

neol



THE LESSONS OF SMALL BUSINESS BEGINNINGS

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

John looks back on his years with small businesses and shares his top tips for teams looking to grow.



JOHN BUKOWSKI
Vice president, sales, content aggregation
at American Express Global Business
Travel (GBT)

1

What is your role at GBT and what attracted you to a career in travel and technology?

I have two roles at GBT. About eight years ago, I was brought on board in supplier relations. I came in as a manager in distribution. In distribution, we look to highlight our partnerships with airlines, hotels, car rental companies, and rail companies by negotiating deals for clients and travelers so you know when you're shopping with GBT that you'll see great deals on airfares, hotels, rail bookings – whatever it may be. I recently took on a second role in September 2020 that essentially merged our procurement and IT vendor management together to form strategic sourcing. We look at GBT's approach to our external spend across pretty much all the different categories at GBT.

2

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

I've had exposures with small businesses both in my current and previous roles. I used to work with American Airlines and US Airways. I worked with a lot of different suppliers from large companies like Boeing and Airbus to small and medium businesses. I've also had some friends from my college days who have gone on to start businesses. Around four or five years ago, I was helping one friend start up a business. I was able to see it grow.



**GLOBAL
BUSINESS
TRAVEL**

American Express Global Business Travel (GBT) is a joint venture that is not wholly owned by American Express Company or any of its subsidiaries (American Express). "American Express Global Business Travel," "American Express," and the American Express logo are trademarks of American Express and are used under limited license.

3

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

Emerging businesses are an important part of the overall business ecosystem. They help people stay on their toes and encourage innovation. They can be very nimble when it comes to solving business problems. When you work with some larger companies, while they may have scale, they might be slower to move and require different types of partners to help operate their business.

4

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

1. **Prioritize.** There are a million different things going on in business, so you need to pick your battles, prioritize the right projects, and make sure you're bringing in the right partners to help you address them.
2. **Create a unique value proposition that addresses customer needs.** There could be a lot of competition out there trying to solve the same problem as you, so strive to make your value proposition unique.
3. **Simplify where you can.** Your employees will find it easier to follow simplified processes. If you make them too complex, you'll start losing people within the confines of whatever you're trying to establish.

4. **Consider all your stakeholders.** Don't just look at your immediate customers but all your stakeholders. You may be able to solve one problem for a customer, but if that causes 10 problems downstream for other stakeholders, your strategy is probably not going to work. It's important to really think about the full ecosystem and not just the customer that's in front of you or the suppliers that you work with. Consider all the different stakeholders.
5. **Find the right partnerships.** You can't do everything yourself. You need to really bring in key partners that are going to deliver the value and help you scale. Pick the right partners and develop a core strategy.

5

Would you like to share any final thoughts?

In general, I think a successful business boils down to being able to come up with a simple process and being able to build scale. Simplify your processes and find the right partners to scale.

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/

