

MELISSA BETTUA (Mel B.)

Director of Sales

Hub HPG Brands

I feel rather confident saying, like many people in this industry – I accidentally stumbled on this underground railroad that is promo – clueless, but very curious!

Until then, I was blissfully unaware of what goes on behind the scenes, before someone gets that rush of adrenaline from winning 100 branded lip balms for being the 100th caller on the radio – or a free t-shirt tossed into the audience by their favorite boy band member (I'm still certain Joey MacIntyre was aiming for me that one time – he missed and I still forgive him). True still, I was always a magpie for a free pen – and some good conversation.

In 2013, for the love of pens – and all things people pleasing, I took on my role at Hub as an inside sales coordinator after several years in hospitality, joining the army of “Rush Makers” – the ones that help create that branded-adrenaline-buzz – sometimes with a few days (or hours!) notice. Less than nine months into my role, I was off to Vegas for what I eternally believe bonded me to the meaning of this industry: relationships, trust, connections and long coffee lines.

Since then, I worked my way through various roles within the brand – traveling – setting up tradeshow booths, chasing new opportunities and getting covered in protein bar crumbs whilst navigating a GPS in new territories. It'll be fun they said – and it is!

In November of 2019 as HPG was still morphing into what is now a 10-brand enterprise, I was offered my current role as Director of Sales for the Hub arm and the mothership brand- which I nervously embraced! Little did I – or anyone know – that just a few short months into my new role I would literally be in leadership lockdown. Once that happened, it hit me with the starkest realization that I needed to own my role as a leader in more meaningful ways than I could have imagined. If anyone told me:

... your team is going to change

... you'll be managing virtually

... you'll have to role reverse, go back to basics

... and at times there will be tears

– Oh, and by the way, here's an HD camera and a ring light – you'll be hosting HPG's virtual tradeshows, act natural and make people laugh. I would have taken that bundle of chaos and still likely have said yes in the name of growing personally and professionally. Saying yes to uncertainty can free you from doubting yourself – and it's a far greater feeling than regret.

A Day in the Life

6:40 AM – Wake up, hover over my Nespresso – enjoy a few slow sips of coffee, then immediately make my bed and get myself and my meals packed and ready to go. I'm usually taking a peek at emails in between just to make some initial assessments of what's waiting for my attention. Blend my smoothie and head out!

8:45 AM – Arrive at the office. Most days I am in office except for one day a week – my office is most conducive to weekly scheduled meetings – and properly staged for virtual tradeshows. Do a round of good-mornings to the crew. Once I get into my office and boot up the computer – I let things load while I defer to my handwritten list!

While I keep organized files and spreadsheets for nearly everything – writing out my projects helps me cement my tasks. By staying proactive, I armor myself for the days where incidentals might get in the way. It's my goal-oriented insurance policy for staying ahead. If the project is something I want to improve, optimize – it hits the parking lot on the whiteboard – and I chip away small chunks at a time.

While each day in the weekly rotation may be reserved for various re-occurring meets, Monday's are always with my team at 11:30 to kick-off the week. Many times, I come with a theme – or I throw out a question or round table topic such as – come prepared with your favorite mistake – what did you learn and what were the gains? In here, we celebrate wins, challenges, share KPI's and leadership updates. Never wing your leadership meetings! Come prepared and be transparent.

We are constantly running contests to keep the team motivated, hungry and challenged to think differently.

I've really thought of myself as more of a fitness coach for my team – “you can squeeze in that one more virtual meeting this week team” – “pump out a few more calls!” – “OK, DETOUR! new obstacle course – we're changing the marketing plan and refocusing on different products” (in my best Peloton voice). The environment around us, including supply chain – was unpredictable. You have to lead with the belief that there is something better on the other side of this; you can be in the sinking ship, or you can be on the team that knows how to sling a life raft, while still rowing!

Mid-Day Eat, stretch, hydrate and check-in with my team (either in-office or through Teams where we keep an active daily chat). I'm a grazer – small, frequent meals – I can't concentrate without nourishing food. While it's very typical of me to work through my lunch, a 15-minute hop in the car and quick stop at Dunkin Donuts is sometimes the greatest perk and provides that boost of energy. It's also just an opportunity to see someone from another department passing by.

Throughout the pandemic, our #1 lead generator was HPG's virtual tradeshow series – each customized for our client's audience. Countless hours were spent planning, prepping, and polishing each event to make them one-of-a-kind for our audience – on top of the actual event experience.

Afternoon – While I am ultimately responsible for the team here on planet Hub – I'm an HPG national lead and work closely with our other brand leaders collaborating on strategy, marketing and next level ideas. I'll never hesitate to call one of my colleagues to say – I have this crazy idea – and it goes something like this... and it might not work... so you're in right?!

Late afternoon – Once afternoon rolls around, I've already tackled the “icky” stuff – the must-get done items that aren't necessarily fun, though necessary. If I'm not in a virtual event or a team meeting, I'm on top of my emails – but I don't give my inbox the key to the kingdom. Emails are like laundry; they'll always be there. I give myself 20-30 minute email “naps” – that's enough for me to fully focus my energy dedicated to analyzing reports, creating sales plans and giving life to initiatives while I'm in the flow!

Distractions are inevitable – I think of having a daily-weekly-monthly plan like the white line on the right side of the road. Fog, rain, emergency orders – or a customer that needs to talk – will come into play. Always know where your white line is so you can get back on track when the day gets shaky.

5:45 PM – Wrapping up the day! I make sure all my majors are covered. Review my list- then start a fresh one to begin the next day. Head out – and either head home to spend some time with my chocolate lab, Moose – or hit up a barre or yoga class. I'm a fit fanatic and movement is key to my sanity.

6:30 PM is restoration time! If I'm not at the studio, I'll light the incense, turn on the Lumineers and enjoy an evening flow in my newly renovated zen loft – it was a pandemic project and my favorite corner of the house.

7:45-9:00 PM – Dinner with my husband, wind down, tackle some chores – and make sure there are no dirty dishes in the sink (that's inconceivable to me!)