

## NASFAA's "Director Download" – Episode 8 Transcript

- Justin Draeger: Hey, everyone. Welcome to another edition of "Director Download." I am Justin Draeger.
- Paula Luff: I am Paula Luff, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Services at DePaul University.
- Lori Vedder: Hi, I'm Lori Vedder, Director of Financial Aid at the University of Michigan-Flint.
- Billie Hamilton: Billie Jo Hamilton, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Planning and Management at the University of South Florida.
- Justin Draeger: Welcome, all three of you. For folks who don't know, you three are also our National Chairs. Was last year the first time we had all three chairs, the incoming, the chair elect, the current national chair, and the past national chair, you were all women?
- Billie Hamilton: Are you asking that? You don't really know that?
- Justin Draeger: Well, I mean, obviously I have all of the national chairs memorized from the beginning of days till now, but-
- Lori Vedder: But you were correct.
- Paula Luff: I thought it was a job requirement.
- Justin Draeger: Yes. Obviously, I could spout them off like I can the presidents, but I choose not to.
- Billie Hamilton: We made history. We made history, Justin.
- Justin Draeger: Yes. So, this is the second-
- Billie Hamilton: Correct.
- Justin Draeger: ... year in a row. So, you'll have some unique perspectives I think, because we want to talk today about strategic aspirations in your job and your career, and how you move forward. I think Billy Jo, maybe Paula. Lori, you have, as well. But you've done actual sessions on women in leadership, and the unique perspective of coming at this from a female.
- Billie Hamilton: Yes. And the challenges that, that presents, particularly in higher ed, I think is in upper administration, is more of a male dominated field. I think there are some challenges as women that we do encounter, particularly with the credibility. You

have to really be cognizant, I think even the words that you use sometimes in conversations.

Billie Hamilton: We have a tendency to say things like, 'but' kind of disqualify what we're saying. It's just something that's a habit that you kinda have to need to break. So, again, I think there are some unique challenges, familial challenges, as well, in your work life balance, and your private life, that makes it a little bit difficult sometimes too.

Justin Draeger: So, all of this, I think, will come out as we talk about people strategically moving their careers forward. We did talk to an expert about moving up in your career, things you should be looking for, Martin Yate. He's a resume and career coach, and a New York Times bestselling author.

Justin Draeger: Martin Yate, thank you for joining us.

Martin Yate: It's good to be with you, Justin.

Justin Draeger: You are the New York Times bestselling author of Knock 'em Dead, The Ultimate Job Search Guide, which is now going on its 32nd edition. That's the keystone book of another 17-book series that talks about all different aspects of the job search, and the modern career management. Which sort of feels like is, both really easy to do, and really difficult to do. For our members, financial aid administrators on campus, most people, Martin, would say they did not set out to be in financial aid. So, they sort of ended up here. They might've been trying something else.

Justin Draeger: But once they're in the profession, our statistics, our numbers show that if they're in this job for three to five years, the odds go way up that they are going to stay in this as a profession. I wonder from your perspective; how does that change? Most people, I feel like, must have some sort of idea of where they wanted to go, but where they end up might be completely different. So how does that work when you're trying to manage your career, that you don't know where it's going to go?

Martin Yate: Absolutely. This is a hangover from the two theories of career management we were all raised on. Number one, follow your bliss, and when do you find it you'll never work another day in the rest of your life. Rubbish. Rocking horse droppings. The other one that we were all raised by, which is more practical, is get a college education. Get a job. Start at the bottom. Work hard. Be loyal. Make sacrifices. Hang on with 10 fingers and 10 toes. If you lose one, hang on with nine, and overtime you will gather more responsibility and greater earnings.

Martin Yate: At the end of your career you'll retire with a house in town, a house of the lake, and your yacht bobbing at the end of the dock. Well that's rocking horse droppings too, because there's no job security anymore.

Justin Draeger: So, what do you tell folks then? How do you advise them when they're trying to think about the years that they have to work in the career they might have ahead of them?

Martin Yate: Well, I say the following, we're all somewhere in the middle of what is probably going to be a 50 year or 50 years plus work life. Age discrimination is going to kick in at about 50. There's a lot you can do to overcome this. If you're thinking about any aspect of career, career change, job change right now, it's best if you thought about, not only the short term, but the midterm and the long-term. Where do I want to be five or 20 years from now?

Martin Yate: It doesn't matter if your goal changes, as it likely will, but it's better to have some sense of direction than no sense of direction. The other thing we need to add to this in a world without job security, is to recognize that the greatest job security ... I don't care about the employer, about Citibank. I'm concerned about the success, economic stability, and personal fulfillment of Justin International Inc.

Justin Draeger: The individual. Everybody being successful.

Martin Yate: Yes, and that's what career management should be based on. Which is both the pursuit of a successful professional career, and also recognizing that at some point you are quite likely to get pushed out, which means you have to have a plan B.

Justin Draeger: So, let me ask a question on that. So, a plan B, and you talked about a short-term, midterm and long-term, and I'm still trying to wrap my mind around the 50-year thing.

Martin Yate: Well, think about it, it's true.

Justin Draeger: How specific can you really be in a five or 10, or even 20-year career goal, some sort of goal or objective setting around that sort of timeframe?

Martin Yate: Well, it's just like business plans. Five-year business plans, everyone knows their science fiction. But let me give you an example of what doesn't happen. I have a career coaching and resume writing business. Have done for 25 years. I had a client earlier this year, been an accountant for seven years. He came to us because he wanted to become an accounting manager. Yeah, I've been an account for seven years, I want to get into management. Well, that sounds fine, but people get hired on their credentials, not their potential.

Martin Yate: If you're a hiring manager and you've got two choices, a guy who's been doing the job for three years, and another guy who'd like to have a shop, we're going to go with the guy with the experience every time. So, as it turned out, he didn't have the skills of an accounting manager. So, deciding, "Okay, what's my next step?" Then discovering the skills that are required for that next step, and

developing them in your job now, is going to greatly enhance your chances of being able to make the step, because you will have the credentials.

Justin Draeger: So, from an individual standpoint, to try to get that experience so you have the credentials to take the next step, what's the calculus? How does somebody make the decision that it's time for a change? That where they're at is not getting them to where they want to be, to get the experience they need to move on. What's the calculus?

Martin Yate: There's many evaluations, but two major ones. In every department and company, there is an inner circle and an outer circle. We all know where we stand. If we're standing in the outer circle, is it logical that someone in the inner circle, or someone in the outer circle is going to get the plum assignments, the raises and the promotions? The people in the inner circle. So, you've got to make sure that you are aligned with the people who have influence.

Martin Yate: Then you have to work towards developing the skills. Because first of all, being in that inner circle, that's where the raises, the promotions, the special projects are hiding.

Justin Draeger: It strikes me that you could be in the inner circle, the facto because of your position. But even if your position doesn't put you in the inner circle, you personally, could be brought into the inner circle by the projects you're working on, or that you volunteer for. The influence you might have, even if it's not formal influence, that sort of thing.

Martin Yate: Yes, if you're doing this, and you may be in the inner circle, maybe in the outer circle, you're doing your best, and it's easier to get promoted within the company you're with today. Right?

Justin Draeger: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Martin Yate: But if you can't get there, and you have the skills, and you've done everything you can, you need to plan a strategic career move. What most people do, is it gets to a point where, "I can't stand working for this jerk a moment longer." And they go out, and they get a few interviews, and they get a job offer. It's got to be better than the seventh circle of hell they're living in. And they jump at it, and then three months later discovered they jumped out of the frying pan into the fire.

Martin Yate: No one should change jobs in the fourth quarter of the year unless they have to. If you change jobs in the last quarter, you're going to get a raise. If you spend this last quarter, getting up to speed on your three weakest professional survival skills, your ability to create an effective resume, your ability to get job interviews, and your ability to earn those interviews into paychecks ... They're everyone's weakest skills because you spend less time on this than anything else than you've ever done.

Martin Yate: Get prepared, you're going to get a review at the end of the year, everyone does. So, let's get the review, and be ready to pull the trigger on a job search in January when all the new hiring budgets open up. And you have a higher starting base pay from which to negotiate.

Justin Draeger: So, you're leveraging your end of year review, the potential increase, you're leveraging that into your next planned opportunity. Which is a strategic move, not a fall back that you hope is better than what you're currently doing?

Martin Yate: Yes. Then, if you organize yourself properly, you won't end up with one offer. You'll have more than one offer, and you'll know how to leverage one offer into offers from other companies. This gives you choice. It's not just what you learn next year, but if we go back to you've got a 50-year career, just starting from a higher point and using this last quarter to get organized, is going to impact your earnings for a lifetime.

Justin Draeger: This is all cumulative. It's building on itself.

Martin Yate: Yeah.

Justin Draeger: So, the longer you go without taking that next step, the further you're putting yourself behind on those opportunity costs, or the lost wage costs.

Martin Yate: Yes and taking it before a raise is hurting what you're going to run next year. Making the change after you've got the raise, you'll be starting from a higher base pay on the new job, and you'll be eligible for review at the end of the year.

Justin Draeger: All right, let me ask another question. You're somewhere, it's not getting you to where you want to be. You're in the outer circle. You're determined ... You know it's time for a change. What if the amount of time you've spent with that organization, or in my members case, that school, what if it's just a short amount of time? How do you ensure that you are not hurting yourself by being perceived as a job hopper, or an opportunist, or overly ambitious, or not really vested in the places that you've been?

Martin Yate: Very good point. If your prior job demonstrates stability, we all make a mistake, so the sooner you make the change, the better. I've been with my last college seven years, and I made the change, and this is just not the right place for me. That's a reasonable reason for leaving. If you've had a few short-term jobs in your history, my best advice is stick it out for two years. Do the best to make it work. Look at the reasons it isn't working. See what you can do to make it better

Martin Yate: Then 18 months from now, you get your resume up to speed. You bring your job search, and your interviewing skills up to speed. And you're ready to pull the trigger when you can demonstrate you've had two years on the job.

Justin Draeger: There's so much to dig into here, but I have one other line of questioning I want to go down with you. I's about, some people end up working for people, who are very supportive of their careers. Your boss can be your biggest advocate. They can look for opportunities for you to grow, knowing that you might take those opportunities elsewhere. How do you advise folks to know whether, and how they can talk to their supervisors about growth opportunities, or moving up, or helping them help you make strategic moves in your own career?

Martin Yate: Okay. Most people don't think about it till September. Then they think, "Oh my gosh, I've got a review coming up. I better stop, suck it up, and get the nice brown nose," and it don't work like that. The best thing to do, is go through that review, and at the review, or at the beginning of the New Year to say, "Justin, could I get a few minutes of your time? I really enjoy working here and I love what I do. I'm hoping to grow professionally. I was wondering if you think this position would be a good target for me to shoot for? And what skills you think I need to develop to get there.?"

Martin Yate: Then, every seven weeks during the year around about seven weeks, it's, "Justin, could I catch up with you for a couple of minutes?" I'd just have an informal discussion. "The last time we spoke you said I should be developing this and this, and I want you to know I've signed up for this online course. I've been developing this new software skill, this new analytical skill," whatever. So, you're keeping yourself, what they call in advertising, TOMA, Top Of the Mind Awareness. This is-

Justin Draeger: It strikes me, you're also building a bond with that manager. They get to know you better. It doesn't come across as over ... It's not coming across as, I'm entitled to something. It's saying, "I'm willing to invest the time, the energy to not only help myself, but help the company or the organization that I'm working for."

Martin Yate: Yeah. Tell me how high to jump, and that's how high I'll jump and a bit more.

Justin Draeger: Martin, there's a lot for us to continue talking about. Because of the constraints of time, where do people go to learn more about you and your work, and be able to tap into your expertise?

Martin Yate: Knock 'em Dead is the title in all my books, knockemdead.com is the website. My latest book is an audio interview prep book that you can play on your iPhone. You can get it for free from Audible, right now.

Justin Draeger: Fantastic.

Martin Yate: If you haven't bought a book from Audible before, and if you have find a family member that hasn't.

Justin Draeger: Work the system. I like it. Martin, thank you for joining us. Again, he's a New York Times Bestselling Author, Knock 'em Dead, The Ultimate Job Search Guide. You can go to [knockemdead.com](http://knockemdead.com), and learn more, and download his new free audio book, which helps people through the interview process. Thank you very much for joining us.

Martin Yate: Pleasure being with you, Justin.

Justin Draeger: Before we get into all of that, I'm curious if you all wouldn't mind sharing. When you talk about financial aid, I feel like the running narrative is, "Well, I happenstanced into financial aid." Or, "Nobody went to college thinking I'm going to be a financial aid." But even if that's your happenstance, if you end up there not by intention, to move up in your career, does usually require intentionality. So, I'm wondering if you can talk through ... Maybe Paula, I'll start with you, our Chair Elect, talk us briefly through your career path.

Paula Luff: Well, I did happenstance into financial aid as a work study student, as many people did. Once I decided that that was my career path, I did set a goal of, I wanted to be a director of financial aid. So, I took intentional steps, moving from institutions that maybe weren't nurturing me, to those that did, and gave me opportunities to prepare myself to be a director.

Paula Luff: That included prior volunteering at the local and regional levels for professional associations, and just learning as much as I possibly could from everybody that I met. I do think you can learn something from every single person you meet.

Justin Draeger: So, so how many different institutions have you worked for in your career?

Paula Luff: I think it's six now.

Justin Draeger: Okay. Lori, how about you?

Lori Vedder: Mine was a little bit different approach. I started as a work study in admissions. I thought that would be my trajectory for my career, but other things changed in life, as life sometimes gets in the way. I totally stepped away from higher ed for a while. When I came back I really just thought I would remain at an officer level where I was processing files and doing those kinds of things.

Lori Vedder: But it was really mentoring, and the support, and mentorship from others around me, that made me believe that I could advance my career in financial aid. So, to this day, I remain very close with those mentors, and I owe a lot to them.

Justin Draeger: Great. Lori, how many institutions have you been, at U of M Flint for?

Lori Vedder: For almost 30 years, and one year in Ann Arbor.

Justin Draeger: Okay, got it.

Billie Hamilton: Okay. Well, mine's a little different in that ... It's not different in that I started as a student, because I did start as a student worker. My first job was a directorship job, out of college, grad school, at a medical school. What's different about my trajectory is that I went from one medical school to another medical school, didn't feel challenged. Decided I wanted to get at a larger, typical public institution, and I backtracked.

Billie Hamilton: I went and took an associate director's job at a large public institution, because I recognized that I didn't have the skillset that I needed to move into that. I think I would've failed, had I tried to step directly from being at the smaller medical school into a more research intensive public institution. So, I took an associate director's job, which was absolutely the best thing I could've done.

Billie Hamilton: I did have colleagues say, "You took a step back. Why did you take a step back?" No, it was a step forward in the path to becoming a director. I stayed there for three years. Then moved into a director's role, and I've been at six schools.

Justin Draeger: Lots of different topics within what you all just said, that I want to hit on. Let's start with what you just said, Billie Jo, because you took a step backwards, intentionally, by title at least.

Billie Hamilton: Correct.

Justin Draeger: To gain the skillset to be able to move forward in your career, which clearly demonstrates forethought about your career and where you're headed.

Billie Hamilton: Right.

Justin Draeger: I sometimes wonder if there's friction in an office, where you all are heading up large offices, and staff, and lots of students. When you have somebody who's looking to move up in their career, and has ambition, sometimes that's associated as a negative, but you have to have ambition, right?

Billie Hamilton: Right.

Justin Draeger: You all moved up, whether it was shown to you by mentors or not, you had some ambition to take on more, be challenged, to oversee more, have more of an impact. Is it a good thing or bad thing to be strategic, intentional, to have that ambition, and map out where you want to go? What do you think here?

Billie Hamilton: Well, I mean, I've always felt like ambition was tied closely to your job performance. I mean, if you don't have some ambition to be the best director, or whatever position that you have, then you're definitely not going to advance your career. There's nothing wrong with ambition, as long as you don't leave



people in the wake of your ambition. But I think that's what motivates people to move forward.

Billie Hamilton: Again, I think coming from a small school, I had granular knowledge, right? Because when you're in a small shop, you know everything about everything. Where I realized that I didn't have the skillset, was to transition to that next management level. People management, more than processes and policy. That's why I took that step back, to actually learn that part of it. Again, it was, I have to say, that's what set me on the trajectory of where I am now.

Justin Draeger: So, ambition, good to have?

Paula Luff: I think it is. I always say ambition is not a dirty word. I think it's how you get anything done.

Justin Draeger: Lori, do you agree?

Paula Luff: Absolutely. I mean I look at my employees, my staff, or those that I deal with in other departments, and I watched those employees. I try to find their leadership skills, and I search that out. Then I try to create that and cultivate that in those employees. I have talks with them, early on. "Are you interested in potentially becoming an assistant, or an associate, or a director down the road, and cultivating?"

Paula Luff: I've had a couple employees come to me and say they are. So, they're asking, "Can you tell me where my weaknesses are? Did I handle this situation correctly?" So, yes, I think if I'm seeing that ambition, I'm definitely looking to cultivate that person.

Justin Draeger: So, somebody who's looking out into their career, it's no problem to go to your higher ups and say, "Hey look, this is where I want to be. How can I get there?"

Paula Luff: Absolutely. I think we don't always know what's happening in other people's lives. Whether they have children to take care of, or elderly parents, or if they're going to school, they might not have time to focus on their careers. So, if someone says to me, "This is what I want." I will do what I can to help them get there. But there's also a little caveat that nothing happens overnight. It takes patience.

Paula Luff: So, if someone comes to me, maybe they're a counselor, and they say, "I'd like to be a director. That's my ultimate goal." That's not going to happen in a year or two years, necessarily.

Lori Vedder: Right.

Justin Draeger: Right, unless something really unexpected happens.

Paula Luff: It might, but-

Billie Hamilton: And you may have to move out, to move up.

Paula Luff: Correct. Correct.

Justin Draeger: That's a really good point. Paula, and Billie Jo, you guys have been at six institutions. Lori, you found a pathway within your institution. If that pathway is not available, it's sort of like ... Where the friction I've sometimes seen, is people saying, "I'm ready for the next level thing." But the problem is, if the next level thing isn't where you currently are, then there's going to be some frustration. So, what do people have to be willing to do here?

Paula Luff: I think, I see not only that there might not be a next level available, they might not see you in that role. Especially, if you started out as a younger professional. Sometimes it's hard to break that reputation of, "I'm the young person." Or, "I'm just a counselor." And you need to be seen in a different light. That's where professional organizations come in. But I do think that, yes, sometimes you do have to move.

Billie Hamilton: I would agree. I would encourage any staff that I'm not going to stand in their way of self-development. I think exactly, Paula, you hit it. The association work and development, and the expertise, and the mentoring, and the knowledge you can gain from being engaged in a association like MASFAA, or the regions or the states, really plays a lot into that development of a person.

Justin Draeger: So, this is the tradeoff I see there, is from a manager's perspective then, from a leader of your guy's offices, would you rather have somebody who has a lot of ambition, who probably isn't going to be there very long, or somebody who ... And is going to do great at the job.

Justin Draeger: We'll make the assumption that they're not entitled without the work that goes with it, but very competent. You're going to get a couple, maybe a couple good years, or not as long as someone who, for whatever reason in their life, they're saying, "I'm happy doing this job. This is what I want to do. It gives me the work life balance I want." Or they're getting something else out of it. What's your preference?

Billie Hamilton: Well, we kinda joke, if we get them for three years, we're happy. I mean, we would like to keep really strong people. Sometimes we'll find other opportunities for them. Maybe we've found they have a special skill, and so we're able to incorporate some new skills. And maybe some additional pay for them doing those kind of things. But we kind of say, "If we invest in you, when we get three good strong years out of you, that were happy with that."

Justin Draeger: One of the things I've found useful, and not useful, and I'm wondering what your takes are. People that have ambition to move up, and they want to do it

within your organization, even if that opportunity doesn't exist. It's helpful to try to ... When you're approaching your manager or somebody higher up, that you want to move forward, take on more, it's kind of helpful, I've seen, if people come with a plan organizationally focused, as opposed to individually focused.

Justin Draeger: So, for example, somebody comes and they say they want to move up. That's great, but somebody still has to do your job. How are we still gonna address that, and find new opportunities? Somebody who comes forward and says, "It's all about me. How do I make my goals a reality?" isn't as effective in my mind as somebody who says, "It's about me. This is what I want to do, but this is what I can also do for you." And how we backfill, and that sort of thing.

Justin Draeger: Have you had any examples, where people have come forward in one way or the other that was more successful, or not, in trying to talk to you about their ambition?

Paula Luff: I've had an employee in the past asked me what my plan was for that person's professional development. As if I had a plan for 80 people in a folder for everybody's professional development without knowing-

Justin Draeger: So, you felt like that was maybe just an expectation that wasn't realistic?

Paula Luff: Yeah. I would much rather have an employee who did what you're saying. That would be wonderful. I'd be like, "Oh my goodness, this is fantastic." I would really think that person was ready to take on more.

Billie Hamilton: Well, we do a lot of cross training in those situations. So that we don't want anybody just to become the expert in that area, and then hit a dead end because there's no other place to go. So, if we can cross train them in another area, or even in something, maybe economic advising, where it would help them if they were to leave the institution. We feel that that benefits us in many ways. You've got somebody else that can do the job in absence, or if someone were to vacate their position. So, it helps the office.

Justin Draeger: I see two benefits there, and it's something I've tried to employ in my own career. Which is, one, is you're getting a bigger knowledge base, and making more connections. The second thing is, people become more valuable at any institution, the more pots they have their fingers in.

Justin Draeger: So, all of a sudden this person's integral, not just to that single position, but they're integral to all these other things. They become more valuable. People become vested in your success. It's almost like saying, "Yes," to as many things as you can and doing them well, just so you get a nice view of everything that's going on, or as much as you can that's going on.

Lori Vedder: I was looking for the team player too. Maybe they don't have a cross training opportunity going on, but they're working with the loan officer, and their job is

the Pell Grant Program. They're looking to, "Is there anything I can do to back you up? It's a slower time for me." Those kind of things speak volumes without them saying anything.

Justin Draeger: Yeah. Is it fair to say there are some professions, maybe not even in higher ed, but some professions where I feel like it is very cut throat, where it's competitive? I would say most of what I've witnessed in higher ed, it's not competitive. You are looking for the soft skills. People that can motivate others, who get along well. Who can resolve conflict without involving higher ups. Maybe you guys can talk a little bit about developing the soft skills to move up in your careers.

Billie Hamilton: I think in financial a lot of that is experiential. I mean, I don't think people come into financial aid in a counseling role and automatically have that skillset. Because you have to deal with such a wide range of needs of your students. You have the high ability kid that just wants more recognition of their high ability kid. Then you really have some kids that come from families that are gut wrenching stories. I think a lot of that is, is just a learned skill.

Billie Hamilton: Now you need to be mentored, and I think we try really hard before we let somebody go solo, for them to have ... They sit with the phones with people, and they sit with their supervisor, because that is a critical skill. If they're going to advance, they need to have that understanding. I think financial aid has this kind of weird combination that is what attracts me. There's the numbers piece.

Billie Hamilton: So, if you're analytical, you have the ability to exercise that analytical part of your brain. But then you also usually have a counseling role. So, it's kinda both of those skillsets, sometimes We can teach you some of those things. Sometimes you don't have them, but it's a critical learned skill.

Lori Vedder: Yeah. I think it's very important on a campus too. Every campus has its politics. If you can't speak to executive officers, as you climb the ladder, and work with the politics that you may experience on your campus, and know how to professionally handle that, then you're not going to make it as a leader.

Paula Luff: Once you have the skills of being able to talk to families and parents, being able to talk, not just to the executives at a higher level, but your colleagues across campus, who can be allies for you. And really be there as your representative when you're not in the room. I think that's a really important piece of success as well.

Justin Draeger: So, let me turn this a little bit. Something Lori mentioned that builds off of what you just said, Paula, is this idea of others either being an ally for you, or in some instances even an advocate for you. I'm talking about the mentors, or the people that would maybe even introduce you to a new job. Or put in a good word for you at a new position or institution. Can you talk a little bit about the

role that you feel like you've seen mentors have, or advocates have with you or with others?

Billie Hamilton: I mean, I think a lot of mine has been ... I mean, I watched people, right? I think this goes back a little bit to the female. I've identified some females on my campus, who some that aren't quite as successful, some that are, and I've tried to watch them. The last promotions that I've gotten, I didn't apply for. I was just asked to take on those roles. I think one of the important pieces, if you want to move up, is don't bring me a problem that you haven't already considered a solution to.

Billie Hamilton: So, my boss knows when I come to him with something, that it's a problem, I need his help to solve, because I've exhausted all of the other. I think that positioned me to where I could take on more responsibility in another leadership role.

Billie Hamilton: Again, I've talked to my female colleagues about that, and we have a tendency ... I think as females, there's an assumption that when you're very successful at something, you can do more. I do think it's critical, particularly as a female, to have somebody that you can emulate and watch at your institution. The good and the bad, because you learn from the bad too, as well.

Paula Luff: I would agree, and I think you also have to have some self-awareness of where your weaknesses are. I can look at other people, and maybe not want to be them as a leader, but think, "They do this really well. I could learn from how they're doing this, because I'm not as successful at whatever it is." So, I learned, try again, try to learn from everybody that I meet.

Lori Vedder: Well, and I think as a director, we also have the opportunity through our evaluations, to point out some of those weaknesses. "Here's what your strengths are. Let's build more on those. Your weaknesses here. What can we do to help you improve in that area? Is it move you to another position? Is it expose you to more, or send you to more training?" So, it's really knowing your employees and paying attention to what the strengths and weaknesses are. Yes.

Justin Draeger: I'll just say that, in two of my career moves that I can think of, one of the most effective things, a piece of advice that was given to me. Was that when I'm applying for a position, ideally, I would never cold apply. I would apply, and I would have somebody else try to seed my name to that organization. So, that me reaching out and saying I'm interested in something, can be effective. But it would be more effective if somebody else actually reached out and said, "You should be looking at this person."

Justin Draeger: So, when people ask me, "How do I move up?" One of my biggest pieces of advice is to folks, "Try to find advocates on your behalf, because when somebody is willing to put their own name, attached to yours, that gets to the trust thing. That's a big deal." There is also, maybe a little level of ... I think there

is an etiquette to this. Like, people who approach you and say, "Hey, I'd like to pick your brain about something." Or, "Hey, I'm looking for a new opportunity."

Justin Draeger: Or, they might be looking for you to offer some mentoring. What advice would you give to folks who are looking for mentors? How do they go about it? Because you're all busy people. You obviously can't mentor 25 people at once. What advice would you give to folks who are out there looking for someone to learn from?

Lori Vedder: Well, I think part of it is getting involved and getting to know your colleagues, not only on campus, but external to campus. Again, association work is a great place. That's where I met several of my mentors. They weren't all on the campus of U of M Flint. So, I think that's really important to do that.

Paula Luff: Maybe, try to be in the arenas that they're in, so that they can see you in action, so to speak. Before you come to them, and say, "I'd like you to be my mentor." Because they want to know, I would think as a mentor, that you actually have the potential, or that you're serious about it. Or at least some idea where to start.

Justin Draeger: So, the question I want to end with is. somebody who's looking to move up in their career, what is the one piece of advice that you would give them? The one thing that they most need to adhere to, think about, focus on, to do it. Paula.

Paula Luff: Take a risk. Don't limit yourself.

Justin Draeger: Take a risk. I like that.

Lori Vedder: Take constructive criticism and build yourself from it and grow from it. Just don't hop around job to job, because you're not happy at the moment.

Billie Hamilton: Do a self-evaluation, identify your gaps, and address them.

Justin Draeger: All good advice. Is it fair to say if people want to learn more ...? Well, first of all, if they want to learn more, they can come to Leadership Conference. We'll be talking about these sorts of things. That's February 25th through 27th. All three of you will be at the Leadership Conference, and so people can connect with you there, if they want a more advice. And, if you guys have job openings, that you can place them in that will advance their careers.

Paula Luff: Careers. You never know.

Billie Hamilton: Please apply.

Lori Vedder: That's right.

Billie Hamilton: We like to steal competent people from anywhere.

Paula Luff:

Absolutely.

Justin Draeger:

All right. Thank you, three, for joining us. Appreciate it. Join us again for another edition of "Director Download." Send us your comments, questions. Remember to subscribe and tell a friend. 'til next time.