

Brian Greene: Banker of the Houston Food Bank

By Radhika Patwardhan

I was quite surprised by Brian Greene's YLDP session from a few days ago as it was not at all a lecture about donating, but instead an interesting talk about the importance of leadership, persistence, and creativity in a

nonprofit organization. Brian Greene is the CEO of the Houston Food bank, one of the largest nonprofit organizations in Texas that feeds nearly 800,000 Houstonians every year. How exactly do they do that?



Surprisingly, the main source of food that the Houston Food Bank receives is not donations from people. Greene explained that the food bank actually gets the most food from the source: farms. Due to the nature of people only choosing the smoothest apple or the most perfect lemon, farms never ship the

“deformed” produce in order to save money and it often goes to waste. The food bank noticed this and decided to collaborate with these farms; the farms give all the unwanted produce to the food bank for free as long as they pay the cost of shipping. Through this creative solution, so much food is kept from being wasted and fewer people go hungry.

One of the interesting points Greene mentioned was the impact of Covid-19 on the Houston Food Bank. Across the nation, food was being wasted as restaurants shut down and they had no

choice but to throw the unused food away. Seeing this enormous waste of good food, Greene switched his focus from sourcing food from farms to the many shut-down restaurants. The Houston Food Bank was faced with another problem: due to the pandemic, little to no volunteers were available to help and most of the bank runs on volunteer work. Since many people also lost their jobs during the pandemic, Greene implemented another inventive idea of paying people to work at the food bank instead of just volunteers working. This way, the Houston Food Bank created hundreds of jobs while also making sure that people were not left hungry. Win-win!

Most importantly, Brian Greene is an incredible leader and shared some of his wisdom with us. In the HBR article, there is a page that really stood out to me about the 4 common myths in leadership. The myths are Everyone can be a leader, Leaders deliver business results, People who get to the top are leaders, and Leaders are great coaches. A few more that Greene added are a leader does not have to be an extrovert and a leader does not know *everything* about the company. It is nearly impossible for one individual to know how to do everything which is why it is important for a leader to be able to make the decision of entrusting other people with other decisions within the company. Overall, Mr. Greene's session was very inspiring, and I learned many new things that will make me and others better future leaders.