

Inspiring Women

Episode 7: Amy Boerger

Laurie McGraw:

Welcome to Inspiring Women with Laurie McGraw. I am your host, Laurie McGraw. I have spent the past 30 years in leadership, and over the years I've come to learn one thing: women need women, and not just any women, but inspiring women. Tune in every week to hear from women at the pinnacle of their careers, and from others who are just starting out. Episodes can be found at inspiringwomen.show, or subscribe on your favorite podcast app. Thanks for listening, and I hope you will be inspired.

Laurie McGraw:

Welcome to another episode of Inspiring Women. This morning, I am speaking to Amy Boerger, and Amy talks about herself as an experienced account executive and a sales team lead. She's a couple of years out of college. She's a communications major. She had a couple jobs she was working at the same time, right out of college. Started in TV, moved over into sales at a high-tech company, where she became a rising star in just two and a half years with a lot of promotions. Then, took a turn and is now working at Toast. I am looking forward to this conversation today. Amy, welcome to Inspiring Women.

Amy Boerger :

Laurie, thank you so much for having me.

Laurie McGraw:

Yeah, I really appreciate talking to you today. Let's get started, and why don't you tell us, what are you doing now? What are you working on? Where are you employed? What do you do?

Amy Boerger :

I actually just started a role at a company called Toast. We are a restaurant point of sale SaaS system, and I started there in January after eight months of being laid off. I'm just thrilled to be at this company. I feel so incredibly lucky, because what they're doing for the industry that we all hold so near and dear to our hearts, the restaurant industry, is truly incredible.

Amy Boerger :

I actually also started volunteering at a organization called Back On My Feet in Boston. It works with people who are in later stage homelessness. It's homeless people, and it gives them a sense of community. It's three times a week, you get up at five o'clock in the morning, and you go run around Boston, which is really cool. I get to see parts of the city I've never seen before. We really work with these people, and once they start coming, it shows that they can stick to a schedule, which is really important. It builds community, like I said, and they also, instead of providing

them with food or shelter, it gives them job advice and provides them with opportunities to grow for themselves and grow their careers, and actually get back on their feet, if you will.

Laurie McGraw:

Amy, that's incredible. I want to talk more about that. But, before we go there, I want to go back to a bit about your career progression. You have a degree in communications. Right out of college, it looks like you were doing things like I know, which is working two jobs, starting out, you're bartending, you're serving, but you're also working at a TV station. How did you get that first job? Did you know that you wanted to go into TV? Because, you made a switch, and so I want to walk through that a little bit.

Amy Boerger :

Funny story about that, actually. I got a degree in the wrong field. I was supposed to get a degree in television communications, and being on air, I wanted to be a talking head, I wanted to be a news reporter, what have you. I did an internship in high school with the local television station that was the rival station I ended up working at. I got my degree in three years, the wrong degree, but I loved what I was learning. I was like, that's fine by me. I really enjoy this course. I learned about how people interact with one another, what causes people to be friends, why we connect on a deeper level than just very surface level, where we are, who we are, and how we got there.

Amy Boerger :

I graduated after three years. Didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, like most college kids. Just wanted to be happy and successful. I was actually going to do the Disney College Program when I graduated from school, because they accept kids a year after graduation. Unfortunately, I was unable to do the Disney College Program. My mom ended up getting sick, so I decided to stay home with my family and just stay in the area to be with them. I was working at one of the local restaurants that I had worked at all through college, and the owner of the restaurant was so kind. He knew that I was looking for something more, had just graduated, had my degree, wanted a real nine to five, if you will. He was friends with the general manager of the local television station and they were chitchatting one day and he's like, "You know, I have this girl who's just graduated, I think she'd be a perfect fit for you."

Amy Boerger :

The general manager called me, had a couple interviews with him, and it was fantastic. I was like, "Hey, you know what? I get to work at a television station, which is what I wanted." I got to see both sides of it, which was really nice. I worked in sales there. My first day, actually, I was taken out by the local sales manager, who was an AE at the time. I went out with her, we explored the area. She showed me the ropes of the job, and then not a week later she was promoted to my manager, which was so cool to see, especially being so young and fresh out of college, seeing women succeed. You're like, "Oh, I can do that, can't I?" That was really, really important for me.

Laurie McGraw:

You moved into sales almost right away, so you didn't necessarily know that you wanted to go into sales starting in communications, but then you moved into sales. Did you like it? Are you good at it?

Amy Boerger :

Well, I mean, it's been eight years of sales, so I guess so. Growing up, I was always told that I could sell ice to an Eskimo. We had competitions at the restaurant, and I would crush everybody else. The first was a week after I started. I just like talking to people, and finding that gap and filling it.

Laurie McGraw:

Yeah, well, I think your background sort of in the service industry; waitressing, bartending, I mean, those are great skills to get over lots of years. Let's talk about Easy Cater a little bit. You moved on from the television studio to Easy Cater, and you're there for two and a half years. It looks like you had five promotions while you were there, so I would call that sort of a rising star. What was happening at Easy Cater?

Amy Boerger :

I actually moved to Boston in 2017. I'm from very upstate rural New York, and I always dreamed of something bigger and better. When I moved to Boston, I moved here without a job, without any prospects, because I was like, "Okay, I need to just be there and do it." That's what I did, and I found Easy Cater. I actually applied to the account executive role originally, but they had just filled the role, which was unfortunate. I liked the company. I liked what they did. I thought it was a neat concept. I was like, "Okay, tell me about this customer service role that you have available." I got hired for that, and it was actually, there was a six week training program for customer service at Easy Cater. Two weeks out of that training program, I was promoted to sales assistant. I was the quickest promoted person at Easy Cater, for at least a little while.

Laurie McGraw:

That's cool. That's really cool. That's awesome.

Amy Boerger :

It's a really nice resume booster, if you will.

Laurie McGraw:

Yep.

Amy Boerger :

Was the sales assistant, did that role helping the salespeople if there was an issue with their client, or if they just needed somebody to place an order for them, or if they didn't have time to handle an issue properly, it would get passed on to me and my little team. That was really a great way to learn about the sales organization and how they worked and who was responsible for what. After about six months in that role, Easy Cater decided that they didn't need that role anymore, so I was promoted to an account manager.

Amy Boerger :

They wanted me to start this new team with a couple other ladies, working with the people who were spending the most money on Easy Cater, so our whales, as we called them. Our role was to figure out what they needed, how we could better serve them, how we could be their sole provider of business catering. Within that role, I learned so much, because we were starting it out from scratch, figuring out how to talk to these people, what they needed, how to communicate with them so that we didn't upset them or lose their business or push them towards something else, but be hands-on enough where it was a white glove service, but not so hands-on where they were put off. You know what I mean?

Laurie McGraw:

Yep. Did you move into management at some point during Easy Cater, or would you stay in the whale accounts?

Amy Boerger :

After about a year on the whale team, Easy Cater finally opened up that account executive position, and I was like, "Yep, this is what I came here for, so I'm going to get right into there." Applied for that role, got it, became an account executive. As soon as I became an account executive, they opened up the sales team lead program, which was kind of a hybrid between management and being an individual contributor. Because I had been at the company for so long, I knew a lot of the ins and outs of it, so I was like, "Oh, I want to be sales team lead." I wasn't quiet about it. Everybody knew that that was something that I was working towards and wanted to be. My managers knew, their managers knew. The VP of the sales team knew.

Amy Boerger :

Eventually, after six months of me working towards that goal and really helping my team out, putting in coaching, putting in place things for other people to use to improve upon their job, the VP of sales actually approached me and said, "Amy, I know you've been working towards this. I want you to start your own team. You'd be a team of one for a little while, but you'd be a team lead and you'd be in charge of it." I was like, "That's amazing. Thank you so much." I was the team lead of myself, of inbound and projects sales team. I was taking the inbound leads that we were getting, and reaching out to these people, whether they were BDRs, account executives, or CEOs of companies looking for business catering. Then I'd also do projects for the sales team.

Amy Boerger :

After two months on that team, the woman who offered me the position actually left Easy Cater, so I was reapproached by management, and they said, "You've been doing a really great job of this. You have two options here, because we don't really need this team anymore. You can either go back to being an individual contributor, you'd be a senior account executive on this team that's going to be similar to what you were doing before, or you can be the team lead of this team that really needs your help. We really need you to be the team lead. Please be the team lead." I was like, "I can read between the lines here, people."

Laurie McGraw:

What did you do, Amy? Team lead?

Amy Boerger :

I chose the team lead, believe it or not.

Laurie McGraw:

Yep.

Amy Boerger :

In that role, I was in charge of six other account executives, making sure they were hitting their metrics, making sure that everybody was saying what they were supposed to, doing what they were supposed to do. This team hadn't had a leader in quite some time, so things had kind of fallen down a little bit.

Laurie McGraw:

How is it going, Amy? First of all, it's just fantastic that you really promoted yourself and you made it well known what you wanted, and that's I just think good to hear. I mean, many women need to hear that and need to know that those are the things that they should be doing for themselves. Now, you're going from being an individual contributor or a manager of yourself to a manager of team members. What was that transition? Was it hard? Did you learn a lot? Did you have someone to look to, to help you make that transition?

Amy Boerger :

Sure. It was really different. Keeping six individuals happy, as opposed to just myself, was a huge learning curve. Especially people who had been on the team for a while, because it was a new team to me. Even though I had worked closely with them, it was different than what I was doing. I really leaned into them to teach me the ropes, show me what they were doing, and then I was tasked with improving it. Also, I had a really fantastic manager. He allowed me to be very vulnerable with him, which was super nice, because he just showed me how to overcome that imposter syndrome, and just have the confidence to make these decisions. You can't keep everybody happy 100% of the times. If you set standards, you have to keep them. By keeping them, you can hold people accountable. It's okay to hold the people accountable to the standards you set. If they're not, you really have to dig into the why. What is it about this that's not working for you? Why are we doing this? If we do it this way, this is why.

Laurie McGraw:

I think that's great advice. A lot of times what I see with new managers is they often feel that they need to be accountable for what is the responsibility of their team members. That's great advice that you got, sounds like you took it to heart. But, moving on a little bit, Amy. The pandemic hit, and Easy Cater, a high flying company on track to be another unicorn IPO kind of thing, boom, lays off a tremendous amount of their team through no fault of their own, but just because everything shut down, and you were part of that. What happened? How did you do with that? I've got to imagine that was really difficult.

Amy Boerger :

Honestly, when it happened, I was awestruck. I got the call early in the morning. Thank goodness, my fiance was sitting on the couch across from me when I got the call, because all I heard was we're letting you go, and the rest was just a blur. After that, my computer was shut off immediately. I couldn't tell my team goodbye. Thank goodness I had their phone numbers. That was really tough. But, after I was fully able to wrap my mind around it, I gave myself a week to process and mourn the loss of something that I held so near and dear. I saw a future at Easy Cater. My career projection was outstanding. I loved it, so I just needed a time to really mourn that.

Laurie McGraw:

Is a week enough time?

Amy Boerger :

It's what I did. I mean, it was still a process, but I think a week was enough time to process everything, understand it, and then while still holding it, kind of move on and move past it.

Laurie McGraw:

How did you do that? I mean, how do you move on? That's a big deal. That's a big deal for anyone at any stage of their career, and it happens. What did you do? How did you get to work after a week of giving yourself a little break?

Amy Boerger :

I looked toward the future. I said, "Okay, now it's time to set our sights on the next great adventure." In order to do that, I set a standard of sending out three job applications a day. I was super diligent about it, had a spreadsheet, a very detailed spreadsheet. When I actually moved to Boston in 2017, I did not have a spreadsheet when I was applying to jobs, and it did not go as well. Made sure to update that spreadsheet. I would allow myself breaks. When I went to go visit my family in Central New York, after getting tested, I wouldn't apply to jobs when I was there. I'd be with my family. On holidays, I'd enjoy the holiday. On particularly bad days, I wouldn't apply to as many jobs as I would have on a good day. The bad days were more frequently than I would have liked, but you just have to move past them.

Amy Boerger :

The rejections got harder and harder as time went on, and the lack of feedback was something that really took me by surprise. You'd apply to a job, you'd get the stock rejection email, but then after you would have an interview or two with a company and they would ghost you, that was almost worse. Finally, I actually applied to a company that one of my former colleagues from Easy Cater worked at. I was like, "Listen, this is what's been going on. I haven't gotten feedback from anyone about interviews. Please help me." I was unfortunately unaccepted by that company, but she gave me so much feedback about why, that I was able to actually take that and put it towards my interview style, and really changed what I was doing, which was so, so helpful.

Laurie McGraw:

You worked your network, and you worked your network, and that was really helpful. How many applications, how many things did you apply for during that time?

Amy Boerger :

No more than I'd like to admit.

Laurie McGraw:

Yeah, yeah. It's tough. It's tough out there for young professionals, but you started off this discussion with real excitement about what you're doing at Toast. Tell us a little bit about that.

Amy Boerger :

At Toast, I'm an account executive now on the inside sales team, and each person has a different territory within the United States. My territory is actually Central New York, which is wild. It's my hometown, it's my stomping grounds. I am actually very excited to really get in there and open up the restaurant industry to this new technology, because I know how old school everything is there. When I was selling television advertising to people, some of these places, the mom and pop shops didn't even have websites. What's the first thing you do when you see a commercial on the television that you're interested in?

Laurie McGraw:

Website, you go to their website.

Amy Boerger :

You Google it. Right?

Laurie McGraw:

Right.

Amy Boerger :

You need a website, you need some sort of online presence. Really, taking this old-timey little area and bringing it into the future is something I've been passionate about, I guess my whole career.

Laurie McGraw:

Well, that's awesome. You do sound passionate about it, Amy. Then, Back On My Feet, you were talking about that. Did you get involved in that during the time that you were job searching? Or, how did that come about?

Amy Boerger :

During the pandemic, my fiance and I did money of the pandemic checklist things. We got a puppy, we moved, just got a Peloton, but we moved in with his brother and his brother's girlfriend, so my future brother-in-law and his girlfriend. They're incredible people, and they're both involved in this organization. We'd heard so much about it, and I was like, "You know what? Let's try it out." I actually created a jeopardy board for their Christmas party, and was able to implement that. Then was like, "This organization's really great," and you get to meet so many people from different walks of life from my own. I was like, "Let's really double down on this." You get up early, you go run around Boston, you talk to these people, and it's a good way to be

outside, A. Being in front of Zoom all day doesn't necessarily advocate for outdoor time. It's a good way to be outside, and to learn about people that are different from you.

Laurie McGraw:

Well, it also sounds like an incredible organization that is really helping other people. I think we all can use more of that these days. Amy, as we start to close out today, as you think about your career vision, you're back at it with Toast, and it sounds like that is going extraordinarily well. Do you have a vision for yourself next five years, next 10 years? What are you thinking about there?

Amy Boerger :

I don't know if I have such a short term career goal, but I'd love to run a startup sales organization one day. I love the people management aspect of it, and seeing things succeed that I've built is such an incredible feeling. But, also learning from the failures is really important. Just taking every opportunity as it comes, building upon it, and working those business relationships.

Laurie McGraw:

Yeah. Well, that's really important. Amy, we're going to close out here, and part of the reason I'm doing Inspiring Women is to talk to young professionals like yourself who are really going at it with their careers, as well as very advanced at the pinnacle of their career women who have really made it after a long time putting in effort on their profession. What kinds of things do you want to hear from other women, advice that you'd like to seek out as I talk to some of these women at the pinnacles of their career?

Amy Boerger :

Oh, that's a really great question. I think I'd like to hear about their backstory, how they got there, why they ended up in that position, and is that what they wanted when they were young?

Laurie McGraw:

Yeah, well, I think what you're going to hear is that a lot of women are like you, Amy. They didn't necessarily have a plan, but they pursued things. But, I'll definitely be asking those types of questions. Amy, this has been a really terrific conversation. Any closing thoughts as we close out Inspiring Women today?

Amy Boerger :

I want to inspire people, and I want women to be able to ask for what they want, know their worth and go get it, not be afraid.

Laurie McGraw:

Well, it sounds like you are doing just that, Amy. This has been a great discussion. I appreciate being able to talk to Amy Boerger here on Inspiring Women. Amy, if people want to follow you, where can they find you?

Amy Boerger :

They can find me on LinkedIn under my name, and I really hope everybody enjoys listening to the podcast. Laurie, thank you so much for having me on here. Truly remarkable.

Laurie McGraw:

Thanks so much. This has been an episode of Inspiring Women with Laurie McGraw. Please subscribe, rate, and review. We are produced by Kate Crews at Executive Podcast Solutions. More episodes can be found on inspiringwomen.show. I am Laurie McGraw, and thank you for listening.