

THE CANNATA REPORT

THE YOUNG INFLUENCERS OF 2019

Millennial Momentum

The Imaging Industry's Next Generation of Leaders
Embrace and Drive Change on Their Own Terms



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The Imaging Industry's Next Generation of Leaders Embrace and Drive Change on Their Own Terms

By Sharon Tosto Esker and Kate Gragg



The Cannata Report is proud to present our 2019 Young Influencers. For the first time in the franchise's six-year history, all of this year's featured Young Influencers hail from the millennial generation. Like many in this generation of young workers, our Influencers are passionate not only about their work, but also the impact of their work on the people and world around them. They are not content to simply punch in and punch out on the office clock. They are striving to make their individual marks in this ever-evolving office technology industry.

As digital natives, our Influencers are adept at quickly connect-

ing concepts, processes, and people. They are constantly tuning in and listening, using the information they gather from their varied life experiences and research to improve customer experiences, drive revenues, and innovate across their businesses.

Though many within our industry continue to lament the decline of print, these Influencers aren't bogged down in the way things used to be. Embracing change is a driving mantra in their lives and careers. Each is committed to being a vital part of the evolution of this industry, and to rising above the fray to forge their own path to success on their own terms. **STE**

Dollars and Sense:
A.J. Baggott, COO, RJ Young

After spending his early career in accounting for publicly held clients, working for “Big Four” mega-firm Deloitte & Touche as an audit manager, A.J. Baggott started to get curious about what the private side was like. When the Nashville-based dealer R.J. Young reached out to him in 2016 about a chief financial officer position, he didn’t know much about the office technology industry. It was actually his wife Miranda who encouraged him to consider making the switch. As a community outreach manager for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, she knew the company as one of her foundation’s strongest supporters.

“When I called my wife and told her I got a phone call about a CFO opportunity at R.J. Young, I’m not sure she had any idea what they did, but she loved the company because of what they stood for and what they did for Make-A-Wish,” said Baggott.

Starting at a new job is always a crash-course in adjusting to the company culture but coming in as a high-level executive had its own challenges, since there’s a responsibility to not only fit into the culture but also lead it and shape it for the better. Baggott knew it would be best to take things slow, so he spent the first six months spending time with people and learning as much as he could.

“I tried to spend some time with every different department that reported to me,” recalled Baggott. “I wanted to understand, at least at a high level, how to do everybody’s job and what their daily tasks were like. I don’t know that you can really be an effective leader unless you understand what the people you’re leading do on a daily basis.”

R.J. Young is a company known for the long tenure of its employees. Some of Baggott’s colleagues have been with the company “longer than I’ve been alive,” he joked. He recognized the value of that experience and set out to learn as much as he could from the people who had already been down the path he was on.

Like any company in this industry, R.J. Young’s success lives or dies by the strength of its sales team. As Baggott learned during his

observation phase, communication and teamwork between the sales team and the administrative side had broken down. He perceived a lack of trust there that was risking dysfunction and causing undue stress for the talented employees in all sectors of the company.

By waiting and letting his observations guide him, Baggott said he ended up setting a far more effective and productive goal than he would have come up with on day one. When he started, he assumed his primary focus as CFO would be financial, but after seeing how R.J. Young’s departments were siloed, working separately instead of in sync, he realized that his top priority was finding a way to show everyone on his team that they shared common goals.

People-focused tasks like this mark the real difference between his mid-career work as an accountant, who only had to concern himself with getting the balance sheet right, and the world in the C-Suite.

“We’ve got a group of sales people who, in my opinion, are some of the best sales people not just in this industry, but in the country overall,” observed Baggott. “But you have to understand the mentality of these highly aggressive sales people. So, I took substantial time to listen to them and hear their concerns and their complaints.”

Their complaints may ring familiar to anyone who’s worked in a large company. They felt the administrative department had become the “no” department. For sales, the business of “yes,” this was an incompatible difference in perspectives. Baggott worked with the administrative team to change that “no” into the start of a conversation, not the end. By working collaboratively with the sales team, focusing on the shared goal of making customers happy, the administrative side learned to say, we can’t do it this way, but maybe we can do it another way.

“It still accomplishes what the customer needs from us as a company,” said Baggott. “It’s just finding the best way to do that, and that’s really all we want at the end of the day, to make sure that the customer is getting the best experience they can.”

Baggott acknowledged that, in the accounting world, with its strict regulations and focus on



A.J. Baggott
COO, RJ Young

Age: 36

Preferred mode of communication: Text or email

Mobile device: iPhone

Tablet : iPad

Favorite app: Twitter or Waze

Favorite music streaming service: Apple Music

“I wanted to understand, at least at a high level, how to do everybody’s job and what their daily tasks were like. I don’t know that you can really be an effective leader unless you understand what the people you’re leading do on a daily basis.”

hard data, it's easy to forget that flexibility is possible in other ways.

"That agility and that flexibility is really what makes the independent dealer network so successful," observed Baggott.

R.J. Young is a privately held company like so many other independent dealerships in this industry, and though the customer may not think of it as a factor, Baggott credits that fact with the company's ability to remain flexible despite its size.

"With a public company, you've got a lot of bureaucratic red tape, and there's even enhanced regulations and reporting that you have to do," said Baggott. "As a former auditor and a CPA, I'm always going to default to making sure we're doing things by the rules, but when you get to that level, you're doing things by the rules even if the rules are nonsensical."

Baggott was promoted to chief operating officer last fall, and even with the greater responsibility, he still appreciates the fact that he has freedoms he wouldn't at a big publicly-traded company.

"When I need to make a decision, I don't have to run it up to a board of directors or send it to a shareholder vote," said Baggott. "I go into the leadership team, and we have a conversation about it, and then, we all agree that what's in the best interest for the customer is in the best interest of the company." **KG**

Customer Caring:
Mark Flesch, Chief Operating Officer,
Gordon Flesch Company

Ready and willing to learn, Mark Flesch, chief operating officer at Gordon Flesch Company (GFC), always knew his career would lead him back to the company founded by his grandfather, Gordon Flesch, in 1956. As a Flesch family member, a college degree and three year's experience at an outside firm are pre-requisites to joining the family business, and Mark fully embraced this invaluable opportunity.

Securing an account executive role at third-party logistics broker CH Robinson, following his graduation from Ohio's Miami University with a Bachelor of Science degree in market-

ing, Mark jumped right into calling on carriers to contract them to fill trucks and transport other companies' freight. Starting without any accounts or any set territory, Mark focused on building solid relationships to build his book of business. Starting his days at 7 a.m. and packing in as many calls as possible until 4:30 p.m., Mark adopted a disciplined, quick pace to achieve his sales targets.

"You had to build relationships with different trucking companies, find your niche, and then, try to move as much freight as possible," said Mark. "The deals were very transactional. It's not like in our business where you work on a deal for six months and that one deal may make your year. It was a different style, but I learned a strong work ethic, how to build strong relationships, and what it takes to succeed."

When an account executive role opened up at GFC in Columbus, Ohio, in 2008, Mark brought that same energy and enthusiasm he harnessed at CH Robinson to begin his career in the imaging industry, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, father, uncles, and brother, Patrick Flesch, now president of GFC, who joined the company in 2006.

Moving from Chicago, Mark went from having thousands of trucking companies to call on to a geographic territory. He had to learn not only about the companies within his new territory, but also the boundaries of his coverage area so he wouldn't be stepping on anyone else's toes at GFC. Meeting with his customers face-to-face, absorbing numerous details of the technology and software he was offering, and adapting to a slower sales cycle were also adjustments Mark encountered quickly and effectively. He made a commitment to reach out to every one of his current customers in his first 90 days to get settled in to understand the opportunities within that existing base and expand from that point. Within six months, Mark was meeting his sales goals and earned GFC's sales award for a trip.

"People want to do business with people they like," said Mark. "If you're genuine and kind, and want to do right by your customers, they're going to want to do more business with you. Sales is not easy, but if you establish trust with the client, and you're honest and genuine with them, they're going to come back to you."



Mark Flesch
Chief Operating Officer,
Gordon Flesch Company

Age: 37

Preferred method of communication: Phone call (He's made an internal initiative to reduce emails, opting for weekly one-on-one calls with his team members rather than emailing back-and-forth.)

Mobile device: iPhone

Tablet: iPad

Favorite app: Uber

Favorite music streaming service: Pandora

"We need to be more mindful of the next generation of buyers that we are selling to. Millennials are buying differently than the generations before them. We need to change how we work with them, how we communicate with them."

By the end of his five-year tenure as an account executive, as well as a team leader, Mark was one of the company's top sales performers and had brought in several large, revenue-driving accounts. In 2013, Mark took on a sales manager role, and in 2015, he became vice president of sales for GFC's eastern region. Mark was not only ready to take on this challenge, but he had also distinguished himself as the right person for the job.

"I wanted to prove myself," said Mark. "Anytime your name is on the wall, people are going to look at you a little closer. I'm sure people were wondering, what is Mark like, what's his attitude like, what is his work ethic, is he going to be any good, what's the future look like? My main motivation was to prove to people that I could be successful and a good future leader of this business."

In November 2018, Mark assumed the role of COO, taking over responsibilities for GFC's leasing, contracts, aftermarket, and services departments, as well as its human resources group, which manages robust, comprehensive health care and retirement plan programs.

"I've always been very interested in not just the sales aspect of this business, but also how we operate outside of that," said Mark. "I have a real passion for learning about those areas of our business, but also looking at ways we can improve them and make them more efficient for the company and our customers."

As one of Mark's first actions as COO, he established a new customer experience group that meets on a bi-monthly basis to examine how GFC can improve its customers' experiences. Pulling in leaders from each of GFC's primary departments, he is focused on listening to their feedback and ideas to improve internal workflows and processes that impact GFC's evolving client base.

"We need to be more mindful of the next generation of buyers that we are selling to," said Mark. "Millennials are buying differently than the generations before them. We need to change how we work with them, how we communicate with them. They want to do things more on a mobile basis with less face-to-face interactions. People don't have as much time anymore. It's less about taking a customer out

to lunch, and more about showing our value in the half-hour we're given with them. This shift is why the customer experience group can be one way to adapt to the changes in our culture and business climate."

Just as he has with his past roles, Mark is committed to bringing his energy and fresh ideas to GFC, challenging the company's sales and internal processes to explore ways to build upon his family's business legacy.

"My success is dependent on the success of the business," said Mark. "We want to maintain a great working environment for our employees and keep this business thriving. We have a lot of great employees who like their jobs, and we want to continue to have success, grow, and provide opportunities for them to grow within our company, allowing our employees to continue to do a job they love. And this, of course, goes along with servicing our customers well too. A great customer experience—internally and externally—would be a great success for our company, and for me." **STE**

Sales Superiority:
Patrick Flesch, President, Gordon Flesch Company

Even though it wasn't discussed at home, Patrick Flesch, president of Gordon Flesch Company (GFC), had always known he wanted to work for the company founded in 1956 by his grandfather, the firm's namesake Gordon Flesch. Raised with a strong work ethic, he spent his high-school summers doing a variety of jobs around the company, from cold-calling for sales reps to working in the warehouse, delivering machines and filling toner orders. However, after graduating from Miami University in Ohio, Patrick went to work for CDW, an Illinois-based tech reseller. GFC has a firm policy that all Flesch family members obtain a college degree and gain three years' experience at a minimum at an outside firm.

By early 2006, in his third year as an account executive for CDW, an Illinois-based tech reseller, Patrick was thriving. On the hook for making 85 total calls a day, 65 outbound, CDW tracked and measured every sales metric, including the amount of time on each call, the number of quotes delivered, the number of orders taken.



Patrick Flesch
President, Gordon Flesch Company

Age: 39

Preferred method of communication: Phone call for work; text or FaceTime with family

Mobile device: iPhone with AirPods

Tablet: iPad

Favorite app: Uber

Favorite music streaming service: SiriusXM and Pandora

"I've been in the shoes of every sales role along the way here at Gordon Flesch. That's really helped me because I can understand the challenges, the upside, and all the different aspects of these positions."

“You had to put in the work and make the calls,” said Patrick.

In a cut-throat sales environment, he adopted a disciplined approach to his position, where there was no place to hide. But, the sales role exhilarated Patrick. Of the 35 people in his CDW training class, he was one of only five who remained after three years.

When Patrick’s father, Tom Flesch, Gordon Flesch Company’s prior president, called him about a territory account position in Elmhurst, Illinois, he wasn’t quite ready to leave CDW. He had developed a solid book of accounts and was exceeding his sales targets. However, true to form for a tenured salesman, Tom arranged a meeting for Patrick to meet with one of GFC’s branch managers, not taking no for answer.

Ultimately, Patrick agreed with his father that this was the right opportunity for him to join the company. Ready to prove himself in the field at GFC, Patrick took over the underdeveloped Elmhurst territory in March 2006, and he quickly translated the skills he acquired at CDW to get out onto the street, going door-to-door for prospecting, and begin meeting his new sales goals. Within his first 12 months, he achieved his sales quotas in a territory that had not met its numbers since 2001.

This success was only the beginning for Patrick. He proceeded to take on a sales manager role in 2012, and in 2015, became vice president of sales for GFC’s western region.

“I’ve been in the shoes of every sales role along the way here at Gordon Flesch,” said Patrick. “That’s really helped me because I can understand the challenges, the upside, and all the different aspects of these positions.”

As Patrick’s career has progressed so has the sales process. While Patrick says cold-calling still has its place in sales, reps are now working with more sophisticated buyers who, in most cases, have already done a substantial amount of

web-based research before considering a deal with GFC. As such, GFC has diligently worked to optimize its website, using HubSpot to direct leads and convert potential customers from browsing for information to revenue-generating deals.

“With buyer turnover and the millennial generation coming up, we are certainly thinking about how we are communicating and interacting with these new buyers,” said Patrick.

To support its sales reps, GFC values its extensive sales training. Reps spend four days in the Madison, Wisconsin, headquarters for a planned orientation that includes briefings on GFC’s CRM software, presentations from every department within the company, and an introduction to the firm’s culture.

“We want them to leave orientation knowing they’ve made a really good decision to work for Gordon Flesch Company,” said Patrick. “We want them to think, this is where I want to build my career.”

After this initial orientation, reps head back into the field for what GFC calls “Navigate 90,” which gives GFC time to deliver more training and evaluate the new sales employees. Over the next 90 days, sales managers, branch managers, and team leaders work hand-in-hand with the new reps, getting them acclimated to their territories, and coaching them on how to canvass their assigned sales areas.

“We are a sales-centric organization,” said Patrick, who became president of GFC in November 2018. “Nothing happens—good or bad—unless a sale comes through the door.”

Today, Patrick continues to keep his ear to the street, getting involved in certain larger sales opportunities, as well as paying close attention to the challenges the GFC sales team is encountering in the field and what customers are looking for.

With his strong foundation in sales, as president, Patrick is looking to expand on GFC’s success by building out the com-

pany’s IT services sales team. While IT services had previously been rolled into the traditional account executive role, GFC has recently separated IT services into its own dedicated area.

“I consider IT services to be one of the bigger pieces of our future,” said Patrick. “Our business isn’t getting any less complex, so having the account executives refocus 100% on driving the hardware and print business—managed print, production, and anything that goes with hardware technology—will be the right move for us in the long term. Having a dedicated IT sales team will help us as well, as I see IT services as being vital to our organic growth.”

Another area of focus is acquisitions. While the company had previously taken a more conservative fiscal approach, Patrick and the GFC team are seeing a greater opportunity to partner with and potentially acquire other firms to expand GFC’s footprint and capabilities.

“We’re constantly trying to evaluate opportunities for partnerships,” said Patrick. “It’s an unusual climate out there right now [with acquisitions and industry consolidation], but we’re trying to stay disciplined and stick to our values, but also look at opportunities for inorganic growth, while our sales team continues to pursue organic growth.”

After nearly 15 years in the business, Patrick is excited about his own future and that of GFC. With a growing funnel of deals and potential partnerships, he is committed to not only GFC’s customers but also GFC’s loyal employees, who continue to make GFC the successful company it is.

“I still get excited about this stuff,” said Patrick. “Winning a deal to me is still one of the best things about what I do. I guess it’s just the salesperson that is engrained in me. I just love when we’re able to bring in new accounts, transferring them from the competition and showing them what we can do, and make them raving fans.”

STE

The Great Communicator: Lauren Ford, Corporate Marketing Communications Manager, Square 9

Lauren Ford arrives at work every day in the corporate marketing department of Square 9 ready to tackle a central problem in this industry: how to deliver information to people in the most user-friendly and effective way. The right document management/ECM solution can open up an office's productivity in ways the people working there never imagined, but they'll never get to use that solution if people like Ford don't find the right way to explain why to choose this product over that one, how to use a new feature (and why you'd want to), and above all else, how to make sure information is easy to find, not just for sales reps and technicians, but for the customer too.

SEO (search-engine optimization) is pivotal to Ford's job, but it's not for clickbait. While someone in the market for a new office product 20 years ago might have been content to wait for a sales rep to bring over pamphlets, first-time buyers today do most of their research before the companies they're shopping from even know they exist. Because of that, Ford works closely with Square 9's web team to make sure that the company's site is easy to find, easy to navigate, and easy to read.

"It really is a fine line we're walking all the time," she said. "I work with our development team right upstairs, going over the top features and why they matter. Then, I work with our marketing team here and we segment our two audiences and hit the ground running."

Technical information goes to the resellers, but Ford is always working on ways to explain the benefits of a new feature or product to the end user as well, since these days people don't shy away from extensive research about a purchase.

Ford got her start in college at the University of Vermont, where, despite the heavy course load of her double-major in public communications and applied economics, she found time to work in public relations for the university, covering student life, academics, and athletics. She stayed on for two years after graduation, savoring the beauty of Burlington, Vermont, but eventually felt it was time to "get back to reality."

Though she didn't have much formal technical background, Ford had always been interested in software and technology, so when she saw Square 9 was looking for a marketing communications specialist, she saw an opportunity to challenge herself by writing about something a little more out of her wheelhouse than campus events had been. Six years and a big promotion later, she's now the voice of the brand, developing most of Square 9's written communications and public relations strategies.

Ford's job wouldn't be possible without a close relationship with the marketing department. She's in marketing director Ethan Votolini's office "all day, every day," she laughed.

"We work together to create campaigns to track web-lead progress, which is a huge initiative," said Ford. "We're not only gaining new leads but also creating unique, nurturing campaigns around them. This is directly to help the sales team, truly generating leads for them."

Information flows both ways. Once a quarter, Ford gathers together Square 9's top twenty dealers and picks their brains, looking for intel on what the company could improve, what customers and sales prospects are saying, and how Square 9 can serve their needs better. She's especially interested to get recommendations from dealers about customers who might make good subjects for case studies. Ford will reach out to these customers and interview them about what problem they were trying to solve and how Square 9's products helped them solve it. She, then, writes it up and co-brands with the reseller, creating valuable marketing material for both companies at once.

"It's a really progressive development strategy to make more simplified solutions for resellers to sell and implement," said Ford.

Document management software is still a new idea to many customers, so education is a big part of the game plan. While the resellers themselves participate in training events both on-site in Square 9's classrooms and through the company's e-learning portal, the end-user relies on the information Ford develops for them online.

"At first, we were heavily invested in keywords on page content," said Ford. "What exactly do



Lauren Ford
Corporate Marketing
Communications Manager,
Square 9

Age: 30

Preferred mode of communication: Email, written communication is often the most effective

Mobile device: Google Pixel 3

Tablet: iPad

Favorite app: Venmo, it's so convenient!

Favorite music streaming service: Spotify

"At first, we were heavily invested in keywords on page content. But then our perspective shifted, and I realized it's really about the content itself. It's about getting your website to be incredible, making sure that people respect you, and that you're not just salting your content with keywords, but that you have actual information that is helpful to people."

we use, ‘data management’ or ‘enterprise content management,’ or ‘digital business’? But then our perspective shifted, and I realized it’s really about the content itself. It’s about getting your website to be incredible, making sure that people respect you, and that you’re not just salting your content with keywords, but that you have actual information that is helpful to people.”

Ford’s team now makes external initiatives just as much of a priority, focusing on getting link-backs from high-quality sites and partnering with industry publications like this one.

In 2018, The Cannata Report presented Square 9 with the Frank Award for Best Software Developer at its 30th Anniversary Awards & Charities Dinner, an event that raised over \$150,000 for cancer research. To Ford, this kind of recognition not only validates the work Square 9 does, but also makes it easier for her and her team to communicate the value of that work to resellers and customers. In an internet riddled with clickbait and questionable content, the respect of your peers is the one thing that’s still impossible to fake.

“It’s crazy to think that I still feel new to Square 9, even though it’s been six years,” said Ford. “But when I speak to our customers and they’ve never heard of document management before, they don’t know the benefits that could help them save money, save time, it’s a good feeling to be able to help people create more efficient organizations.” **KG**

Multi-Faceted Multitasker: **Kristen Goldberg, Director of Marketing and Product Planning, Canon U.S.A.**

To understand how Kristen Goldberg approaches her job, you have to go back in time to 2002, when she was a marketing major, studying abroad in London at the American International University. She had an interview for a prized internship with Canon, so she dressed in her best interview clothes. Even though it was just a phone with video chatting, Kristen knew looking ready would help her feel ready. She got the internship.

That summer, interning at Canon, Goldberg worked on her first product launch. The process of bringing a new product to market was instant-

ly fascinating to her, so during senior year, when her peers were securing their first entry-level sales jobs, Goldberg decided to stick with Canon. It was a rare opportunity to do exactly what she enjoyed, right out of school. She worked her way up from marketing associate to supervisor of product marketing in just seven years, but family circumstances took her away from Long Island, where Canon USA is headquartered, in 2010.

“This was the only industry I knew, the only industry I had ever worked in,” said Goldberg. She ended up taking a job in New York City, working for a corporate health and wellness organization that was much smaller than Canon. “It was kind of my crash course in all things marketing, because you can’t have the same resources that you have in a larger organization. I got more hands-on in terms of web development, corporate communications, and PR. Things I would work on with other departments at Canon, now, I was doing that all in my department. It was a nice learning period for me.”

Goldberg kept in touch with her team at Canon for two years, and eventually, at a going-away party for a Canon colleague, realized the timing was right to return to the company that had given Goldberg her start. She was living in Long Island again, and she’d learned so much while wearing multiple hats at a smaller company that she knew she was ready to take on bigger challenges.

In 2012, Kristen made a happy return to Canon as product planning and marketing manager, rising to her current role, director of marketing and product planning, by mid-2017. She still wears multiple hats, synthesizing information she gets from Japan, the dealer network, and customers for enterprise products. While she occasionally coordinates with the consumer print and camera divisions on major projects such as website development and social media, the dealer network with all its many layers of communication interests her the most.

“You have to prepare the dealers with the tools and resources they need to be able to support their customers, so really understanding their business models, their challenges, their objectives, and hearing their feedback influences not only the product and solutions development, but also the way that we share information with the dealers and the types of information we’re giving them,” said Goldberg.



Kristen Goldberg **Director of Marketing and Product Planning, Canon U.S.A.**

Age: 38

Preferred mode of communication: Text

Mobile device: iPhone

Tablet: iPad

Favorite app: MyFitnessPal

Favorite music streaming service: Spotify

“You have to prepare the dealers with the tools and resources they need to be able to support their customers, so really understanding their business models, their challenges, their objectives, and hearing their feedback influences not only the product and solutions development, but also the way that we share information with the dealers and the types of information we’re giving them.”

Aligning all those moving pieces is an endlessly fascinating challenge for her, and one that she sees changing by the day.

“People have so much more access to information now than they ever did, and it’s a good opportunity for both the dealers and the technology providers to communicate that information,” said Goldberg. “It means we have to be more educated and show more expertise about the things that we’re talking about with dealers, and they have to do that as well, which means we need to provide them with the tools to be able to do that.”

One of the most powerful tools in Canon’s arsenal is an annual dealer event Goldberg is heavily involved in, the Canon Roadshow. It’s a series of five events for Canon’s dealer channel at five different locations, each focused on a different aspect of that year’s training. In two short days, Goldberg can bring the dealers up to speed on everything new and upcoming with Canon’s product line. She even developed a take-home version she calls “Roadshow in a Box,” which Canon makes available to account executives to do their own training events throughout the year.

Flexibility and diversity of options are the key to effective training in this busy world. In addition to the Roadshow, dealers have the option to attend classes in Canon’s learning center or have a field sales trainer come out to them on-site for any of a wide range of course options Goldberg’s team has developed. But at the end of the day, the default option for many people is always going to be looking things up online, so Goldberg works hard to make sure that Canon’s online content is extensive and constantly updated, as well as responsive to trends the social media and customer service teams have noted. If many people are asking the same question, that’s a message to Goldberg that it’s time to create some educational content around that subject.

One of the best ways Goldberg gets feedback on what topics her team should cover is in the breakout sessions she conducts with dealers at training events.

“We propose different scenarios to them, like what if you were the customer, what would your expectations be from your office solutions provider?” she said. “They spend 20 minutes brainstorming some ideas and share that back with us. We take that feedback, compile it, pull some key things out that we can implement right away and some things that we can develop in the long term. We really do leverage that information.”

Feedback is a vital component in the “iterative process” of product development that happens in Japan. The information Goldberg gathers from dialogues with dealers, sales reps, and customers is continually factored in, along with analyst reports, in a process of continual adjustment aimed at delivering a product that meets customers’ needs perfectly.

“One thing in recent years that we’ve been more closely aligning on is taking a more global perspective,” noted Goldberg. “I’m on a weekly call with Canon Japan just talking about new products coming down the line and how they’re communicating about them. We’ll share infographics or images, so we’re leveraging similar messaging across a global market.”

Goldberg sees her own career as an iterative process, too, at once (and always) a student and a teacher.

“Know your own value,” she added. “You’re not there just to check a box. Don’t be afraid to step up and say what your value is, but also know that everyone has a lot to learn. You should always be learning and always be adding value.”

KG

A Non-Linear Career Path:
Stacey Sujeebun, Director of Marketing Communications (Research & Development, The Digital Workplace Division, and North America), Konica Minolta

Driven by a keen sense of curiosity, Konica Minolta’s Stacey Sujeebun, director of marketing communications (Research

& Development, The Digital Workplace Division, and North America), has forged a successful career path in the office technology industry.

Even though Sujeebun, a social anthropology major at University College London (UCL), had envisioned herself studying tribes in remote areas of the Amazon upon graduation, she opted to take a break from her rigorous academic track to explore the business world. Seeking to leverage her skills in understanding human behavior trends, she turned to agency roles focusing on marketing and advertising.

“When you work within a marketing and branding agency, it’s all about understanding human behavior, how people interact with each other,” said Sujeebun. “Marketing is also about understanding pain points and people’s perceptions of brands. I didn’t realize it at the time, but there is so much synergy between what I learned at school and what I had started to learn in my actual career.”

Initially, Sujeebun’s marketing insights position encompassed examining a myriad of trends among consumers, particularly how they perceived brands and responded to advertising. Her later positions provided her with insights into brand consultancy, developing brand recognition, using logos as symbols that would resonate in the minds of consumers, and understanding product innovation. She, then, pivoted to media planning.

After several years in the agency arena, working closely with various brands and industries on temporal projects, as well as building her skillset, Sujeebun began looking for a role where she could have a more sustained, longer-term relationship with the projects she was working on and the clients she was serving. She was looking for a role where she could sink her teeth into a project, stick with it for the duration, and see the fruits of her hard work and dedication.

“Obviously, you do your career because you have bills to pay, a mortgage to pay,”

said Sujeebun. “But, on a personal level, I have to know and feel what I’m doing has real worth and value, and that I feel connected to the organization, the people I work with, and the customers I serve. To me, those things are equally as important as the paycheck I receive. It’s that my work is important to the world we’re in.”

Responding to a local newspaper advertisement in England nearly eight years ago, she applied for a U.K.-based position at Konica Minolta. The company was seeking someone to drive incremental innovation in vertical markets. It was a pivotal moment for Konica Minolta, as the company was in the throes of shifting the way it approached its marketing, evolving from highlighting speeds and feeds to displaying the value of what the company was offering to customers. As Konica Minolta expanded its focus from solely hardware to services and solutions, this role piqued Sujeebun’s interest and seemed like a natural fit. Inspired and motivated, she joined the company in August 2011.

After three years studying the industry in her marketing specialist role, Sujeebun joined Konica Minolta’s innovation team, at that time known as the Workplace Hub group, which was born out of the Business Innovation Center in Europe. In this new role, Sujeebun was tasked with developing a program to create a new brand intended to reposition Konica Minolta and make way for the company to roll out an innovative, disruptive product, Workplace Hub.

This was not an easy or simple task. When Sujeebun joined the innovation team, Workplace Hub was still solely a concept. The team was building a product that did not exist in the marketplace. There was no benchmark on how to communicate about and brand a product like Workplace Hub in a customer-friendly manner.

“One of the main considerations was how we could take what this very intellectual group of individuals are building and simply it in a way that’s easily recognizable to customers unfamiliar with such a product,” said Sujeebun.

The other consideration was Konica Minolta’s history as an innovator. Most consumers easily identified the company as a printer brand, or in some cases, a camera firm. Sujeebun needed to help propel Konica Minolta’s brand onward globally to be known as an IT services compa-

ny, as well as one customers could trust from an innovation point of view.

“We knew we had to shift perceptions,” said Sujeebun. “We needed to show the unique value of Konica Minolta.”

In March 2017, after two years of research, development, and testing, Sujeebun and her team rolled out the Workplace Hub platform to positive reviews. She was the only marketing specialist within a team of highly talented IT developers, including last year’s Young Influencer Christian Mastrodonato, chief technologist, Konica Minolta. Since the rollout, Sujeebun’s career has truly taken off. In May 2017, she moved across the pond from London to New York to take over marketing for Konica Minolta’s digital workplace, including Workplace Hub, and its North America division, and this year, she added the company’s global research and development group to her scope. Sujeebun currently reports into 2014 Women Influencer Kay Fernandez, senior vice president, marketing, Konica Minolta.

Since her arrival in the United States, Sujeebun has continued to follow where her curiosity takes her, finding inspiration from experiences in her new home. She feels fully supported not only by her mentor, Fernandez, but also by Konica Minolta as a whole. Sujeebun is looking forward to helping the Konica Minolta evolve into an internet of things company, maintaining its rich heritage as a print company and combining it with its growing IT services offerings. Like the marketing plans Sujeebun develops, we expect her career to continue on a unique and innovative path.

“What I think is interesting in careers today is that there isn’t a linear path anymore,” said Sujeebun. “My career has not been linear at all. It’s been about trying to find exciting projects that I’m interested in learning about and finding better ways of doing things. My career has progressed because I’ve been truly passionate about the programs I’ve been involved in, rather than following a set career path because that is what I’m supposed to do.” **STE**



Stacey Sujeebun Director of Marketing Communications (Research & Development, The Digital Workplace Division, and North America), Konica Minolta

Age: 36

Preferred method of communication: Call, email, text, FaceTime, depending on the person

Mobile device: iPhone

Tablet: iPad

Favorite app: Pinterest

Favorite music streaming service: iTunes and Apple Music

“What I think is interesting in careers today is that there isn’t a linear path anymore. My career has not been linear at all. It’s been about trying to find exciting projects that I’m interested in learning about and finding better ways of doing things.”



Questions About This Story?

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