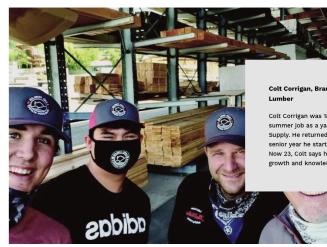


Teen to Leader

This article was printed in our TAL Tribune Intern newsletter.

One hallmark of the TAL mission is our commitment to our people. Our commitment is evident in the benefits we offer, the training we provide, and the emphasis we place on health and wellness. Perhaps even more, it's visible in the people who flourish over time on the TAL team. Four of our leaders—Colt Corrigan, Chad Daniels, Zac Linscott, and CJ Orozco—got their start in the industry in their teens or early adulthood. All four have continued to learn, grow, and achieve while also doing their part to invest in the next generation of leaders.



Colt Corrigan, Branch Manager | Marson and Marson Lumber

Colt Corrigan was 18 and a college student when he took a summer job as a yard associate at Lake Chelan Building Supply. He returned the next two summers, and during his senior year he got a full-time job as a delivery driver for the BLS team. Now 23, Colt says he's grateful to TAL for investing in his growth and knowledge. (Colt is on the left)

Q: As a branch manager, what do you do to help encourage and mentor employees?

A: I try to find ways for every employee to excel. I invite them to ask questions about any processes that might be outside their regular scope of work. I'm always looking for opportunities for them to learn and eventually even take over as they can have more responsibility and grow in their career.

Q: What attitudes do you look for in employees?

A: I look for people who are excited to learn. People who want to find a career and grow within the company, who have a good work ethic, and are excited to come to work every day. Because we're a startup, I want to develop talented people who want to stay for a longer period of time. I'm not trying to fill positions, but to fill a position with a plan for what the future might look like.

Q: What's your best advice for someone who wants to grow their career?

A: Never be afraid to ask for more responsibility or look for ways to learn new skills. Another big thing is to recognize all the people around you who have experience and knowledge, and ask them lots of questions. Even if it seems like something that would be really hard, there's lots of people who are willing to invest time in you and give you pieces of knowledge that ultimately have a ton of value in your life.



Chad Daniels, Regional Manager | Best Built Builders Supply

When Chad Daniels was 16, he described himself as "rambunctious" and "wild" and got himself into a scrape or two. In need of a job, he went to work in yard operations at Lake Chelan, loading lumber, driving trailers, building house packs, and driving loggers and other things elsewhere. He never imagined he'd one day be a regional manager.



Q: When did the job transform into a career for you?

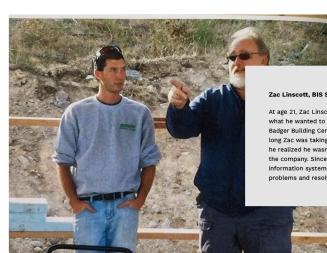
A: Rodney Austin was one of my first mentors, and he has continued to be throughout the 15 years I've known him. When I had no idea what I wanted to do, he and other leaders took an interest and wanted to see me grow. At that time, I was in a band with some friends and getting older, so Rodney had a sit-down with me and said it was time to decide what I wanted to do with my life. I decided I was going to make this my career, and he removed roadblocks and put training in my path.

Q: What would you say is an important quality for a good leader to have?

A: I feel like being a people person. I try to listen to what our stakeholders are, to understand their aspirations. The more you talk to people and the more you listen to them, you can figure out how to get them in the right spot to be successful. People need someone who takes an interest in them and also holds them accountable to get the job done. They want to know what they're doing good and what they need to work on.

Q: With a workforce that includes four distinct generations, how do you cultivate a positive, collaborative environment?

A: I was really lucky when I was a Branch Manager, because one of my contractor salesmen was a Baby Boomer, another was Gen Z, I'm a Millennial, and my store supervisor at the time was Gen X. We had a lot of long conversations. Sometimes older generations don't give a lot of information; they might tell someone the gist of what needs to be done and let them figure it out from there. But there are other pieces that need to be explained or shown more in detail, which can cause conflict. It comes down to knowing a bit about the different generations and building bridges where there are gaps, like with technology or strategy. It usually means listening more, asking less, and learning more about people.



Zac Linscott, BLS Support Manager

At age 21, Zac Linscott was finishing college and figuring out what he wanted to do next. A relative suggested he work at Badger Building Center while he considered his options. Before long, he was working full-time at the lumber yard. The task he realized he wasn't just an employee but an actual part of the company. Since 2012 it has served as business internships, helping him learn how to identify and troubleshoot problems and resolving issues through the TAL enterprise.

Q: What do you think your managers saw in you that they were willing to trust you with more responsibility?

A: I was always comfortable asking questions that I didn't know the answer to, but I think I was able to recognize that I was part of a company that cares about their employees. A company like TAL or Badger gives you that comfort zone to truly be yourself and learn rather than act like you know what you're doing.

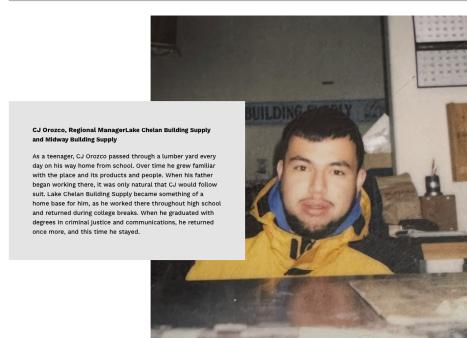
Once you see that, from the top down, you know that everybody's very willing to help. That culture allows employees, especially a young employee, to feel comfortable enough to ask a question without worrying that they're going to get a demanding answer.

Q: Now that you're a manager, how do you help create a culture where others feel comfortable and safe asking questions?

A: The biggest part is by showing them that we're all human and we all make mistakes. I've learned the most from the things I've screwed up. Don't be afraid to make a mistake. Learn from it and make sure you don't make the same mistake twice.

Q: What is one of the best lessons you learned from your managers or other leaders?

A: At TAL we have the best lessons learned from our managers or other leaders. They all did a very good job at making you feel like you were a part of the company. They made sure your opinions mattered. They didn't want you to be afraid to speak up and they even enjoyed contradiction. If somebody had an idea, they'd want to talk about the pros and cons and make sure everybody understood our risk/reward.



CJ Orozco, Regional Manager | Lake Chelan Building Supply and Whetby Building Supply

As a teenager, CJ Orozco passed through a lumber yard every day on his way home from school. Over time he grew familiar with the place and its products and people. When his father became ill, CJ's mother asked him to help out at the lumber yard, and Lake Chelan Building Supply became something of a home base for him, as he worked there throughout high school and again during college. When he graduated with degrees in marketing and communications, he returned once more, and has since he stayed.

Q: Why did you decide to pursue a career with TAL?

A: I had no idea what this industry could offer. There are so many different avenues within this industry, with sales, in operations. I think if I'd been aware of the opportunities and aspects of the industry, I would've made the decision for this career a lot sooner and I probably would've focused my education towards something specific in this industry.

Q: What do you think accounts for your rise to regional manager?

A: I was once told by a mentor, Jerry, that lack is in a formula—that lack is what happens when opportunity meets preparation. So I guess what I've done is I've been working on my preparation and opportunities. By staying curious, I'm gathering as much data and information as possible, learning as much as possible, so when opportunities come up, I have the expertise to give it a shot.

Q: What's your best advice for someone who is young or new to the industry?

A: My advice is to put in your time, earn your stripes, and doors will open for you. Stay curious, always ask questions, and don't be afraid to admit when you don't know something. Within the industry, there are lots of people you can talk to to get answers and advice. If you stay curious and open to feedback, you'll learn little bits of information that at a long way.

Q: What is one of your strengths as a manager?

A: I coached basketball for four years, and I still feel connected to younger generations. I feel like an important part in interpreting the intentions of you know, words that don't universal. As managers change between generations, it's easy to get defensive or think you've got your points across to the full extent.

In those cases, you might just listen more or not back and follow up, and then communicate it back. But I think if you're emotionally intelligent, you're aware of yourself, you know what makes you tick and what makes you drag, then you also can look at others and be more aware of their emotions. You're more empathetic.