

Business Academy gives students real-world edge

Las Vegas is big enough for residents to enjoy the perks of living in a metropolitan area, yet small enough for them to feel they really belong to a community. We're a growing city with endless possibilities for young professionals entering the workforce. However, one of the biggest challenges is breaking into that workforce and setting yourself apart from the mass of qualified people competing for the same position.

As I navigated through law school, the Las Vegas Business Academy gave me the chance to peek into the minds of highly successful industry leaders and provided snapshots of how different industries work. LVBA offered me access most students don't have, and most young professionals don't see for years. Working alongside professionals who make Las Vegas tick allowed me not only to determine what I liked and disliked; it also opened many doors.

And LVBA benefits businesses, as well, helping them find future employees or partners while giving back to students by providing them with real-world tools and insights.

Las Vegas is a city under constant development. We have seen an increase in startups over the past few years downtown after Zappos came in and rejuvenated the area. However, much can still be done. We need to find new ways to support small businesses and entrepreneurs so starting a business is feasible for anyone who wishes to do so.

I cannot speak for all young professionals, but what seems to be a trend is finding a company that offers a work-life balance. You hear a lot about how millennials are looking for different incentives than previous generations. We want to work hard, no doubt about it, but we also want to be able to enjoy some of the fruits of our labor while we are still young. So, does the job provide the option to work from home at times? Flexible vacation hours? Does the culture of the business give the impression that it cares about the employee, or



GUEST COLUMN:
DAVEN CAMERON

are employees just numbers who are easily replaceable? People will work extremely hard for you if you invest in them.

LVBA invests in its students. I appreciated being able to hear my mentors' personal stories, where they started and how far they'd come. I don't

think I met anyone who was handed a business or just fell into a position as vice president or chief financial officer. Each one started at the bottom, learned the industry, worked hard and sacrificed a great deal. I admire that. It mirrors LVBA's vision and commitment to offering students professional experience that isn't possible in the classroom.

As a millennial, I don't subscribe to the idea of entitlement, and I don't think I'm alone. A significant number of millennials enter the market with an excessive amount of student-loan debt. People don't want to spend their lives working at a job they don't like simply to pay off debt

they incurred for the sole purpose of securing a job. The aim of LVBA is to alleviate these issues for students, allowing them to join the workforce debt-free.

That said, millennials see employment a bit differently. The expectation of young professionals, specifically millennials, has changed from past generations. Employers expect them to be educated, the more degrees the better. And once on the job, millennials are expected to further pay their dues as the generation before has done. What used to be an entry-level position now often requires a degree. Right or wrong, the expectations for young professionals have increased.

At the end of the day, we all want to find purpose in what we do and to be valued for our work. This goes back to investing in the employees, ensuring they have the skills necessary to succeed while feeling that their work is valued.

Daven Cameron is a recent graduate of the Las Vegas Business Academy, a nonprofit organization that provides selected college students financial aid and mentoring to encourage future business leaders in Las Vegas.

Las Vegas rich in skilled mentors, rare opportunities

Growing up in Las Vegas, you get this false sense of reality. You become accustomed to five-star five-diamond resorts, world-renowned restaurants, a 24-hour lifestyle and access to seemingly limitless opportunities. It isn't until you leave that you begin to understand just how much Las Vegas has to offer.

Las Vegas provides the opportunity to succeed. Young professionals can be mentored by incredibly successful individuals. It has this feel of a big city, but maintains such a small, close-knit community. You have the ability to dream big and realize your dreams. All it takes is the drive and commitment to create your own success story.

The Las Vegas Business Academy realized this and decided to invest in the future of young professionals. LVBA helped further my dream of earning my Juris Doctor with financial support for my last year of law

school. The program casts a wide net across the Las Vegas Valley and finds mentors who have been successful in a variety of prominent industries. Through the program, we gain an "all-access pass to Las Vegas." We can pick the brains of these individuals and understand their success stories

— what it took to get where they are, how they have made a difference in our valley, what struggles they encountered and what advice they can provide.

The Las Vegas Business Academy's program is not easy. Our mentors constantly push us and mold us. LVBA requires drive and commitment that is required to succeed. This program has helped me in so many



GUEST COLUMN:
BROOKE LUNA

ways by the lessons it has taught, such as public speaking, creating personal relationships, how to communicate properly and carry myself at a variety of professional functions. It teaches you the meaning of hard work and keeps you humble.

What I found common among

all of my mentors is that being the smartest or the most talented is helpful, but the willingness to work hard is even more important. When you make a commitment, you do everything in your power not just to meet expectations, but to surpass them. Through the LVBA program, I created relationships, built a support system and network and learned many helpful and useful practices.

Many people view millennials as entitled, ready to move onto another job opportunity when it comes knocking. However, LVBA humbled me and showed me that hard work and dedication are needed to succeed, not only as an employee but as a future employer.

As an aspiring professional and as a millennial, I understand that I still have much to learn. It is important that an employer is willing to teach and challenge me. I strive to become someone whose focus is not to further her own career, but to work as part of a team in furthering the success of the business. At the same time, it is important to have an employer and career that make going to work enjoyable each day.

Brooke Luna is a recent graduate of the Las Vegas Business Academy, a nonprofit organization that provides selected college students financial aid and mentoring to encourage future business leaders in Las Vegas.