

Anders T Rosen 0:02

Welcome to the first episode of the Spring 2021 season of the Manage-A-Bull podcast from the UB School of Management, where extraordinary is our ordinary. I'm your host Anders T. Rosen. This semester opens with an episode with three of my second year MBA classmates. As we discussed, one of my favorite parts of the MBA degree so far, the Mentorship program.

Alumni and current students of UB will likely agree that the first semester is a whirlwind. There's more work to be done than any individual can accomplish alone. That's why teams and team building are such an integral part of the learning process. Mentors are there to provide guidance as new students work through that process. I was lucky enough to be a mentor during the Fall semester, and it was a challenging, rewarding and fill in the blank with other positive adjectives here experience. On the latest episode of Manage-A-Bull, I'm joined by three additional team mentors to talk about our experiences. There might even be a pop culture reference to Cobra Kai. You'll just have to listen further to find out. So onto the show.

I'm gonna get right into introducing these fine folks. First, I want to introduce Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko. Kelechi is a three/two MBA with a concentration in Marketing. He is Buffalo born and raised. And he's interested in starting an online business. Kelechi how are you managing this morning?

Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko 1:38

I imagine, you know, trying to kind of wake up here. I'm used to waking up like 10 - 11am since we're still on a break. So I gotta get back in the swing of things.

Anders T Rosen 1:50

For all the listeners out there, I have very crudely made everyone wake up at their general wakeup time during the weekends for this recording. Kelechi is calling me out right away on that.

Next we have Megen Rose Rependa. Megen has her Bachelors in Philosophy from the University of Toronto, and is concentrating in marketing and consulting at UB. She is the VP of the UB Consulting Group. And when not working on her masters, she spends time riding horses, writing comics, and studying to become a certified yoga instructor. In fact, she was just telling us right now she is working on selling her horse to move up into the next level of horseback riding. So Megen, how are you managing next level horseback riding?

Megen Rose Rependa 2:38

Wow! That makes me sound like some sort of epic master. That is not the case. But I've been managing pretty okay. It's been a long month of being alone. And I'm about to start quarantine once I get back in Buffalo. So it'll be another long time of being alone. But by this point, we should all be used to it, right?

Anders T Rosen 2:59

You know, for what it's worth, you sold it to me as if epic horseback riding. That's how I heard it.

Megen Rose Rependa 3:05

You hear what you want to Anders.

Anders T Rosen 3:06

That's true, although isn't communication in the listener?

And finally, we've got Michael Ryman. Mike is a UB undergrad alumni as well. And he is in his second year at the MBA program finishing up the last semester in the joint JD/MBA program.

I don't know. How are you managing?

Michael Ryman 3:35

Anders, I'm managing well. I don't know if I could quite manage the legality of this program. But we can talk after about my fees, they're pretty generous.

Anders T Rosen 3:43

I have no doubt of that. I have no doubt. I've learned quite quickly. But for folks listening, I probably should have gone into the law. Just I'm working on a startup myself. And boy, you know, I'm in the wrong business. That's all I'm gonna say, Mike. He shows right.

He's just shaking his head at me going 'yeah, I know'.

Michael Ryman 4:06

When we get to the podcast about student loans, then we'll revisit that conversation about choosing the right path.

Megen Rose Rependa 4:10

Oh, my goodness.

Anders T Rosen 4:11

Oh, it's already gone there, folks. Oh, boy, we better get into the topic for today's scheduled program. So as I mentioned at the top, you know, these colleagues and I, we were part of UB's MBA Mentorship Program, which is a program where second year students get to work with first year students on helping them achieve kind of their highest levels while working through the first semester of the program, which is the most challenging semester of the program, at least in my humble opinion. So I kind of wanted to just have

each of us talk through a little bit what the mentorship program was like for us. What was our main takeaway? So I'd like to start first, working backwards. So we'll start with Mike. What was your biggest takeaway from being a mentor last semester?

Michael Ryman 5:01

It's definitely different being on the other side of the table, it's a lot more interesting, a lot more challenging to kind of hold yourself back when you've been through their situation, trying to give some advice without really holding their hand through it. It's really just a growing experience for them. So trying to walk that line is definitely an interesting one.

Anders T Rosen 5:20

It is, and it's very different online too, I think. You know, we had the opportunity to have mentors in person, and then we were mentors online, which is very different. Megen, what about you? What was the biggest takeaway for you last semester, being a mentor to first year students?

Megen Rose Rependa 5:36

Oh, my goodness, I think the biggest takeaway was, how difficult it is to build a rapport with people whom you've never met in person.

I think that it really sort of highlighted what all of our faculty are going through right now. What everybody on the other end of the zoom session is going through and really sort of put things into perspective on communication.

Anders T Rosen 6:08

Yeah, and I think you bringing it in about faculty is really important as well, because, you know, we might take it for granted sometimes, what it's like to be on the other end of the classroom.

But it's even more challenging in that virtual environment. Just thinking, are people listening to me? Are they really getting what I'm trying to sell? I'm sure we're gonna kind of dive into that some more as well. But Kelechi, what about you? What was your biggest takeaway last semester?

Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko 6:37

Yeah, I think for me, my biggest takeaway was, how much I actually had to give, in terms of how much I actually grew the first semester of school, is when I first signed on to be a mentor. I was like, am I good enough to be a mentor? Do I actually have enough advice to give but that when the mentee starts asking you questions, and start asking for advice, then like, all these things are clicking in my head. Like, oh, yeah, like I've been through this, I know how to, I can give advice on this. So it really just shows like, how much the MBA program actually grows you as a person. So that way, you're able to give advice to people.

Anders T Rosen 7:12

You know, and let's expand upon that for a second, because Kelechi I think you might be the youngest member of today's panel, and you're the three/two MBA and for the folks listening out, there three/two... actually, Kelechi, can you describe what the three/two MBA is?

Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko 7:27

Yeah, so the three/two is essentially, it's like a combined program with a bachelor's degree and an MBA. So essentially, I just skipped senior year. I just went straight into the MBA program. That's the easiest way to explain it.

Anders T Rosen 7:41

Yeah. And with that, that means that you might be a mentor for folks that are older than you. There might be students in your groups that, you know, are coming from a professional background where

they've worked for a while. You know, can you describe what that experience was like? If you felt it at all.

Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko 8:01

Yeah, it is interesting. So I feel like, our class is like a very young class. But then the newer students, the first years, they have a lot like their range is like, huge like that. Their class is a lot bigger than ours. I'm pretty sure, at least, in one of my groups, they were all, I'm pretty sure, they were younger than me. In one group, I had a lot of some older people. So it's not really as strange as it may seem, just because even though they may have more work experience than me. In terms of MBA, I have more MBA experience, and it's not that weird. But it is interesting, for sure, though.

Anders T Rosen 8:42

And you mentioned, you know that in the first semester of the program, we learned so much that there's a lot to give back.

Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko 8:49

Definitely

Anders T Rosen 8:49

A lot to share back and say, well, this is how I experienced it. And now my colleagues and classmates experienced it. I can tell you from that point of view, you know, being a mentor takes a lot of time and takes a lot of effort. Megen, what drove you to say yes?

Megen Rose Rependa 9:06

Oh, my goodness, well, this is not my first time mentoring. And it will hopefully not be my last. I was put into a similar position in my last year of my bachelors in UofT. So I joined a capstone course or applied to, it was a very similar process to how we got into the mentorship program for the MBA.

theoretical work, theoretical papers on how people like to interact, on how people like to work and on what people need to do so well, and the actual real life experience of it. And so it showed me that, you know, if I want to do this thing, if I want to actually go out into the world, and you know, apply what I'm learning in classrooms, then the best way to do it is to be in sort of a more corporate setting, where I am hoping the people around me do the job that they want to do. So I said, yes, because I know how much I've gotten from it before. And I knew that I would just experience that again.

Anders T Rosen 10:41

And you mentioned that you want to be a mentor, again, potentially, in the future. How do you maybe want to use the skills that you learned being a mentor in your future career?

Megen Rose Rependa 10:51

Well, good question. I suppose it will depend on how my career ends up. Falling into line, there's a lot of different ways that I see my future sort of unfolding. But in any and all of them, I see myself, whether it be through the career itself, or through a hobby,

being in a position where I'm able to give true and honest, difficult advice to people who need it. So right now I'm doing so in the horse world, I'm doing so with some of my more creative ventures as well. And I just hope that in the future, I'll be able to, you know, get little workers under my wing again.

Anders T Rosen 11:33

Absolutely yes. And Mike, you know, for you, when you were approached to be a first year mentor, you know, what drove you to agree to this program?

Michael Ryman 11:45

I think, partially it was the experience I had with my mentor.

And like Mege I've done mentor programs in the past.

I knew it's hard to know if you're ever really qualified to be a mentor, but I definitely felt like it's something I can handle. So just seeing how much even, just someone to go to and talk to, how useful that was. It was kind of just reassuring, and I thought I would do a good job being that person to another batch of first years coming in.

Anders T Rosen 12:13

You know, I love that you mentioned, am I qualified? Or you ask yourself that question. I have a feeling that's a question that almost everybody on this recording, ask themselves that question. You know, there's in the business world, if somebody can remind me of what the term is, there's Imposter Syndrome. I think that's what it is, Imposter Syndrome.

I mean, Mike, what do you think the qualifications are?

Michael Ryman 12:43

I think it's unique being a mentor. You're not looking for any professional qualifications.

I'm a JD/MBA. So I'm not exactly comparable, professionally, to some of my mentees, who were going for an MD, so I didn't really know how to actually really talk to him about that program. But I think it's learning about yourself and whether or not you can really just give advice on the personal side, and how to manage the stress and

the requirements of the program itself.

Anders T Rosen 13:17

And maybe we can talk a little bit about what the requirements are of the program.

For us, I can talk a little briefly about my experience as a mentee in the first semester, and then talk about kind of what it became like as a mentor. But as a mentee, you know, there was the opportunity to sit down one on one with my mentor to talk through my goals and my experiences. Also, we were in the building, we were at Alfiero or at Jacobs on North Campus for the UB School of Management. So there was the opportunity for you know, my mentor to kind of see me working with my team and walk over and you know, witness how we were getting along. Recognize when there might be conflict, recognize when there might be challenge and help kind of guide us through that.

A little different when you're online, because you can't really watch or witness as people are working through zoom or,

you know, sharing documents through Slack or some other channel like that. We just can't be there, can't be a fly on the wall. And I wonder, you know, maybe Kelechi, can you share a little bit about how you tried to overcome that challenge in being a mentor? Because you were required to kind of

bare witness and support however you could, but it's a little bit difficult when you can't just see them all the time.

Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko 14:44

Yeah, it was really interesting for sure. Like it's really difficult. So what I would do is I would meet every other week, at least with my teams, and I would just sit in for like an hour. So first, I would just kind of do updates like just see how they doing, catch up and stuff for like 20 minutes. And then I would just kind of just sit there like a fly on the wall, just kind of take notes as they conversated and did their work and stuff. But I feel like the biggest challenge is really transparency. Because when you're kind of just with them, I feel like they try to put on a show as like the kind of like this perfect in a sense. There's one of my teams, I had a few issues with, but I didn't know that until it kind of escalated too late, because they didn't really bring it up. So I thought, I really thought like everything was perfect in the group. And that they would bring up some issues here or there and ask for advice on things. But they kind of waited to like the last second to bring up this specific issue. And so I was like, shocked. I was like, oh, what! Like this is going on behind the scenes. So communication is really the key. You have to kind of be really proactive and ask specific questions to see how they're doing.

Anders T Rosen 15:59

I see some nodding coming from Megen here too. I think, Megen, you got a comment on that.

Megen Rose Rependa 16:07

I don't know. I think that it was almost an insurmountable obstacle. You know, there's no world in which we can be a fly on the wall, a perfectly invisible observing forest. Even when we were in the building. Kelechi and I were actually on the same team. So we had the same mentor. And, you know, as much as she was around the school, perhaps we weren't, perhaps we were doing our work someplace else, or you know, she was busy doing her own thing. So that is not to say that my mentor wasn't doing a good job. She was incredible. She is part of the reason I applied to go into the mentorship program in my second year. What what made her such a good mentor was when she did pop up. I knew that I could say exactly how I felt in the situation. I've remember the end of corporate champions, and I am going to make myself seem like a bad MBA student here. So please excuse me. Corporate Champions was coming ahead and we had that awful terrible week, before rehearsals, and corporate champions, the project itself had sort of fluttered out of all of our minds. And all of a sudden, we realized that we had to finish this project, so that we could fix it so that we could get some true advice on whether or not it was going to be workable deliverable in the end. And that was one of the most stressful weeks of my life. It was, you know, staying awake until three in the morning, staying at school until midnight. It was just endless poring through data and trying to figure out with Kelechi and the rest of my teammates, how to properly present what we were seeing, which was Zilch, by the way at that point. So, you know, it was really there. The name of my mentor was Kate. Kate was really there for me in the background of that, and she was working late one night, and I came across her in the hallway and I looked frazzled and upset. And she goes, you know, "what's wrong?" I said "you know what I hate? I hate everything. This is terrible. It's not going to go well. I haven't showered in three days, I don't think I've eaten a full meal in a week. What do I do?" She just laughs. And when you're doing it, you know it's hard. And whether or not the



rehearsal goes well, you'll take the next step after that to accept and what you're doing now, whether or not it's stressful and terrible, and you don't want to be in exactly what you should be doing. And so while she couldn't see how our group itself was interacting and functioning with each other, she was able to still come in at a time of need, and go, "listen! you're doing what you can, and you're doing what needs to be done." And that is exactly what I feel like a mentor needs to be able to do. They need to be able to give you that authentic, solid truth of 'Hey, listen! I struggled exactly this much last year. I didn't have all my ducks in a row. I didn't have all my boxes checked off. But it doesn't mean that you're going to be unsuccessful. It just means that you're in the middle of a learning process.' And so while she wasn't able to completely and totally dissect every situation and my team, she wasn't able to lay out the complex for me and help me sort through them on my own or with my teammates. She was there to say, 'you're gonna get through it, and you're gonna be here next year.'

Anders T Rosen 20:08

I think one of, there's a lot to unpack in that. And I think that's such a brilliant, you know, description of when a mentor can be so vital in the process of learning, you know, in those moments where everything's cooking. But I think something that also kind of stands out to me is that you kind of, your mentors from the past are going to have an effect on how you view mentorship in the future. It might not be exactly the same, you might not, you know, exhibit all the same qualities, but maybe your first email. I will say, my first email to my team was almost word for word the same as the first email I received from my mentor. Because I was like, I don't know what to say. I liked my mentors email, I'm just gonna do that. So that I don't have to think about this so much. And we'll figure it out from there. So there can be those like little tactical things where you don't have to worry so much. And you can just take what you've learned from somebody else. But then it's also viewing how mentor, you know, helped you through the most trying time in your academic career. Mike, you know, for you, what were the lessons that you took from your mentor that helped kind of inspire you this year?

Michael Ryman 21:25

I've been lucky, I've had a really great string of mentors, and specifically, the one for the MBA mentorship program is great in the fact that she was really hands off, which is what I thrive under. I like knowing that someone's there if I need to go to them, but I also like knowing that they're not gonna kind of press and there are gonna let me not flounder, but like, struggle a bit. You learn from your struggle. So I think that was easily the biggest takeaway for me, and I tried to really bring them into my style this year was just kind of let the MBA students struggle, because that's how you learn and thrive. Like Megan said, sometimes you need those three days without a shower and a week without a full meal. And then you really learn the lesson. I wouldn't go quite that far myself. But sometimes that's what you need in the moment to get through that deliverable.

Anders T Rosen 22:14

I'm not gonna lie, you know, I've been watching Cobra Kai, recently. I see some others on here agreeing, there's a scene in the first season where Johnny Lawrence is training his first student. And he \*spoiler alert\* for a moment here \*spoiler alert\* he throws him in the deep end. You got to see what happens. I don't think that's what you did as a mentor, Mike. I'm not suggesting that you just pushed anybody in the deep end. But I think I do see a similarity where it's kind of like, you know, you just want to let them as students, figure out what they need to figure out, and then be there as a teacher, as a counselor, as a mentor, when it's clear they need it.

Megen Rose Rependa 23:07

Honors, if I may, can I pop in here for a second, I actually have a question for you off. So I totally agree, I think that, you know, there's, there's a given for how much presence you need with your students. I know that if my mentor had been around much more than she was, I would have become very frustrated because I don't do well with oversight. Some people aren't like that. And, you know, in your mentoring with your students, were you able to strike a balance? Were you able to figure out what students needed more presence and what students needed less presence? And were you able to, you know, adapt to that situation, because I'm not sure that I was totally able to do that. I will be completely transparent. I think that's something that we all need to learn to do a little bit better.

Michael Ryman 24:01

It's to make that a little bit more difficult for you too, Anders. I will add to that,

Anders T Rosen 24:06

you guys! I'm the host.

Michael Ryman 24:09

you said it was gonna be conversational, you shouldn't have given this freedom. So really, what did virtual landscape do to that process? Obviously, it made it much more difficult, but how did you figure out that balance while doing it virtually over zoom? And now I don't have anything to add to make harder but if Kelechi can throw something on top, let's make it fun.

Anders T Rosen 24:29

I should be writing these down.

Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko 24:32

And then so what was the difference between what your mentor did and then how did your mentor have a good balance?

Michael Ryman 24:40

Okay, let's see. Here we go stretch, stretch it out. Let's see if I can figure this out.

Anders T Rosen 24:47

I did take a proactive approach on certain areas. So I was proactive about, you know, scheduling times. I was proactive about making the one on ones really important and interactive. And so we're scheduled as mentors to have one on one sessions a few times in the semester. And I will say that, you know, going to Kelechi's question for a second one thing that my mentor did in my first year, as he was, he provided the first of those one on ones, but not the second, because what he witnessed was that we were excelling as a team together. And I appreciated that. But something that I learned from it was I want to learn, I want to continually know what I need to do better on. I want that learning mindset to continue moving me forward. And one way to do that is just to communicate. To just ask somebody, you know, what are you witnessing? Share with me back what people are saying, and it doesn't have to be, you know, you don't have to know what some individual is saying, but just getting a sense of, triangulating 'where am I in my academic journey?' And I wanted to be as helpful and supportive as possible, especially in those one on one sessions. We've talked a bit today about, you know, the challenge of the virtual environment working together, right? We've talked about how you don't get to really see and hear necessarily what your mentees are going through, because maybe they're putting on something while you're in the room. It's the same thing that we do as students, when a teacher comes into a breakout room and says, 'what's everybody doing?' And you go, Oh, yeah, we're answering the question, don't worry about it. It's a bit forced. Whereas in the one on one, it's not as forced. Instead, it's, you know, you have to establish trust, you have to ensure that everyone on your team knows that you are discreet, that everything that's, you know, going on is between you and that other person and unless they want to share it, you know, you will not. And that's where the counseling part of it comes in. That's one of the biggest challenges, I think, is just taking on the role of a counselor in a sense that might be even, especially the case during the pandemic, you know, we having anybody to talk to through that is tough. But that was the most important thing for me was those one on ones that was where I took a real active approach where I asked hard questions, I gave tough advice. But I also listened, and I really enjoyed listening to. I will say, I loved my mentees, I really cared for them, I want them to succeed going forward. And that's another thing that I did is I made it clear like, "Hey, this is about you, and your journey. And I am just here along the way to help you in that. You have to remove your ego from any of that process." Okay, so I think I answered Megen's question. Did I answer Mike's question? I brought in 'virtual', I brought in 'how I achieved', I brought in a little bit of what Kelechi asked. I think I did it. Round of applause.

Megen Rose Rependa 28:18

It's like an onion. You peel out the layers.

Anders T Rosen 28:23

Okay, back to Anders being the host. Now, I don't know what my next question is, gosh!

you guys are good. Like, this is actually exactly what I was looking for. Yeah, this is killer. I think one of the things that, you know, we've talked a little bit about are mentors from the MBA program, but you know, there are folks in all sorts of walks of life that have probably supported us along our journeys, whether they're professional, personal, academic. Mike, I'll start with you, and then work backwards again, can you share with me kind of someone from your past who is a mentor that you look to, that you've learned from that's not from the MBA program, or maybe a faculty member, if that's somebody you want to point to that's fair?

Michael Ryman 29:07

So UB faculty member, but they aren't quite from the MBA program. He works for the Office of Student Engagement. He was the faculty member in charge of the undergrad mentor program that I worked for. And it was just, he's easily the person I think of when I think of probably the most impactful mentor I've ever had just because he had me from the age of 17 to the age of 21. I didn't really know what I was doing. Switching majors, don't know how to handle a real world. And I still remember going to his office every other week. Just at first there wasn't a rush, just answer a question. I don't know what I'm doing. Can you give me some advice and then later on, As the years passed, it was more like, hey, let's just talk. This is what's going on in my life. This is what I'm telling the people I'm supposed to be mentoring. How did you do this? So he's definitely the largest impact I've ever had as a mentor. He's just a rock and a hard place sometimes. Yeah.

Anders T Rosen 30:07

What about same question to you, Megen?

Megen Rose Renda 30:10

Well, I have two names that come to mind, which is surprising actually, because I haven't had a lot of mentors in my past as much as it's a process that I very much enjoy. It's not one that I've put myself in, you know, the other shoes for it very often. The first one that comes to mind is the man who headed up the mentorship program that I was a part of at University of Toronto. His name is Iro Wells. And he was the first professor who saw me who really truly wanted to figure out where I wanted to go, and what I could do with the skill set and toolset that I had in place. And I was in his class in a very strange time. You know, it's your fourth year, I was doing it in philosophy. So there was no clear path, I wasn't sure if I wanted to go into a life of academia. I considered it for quite a while. And I didn't know if I wanted to go

into law, which was another thing that I was considering doing with a philosophy degree. And then, of course, the third option was business. And he was the first faculty that I ever asked for advice from, he was the first person who I went up to and said, this is what I like to do. This is what I have done in the past. I don't know what I'm gonna do in the future, can you help me? And I truly believe that if I reached out and emailed him today, he would still be willing to sit down with me virtually, and figure out where I've come so far. And, you know, try to go through the process with me all again. And I think that's what made him a really good mentor, he really felt like he actually cared, he actually saw what I had to offer. And he was able to help me, you know, weave those different little tendrils into a very, you know, actualized path. The other mentor, because I did mention that there were two is my sister actually, and she is probably the only other person who I will go to advice for, because she is such a hard person, she loves to just give you the down and dirty of it. She's actually a trained psychologist, though, she does not go into psychologizing mode with me, you know, ethical reasons. But she's so willing to look at me and go, you're being so dumb. Shut up! You know, like, this moment is not the rest of your life, this moment is not everything that you are making it out to be. And you're piling little bits on little bits on little bits, and you're making a big Frosty The Snowman, out of a few little snowflakes. So all of that is to say, you need someone who's willing to strip you down so that you can, you know, build yourself back up and in a way that you want to be seen. So there are my two mentors.

Anders T Rosen 33:25

Yeah. And I appreciate, you know, looking at mentors in both in different areas of your life, too. I think that's really important. Kelechi, same question to you.

Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko 33:38

Yeah. So for me, I feel like I don't have any formal mentor, like some people. Some people ask people for like to be like a formal mentor. I don't have anything like that. But I do have, I guess, unofficial mentors in different areas of my life. I guess one of them is kind of official. So one is my LeaderCore coach who's like a mentor to me, her name's Julia Jornsay-Silverburg. She works in marketing, but like, she was very helpful, especially my first semester in the MBA program, she was also a three/two graduate. So like, when I first met her, and I was telling her like, how stressed I was with the program. She was really encouraging. She was like, if you're a three/two MBA, that means like, they don't just hand those out. Like, that means you're like, qualified to be here. So it's gonna be tough, but like, you're good enough to be here, so don't worry about it. So she was really helpful in that regard. Other mentors I have are my parents, I would consider mentors, especially my dad, who has his own business. He's been running it for like, since before I was even born. He's had a great career. So always go to my parents for, you know, career advice and just life advice in general. And then there's a guy named Matthew Gardiner. He's kind of like a spiritual mentor to me. My faith is something that's really important to me. So having mentors in that aspect is helpful too. So kind of have like a personal Board of Directors. It's kind of like a buzzword that people are on. But I've got a lot of people I like to get advice from.

Anders T Rosen 35:06

Now, that's great. The personal Board of Directors, I've heard that too before. And I think it's a great description of what, you know, group of mentors can be for you. And Kelechi, you know, to continue on, what's one piece of advice now that you have gone through the process of being a mentor. What's one piece of advice you would give to someone who might be a mentor for MBA students in the future?

Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko 35:35

Advice I would give it to someone who wants to be a mentor. That's a great question. I would say, don't put too much pressure on yourself to know all the answers. Because sometimes my mentees would ask me something. It's not something that I've personally been through. But I would just tell him, like what I would do in this situation. So we're kind of both just shooting blind. But don't be afraid to do that. Just kind of like you have enough cumulative knowledge to kind of come up with like an answer to something. And the problem is solved. So don't be afraid to problem solve in real time.

Anders T Rosen 36:12

I love that. Megen, what's one piece of advice that you would give?

Megen Rose Rependa 36:18

Well Anders, you keep asking me for one thing, can I give you two?

Anders T Rosen 36:22

Yeah, no. Well, I don't know. Maybe the rules say only one, hold on.

Megen Rose Rependa 36:26

Okay, well, I'm a rule breaker at heart. So it's okay. Here's some advice number one from I think something that I did well, and then piece of advice number two, from something that I did not do well. Number one, be authentic, be willing to show where you failed. Because that is the only way that you're going to be able to convince your mentees that you've actually learned anything. Because that's the only way that you can learn anything, you know, you're going through the process, you're making mistakes, be open and willing to share those and then you know, be able to not just show all of your failures, but build off of those, use those as a foundation for the advice that you're going to hear. And then the second piece of advice. And this one is always very, very, very difficult to figure out how to do, but learn what your mentees need from you, instead of what you're able to give. Because, you know, like I said, I have a style. And that style doesn't match everybody's needs. Anders you like somebody with you to help drive you towards growth and progression. I like to drive myself towards both growth and progression. And I hate when other people, you know, try to get entangled in that. And both are just as valid a way of going through the process. But as a mentor, you need to be able to fill both roles. And,

you know, being more adaptable to other people's styles is something that's extremely difficult, especially over something like a zoom session, where it's very difficult to read body language, it's very difficult to see what all your mentees are doing. You know, it's hard to read minds. But it's also hard to ask your mentees to speak their mind. Because nobody wants to tell you and sometimes people don't know exactly what they need. So all that is to say. Those are my two pieces of advice.

Anders T Rosen 38:35

Thank you. Those are fantastic pieces of advice. Mike, you have some big shoes to fill with advice to give here too.

Michael Ryman 38:42

Yeah, can we start switching the order around here? Maybe put Megenn last because she has done the most prep work and research for this. The rest of us are just starting to look bad at this point.

Megen Rose Rependa 38:52

I prepped for nothing Michael Ryman,

Anders T Rosen 38:55

that's on you, Mike.

Michael Ryman 38:57

Don't worry Anders, I'm throwing you under the bus after we go anyway. So I would say my biggest piece of advice, and it's kind of unique, because you'll always have this opportunity. But for the mentorship program, you're not alone. Like you can reach out to your other mentors. You have that class for a reason. You have Professor Rogers, she's always willing to talk and have resources available to you. You don't have to be the sole pot of wisdom for first year MBA students, you can reach out to people and it will be just fine. You don't always have to have the answer. And it's okay to not always have the answer. It would be concerning if you always have the answer. So just knowing that you're not alone, that you do have that resource available to you and not to throw you under the bus Anders and I take back that host cap. I knew you knew it was coming. What would your piece of advice be?

Anders T Rosen 39:47

You know, I've been thinking about it because I had a feeling I could see in your eyes. You're being sneaky and mischievous

Michael Ryman 39:55

my favorite

Anders T Rosen 39:57

Ah, I think my piece of advice To listen, full stop.

Michael Ryman 40:08

Is that where we add in the the soundtrack track, 'awwww' from the crowd. Just so that it would fit perfectly.

Megen Rose Rependa 40:15

That's where we add in 'top 50 MBA'.

Anders T Rosen 40:17

That's where it is. That's where it is.

I could try. I'll see what I can do on the post production. Top 50 MBA!

Well, I think before I let y'all go, I just want each of you to have a chance to kind of share what you're working on now. What your next steps are if you want to share you know, anything where people can find you, whether it's on LinkedIn or somewhere else. So Mike, you asked if you could not go last. So I'm gonna you know, give you that chance right now. Any last words, Mike?

Michael Ryman 40:53

Oh, dear. I'm happy to go before Meegen this time, I feel like I'll look slightly more impressive for the 30 seconds until Kelechi and her get to go. I'm currently just working on graduating trying to, you know, enter that corporate world, pass the bar after graduation. That's really the next hurdle for me.

Just I guess my parting piece of advice would be whether you're a first year MBA student, an undergraduate who happen to get lost and find this podcast or any other grad program, you're just almost done with a year. And if you're almost done with your program just let it out, almost there.



Anders T Rosen 41:31

Megen, any last words? I'm making it sound a little bit dramatic. I shouldn't make it sound like that.

Michael Ryman 41:37

Let's put a lot of pressure on her

Megen Rose Rependa 41:40

Listen, last words, the drama, I am eating it all up. With Mike he forgot to add that into his list of things he's working on, you know, making sure that I'm actually looking at him with you know, not just things, of course,

What am I working on, I mean, I'm finishing the school semester, yes.

I'm working on keeping my sanity during COVID it's been a very, very difficult time. You know, that's actually where I'm going to put my last piece of advice, be open and honest with yourself about how hard this is. Because I'm not having a good time. I'm struggling so hard. I'm a very social person. I love people. I love talking to people. I love meeting people. I love being with people. And I've been alone for this entire month.

And I live in Buffalo with roommates, with whom I'm very, very close. So

it's been an adjustment for me just like, I'm sure it is for all of you.

But if you're not used to telling people that you're struggling, get used to it. Because that is the only way that we're all going to be okay on the other end of this. So reaching out to our networks, and really ensuring that people see you.

Anders T Rosen 43:07

We've talked a little bit before on this podcast about the importance of vulnerability. And I think that kind of that ties in directly to what you're talking about there, Megen. So I really appreciate that advice to kind of take home for folks.

And speaking of taking us home, Kelechi. Take us!

Michael Ryman 43:23

Yeah, so no pressure.

Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko 43:25

Yeah, no pressure.

While I'm working on also finishing, starting the last semester so that I can finish to graduate.

So I'm excited for that. Starting to begin the job search, even though I know it's kind of late. I know people start like the job search, you know, in September but a brand new year.

So some advice?

Well, I guess this would be advice for students or people interested in coming to the MBA program or any MBA program.

Don't be afraid to fail. Because that my first semester of the MBA program, I was like, terrified.

I'm like a very, I'm like an overachiever. So in like my undergrad, I was like, had all the highest grades and stuff. So coming to the MBA program was like, huge, there's just a big difference. So like, don't be afraid to fail now when it's just grades on the line, than failing later, when you're actually working and there's like, a billion dollar contract or something like that. I'd rather like go in school than not have that happen, but you know what I mean? So just don't be afraid to fail. You know, seek out help. get advice from people, and you'll be alright.

Anders T Rosen 44:44

And with that, I think we've gotten some amazing advice from three fantastic classmates. I'm so glad that Mike, Megen and Kelechi could join me today on this, I think was a really great, deep and just

Learning conversation related to mentorship. So thank you to all three for joining me for the first episode of the spring 2021 season of the Manage-A-Bull podcast. And with that, I'm Anders Timothy Rosen and how am I managing right now?

Usually I say any better I couldn't stand it but you know what? I'm just managing and that is okay. Take care folks.

An immense Thank you to Kelechi Chillis-Ihenko, Megen Rose Rependa and Michael Ryman for joining me on this episode of Manage-A-Bull. I also want to give shoutouts to the four additional second year mentors who made the mentorship program in Fall 2020 such a success. Michael Collet, Ed Halady, David Antini and Vadim Morogai.

If you're interested in applying to the UB School of Management, or learning more about the programs here, including the full time MBA program, just visit the website [mgt.buffalo.edu](http://mgt.buffalo.edu).

The Manage-A-Bull podcast is produced by me Anders T Rosen in partnership with the UB School of Management. Special thanks to Dean Paul Tesluk, Assistant Dean Erin O'Brien, Assistant Director of Recruitment Aaron Shaw and Assistant Director of Marketing Harrison Cheung. Fans of the Manage-A-Bull podcast can find us on Stitcher, Apple podcasts, Google as well as a number of other listening platforms. Don't forget to leave a review of Manage-A-Bull in your favorite podcast app and to subscribe.

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