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## THE LESSONS OF SMALL BUSINESS BEGINNINGS

### A SVP's Years in Small Business and the Tips That Could Make a Difference for a Team of Any Size

*Jason shares how his small business beginnings shaped his view on sales and the must-know tips for teams in 2021 and beyond.*

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Express Global Business Travel (GBT)

**1**

#### **What is your role at GBT and what attracted you to a career as a chief people officer?**

Ultimately, the responsibility of my role is the overall smooth running of the business performance and operation of the organization across the region.

After school, I started out in retail and retail management. I instantly connected with the human psychology of it all, helping somebody decide to purchase something that they hadn't planned to in the first place. I eventually found myself in sales at a startup called Jobsite. I was earning well and was picking up lots of responsibilities but wanted to test myself in a completely different industry sector. I was lucky enough to find an organization that was prepared to bring somebody into a commercial leadership role that didn't have prior travel experience with Eurostar. I instantly fell in love with the industry. When you're consuming travel day-to-day, you don't really give it a moment's thought, whereas when you're helping to serve it, you have the ability to see and reflect on what it actually enables people and businesses to do. I'm as passionate about that now as I was when I found the travel industry back then.



## 2

### What exposure have you had with small businesses either personally or in a working environment?

I ran one for nearly four years prior to coming to GBT, a company called the Student Room. It wasn't a startup because it was started in a student bedroom about 10 years before, but it only had about 12 employees. At the time of my departure, we had four and a half million registered students on our website. It was probably the single biggest source of university information in the UK. We had also grown to just under 70 employees and were generating about £8 million in revenue. So, I have a huge amount of respect for the power of small workforces. They do some incredible things.

## 3

### In your view, what is the importance of emerging businesses to the economy and everyday life?

I don't have the statistics on hand, but statistics will show the number of people that are employed by emerging businesses. The amount of gross domestic product they drive is significant. Interestingly, at some point in every company's history, they were once an emerging business or continued to be one. They drive innovation, often helping to challenge and create new marketplaces. They also create new processes, which then influence larger companies further up the food chain.

## 4

### If you could give a business five tips, what would they be?

1. Surround yourself with people that help you. Make sure you choose your business partners, suppliers, accountants, consultants, systems, tools wisely. You need these people and services to help grow and manage your business. If you are lacking in an area, plug the hole and find someone ASAP.
2. Your customers are your business. You can never underestimate the knowledge your customers have about your business. They know what you need to do to get better, grow, improve – so ask them.

3. Know your financial flexibility and proactively manage your cash position. If the events of 2020 taught us anything, it was to be prepared. For many of us, this came down to our cash position, making decisive and hard decisions to preserve cash and being able to access cash when needed. I think moving forward most emerging businesses will have a greater sense of the importance of liquidity and cashflow. It was always a key cause of business failures but hopefully a new sense of "cash is king" will be better respected by us all – regardless of how large your company is.
4. Stay strong and keep moving. Emerging businesses attract strong, resilient, and optimistic people. If you got through 2020, chances are things are starting to get a little better. You might be stronger but don't assume the way you did things in 2019 is going to be the way you do things in 2021. Stay strong but keep moving and evolving your business.
5. Be very proud of what you do. Remind yourself that you are the backbone of the economy and a core source of innovation for us all. I don't think a day goes by that my personal or business life isn't made easier or more enjoyable by the services of an emerging business so give yourself a pat on the back.

## 5

### Any final thoughts to share?

Remember, whoever you are within your company, you have the ability to feel the pulse of the business day-to-day.

## Learn More

For more information about the Neo1 platform that helps manage employee spend for small to medium businesses, American Express Global Business Travel (GBT), and the services we offer, visit [www.amexglobalbusinesstravel.com/neo1/](http://www.amexglobalbusinesstravel.com/neo1/)



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