

NASHVILLE LIFESTYLES



LEIGH
LOVETT



KATIE
ANDERSON



BRITTANY
N. COLE



CHRISTINA
RIOJAS



SOPHIA
WARWICK



MATTIE
BUSH-MARTIN



LORI
PARANJAPE



JENNIFER
SHEETS



SARAH
KNUTH



HOLLIE
WOODWARD



TEQUILA
JOHNSON



SEEMA
PRASAD



TERRY
VO



EMILY
DRYBURGH



JAMIE
DRYBURGH



PENNY
AUSTERMILLER



ERIN
DUGAN

WOMEN *in* BUSINESS 2024

WRITTEN BY DESTINY MIZELL AND NICOLE BROWN | IMAGES BY NATHAN ZUCKER

There's no shortage of success stories in Nashville, and behind many of them are the incredible women who are paving their own way and opening doors for generations to come. Whether they're building an idea from the ground up, crunching numbers, creating content, or working to make dreams a reality, these are the trailblazing women of Music City – and their stories are sure to inspire you.

Leigh Lovett

Director, DG Media Network
at Dollar General

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I help develop digital media campaigns for Dollar General's largest CPG partners including PepsiCo, General Mills, Clorox, and more. I have been with DG for six years in August and helped start the DG Media Network three years ago. I like to flex my creativity outside of my eight-to-five career in ways which help my local community. That is why I run my own blog and social pages called love, Leigh Love, which is focused on Nashville restaurants, sites, and things to do. I also work with local Nashville businesses and bloggers to help them grow their online presence through my consulting business, Blogger Xchange. Blogger Xchange celebrates seven years in Nashville in November.

CHALLENGES FACED

When it comes to getting in marketing, I had the experience and was lucky with being tapped for great positions. For my blog and business, the hardest part was starting and putting my work into the world to be read, viewed, and judged. It can be a scary thing to know people are going to critique something attached to your name and with your face on it. But the reward of doing something that makes you happy and benefits so many outweighs those fears. Today, my challenge is stretching the hours in the week to do everything I want to do. A detailed schedule and discipline allow me to make everything work as my role expands and I get called to do more.

DEFINING SUCCESS

Success, to me, is being able to help other people move up, learn, and grow. Success in marketing, to me, means opening the door for other young women who look like me. It's being able to not only be a mentor, but give someone an opportunity to explore marketing, get paid well, and develop themselves.





Katie Anderson

*Strategy & Operations; Touring
Leadership, Creative Artists Agency*

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I partner with the rest of our leadership team on the day-to-day operations and strategic vision of CAA's Music & Comedy Touring group. My work primarily involves financial and operational oversight, organizational design and growth, and people management within the business. I was also recently appointed to CAA's Agency Board where we'll be working with the CAA Co-Chairmen and President on ensuring the continued strength of our culture of service, collaboration, and opportunity, built for personal client service. Among other areas, we're focused on organizational excellence, state-of-the-art dealmaking, training and development, and sustained innovation.

EARLY ASPIRATIONS

As a little kid, I'm told I was sweet, a little stubborn, and that I, let's say, "exhibited leadership qualities" from a very early age. Music has always been a big part of my life and how I grew up: church and community performances with my grandparents, my first CD player, and camping at bluegrass festivals. I think a lot about the soundtrack of my childhood. I didn't know my current role existed when I was young. I wanted to be an attorney, and I did go that route to begin my career. I think that my legal background and that skill development prepared me for what I'm doing today.

CHALLENGES FACED

Fear of failure used to weigh on me. Now, I look at having the chance to do something I've never done before as a motivator. It's an opportunity. Today, one of my biggest challenges is time. I wish life moved at the speed of childhood.

DEFINING SUCCESS

Living my day in a way I can sleep well at night.

Brittany N. Cole

Keynote Speaker & CEO, Career Thrivers

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I'm a thriving leadership and workforce catalyst who partners with organizations to develop and retain people who thrive in their career. As a keynote speaker and CEO of Career Thrivers leadership development firm, we partner with Fortune 500 companies to advance and retain top talent, through tailored leadership development, inclusive organizational strategies, and transformative coaching. My work involves delivering impactful keynotes, designing curriculum, leading a dynamic team of coaches, and strategic consulting to foster inclusive cultures where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued. I help leaders bring their authentic selves to their roles, driving innovation and success. I am passionate about equipping women leaders to define, own, and elevate their personal brands. Through my bestselling book, *Thrive Through It*, and my podcast, *Let's Thrive Together*, I share actionable insights and stories to inspire growth.

DEFINING SUCCESS

I define success as thriving in every aspect of life. Thriving is a mindset before it's a manifestation; it's about being, becoming, and believing the best about yourself and those you're called to serve. Success isn't just about achieving goals or reaching milestones; it's about the journey of growth, resilience, and continuous improvement.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

I would encourage young women to embrace and own their unique journey. Instead of aiming to have a career like anyone else, learn to listen within and create a path that is purposeful, challenging, and inspiring for you. Emotional intelligence, especially self-awareness, is a game changer for being a career thriver. Hone that skill—it will help you own your power and use your voice effectively. Build your personal brand offline and invest in relationship capital. Your personal brand is what others believe about you. Social media can help scale your brand, but it's not just what you know or who you know—it's who knows you. Invest in people and make deposits before you seek withdrawals. Lastly, believe in yourself. You are your best advocate. Decide what you want, identify who can help you get there, and go after it, thriving through the challenges as you develop your belief in you.



Christina Riojas

Marketing and Sponsorship Director, The Mall at Green Hills

Sophia Warwick

Senior Marketing Specialist, The Mall at Green Hills

THE DAILY HUSTLE

CR: I plan/develop an array of initiatives, including events, advertising campaigns, strategic partnerships, and innovative business development strategies.

SW: I plan and create a wide variety of content for our social media, website, email, and digital media programs, as well as plan and develop our influencer program and events within the center.

From creating magical family traditions with the Easter Bunny and Santa, to hosting sophisticated, enriching workshops, and even exhilarating collaborations with automotive and entertainment giants, each day unveils new adventures within our mall with 125+ retailers and thousands of daily visitors.

DEFINING SUCCESS

For those aspiring to thrive in the realm of retail management within the mall industry, our advice is simple: prioritize relationship-building. On a personal level, our success as a marketing team relies on us recognizing each other's unique strengths and utilizing them. We bounce ideas off each other and are not afraid to push one another to be the best that we can be. On a broader level, immerse yourself in your community, and pay attention to its ever-evolving desires. While you may not satisfy every individual preference, actively engaging with varying people and businesses will empower you to cultivate an inclusive environment where all feel valued and welcomed. Never underestimate the power of exceptional customer service — it's the cornerstone of success in any role, but particularly paramount in our industry. Equip yourself with the tools and techniques to deliver outstanding service, and you'll be poised for success in any endeavor you pursue.

CHALLENGES FACED

On a daily basis, one of our primary challenges revolves around meeting the various needs of our community. Our aim is to provide a welcoming environment where every visitor can find what they're looking for, be it through shopping, dining, or simply enjoying the ambiance. From the moment they engage with us online with our website, to their interactions on our social media, to their physical presence in the mall, and even after they leave, we strive to ensure a seamless and memorable experience at every touchpoint.



Mattie Bush-Martin

Founder/Owner, Amelia's Flowers

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I started Amelia's Flowers back in 2016 with just one flower truck. Since then, I've expanded to multiple storefronts and offer nationwide direct-to-consumer shipping of our beautiful bouquets. My passion is creating unique floral experiences and making flowers accessible to everyone, which has helped Amelia's Flowers grow into a beloved brand known for beauty and joy.

EARLY ASPIRATIONS

I've always said that if I had known what an entrepreneur was when I was a kid, that's exactly what I would've wanted to be. I was constantly dreaming up ways to stay busy and make some money while doing it. My first "venture" was going door to door around my neighborhood, selling my Beanie Babies, and as soon as I was old enough to get a "real" job, I jumped at the opportunity. In my early 20s, I realized I wanted to work for myself and create something truly special. That's when I started brainstorming, and I always came back to flowers.

GROWING THE BUSINESS

I tried anything and everything that piqued my interest, and I think that really helped me develop the important skills I needed to own my business today. I worked in hospitality, the film industry, the service industry, and even served as an Operations Manager for a local business before starting my own. All these different experiences gave me the confidence to take the leap into becoming a business owner.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

I think a lot of women are held back by the fear of failure, but for me, not trying would have been worse than trying and failing. The regret of not taking the chance would have been far greater than any failure. Do your due diligence, plan carefully, and then take the leap! It's important to push past the fear because the rewards of pursuing your passion can be incredible. You'll never know what you're capable of unless you try.



Lori Paranjape

Interior Designer, Mrs. Paranjape Design + Interiors

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I am a Nashville-based Interior Designer. We have the privilege of designing incredible properties for clients all over the country (and beyond).

CHALLENGES FACED

What challenges did I not face early in my career?! I didn't know AutoCAD, have accounting skills, billing methods, organizational software, process, or just about anything. I had some style and lots of energy. That was the beginning. I made a decision very early on that I would use all of my mistakes as learning opportunities. If I had to fail, I may as well learn from it. I do that to this day and require the same from my team. When we find ourselves in a bad spot with a client or project, one of my first questions is: "What are we supposed to be learning here? What is this teaching us?"

DEFINING SUCCESS

Such an interesting question at this point in my career. We have amazing clients and incredible projects... I think the way I feel most successful is when the clients truly feel heard. Learning about their lives and understanding what's important in their homes are our greatest task. When we deliver a project to them that's reflective of their family, that is what I consider to be a success.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

I'm sure there are plenty of people with more talent than I have, but being a good designer and running a successful design business are two very different things. I've put as much, or more, work into building a strong, healthy business as I have into sharpening my eye for design. My advice would be to invest time and energy into creating a strong foundation for the projects and clientele that you hope to attract.



Jennifer Sheets

CEO, MasterStaff, Inc.

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I am a workforce strategy expert and solution provider, radio talk show and podcast host, CEO, speaker, and mother of a childhood cancer survivor. My entire career has been dedicated to understanding and improving the activity that consumes 70 percent of our lives: Work.

GROWING THE BUSINESS

I knew I wouldn't be handed opportunities; I had to create them myself. In business, especially one that relies on the ever-changing landscape of companies, the economy, and people's needs, you face many highs and lows. Over the years, I've taken on clients strategically to diversify our services, which has propelled us in new directions. However, there were also times when I made wrong decisions and had to learn from them. To stay afloat, we had to adapt by entering different industries, especially when some sectors were struggling. This diversification turned out to be the best decision we ever made. It allowed us to maintain a robust client portfolio, ensuring our survival during recessions or periods of labor market fluctuations. Our ability to continuously adjust has kept us in business through various economic climates.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

L.E.A.D.: Listen, Empathize, Absorb, and Decide. At the end of the day, the most treasured skill set is measured by the simplest form of communication – listening. You must give yourself some grace. As women, we face a unique set of challenges, constantly juggling various aspects of our lives. The expectations can be overwhelming and often unrealistic. Trust your instincts while valuing the insights of others. Keep God and your faith at the forefront of everything you do. Surround yourself with brilliant minds. And, above all, put this quote to memory by comedian Milton Berle and remember it whenever you are at your most hopeless, drained, and desperate moment: "If opportunity doesn't knock, build a damn door."



Sarah Knuth and Hollie Woodward

Co-Founders, *The Post*

CHALLENGES FACED

I think the biggest challenge we faced in the beginning was not being able to start smaller and grow steadily. It was a blessing and a curse. We were so thankful to have so many shoppers on day one (because of our Instagram followings), but it was hard to have no ramp-up or learning curve. We had to start ordering and producing clothes for weekly drops four months before we launched without knowing how many people would shop or how many pieces we would sell. And then, we had thousands of orders to fulfill and customer service questions to get to within minutes of launching. It was definitely a trial-by-fire situation for a bit. I think the biggest challenge we're still facing is learning when to ask for help and how to delegate. If we physically could, I'd answer every customer service question myself and pack every order. In the beginning, I was picking out every single image for the website and writing every clothing description and Instagram caption. It wasn't sustainable. We have an amazing team and are slowly but surely learning how to let go and let them shine.

WORK PERKS

I just love getting to be creative. I love coming up with ideas for our pieces and watching them come to life and be worn by women all over the country. I love dreaming up photoshoot themes and locations, styling them, and then seeing the final images on our website. I love when I see someone walking around Nashville in one of our styles. And I love getting to "work" with my best friend. It doesn't even feel like work most of the time.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Just do it! Just start. What's the best that could happen?

Tequila Johnson

Co-Founder and CEO, The Equity Alliance

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I am affectionately known as Ms. Solutionary. I combine modern tactics with revolutionary principles, doing so authentically and with integrity. I keep the culture socially, civilly, and politically engaged. As a social entrepreneur with over a decade of experience running and scaling successful cause-based companies, I am a leader with layers. I like to say I can build community from the White House to the trap house and everywhere in between. I am a creative and innovative community relations expert, a mom, and a friend.

GROWING THE BUSINESS

To grow my business and rise to my current position, I took on various roles and seized every opportunity to learn and innovate. My journey involved strategic planning, continuous learning, networking, and adapting to new challenges. I started as a therapist out of college and quickly landed several corporate consulting roles as a project manager. I worked as a campaign manager and lead strategist for over 20 political newcomers, currently holding a win record of 19 to 1.

CHALLENGES FACED

Early in my career, I faced challenges such as securing funding, building a trustworthy team, and establishing a solid market presence. We started The Equity Alliance with \$250 and quickly scaled to become the state's largest Black-led, multi-entity enterprise. One significant challenge is how lonely it can be as a founder. We transformed from a passion-driven organization into a multi-million-dollar enterprise, which could only survive by instituting strong systems and processes. It was hard, and it continues to be hard today as we navigate scaling, maintaining a competitive edge, and staying true to our mission.





Seema Prasad

Proprietor, Miel Restaurant & Harvest Wine Market

Realtor, French King Fine Properties

Founder, Resource Capture

THE DAILY HUSTLE

Miel is a farm-to-table restaurant located in Sylvan Park that focuses on classically influenced food from France, Spain, and Italy. We will be celebrating our 16-year anniversary in September! I purchased Harvest in October of 2023, which is in Belle Meade. I am known to interact with people the most around my love for food and wine, and my ability to create special experiences with them. This can be as simple as pairing a wine with tomato risotto that just hits or selecting wines for a private cellar around a specific palate. Real estate has been my career since I moved to Nashville in 2001. I love how it uses a different part of my brain and how I can help navigate what can be a challenging and impactful purchase for my clients. Additionally, I treasure my community engagement activities. As the founder of Resource Capture, a non-profit whose mission is to provide efficient, safe, clean, and financially sustainable processing of food waste, I stay connected with opportunities for our region, often acting as a connector and educator more than a taskmaster. For the past four years, I have spearheaded the fundraising efforts for Nashville General Hospital's food pharmacy, which allows patients to fill their food prescriptions to aid in healing their illnesses. Miel hosts an annual fundraising event to support these efforts. I am grateful to be able to wear many different hats. Surrounding myself with smart people allows me to take a step back, make myself dispensable, and have the freedom to follow multiple passions.

EARLY ASPIRATIONS

I have always been an entrepreneur at heart. My worst quality is having no fear, which has allowed me (with calculation) to have many experiences and to learn and grow along the way. Through the years, I have pursued many ventures and, yes, some failed, but, of course, that is when I learned the most. Overall, working hard has led me to where I am today. I am reliable, honest, and loyal. These are the qualities that have taken me further than anything else.

DEFINING SUCCESS

Success is making a difference with your specific, personal talents and skills; contributing, both to one's workplace and to one's community. Success is not a one-time peak in my eyes – it resets every single day. It's not a place where you arrive, it's a journey.

Terry Vo

District 17 Metro Council Member, Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County

Partnerships Director, API Middle TN

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I do a little bit of everything. I'm an elected official, nonprofit leader, and entrepreneur. I am the District 17 Metro Council Member for the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County. I represent over 20,000 constituents and want to build trust and increase engagement between community members and their local government. I am the Partnerships Director for API Middle TN. API Middle TN is a nonprofit that works towards racial justice by building the Asian and Pacific Islander community, lifting API voices, and celebrating API identities. As an entrepreneur, I have done consulting work for Fortune 50 companies as well as emcee for various community events in town.

WORK PERKS

I love being able to connect people, organizations, and companies to build partnerships that wouldn't exist otherwise. I love improving the lives of my constituents to make crossing the street safer, building more affordable housing, and advocating for more language access throughout the county. I love problem-solving and making a positive change. I love being part of creating something where there was nothing. I love community building and creating spaces where people can gather, be safe, and grow.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

For young women who aspire to have a career like mine, I advise you to not wait! Your voice is needed now. Our current Metro Council is amazing and can still improve. We have a female majority for the first time ever. A quarter of the council is in their thirties, which is incredible! We need someone in their twenties on council. We have strong representation from the minority, LGBTQ, and immigrant caucus, but there is room to grow. If you have a goal or dream that you want to reach, say it out loud! Be vocal and let people know. People can't help you if you keep your goal/dream to yourself. I saw so many people who came out to support me and help me achieve my dream of becoming an elected official. I couldn't have done it alone. Finally, discuss finances and practice being comfortable with being uncomfortable.



Emily and Jamie Dryburgh

Founders, RNBW Queer Music Collective, GIRLCRUSH, Country Proud, and Young Music City

THE DAILY HUSTLE

We consider ourselves music and culture entrepreneurs. As young, queer female business owners with a background in the music industry, we work to build community and celebrate unique and amazing artistry via modern media platforms and tangible events — much of which focuses on marginalized and LGBTQ+ spaces. Our Nashville-based entertainment company, Young Music City, works directly with the music industry to showcase artists of all genres, shapes, and sizes. Within that, we also own and operate the brands RNBW Queer Music Collective, GIRLCRUSH, and Country Proud. Young Music City hosts Rooftop Sounds, an artist showcase on the first and third Wednesday of every month at Virgin Hotel's poolside rooftop. RNBW Queer Music Collective is a Nashville-based LGBTQ+ music platform that spotlights queer talent. We host a bi-weekly residency at the legendary Lipstick Lounge on the first and third Tuesday of every month, which showcases six queer artists per event. We work with the community to support other LGBTQ+ events and activations. We also have a recurring RNBW stage at Nashville Pride. With RNBW we aim to create safe spaces for queer voices to be heard, celebrated, and amplified. Country Proud is a subsidiary of RNBW Queer Music Collective that spotlights LGBTQ+ Country-leaning talent. In partnership with CMA and CMT, we hosted the first-ever LGBTQ+ music activation at a country music festival in American history at CMA Fest in 2022 and have recurring stages with the festival each year. We have also been showcased at the Country Music Hall of Fame. GIRLCRUSH is Nashville's premier lesbian and queer night. We throw epic WLW events, showcasing queer DJs, and pack out Canvas Lounge with hundreds of queer women and allies every second Friday.

WORK PERKS

What we love the most about our jobs is the truly unforgettable experiences we've been able to be a part of, and the beautiful people we've met. We've gotten to work with dream partners, artists, and entities, and along the way, have met so many amazing people who have taught us so much about humanity.



Penny Austermiller

CEO, Austermiller Roofing

THE DAILY HUSTLE

I am always juggling multiple responsibilities. Most days, it feels like I am everywhere all at once, so it can get pretty hectic! But my primary role is to lead, inspire, motivate, and be a visionary for the future of our company. I need to know where we are now, where we're headed, and how we'll get there. My personal goal is to foster a culture of leadership within Austermiller. I am deeply passionate about this aspect of my role. Professionally, my goal is to establish Austermiller as a trusted and reliable company that our customers can always count on.

CHALLENGES FACED

In the early stages of my career, I was often labeled and dismissed as just the "CEO's wife," so my husband would sometimes get credit for my work. Initially, I chose to remain silent. However, I soon realized that I needed to assert myself as the true CEO and break free from being overshadowed by my husband. This was a pivotal moment for me. It taught me the importance of self-assertion and breaking free from stereotypes, empowering me to take charge of my career. I had to work twice as hard to prove my capabilities and earn the respect I deserved. Today, as a woman in the construction industry, I still encounter challenges. Many people assume that the men working for me are the CEOs and the ones in charge. I refuse to let these biases and discriminations define me. I choose to focus on my role as CEO and ignore others' opinions. I am here to lead, and that's exactly what I do.

DEFINING SUCCESS

Success is a journey of constant improvement, not a destination of perfection. I often tell my children that it's not about being perfect but about being just two percent better than yesterday. I tell my staff the same thing. I strongly emphasize to my team the power of a strong mindset, and I always try to motivate and uplift them to do their best and learn from any mistakes made along the way, reminding them that mistakes are not failures; they are opportunities for growth. I am also passionate about giving back. I always look for ways our team can contribute to our community through charitable support or empowerment programs. This not only benefits those we serve but also enriches our own sense of success.



Erin Dugan

Founder & Director,
The Cast Collective

THE DAILY HUSTLE

Storytelling is interwoven into everything that I do, but on a tangible level, I do all things photography, videography, podcasting, and start to finish creative conceptualization for creative media. I give creative guidance to artists and other professionals as they work to define, develop, and execute their visions. I utilize video, image, and sound as mediums to help articulate their stories and advance them in whatever direction they are heading. I get just as excited seeing others reach their goals as I do when I reach my own. I guess that's a glorified way of saying I am a hype woman, which I totally am. I am a listener, a helper, and a collaborator at heart. To my core, I believe that it's not one idea but rather the combination of ideas that is where the magic happens.

THE NASHVILLE WAY

My Nashville community is the reason I haven't had to spend a dime on marketing since starting The Cast Collective – no paid advertising whatsoever. New business has come my way through the power of human connection, my most valuable commodity. I always tried to support my friends, colleagues, and other small business owners with their ventures, both those who came before me and those who are just starting out. And, let me tell you, they have returned the favor. Nashvillians have your back if you have theirs. This community is as tight-knit as they come, and I am so grateful to be a part of it!

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Don't let a bunch of "reasonable" people weigh in on your dream early on. Keep your ideas close and sacred. People may think they are protecting you from failure, but that is often just a projection of their own fears, or regret for what they did or didn't accomplish. Don't listen. You can be thoughtful. Be smart. But if you have faith that you can do something, don't let other people's need for comfort and security deter you from taking the leap. Your moral compass should guide you always. Make sure you have enough quiet moments to hear it.

