

How Success Happened for Clayton Ruebensaal, EVP of Global B2B Marketing at American Express

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Clayton Ruebensaal is responsible for bringing American Express's vision to life. As the EVP of Global B2B Marketing at American Express, Ruebensaal leads a team that's responsible for setting the vision, strategy and marketing plans to leverage data and creativity as competitive advantages in prospect and customer marketing across all channels and geographies.

Before stepping into his role at American Express, Ruebensaal served as the company's head of global brand management. There, he implemented its first global brand strategy, which focused on building loyalty across its consumer, commercial and merchant customers.

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In my conversation with Ruebensaal, he spoke specifically about his efforts to support American Express's 60-plus year legacy of empowering small businesses through initiatives like Small Business Saturday and the nationwide Shop Small movement, and what that has looked like during the pandemic.

"We've identified that what small business owners often need to succeed is education on topics like marketing,

management and retaining customers,” he said.

After seeing the impact of the pandemic on small businesses, Ruebensaal and his team were inspired to make more resources available and launched its newest effort to democratize business education. The platform, called Business Class, provides small businesses with valuable education to empower their success through tangible resources, including stories, timely tips and inspiring insights from business experts at no cost.

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Ruebensaal spoke to me about how Business Class differentiates itself from other resources out there.

“We saw an opportunity to make business education much more engaging. In addition to being digitally accessible and useful, we approach it in a way a lifestyle brand would,” he said. “We’re creating something that is useful and educational for customers, easy to access and entertaining. And we judge that by the number of people we do see opting into our content.”

American Express’s recent small business initiatives go far beyond *Business Class*. Ruebensaal also spoke to me about the company’s \$1 billion action plan to enhance diverse representation and promote equal opportunities for colleagues, customers and community, stating, “Our approach to empower minority-owned businesses spans three pillars: driving sales and growth, unlocking funding opportunities, and providing access to resources and tools.” Part of this initiative includes a commitment to provide capital and financial education to at least 250,000 black- and minority-owned small businesses in the U.S.

Ruebensaal is energized to help roll out even more inventive and impactful ways to support small businesses throughout the

country. According to a recent American Express Shop Small survey, more than half of consumers agreed that Small Business Saturday makes them want to shop small all year long, insights that Ruebensaal says are making him hopeful that small businesses will start 2022 on a high note.

“After all, we all do better when small businesses thrive,” he shared. “It’s good for our communities, it’s good for our country, and it’s good for our bottom line.”

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