a tape measure showing up on a construction job site or at their front door! The challenges for me are to be taken seriously and respected as a woman in the male-dominated construction industry and to be given the chance to prove I am knowledgeable and quite capable in the field.

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

My idea of success is repeat and referred clients, exceptional customer experiences, and positive feedback. Success isn't easy and it doesn't happen daily. I have learned that you must enjoy the good and use the bad to make you better. Complacency is not an option. I have built strong relationships and maintained loyalty which, to me, is the best pat on the back!

WORK PERKS

My clients will always be my number one. Being able to lean on our team and be supported, to see projects come to fruition, and to surround myself with the most creative and inspiring people, daily, are what keep me motivated. The Before and the After are what keep me inspired. The talent to which I am exposed and the friendships and projects we have created are what keep me grounded.

Lindsey Paola

*Chief Operating Officer,
Nashville Soccer Club*

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I work with my team to make sure we are evolving to meet the Club's needs, especially as we have grown so rapidly in the past year. My role is also about making sure there is cross-departmental communication because I look at everything from a 10,000-foot view. We work hard to make sure there is collaboration and communication between the departments and all four venues. I always say you can never over-communicate. A new part of the business was added to my portfolio last year: non-gameday revenue. We host private events at the stadium year-round in our premium spaces and we have three concerts (Shania Twain, Guns N' Roses, and Pink) at GEODIS Park this year. It's been exciting to see all the non-Major League Soccer programming we are doing at the stadium.

EARLY ASPIRATIONS

I worked on a presidential campaign right after I graduated, which then gave me the opportunity to work on the Presidential Inaugural. Once the Inaugural ended, I was fortunate enough to get a job at the White House right out of college, which was a dream come true for me! Eventually, I realized I needed a change, and since I love sports, I met with numerous individuals in the sports world to learn what opportunities existed. Through a lot of networking, relationship-building and persistence, an opportunity came up with the new minor league soccer team in Nashville. I interviewed for the role of Senior Director of Administration and began my career in sports.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Surround yourself with good people and great mentors. Find people who embody who you want to be and how you want to behave and learn from them. It took me a long time to learn that you don't have to be perfect to be successful, but you do need to be curious and take risks. If you bet on yourself and put yourself outside your comfort zone, success will follow.



Evange Livanos

*Co-Owner/Co-Founder, Alternate Side,
Partner at Public Consumption Recording Company
(Elektra Music Group)*

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I co-own an artist management company (Alternate Side), head up a JV label with Elektra Music Group, and run a small admin publishing company in partnership with BMG. I manage artists and their businesses. I help guide them toward making good decisions for their careers, find opportunities to help grow their fanbase, and help create their vision around their music. It's a lifestyle-type career versus a job.

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

The wannabe hippie in me wants to say success is being able to pay your bills by doing a job that makes you happy. The grinder in me wants to say success is defined by how known your artists are and that's rooted in money. Maybe it's a happy medium of the two, although the first one makes me feel a lot better because that's exactly where I am right now.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

To young women, work harder than everyone around you. Worry about making money later, grind it out now by putting yourself in places of opportunity and for people to know who you are. Be OK working side jobs so you can afford to have a job in music. The more your reputation becomes "someone who is awesome because they are not only good but hungry" will result in a long-term career. Watch what you post on social media. Be prepared to have your soul crushed sometimes and be prepared to have the best day of your life sometimes. This is a roller coaster business so be ready. Make sure you always put yourself first, though. Stay healthy; don't get caught up in the late-night drinking and other behaviors that come with the music industry. Make sure everyone you work with always treats you with respect, and don't accept any less.



Emily Dorio

Commercial Lifestyle Photographer

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I put people, places, and things on a creative and visual pedestal. If it is a part of life, I want to find the story and capture it. I see myself as a creative partner. Commercial photography is a group project and my role is to visually bring the project to life. I am the artist, and my tool is my lens, but I am also the director and the person looking for the bigger visual picture.

CHALLENGES FACED

Photography is and should be an investment. Especially in the beginning, and even now, it is hard for someone to connect the return on investment to the art and power of photography. Getting people to value the work—getting people to understand the power of a photograph—has always been a challenge. These days I am in a position where I work with people and brands who know the industry standard, so it is less of an issue. But in the beginning, it was a challenge. And maybe the best advice someone gave me, is that if you give it away, no one will ever value it. No one has gratitude for the free bin. Believing in your own worth is the first step in getting someone to invest in your skill. But sometimes getting someone to see the value, it can be a challenge.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Make the work you love. Don't take the feedback personally (there will be so much of it that feels personal, but it isn't) but make the work personal. Only you have your point of view. Get great at the technical but lean into the lens that is YOU. Trust your gut and protect yourself. If something doesn't feel fair to you, don't say yes. Never transfer your copyrights. And don't take it personally. Life is short and beautiful, and I try not to let the hang-ups drag me down any longer than necessary to dig to the depth of the problem.



Claire Crowell

*Founder and CEO,
Hattie Jane's Creamery*

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I started Hattie Jane's Creamery in 2016 when I was still COO for A. Marshall Hospitality, my family's company. I initially started the business with my father, until my current partners Rhonda and Autumn bought him out around 2019. I ran it on the side of my day job for the first several years. After the business survived the pandemic, largely thanks to those two partners, I knew I needed to dedicate more time to help nurture it and grow it to the next level. In late 2021, I stepped down from my role with my family's business to focus on Hattie Jane's.

WORK PERKS

I make people happy because everyone is happy when they eat ice cream. I also love mentoring the amazing young people who work for us. I wish I could do that part all day every day rather than answering emails and filling out forms.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

To all my introverts out there: You don't have to be loud and splashy to be a great leader. Quiet, thoughtful leadership is just as effective and sometimes more enduring. Just remember that at some point, you do have to stop thinking about it and take the plunge.



Leslie Embry

Owner, The Blowout Co of Nashville

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I provide my employees with a space to make our clients feel beautiful and confident. They are the talented ones, not I. My goal is to give them a workspace and work family they love so they give our clients the best experience possible.

CHALLENGES FACED

I think not being a licensed stylist has been a blessing and a curse for me. When we first opened, I worked the desk every day because that was the only job I could do. That did not allow me to work on growing the business because I was constantly answering the phone. Once I opened my second location, I had to learn to delegate and then I could start working on marketing and networking. That was the best thing that happened to my business because I had to learn to trust my employees and give them more responsibility. I built a management team that has consistently blown away my expectations. If I had been a stylist, I would have been behind the chair constantly.

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

My mother used to say, "Live your life so that if someone says something bad about you, no one would believe them." Something about that stuck with me. If I were to die tomorrow and people said that I was a good person and made others feel good about themselves, then I would feel like I was a success.

WORK PERKS

I love the family feel of the salons. Our clients really are like family. I love that we get to be there for their best days like weddings or first dates, but also on their worst days. We know all about their kids and jobs and their love lives. I love seeing my clients celebrate their stylists, too. They bring in wedding gifts or baby gifts or puppy toys for their dogs. I also love a good transformation. Someone can come in for a wedding and you can tell that they don't get blowouts or makeup very often. By the end of the appointment, they are glowing with a new sense of confidence.



Katy Shah and India Mayer

Co-Founders, Of Note

THE DAILY HUSTLE

Of Note is an influencer marketing agency connecting creators and brands to cultivate authentic relationships through content creation, immersive experiences, and strategic partnerships. Our business is made up of three divisions: Talent Management, Creator Strategy, and Branded Experiences, in addition to our content creation studio, Note House, in East Nashville. Our Talent Management division works with 15+ content creators in the lifestyle space, and we operate with the goal of personalizing creator partnerships to aid in seamless and authentic storytelling with notable brands. We pride ourselves in the “hands-on” dedicated service we extend to all of our talent while keeping their individual goals in mind. Strategy and long-term planning are at the forefront in our business, and we provide a full 360 approach to our intentional roster through campaign management and unique services such as our Creator Strategy program, which offers affiliate growth and assistant-for-hire services.

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Since launching, our idea of success has changed. We’re both married and growing our families (Katy has a son named Revi), and we have a deep desire to build a business that we’re proud of while being able to care for our families and enjoy the hard work and success. That said, we have ambitious goals for growth while maintaining our “boutique agency” feel and look forward to continuing to grow our team in Nashville and beyond.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Be nice to everyone, be passionate, work hard, and always take the meeting. Don’t limit yourself to one idea of success, and always be willing to pivot.



Kate Guerra

Vice President of Marketing and Communications, Tennessee Titans

THE DAILY HUSTLE

My role at the Titans is centered around serving and engaging the Nashville and greater Tennessee community. The Marketing and Communications department includes community service and social responsibility; fan engagement and experiential marketing; business and lifestyle media relations; our cheer, mascot, and drum line teams; and our digital platforms all focused on the same mission, which is to win, serve, and entertain. I try my best to bridge our day-to-day work with big-picture organizational goals, present solutions to any challenges we may face along the way, and provide an environment for our team that fosters collaboration and growth.

CHALLENGES FACED

Early in my career, I experienced youth bias from more tenured people whom I worked with, which was disappointing at a time when I was craving leadership. Thankfully, I found amazing mentors who invested time (and patience!) in my development and was able to learn invaluable institutional knowledge from their experiences. That has led me to take mentorship opportunities very seriously, and I enjoy passing along anything I've learned. Today, I am working on being a strong leader of people, shaking off any symptoms of imposter syndrome, and remembering that being technically "right" isn't usually as important as being compassionate.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Everybody's path is different, but what I have learned throughout my career and through watching my mentors is that success comes to those who are adaptable, who advocate for others, and who focus on doing the job in front of them to the best of their ability.



Becki Annastas

*Owner and Chief Manager,
Dream Events and Catering*

THE DAILY HUSTLE

Dream is a 32-year-old event planning and catering company with a long history of executing incredible and memorable events—small and large, casual and elegant. My role as an owner has really become one of leading and facilitating. We have such a high level of talent on our team that I am not the one handling the details or logistics nearly as much as I used to. I really feel my value is in the history of knowing what we have done that works or didn't work and why, so we can use that information to become even better day to day. I am focused on how our teams are developing individually and how we are developing as a whole, making sure we are staying aligned with our goals for our company and clients, and how it relates to our community.

CHALLENGES FACED

The biggest challenge was being a woman in a man's world. I spent so much time trying to earn my way because it was assumed that I wouldn't be able to do certain things. What should have taken me months took me several years to convince people that, not only could I do it, but I could improve it and then sustain it. Today's challenges are more in adapting to all the change we have experienced over the last few years. We are better than before but also different. We have seen a lot and grown so much.

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Success is defined in so many ways. I think it is individual and from the heart. It is setting goals and moving the needle to get there. I think of it as being comfortable in your own skin. Creating a product or company that people are proud to invite into their lives, their families, and their intimate celebrations, is a true honor.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Be persistent and get out of your own way. Do not let imposter syndrome, fear of failure, or self-doubt set up house inside your heart and mind. Surround yourself with people who are different and maybe even better than you in certain areas and absorb it all. Check in with yourself to make sure your goals are still your goals and that you are on track.

