

## Alum takes lead role in advancing EDI

September 19, 2023



Christopher "Skip" Wilson (MBA '12) lives by a simple truth. Chasing a bigger paycheck or a more prestigious job title will not ensure happiness, he says, "especially if it means setting aside your needs and your family's needs. You have to listen closely to that and make it a priority."

It's a belief that has become clearer for him as he looks back at a successful career in brand marketing for some of the world's most respected brands, including Peloton, Sony, MTV and Ralph Lauren.

Originally from Lansing, Michigan, Wilson was always fascinated by people. Before receiving his MBA from the Freeman School in 2012, he worked primarily in media and entertainment at companies such as MTV and Country Music Television.

Despite his love for music, Wilson wanted to take a step forward in his career.

He was interested in sociology and psychology, and at the Freeman School he began studying consumer behavior, the science of how people make choices and what influences purchasing decisions. And at Freeman, Wilson was able to carve out a path according to his interests.

“I like people, number one,” he says. “Meeting them, interacting with them. Understanding their stories. Naturally, my curiosity led me to a professional life where my day-to-day is about connecting to people. That really is at the heart of marketing — connecting people to a service or product that you offer.”

He describes his two years at Freeman as very impactful, and by graduation he didn’t want to leave New Orleans, but he struggled to find a job in his field locally.

He began working for firms focused on fitness and health and wellness, eventually leading to a job as global brand and communication lead for Precor, which would eventually become the commercial division of Peloton Interactive. He spent four years at the helm of this marketing team, a period that spanned the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, when demand for connected fitness options skyrocketed.

At the same time, the Black Lives Matter protests were stirring up important and long-overdue conversations about racial equity and anti-racist practices across the United States. Corporations had to make significant adjustments to ensure that their practices aligned with their commitments to social justice. Wilson recognized an opportunity for change and a gap that he could fill and helped to create the division’s first Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging resource group. As co-chair for the group, Wilson helped the organization compose its charter and establish objectives aimed at improving the employee experience.

“My goal was to keep our team focused on a few key things,” Wilson says. “Do employees have the education and tools needed to create sustaining and positive change? Are the policies and practices that we’ve implemented creating roadblocks for minority populations within our walls? How do we define success for our teams? And how are we holding ourselves accountable for our diversity and equity goals?”

As the pandemic subsided, Wilson made another shift, leaving Peloton + Precor after more than four years to become vice president of brand marketing at Shutterstock. There, Wilson again used his skills to stabilize and rebuild the company’s marketing function, provide strategic direction for the brand, and create the foundation for the

business's next phase of expansion.

More recently, the call to create balance between his career and his personal life has gotten louder. "Excellence in most things requires discipline, inspiration, courage and, yes, rest," Wilson says. "I'm grateful to be at a place where I can take a small reprieve to recharge."

This fall Wilson is taking a break from work to travel, connect with family and explore areas of the globe he's never seen.

"In contrast to my parent's generation, it's rare that people stay in the same job throughout their lives," he says. "Just because we wander doesn't mean we are lost. Having wealth and a variety of experiences, being able to shift, to adjust and be flexible is so important growing as both a professional and human being."

After taking a few months off to pause, reflect and explore, Wilson plans to consult and work with small business owners on their marketing and branding.

"For me to be successful and happy, I have to keep it fresh," Wilson says. "I think that is the calling for many of us creative folks. I am jumping at the opportunity to listen to that voice we all have that grows louder and louder as the years move by. What's different now, versus then, is that I have the lived experience, confidence and skill to apply to those larger leaps."

*--Maria Clark*