

Interviewee: Alise Breton
Interviewers: Ashley Wenzel and Nicole Marin
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Abstract: Alise Breton is a 39-year-old woman who was born and raised in Oxford, Massachusetts. She currently lives in Dudley, Massachusetts with her husband and dog. Alise works for Millbury Credit Union as a retail director who oversees four of the five branch locations. In this role, she works as a manager to the other branches and runs the social media for the company. In this interview, Alise discusses her path to becoming a career-focused, passionate woman. She began working on a farm before she made her way to becoming a retail director and playing a major role in volunteering for the Women's Success Network. She highlights the various projects she has been a part of and their future direction and goals to continue impacting the community in Worcester, Massachusetts. In addition, she reflects upon the importance of her family and the role her parents played in her becoming a strong and independent leader. She emphasizes the impact the city of Worcester has had in her lifetime and what it means to be a big fish in a little pond when it comes to working at the job she loves as a retail director.

NM: Okay, so good morning.

AB: Good morning.

NM: Hello [laughs]. Thank you so much for coming in. My name is Nicole.

AW: And I'm Ashley.

NM: And we're so happy to have you for this project. Thank you so much for helping us. We could just start off with you telling us a little bit about yourself, a little bit about your background.

AB: Sure. So, I am... My name is Alise Breton. I'm 39 years old. I currently work for Millbury Credit Union as Retail Director. So, we have five branch locations and I oversee four of them. I also do their social media. We're a smaller credit union so there's a lot of little projects and initiatives that I do within my current role. I was born and raised in Oxford, Massachusetts. I've worked in Worcester as a branch manager before. We have two Worcester branches in the credit union, so I oversee them, so I'm still involved—very much involved—in the city. Currently, I live in Dudley [Massachusetts] right now with my husband and our dog.

NM: Perfect. So, when it comes to obviously working with a credit union, how have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, and interests in your life?

AB: Like work-life balance you're looking for?

NM: Yeah, work-life balance.

AB: I definitely... I think being in the banking industry, you know, it's... a lot of my work I can't take home with me. My job now is a little different because I'm more in a management role, but as a branch manager, or working in retail banking, you know, there's privacy and confidentiality in banking so it's not like I could take that stuff home with me. So, I'd work 40-45 hours a week at the branch, and then it was very easy for me to kind of just leave my job there. And then go home and do the stuff that I enjoy doing on the, on the side. So that's been relatively easy for me. I don't have children so I would say I'm very much more career focused. I've always been that way, whether it's from when I first started—I mean—I started working when I was 14 years old and I've always been just very driven, passionate about what I do, and so when it comes to work, I... it's definitely a top priority in my life I would say.

AW: So, you mentioned you started working at 14 years old. What kind of jobs did you work growing up and how did that lead you to where you are now?

AB: So, I started working at a farm in Sutton, Massachusetts, it's Whittier's Farm. My mother had gone to school with one of the owners and she, she was a preschool teacher at the time, so they went there for a field trip, and they asked, "Oh, what age do you hire at?" and it was 14 so I got my first job there doing that and it was outside like in the fields picking vegetables. My first day, the season had just started so they were prepping the fields for planting, so I had to, you know, with a bucket, pick up bigger rocks in the field and bring them over to a tractor. It was a hot day, it was brutal. I was 14, I came home crying, I didn't want to do it. My mother was like, "No, this will build character, like you're sticking it out, you know, it's just the summer you need something to do." And I did stick it out and I ended up working for them for nine years. So, I didn't leave until I actually graduated college. So, they had the field work and then they also owned a farm stand store, I would say. So, I worked most of the time there but that's probably where I really started—how can I describe that—having a passion for what I was doing. My boss definitely empowered me to make decisions and I really started to like working.

AW: Wow, that's awesome.

NM: Okay, so I just want to know, like I mean your mom was the one pushing you, you know, obviously she wanted you to like realize like your potential and like what you could potentially do like in the future. Do you and her like have a great relationship would you say?

AB: We do, yeah, both my parents, I have a very good relationship with both of them and they're definitely role models for me. They're both very hardworking people. My mother, she raised both my brother and I. She would do like odd end jobs here and there, but she didn't go back to school to be a nurse until we were in college. Actually, all three of us were in college at one point, isn't that embarrassing [laughs]. Seeing your mom on campus, it was... but you know, my dad was

the one that went to work every day and he had no education, he didn't go to college, but he started in the grocery business and ended up really building his career and he actually just retired at 55. And when he did retire, he was very successful, so they're both role models for me.

NM: That's great.

AW: So, you said that all three of you guys were in college at the same time. Were you all at the same school?

AB: We were, unfortunately [laughs]. So, I really didn't know what I wanted to do when I graduated high school and I was—I wasn't that—I was a good student, but I wasn't the best student, like I didn't really excel in academics, but my parents were like, "You're going to college." I applied to one school, which was Worcester State and they said, "Okay, you can live on campus, or we'll buy you a car... help you buy a car, and you could commute." So, I was like, well, I want the car, so I did that. So, thank God I got in because [laughs] I don't know what my backup plan was. But I commuted back and forth to Worcester State and then I think it was like my second year, my mother ended up enrolling in courses and my brother, he's two years behind me as well. So, we graduated, kind of back-to-back. But my brother did the same thing, he ended up going to Worcester State and commuting as well.

NM: Right. So, you mentioned how, like, you didn't really have like a backup plan. Right? So, do you feel like the choices that you've made in your life—like if you had made a different one—would it have led you like where you are right now?

AB: Yeah, so it's funny that you... because it is something that I think about a lot. Like if I had gone out a little bit more, like if I had, you know, even if I went to school in Boston, or if I had gone to another state, like would the opportunities that were presented to me, would I end up in the same, same position. Or if I got a corporate job out of college. I often think about that a lot. I don't, I don't know. I definitely think my drive would have been the same, but I don't know how it would have played out. I can't say I regret it but it's something that I wish I had experienced.

NM: Right.

AW: So just going off of that, do you think there are pros and cons, specifically to the path you chose?

AB: I think the pros, I ended up graduating college and I had no debt, which definitely set me up for I think financial success. I ended up buying a condo at 25, which was very young. So that definitely was a pro but again, what I sacrificed as far as experience-wise would probably have been a con.

NM: So, what was your college experience like? Like, what did you graduate with, did you proceed to, you know, get your master's, how do you feel like that went?

AB: So, I said before... like academics... I never really excelled at academics like I really had to work for my grades, it just didn't come naturally. But at the time that I was in school, you know, second year, they're like, "Okay, you need to pick a major," and I still didn't know what I wanted to do. Originally, I was kind of thinking history and maybe going to law school, but at that time, I was really... I really enjoyed writing, writing classes, and literature. So, I ended up picking an English Lit degree and I graduated with that. I had no idea what I wanted to do. I didn't know... I didn't want to be a teacher at the time so I really... I ended up... the farm that I worked at, they were members of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and we had done a lot of events for them, and they were hiring a temporary assistant, and they ended up hiring me. After three months, the original assistant had returned and then they opened up a programming events coordinator position for me, so I stayed with them for a year and—I just lost my train of thought—what was your original question? [laughs].

NM: Oh, yeah, just like how college was like for you and like, did you proceed like into further education afterwards?

AB: Yeah, so I had thought about, at that point, once I graduated I had thought about getting my master's, but I was so done with school at that time, and I didn't know what I wanted to do. So, I never, I never pursued it. And I haven't pursued it since.

AW: So, after you, you said you worked that job for a year and then what happened after that?

AB: So that's when I was introduced to the banking industry. The bankers would come to our events. They were always the last ones there networking, having a good time, I was like, "Oh, that looks like a fun job [laughs]." And they ended up having an opening and they hired me. I had no banking experience and the position that they hired me at was actually a desk position so they— looking back— like knowing what I know now, they I think took... that was a risk for them, but I ended up learning what I could and just kind of pursued my career.

NM: So how do you feel like your experience, like there, working at like for a credit union has been, because you've been there this whole time, right?

AB: Well, I actually left for two years. I was an assistant manager at the time in Worcester and I really wanted to take that next step and be a branch manager, so I ended up pursuing an opportunity with a savings bank in Marlborough [Massachusetts]. I left and went there. I worked for them for maybe like six months to a year before I was promoted to branch manager there. And then I ended up moving back—it was—the commute was very difficult. It was like a 45-minute commute with no traffic. So, when I was interviewing with them, I was like, "Oh, this isn't bad, I can handle it." But when you're commuting, you need to get there for 8:30 in the morning, that 45 minutes turned into like an hour and a half. So that was a lot for me and that particular bank, they were, they were bigger and my job and role there was just being a branch manager where I was used to working for a smaller credit union where my job might have been

being a branch manager, but I'd have different projects and different initiatives that I'd be working on and I really liked that freedom. So, I ended up going back to Millbury Credit Union after the two years and as a branch manager at that time.

AW: Can you just tell us a little bit about the freedom you just explained and like, what different roles you took?

AB: Sure. So, when I came back, they had... all their marketing, they were outsourcing to a third party, but they knew that they needed to at that time. Like Facebook was really big and they knew that they needed to if they wanted to compete, you know, to start getting involved in social media. So, they put together a project team and they looked at their retail employees, like who would be good in this. And I, my... I've always like just volunteered and, you know, participated in any level that I could. So, I ended up being on the project team and then eventually that kind of grew and developed into a social media manager which I still do, to this day and we work with actually another advertising company on that as well, which is helpful. But any other projects and initiatives... so a lot of times because we're smaller, if we're releasing a new product, or there's, you know, a sales idea or even, you know, one of the things that I do a lot is we do like employee appreciation events or days at the credit union. So, I'll volunteer for that and kind of organize that, which my role as Retail Director, I really like the growing and developing employees but then the outside stuff is really what I love and what I'm also passionate about. The projects, and you know, taking something, an idea of something, and then building it and actually making it happen.

NM: Amazing. So, now that you mentioned a little volunteering, have you been involved in any like other volunteering or community work? And if so like what specific groups did you work for? Or volunteer for?

AB: So, my big volunteer group right now is the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Women's Success Network. So, I chair that network and that's about supporting and inspiring women in business. So, we do different initiatives throughout the year with that group, but then the credit union, we also give back to the community. So, we do the Worcester Alzheimer's Walk every year. I participate on that team. There's an event that we do every October. It started during COVID, it was a trunk or treat. Have you ever heard of trunk or treat? So, we decided to do a trunk or treat event at the credit union where all the employees would dress up and decorate their cars so that started as an idea and we've been doing it ever since and the event has actually grown a lot. I'm trying to think of other... Really when it comes to volunteering, if I'm asked, I usually say yes, just because I do love to give back. And I like the camaraderie that happens when you volunteer, especially with a group of other strong women. It's just great to be involved and I'm very passionate about it.

NM: That's good, that's amazing.

AW: Yeah, that's awesome. So, going off of that, what would you consider some of the major accomplishments you've achieved, whether that's through volunteer work, or just your work in general?

AB: Major accomplishments that I've personally achieved or?

AW: Yeah. I mean, or as a, as a group, whatever.

AB: So personally, I think probably my position as Retail Director, looking back, I didn't think that I would... It's not that I didn't think I would get this far, but I didn't, I didn't really expect it I guess. I feel like if you work hard and you're passionate about something, you know, doors open for you and that's... I'm very proud of the position that I'm in now. As a group, you know, the, the Women's Success Network started with an idea and just so... the chamber had started it a few years prior to me getting involved and we restarted just based on a conversation that I was having with a woman that I had met at a networking event. And she said, "Let's get this group started" and we did, and we've been doing it successfully for probably, gosh, it's like three years I would say. You know, we've done various drives and collections for veterans, new mothers. We've participated, I don't know if you're familiar with the Yellow Tulip Project which brings mental health awareness, especially in adolescence. So, we've done a lot of great events and initiatives as part of that group and I would say I'm very proud of that as well.

AW: That's awesome.

NM: So you are, like you said, a part of the Women's Success Network. Are there any like upcoming ideas you guys are working on? Like any more expansion you want to do?

AB: Yep. So right now, we're looking at doing the Purse Project, I don't know if you've ever heard of that. So, it's basically women will donate their used purses and then they get filled with like different toiletries or stuff that, you know, we donate to other women for their use. So, we're actually thinking about doing that. In the upcoming months, we have a huge networking event that's going to happen in June called Ladies on the Lake. So, it's on Webster Lake, we actually rent out their steam ship and that's a networking event so other business professionals, meeting each other and, you know, exchanging business. We also do an event in November, called Commerce on the Common which is in Grafton [Massachusetts] and that supports women owned businesses, so they'll feature their businesses during a specific time of night, and you know, women will come and you know, network, have cocktails, shop, all while supporting other business owners. And then we'll probably do some sort of breakfast meeting in the fall where we'll bring in a woman speaker, like a motivational speaker, to speak to the group.

AW: Wow, that's awesome. So just moving on, did the COVID pandemic affect you, your family, or your business in any way?

AB: I would say yes, I think COVID affected everyone. I was fortunate enough—and I say fortunate now—I don't know if I necessarily felt this way at the time, but we never really closed our doors. The credit union we were open for appointment only, or you can utilize our drive thru for your banking but we, you know, our employees worked through the pandemic, we didn't have anyone really working from home. So that was actually great because it kept some normalcy for us. You know, banking at the time during COVID, people weren't spending a lot of money, so people were saving money. So, during the two years of COVID, banks were doing exceptionally well, rates were still low. So, it was probably coming - transitioning people out of COVID that was more challenging, I think, and it is still challenging. I think in the banking industry right now is more challenging than, than COVID.

NM: Okay, I just have a question like my own curiosity like what exactly like do you do on a day-to-day basis like what is your, you know, role look like when you're at the office?

AB: So right now, the position that I have right now... so I oversee four of our branches, so four different credit union locations, and those branch managers report to me. So, part of my role is, you know, offering them assistance, whether it's - they need assistance with staffing, like coaching and developing their staff, you know, putting together sales initiatives for them, making sure you know, on a compliance standpoint, they're all doing what they're supposed to be doing. So, it's kind of just overseeing the operations of those four branches. And then with the social media piece it might be scheduling posts, taking pictures of any external events that we're doing within the credit union, whether it's employees that are volunteering, and then also the - because I like to do employee appreciation and engage our employees and might be like working with HR [Human Resources] on ideas for the coming months. So this week, we're doing a Red Sox, Woo Sox, Opening Day luncheon for employees, so might be kind of coordinating what we're going to do for that event.

AW: How is your relationship with the people that you work with?

AB: I would say I have a very good relationship with the people that I work with. My manager team is strong. I have a good relationship with my boss. The credit union, we, we're a community credit union, but it's more like a family, we really identify as that. So, I would say it's, it's good.

AW: Awesome.

NM: Do you feel like having such a good like support system where you like can like call them your family really helps you thrive like in your workspace?

AB: Yes, I think it gives you like the freedom to make mistakes without being judged or you know, or had the confidence in yourself and whereas like when I had left for two years, I didn't really feel that, I was... definitely felt almost hindered too, like, I didn't feel like I was empowered to make decisions or learn, you know, because as you grow, you know, you're going

to make mistakes, you're going to, you're going to mess up like I really didn't feel like I had that support and maybe acceptance, so I was constantly nervous about... I just wasn't confident in myself, nervous that I was going to mess up or someone was going to, you know, think that I didn't know what I was doing, and honestly, at the time, that was my first role as a manager, so I probably didn't know what I was doing, you know. So, it definitely makes a difference. Whereas now, like I've been established with this institution, they know who I am like I have a little bit more flexibility to kind of grow without being judged if that makes sense.

AW: So, I know you talked a little bit about your relationship with the people at work. Do you want to tell us a little bit about your relationships, either socially or at home?

AB: Sure. So, I am extremely close with my family, probably closer than most people. My husband and I ended up buying a house one house down from my brother and sister-in-law and their three kids, so there's one house that separates us. And at the time that we were doing that my parents were looking, they lived in the next town over, but they were looking to downsize and so they had sold their house but the market kind of started going crazy at that point so they wanted like a one-level ranch because you know, they thought okay, this is going to be our final house, this is where we want to retire. But at that time, you know that was like what people were going crazy over. So, the inventory with what they were looking for was sparse. So, we ended up building an in-law apartment off of my house, so they live there. So, the whole family lives on the street [laugh], which I love, it works for us. I don't, I don't know if, you know, I tell people that and they're like, you're crazy, you live next door to your parents and your brother, but I'm very close with them. And my husband's family, they're, they're more separated. He's got family in Maine, his parents are in Florida, so there's, there's a good balance for us.

NM: Okay, perfect. So, you know, clearly your family like means a lot to you and you hold them like of high value. Like, what kind of position did they play and, you know, your career, like if they were involved at all, actually in it.

AB: They were definitely involved. I think both my parents worked hard for everything that they have. They really had to... it didn't just come to them. You know, they weren't wealthy, they, like I said, my father didn't go to college. And he started at one position and worked his way up. So that really had kind of set an example for me. And then just my mom, you know, raising her children and making those sacrifices and then when we were—got to an age—she kind of went on her own path and decided to become a nurse and she went back to school for that so that was also very inspiring.

AW: Do you see qualities in yourself that your mom has?

AB: Yes, I would say absolutely. Yeah. Both my parents. They're both perfectionists. I'm perfectionist [laughs]. Yeah, without a doubt, we're all a lot alike, very similar.

AW: Can you tell us about any specific traits or personality characteristics that you do see in yourself?

AB: I would say I'm probably more like my dad than my mom. My mom is actually, she's, she's a very nurturing, loving - not that my dad's not [laughs]. I don't know how to describe our, our similarities.

NM: The work ethic seems like it's coming from both.

AB: Yeah, I mean, yeah it really, it really does. They're a lot alike. Yeah, I don't know.

AW: That's okay.

AB: Yeah.

NM: So, you had a lot of success in your life. Do you feel like, like how would you define like the actual word success to yourself? Like do you feel like you've reached it? Do you feel like you can still keep going?

AB: I think I could probably still keep going, but I think for me, I would want to continue to do something that I'm, I'm passionate. So, you know, when you think of banking, there's like, you think of like a banker that's, you know, went to school for accounting or finance, you know, Wall Street. That's not... I've come to the realization that that's not me, that's not my passion, that's not where I excel. I think the coaching, the mentoring, the people part is more me so if I did keep on going, that would be very important for me to make sure that I still have. I still stay true to my identity, and I don't think I really identified that until later in my career if that makes sense.

NM: Right. Do you feel like when you first started to know, like that definition of success has changed over time?

AB: Without a doubt, yeah. Because I would think that success was like money, driving a fancy car, and that's when you've made it, when you're President, CEO of the bank, that's when you made it. And I think now it's more being happy with what you're doing, like I can literally say I love my job and I want to make sure that I continue to always say, I love my job. So, I wouldn't put myself in a role that's just not going to fit who I am.

AW: So, I know you're super busy with your work and you say that work's your top priority, but outside of that, what activities do you partake in and what do you enjoy doing in your free time?

AB: Okay, so I try to exercise [laughs] which is challenging. I actually went in my early 30s, I took up running. So that was very much... because I was never an athletic kid at all and I was severely out of shape, but I started running and it went from like one mile to three miles and then I ended up registering for a half marathon and I ran a half marathon. That was actually huge for

me because, like I said, I was so not athletic, not in shape. So, kind of going on that journey from thinking that like, oh, I wouldn't—I can't run a mile—how am I going to run 13 miles? And just kind of building on that. That was a huge accomplishment for me. Right now, running and I don't really agree as far as like my body and my joints, but I do still try to stay active. And honestly, I love TV, I'm not going to lie. So, you know, free time I'll watch TV or spending time with my family. You know, both my husband and I love to travel. We'll travel as a family with my parents and my brother and his family. And, you know, being so close, like holidays, are huge for us too, so... or like even family dinner. We'll have family dinner once a week. So, a lot of my free time is spent, you know, with them.

NM: Right. Okay. So, you've had like your goals when it comes to your job, when it comes to the Women's Success Network, and now you said that you ran half a marathon. Do you have any other personal goals or maybe work goals that you're striving for right now, at the moment?

AB: You know I wish I did. I don't. So, I think probably right now maybe I'm like in a searching phase, like what's next for me? Or kind of just continuing to develop on where I'm at now. As far as like work wise. But yeah, no, I'm very goal oriented. I think right now I'm trying to decipher what exactly I want to do and work for.

NM: And like, does that make you feel any kind of way, like, do you feel like not like anxious about it but like...[laughs]

AB: Yes [laughs]. Yeah, like what's next. Like what's... especially I think if you're like a goal driven person you're constantly looking for that next thing like so like being in a period where you're like, I don't want to... I don't know what I want to do. Do I want to go back to school? Do I want to try this or you're searching for that, that thing that you can kind of be passionate about and, you know, put energy towards not having that or not being able to define that right now is—it's a little unsettling—not going to lie.

AW: And I know you mentioned how school wasn't for you, but now, like later in your life, do you ever see yourself going back to school at all?

AB: Yes, yeah, I think I probably need to you know, get my master's or at least some certificates, which I have looked into, but again, it's kind of at a point where I don't know what I want to do. So... but yes, I would if I need—if I'm going to further my career—I would definitely need to get my master's or something.

NM: Right. Do you feel like the relationship you have with your husband like kind of like is he like a good support system for you with like goal wise, like is he also goal driven?

AB: Yes, he is extremely goal driven. He's actually... so he's in the golfing industry so he's very... and he's a health nut. So, he's very like goal focused, whether it's a workout or you know his job, or playing in a tournament or... he's constantly one of those people that is in a goal

working towards some sort of goal. So, yeah, we're a lot alike in that. We don't always share the same goals, very rarely, I think do we share the same goals, but we're both very goal driven. I shouldn't say rarely we should share the same goals, we obviously have like family household goals, but like on a personal end. Yeah, we don't share the same goal.

NM: [laughs].

AW: Do you like talk about the, the different goals like with work with each other or is it kind of like a separate thing?

AB: No, we definitely talk about it. I don't actually talk about work a lot. When I come home like I tend to just leave it at the door but if there's something that I'm like working on at work, I'll definitely share that with him. But most of the time I don't really talk about my job.

AW: Okay and I know you mentioned not talking about it at home, but... and I'm sure that helps like prevent burnout and stuff from work. Is there anything else that you do that does help prevent this burnout or stress with your work?

AB: What else would I do? I mean, if I'm like super stressed or something, I do try to like incorporate some sort of exercise, whether it's a walk or you know, getting on the peloton, just because I know that that's going to make me feel better. I definitely don't talk about work when I go home just because I don't want to like I don't... you know, what happened at the office, I just I don't want to talk about it. As soon as I walk in the door, I'm like oh, thank God. But yeah, I don't know if there's any other like real techniques that I use to... that help me.

NM: So, kind of bouncing off of that question like what are like your biggest challenges when it comes to your job or maybe even like when it comes to like the Women's Success Network?

AB: When it comes to my job, I think staffing. So, trying to lead people is... I can't, I think it's challenging because it's not—you can't—you know, just say, okay, I want you to do this and expect that everyone's going to do it. You know, especially if it's like a sales goal that they're working for, you're trying to get someone to like step out of their comfort zone because you're dealing with different people and personalities. So that definitely gets stressful for me when I'm like, I don't understand, like why they just won't, you know, take that step to, to do what I'm asking them to do or... that definitely... because you don't have control over other people. So that can be challenging for me. With the Women's Success Network, the most challenging thing I think would maybe be probably like growing the network, getting other people involved, and other people invested in, you know, the initiatives that we work on. Normally you'll have, you know, a handful of people that are really passionate about it and will devote time and, and volunteer. But it's getting the other people or other people involved in that, that's where you're going to grow. So, it's coming up with creative ways on, on how to do that.

AW: And I know you mentioned how it can be challenging to lead people at times. So, what characteristics would you say make you a good leader?

AB: Oh my gosh, that's a hard question [laughs].

NM: It's a heavy one yeah, take your time.

AB: I think you have to be empathetic and understanding when it comes to leading people and definitely that everyone's different. I think early in my career that was difficult for me to even acknowledge and accept. Whereas, as time has gone on and I've gotten older and really more experience it's, you know, not everyone is built the same way. Not everyone's going to be a star, you know, sales employee, but you know, that employee might be really well—do really well at—you know, working with our members and you know opening up account for someone or... everyone has different strengths and weaknesses and it's kind of I think with leadership, you kind of have to pull that all together to create a team that can function.

NM: All right. So being such an empowered woman, like you said so yourself. How does it feel, you know, seeing other women reach new heights and kind of get that empowerment?

AB: I love it. I think with my career, it's difficult to have women mentors. I mean, I really didn't have any. I have a colleague now. You know, she has been a mentor to me. You know, we're on the same level, I guess. But, you know, to have that other woman that I can bounce ideas off or, you know, what do you think of this? That's amazing. A lot of my mentors have been men. So, you know, with my career, I think it's important to mentor other women and show them that they can succeed. And really kind of be open about that, whereas I feel like a lot of women that had higher positions with me were like very private. They didn't really share their knowledge or... for whatever reason, I don't know if women... we don't always do that well, you know, sharing and building other women up.

AW: Do you have anything else?

NM: Yeah. So, based off like your life experience and based on all the work that you've done for the community, what advice would you give to women today and future generations of women?

AB: Oh, gosh. I think maybe just to... if an opportunity is presented to you, go for it. And I don't mean like just like a job position. I mean, like if you're asked to help, try to help. Try to be open to volunteering and... or you know taking on a project or... I think that's where opportunities are presented, and you never know where that's going to lead. So just be an active participant in that.

AW: And so, we're working to tell a further story of the history of women that has been recorded in the past. I know this is kind of similar to the question just asked, but is there anything else that you think we should include?

AB: In this conversation or?

AW: Yeah.

AB: Let me think. I feel like we covered a lot [laughs].

NM: [Laughs] Yeah, we did. We tried to ask a lot of diverse questions.

AB: Yeah, you definitely stumped me on some things [laughs]. Yeah, no, I feel like it, it honestly made me kind of think about some things to like, oh wow, like, I never really thought about that before. I don't think so.

NM: Okay. Do you have another question you might want to ask?

AW: I guess if you're just looking back at when you, you were a little girl, would there be any advice you would specifically give her?

AB: Oh gosh. You really, you might make me cry [begins to cry]. Don't be so hard on yourself. Yeah, don't be so hard on yourself. Gosh, girls.

AW: I'm sorry.

NM: I'm so sorry [laughs].

AB: No, no, no, you're fine, you're fine. You can tell your teacher that you made me cry. Yeah, don't be so hard on yourself. That'd probably be my advice.

NM: Kind of going off of that question like could you like sit here and like tell yourself that like, you know, like you're proud of yourself. Like, are you proud of yourself for what you have been doing?

AB: Yes. Yeah. I am proud of myself. Yeah. For sure.

NM: That's amazing. No, like now like I'm touched [laughs]. We're all just going to start crying in here.

AB: Yeah. Don't take life so seriously either, you know?

NM: Amazing. Anything else you want to add?

AW: Is there anything specific you do to get through tough times or what kind of thoughts that keep you going?

AB: I love like a motivational podcast. Love that. There's a book that I have actually... so it's Oprah Winfrey wrote it, "What I Know for Sure," and they're just little stories or blurbs that she wrote about her life over periods of time. So that book I had read during a hard time, but I will gift that book to people just if they're struggling or if I have an employee that just, like... I can't do it or doesn't believe that she can do it, I'll gift that book. So, I will definitely look to that book, like, if I'm struggling or, you know, I'll... It's not, it wouldn't be uncommon for me to pick that up and read it and just kind of remind myself and then, you know being spiritual, you know, God, being with nature definitely helps me through difficult times too.

NM: Okay, so would you describe yourself as a faithful, a faithful person?

AB: I think I yeah, I think I have faith. I wouldn't say that I'm religious. I was definitely raised in the Catholic Church, but, like I don't go to church now. But I definitely would say that I'm spiritual, believe in God, and so.

NM: I actually have a question that just kind of popped up into my head. So, when working with the Women's Success Network I'm assuming, you know, you guys all come from very diverse backgrounds, everyone's super unique. How does that, like, play a part, like in like, your success and like your ideas. Do you feel like having a really diverse group like you know, brings in a lot of like inspiration?

AB: It definitely is inspirational and it's definitely a very diverse group, like all various backgrounds. I think what's good thing, good thing about that group is that we're all—we all have—like a common goal that we'll be working towards, whether it's, you know, putting on an event or you know, doing something within the community. So, kind of to get those women together, the energy that you get from that, it's, it's very inspiring. It just makes you feel good. And then, you know, get - trying to get other people involved in that, so...

AW: How do you get other people involved?

AB: So that's always a challenge. You know, sharing what we do, and getting the word out there. And different people like different things. So, like social media marketing, we're still kind of actually probably struggling with that. I don't know if I've found, like, the perfect recipe on how to share what we do. It's kind of word of mouth, you know? Getting people to come to an event or, you know, volunteer and then, you know, bringing others. It's hard to... I don't know, I feel like it's hard to get people involved.

AW: I know you mentioned like, social media being a big part of that, and that's something you also do in your job, and it's changed so much over the past few years. So, can you describe how you've seen growth within social media, in your job, and for your community service?

AB: Yeah. Social media definitely has changed, like I would say, like I'm on the old end of it like [laughs]. And even in banking, like we're a very conservative credit union. So, we still...

like a lot of our social media marketing we'll do on Facebook. We just last year launched an Instagram page. I would love to do, you know, get creative and do, like, a TikTok or... we're just not at that point, we don't have the buy in. And I think it's hard with—well—with any marketing that you do, it's hard to, you know, measure its results. Like, did that really work? But you have to do it. You have to do it to be, to be part of it.

NM: Kind of a more personal question. What are, I feel like some characteristics that you've, you know, like thought about of yourself that are like, good, but sometimes, you know, can sometimes get in the way, like, for example, like maybe stubbornness or like...

AB: Yeah, I'm a perfectionist. And I do think being a perfectionist gets in the way because you're so focused on something being perfect or you—you don't learn—you learn from mistakes, so you're afraid to make mistakes. But it also sometimes I'll get so caught up in something that I just can't, like, move on from it. I can't grow because I'm not letting it go [laughs]. Yeah, and probably being a control freak, too. That's also an issue. Like a lot of times, you want to empower people, but there are definitely, you know, times where I might not give up a task or, you know, share responsibility because I don't want anyone else working on it, like, for fear that a mistake will happen. See? [laughs].

AW: Was there ever, like, a mistake or even a challenge in your career that you can remember that, like, really expanded your growth in any way? Like, some sort of turning point maybe.

AB: I don't know if I've had like a specific turning point, like nothing I don't think has really like ever happened that I was like, okay, that made a difference. It's more kind of just looking back on how, especially being a manager and working with people, how I was when I first started compared to how I am now. The thought process definitely changed. I learned a lot from within that time.

NM: How has like the city of Worcester impacted you? Like, do you feel like if you were somewhere else, all of this maybe would have happened?

AB: I don't know. I really don't know. So, I will make one analogy with the city of Worcester [Massachusetts]. So, I always say, like working for the credit union I like being a big fish in a little pond. So, it's a small enough credit union where, you know, I can share ideas or initiatives and actually it'll be accepted, or they might be like, okay, yeah, at least run with it. Whereas, like a bigger bank, they might like the idea, but they're going to send it to, you know, some other department, and that department will work on it, and they'll be the ones growing on it. So, I like being a big fish in a little pond. I feel like the city of Worcester is kind of like that. You know, there's a lot that you can do within the community and it's small enough to make connections and network and work with other people and be able to know or shake hands with the mayor. Whereas like in Boston [Massachusetts], like, I don't know if you or even New York or a bigger I don't know if you'd have that opportunity if you have that impact in a bigger city, as you would in Worcester.

AW: Yeah. All right. Are there any last remarks that you want to leave?

AB: I don't think so [laughs].

AW: I know we covered a lot today.

NM: Yeah. We did. I know we covered a lot.

AB: You girls made me work for it, for sure.

NM: On my part, I think I'm good with questions.

AW: Yeah.

AB: Did you girls have to come up with the questions, or did they give you the questions that you have to ask?

NM, AW: A little bit of both [laughs].

AW: Well, then we just want to thank you so much for your time.

AB: Thanks for having me. Yeah.

AW: It was really awesome getting to know you and learning a little bit about your life and your work.

AB: Yes, thank you.

AW: So, thank you so much.

NM: Yeah, it was very inspiring. I love also seeing like women reach new heights too. So, I think this was just like an awesome interview. This is a great project to do [laughs].

AB: Oh good, I'm glad, I'm glad.

NM: Very impressed. I'm very impressed [laughs].

AB: Yeah, well you have my email if you need anything or you know, please feel free to reach out. I'm glad I could participate.

NM, AW: Thank you so much.