

Excellence in **ENTREPRENEURSHIP** Awards



AWARD CEREMONY AT IRVINE MARRIOTT | MARCH 9, 2023

**NEW HIRES, BUSINESS LINES AND VALUATIONS
FOR 2022 EIE HONOREES**

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2023 NOMINEES

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OC Entrepreneurs Offset Challenges Through Innovation

The winners of the Business Journal's 2022 **Excellence in Entrepreneurship Awards** come from varied industries, ranging from healthcare executives pioneering new industry standards to a local real estate executive finding bright spots in the office market.

Since then, the market has taken yet another turn with a potential recession on the horizon, but that hasn't stopped the five winners from continuing to show gains, from

finding new sources of revenue to new employees.

The Business Journal caught up with the execs to see what's changed in the past year; write-ups follow on this page and page 20.

The next Excellence in Entrepreneurship Awards ceremony is scheduled for March 9 at the **Irvine Marriott**, and keynoted by **Allied Universal CEO Steve Jones**. Bios for nominees for the upcoming event begin on page 36.

Ramin Mousavi: Winning Industry Approvals for CathWorks

■ By PETER J. BRENNAN

After **CathWorks**' Chief Executive **Ramin Mousavi** won a Business Journal **Excellence in Entrepreneur Award** last May, the world's largest medical device maker validated the technology.

Medtronic PLC, a Minneapolis-based firm (NYSE: MDT) that's valued around \$120 billion, in July said it would invest \$75 million in **CathWorks**, a cardiac-focused device maker that's developed a new, noninvasive way of diagnosing heart disease.

It's the largest funding deal to date for **CathWorks**, which was founded in 2013 in Israel.

Medtronic has the option to buy **CathWorks** in the next five years, at a \$585 million valuation, plus other earn-out payments.

"We believe strongly in the potential of the technology and are committed to strengthening our relationship with **CathWorks** to provide new, innovative technologies and



Ramin Mousavi
CEO
CathWorks

solutions from diagnosis to treatment," **Jason Weidman**, president of the Coronary and Renal Denervation business at Medtronic,

which is part of the Minneapolis company's Cardiovascular Portfolio, said in July.

Medtronic, which has been part of a prior **CathWorks** funding round, said it will also immediately begin co-promotion of **CathWorks**' **FFRangio System** in the U.S., Europe and Japan, where it is commercially available.

"This long-term partnership opens up the door for exciting development activities," Mousavi told the Business Journal at that time.

"As we launch this fourth-generation **FFRangio System**, it's become clear that the product is ready for globalization."

The company is still in the early stages of rolling out the **FFRangio System**, which is a noninvasive method without drugs to provide a 3D image of structural problems in the heart.

In October, **CathWorks** announced the approval of the latest iteration of the

CathWorks **CATHWORKS**

- **BUSINESS:** medical device maker
- **CEO:** Ramin Mousavi
- **HEADQUARTERS:** Irvine
- **NOTABLE:** CEO says fourth-generation system to detect heart disease in a noninvasive manner ready for globalization after \$75M investment from Medtronic

FFRangio System by the **Japanese Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency (PMDA)**.

About 19 million people globally, including 1 million in the U.S., die every year because of heart diseases, about 35% of total global mortality, making it by far the world's biggest killer, Mousavi said. The potential addressable testing market is around \$5 billion to \$6 billion, he estimated. ■

John Combs: Expanding During the Downturn

■ By KATIE MURAR

Orange County's office market continues to soften in the wake of the pandemic, with vacancy rates climbing north of 14% last quarter, up 42 basis points year-over-year.

For many companies, work from home is here to stay.

That didn't stop one of the region's top property management firms from significantly expanding its foothold in 2022.

Irvine-based property management firm **RiverRock Real Estate Group** added 4 million square feet of new commercial real estate assignments last year, including office, retail and industrial buildings in California and Arizona. This totals 139 new projects for a total contract value of \$65 million.

RiverRock, the largest firm among local companies that only handle third-party management, now counts a portfolio topping 40 million square feet, including 14 million square feet in Orange County.



John Combs
Founder, Principal
RiverRock Real Estate Group

It bucked labor retrenchment trends last year, too, hiring 39 people and bringing its headcount to 150 employees.

"Despite the challenges we faced, our team has achieved a great deal in 2022," Principal **John Combs** said.

Combs, who founded **RiverRock** in 2003, got

his real estate start at a Texas development company before deciding to move to California after visiting the state on vacation.

He joined **O'Donnell Property Services** when it was one of the largest property management firms in OC, and worked his way up to the CEO role before the company sold in 1995 to **Insignia Financial Group Inc.**

Combs led the U.S. property services division at **Insignia** after that sale, during which he oversaw the acquisition of about 30 companies that grew the company's footprint to 300 million square feet.

In 2003, **CBRE Group Inc.** acquired **Insignia** in a deal valued around \$415 million. "I lost my job as part of that merger," Combs said.

That setback ended up pushing Combs to start his own property management company.

"I had a goal of starting a union for property managers because I felt we didn't have any rights, but I also didn't want to go against clients," Combs said. "So, I started **RiverRock**

RiverRock Real Estate Group **R**

- **FOUNDED:** 2003
- **HEADQUARTERS:** Irvine
- **FOUNDER:** John Combs
- **BUSINESS:** commercial property manager
- **EMPLOYEES:** 150
- **PORTFOLIO:** 40M+ SF
- **NOTABLE:** added 4M SF to its property management portfolio in 2022

with the intention of creating a solid company for property managers to work for, that also provided customized property services."

Last year, **RiverRock** employees donated 430 volunteer hours as part of the company's ongoing initiative to give back to its markets.

It's part of why the company has been named a **Best Place to Work** in Orange County by the Business Journal every year the firm has entered. ■

Natalia Sephton: Clientele Boost for M&R Engineering

■ By KEVIN COSTELLOE

Natalia Sephton is bringing **M&R Engineering** into its 50th year of business in a continued growth mode, albeit a cautious one.

The Orange-based firm is keeping an eye out for signs of a possible slowdown in the U.S. economy, according to company owner and President Sephton.

She said revenue was about \$12 million last year, off slightly from 2021. Still, the latest number is up 11% from 2020.

A recent boost in clientele may buoy future gains, Sephton said.

"We're growing. We're gaining new customers every week," she told the Business Journal, noting the firm's customer list now tops 100.

M&R has 61 employees and is hiring for an array of positions.



Natalia Sephton
Owner, President
M&R Engineering

The firm specializes in high-precision machined metal and plastic parts and works in the aerospace, defense and commercial industries. It turns 50 in March.

"It's a big deal," Sephton said of the an-

niversary.

She's pleased to be seeing customers in person again, after the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

"At the end of the day, this is a person-to-person business," she says.

She acknowledges there is a "lot of uncertainty" in the industry, adding: "There's a lot of talk on the news about recession and slowing down."

Still, "we're still hoping that we can achieve expansion of the business."

Sephton left her home in Moscow at age 16 with one suitcase about a quarter century ago to launch her education and career in Los Angeles.

From community college to USC and climbing the corporate ladder, Sephton has a storied path that led her to acquire **M&R Engineering** in 2018.

M&R Engineering **M&R**

- **FOUNDED:** 1973
- **OWNER/PRESIDENT:** Natalia Sephton
- **HEADQUARTERS:** Orange
- **BUSINESS:** precision machining of metal and plastic components
- **EMPLOYEES:** 61
- **2022 REVENUE:** \$12M
- **NOTABLE:** celebrating firm's 50th anniversary next month

She avoids talking about the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the protracted war there.

"It's a very sad situation," according to Sephton, who pointed out last month she has lived in Southern California longer than she did in Moscow. ■

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Stephen Thorne: New Initiatives, Markets for PDS

■ By BY PETER J. BRENNAN

Since **Stephen Thorne IV** won a Business Journal **Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award** last May for building **Pacific Dental Services** into a company with more than \$2 billion in annual sales, he's entered a new market—working with general practitioners.

In December, the Irvine-based PDS announced a unique joint venture to open at least 25 PDS supported dental offices inside **MemorialCare** health centers in Orange and Los Angeles counties.

"This is the future," Thorne said. "I really believe it. No one in the U.S. has done before what we're trying to accomplish."

The company isn't sitting on its laurels. In October, PDS announced what it called a "significant milestone" by opening its 900th supported practice.

"We're honored that so many dentists have trusted us to provide the support services, proven technology and innovation to their clinical practices that enable outstanding patient care," Thorne said.

It also launched an integrated medical-dental practice, **Sahara Health Group** in Las Vegas to offer patients "a holistic strategy to managing their overall health care through a



Stephen Thorne
Founder, CEO
Pacific Dental Services

variety of services under one roof."

It partnered with the **American Diabetes Association** to educate people on the link between periodontal disease and diabetes. It also started a pilot program to offer blood sugar testing in 30 supported practices.

Last month, PDS, which provides back-office support to free dentists to concentrate on their customers, said it's grown 31% in the past three years, including capturing market share in several of the states where it operates.

Pacific Dental Services



- **BUSINESS:** back-office support for dentists
- **FOUNDER/CEO:** Stephen Thorne IV
- **HEADQUARTERS:** Irvine
- **ANNUAL SALES:** \$2B+
- **NOTABLE:** EIE winner Thorne says past year has been one of the most challenging and fulfilling of his career

The company integrated the software of **Epic Systems Corp.** into all of PDS's supported practices.

Thorne also made a \$4 million donation to his father's alma mater, **University of the Pacific**.

"This past year has been one of the most challenging and one of the most fulfilling years of my career," Thorne said. "So even though we were faced with some very challenging economic issues, we were able to keep working on one of my passions, to bridge the gap between dental and medical care for patients and bring further awareness to the Mouth-Body Connection." ■

John Pham: InBrace's Expansion Bringing Smiles

■ By KAITLIN AQUINO

Dr. **John Pham**, founder and chief medical officer at Irvine-based orthodontics firm **InBrace** has been busy promoting his invention, the **SmartWire**, from the company's new Tustin **InStudio** center since receiving an **Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award** from the Business Journal last year.

"I'm doing what I do best and love most: evangelizing InBrace to fellow orthodontists and entrepreneurs, treating patients and creating as many smiles as possible," Pham told the Business Journal.

The company last December expanded its retail footprint to Tustin with a new 24-hour InStudio, a customer center and training facility for doctors.

"It's a one-of-a-kind experience where consumers and providers can learn about InBrace," Pham said. "It's supposed to be like walking into a **lululemon** store."

Customers can also receive treatment at InStudios. InBrace currently counts two InStu-



John Pham
Founder, CMO
InBrace

dios to date, with its other location in Irvine.

Although InBrace plans to open more InStudios in the coming years, Pham declined to disclose the potential locations his company has been eyeing.

'Invisible Braces'

Pham developed the idea for InBrace's

flagship product, the **SmartWire**, during his orthodontics residency at the **University of Southern California**. Unlike braces and **Invisalign**, the **SmartWire** sits behind the teeth and, leveraging computer modeling and artificial intelligence, gently moves them into place without the need for tray changes or tightenings.

Users can wear it while brushing, flossing, eating and drinking as they typically would, company officials said.

Within eight weeks of use, **SmartWire** wearers can begin to see a dramatic difference in their teeth, according to Pham.

Customer feedback for the **SmartWire** has been largely positive, Pham said. The product recently earned a Net Promoter Score (NPS)—a metric that assesses consumer experiences—of 84 out of 100 for consumers receiving treatment at InBrace's InStudios.

"For dentistry, the average NPS is like one," Pham said. "We're sitting high, among brands like **Apple** and **Tesla**."

InBrace



- **FOUNDED:** 2014
- **HEADQUARTERS:** Irvine
- **CEO:** Clint Carnell
- **BUSINESS:** orthodontics services
- **TOTAL FUNDS RAISED:** over \$217M
- **NOTABLE:** closed \$45M financing round, opened InStudio in Tustin, ramping up sales team

Financing Round

The company last August closed a \$45 million round of financing led by **Horizon Technology Finance Corp.** (Nasdaq: HRZN). InBrace has raised over \$217 million in funding to date. It's one of the biggest players in the \$40 billion teeth-straightening industry, Pham said.

According to Pham, InBrace's investors see the company as IPO-ready in the foreseeable future. ■

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Turning off cancer's genetic switch

Photograph by Steve Zylus / UC Irvine

New chemical holds promise to block tumor growth in melanoma and rare cancers

For UCI Health dermatologist Dr. Anand K. Ganesan, a specialist in skin disorders and a prolific research scientist, fighting cancer requires painstaking work to assemble bits of genetic information to find potential tumor-blocking weapons.

He and his colleagues used this approach to create a new molecular compound, called ALY101, with the potential to stop the most aggressive type of skin cancer, melanoma, in its tracks — and possibly other cancers, too.

The chemical agent disrupted cellular processes that initiate growth and blood vessel formation, slowing tumor development for a variety of cancer types in mouse models.

Ganesan, a UCI School of Medicine professor who holds both a medical degree and a doctoral degree in microbiology and molecular genetics, compares finding the ALY101 molecule to Jenga, a popular game in which players take turns removing parts of a tower made of wooden blocks.

"A cancer cell is a big Jenga puzzle," he says. "We wanted to figure out which blocks — that is, genes — are the right ones to target. The first thing we did was to say, 'Let's take out each block, one by one, and see how to fix the puzzle.'"

But the goal wasn't to keep the tower of blocks intact, says the co-director of the Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center's Biotechnology, Imaging & Drug discovery program.

Instead, he wanted to learn the role each gene plays, asking the question, "If we take away this gene, is the tumor still able to form? Does it stop tumors from spreading? What happens?"

Ganesan and his colleagues eventually found a melanoma gene that plays a role both in chemotherapy resistance and in cancer progression, findings that were published in the journal *Cancer Research* in 2012.

Then came the hardest part: figuring out how to switch off the finicky gene. "That's the real challenge because you have to target it when it's switched on," he says.

A key breakthrough came when Ganesan gave a lecture on his discoveries in Italy, where he spoke with Marco De Vivo. The director of the Italian Institute of Technology's Molecular Modeling and Drug Discovery Laboratory uses sophisticated computer modeling to test which chemicals are able to block a protein from binding to a specific spot on a cell.

Ganesan told De Vivo he was unable to identify a chemical agent that could block the melanoma gene because his target was unstable, flipping on and off. "Oh, that sounds interesting," De Vivo replied, and together they began testing molecular models to find a compound that would do the trick.

"There was a lot of trial and error, but we made a new chemical that has never been seen before," Ganesan says.

"We showed how this drug works. And we showed that it slows cancer growth in animal models."

ALY101 was developed with support from the National Institutes of Health and the UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge, the cancer center's annual fundraiser, which provided the initial seed money. The next step is to develop it as a clinical therapy.

"There's still a journey from having a drug that does this in our models and having a drug we can give to people," says Ganesan, who has created a startup company for that purpose with De Vivo and other partners. "That's the path we're on right now."

He's hopeful that ALY101 will not only help melanoma patients but also people with neurofibromas in the ear (tumors that can destroy hearing) and Ewing's sarcoma (a bone cancer that strikes young people).

"We're also looking at the drug for rare cancers," Ganesan says. "There are a lot of rare cancers we have no treatments for now."

UCI Health

ucihealth.org/cancer-switch

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By Ivo A. Tjan, CEO
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2022 was another record year for the company amidst a period of great economic uncertainty. And we continue this well into 2023 by actively managing credit risk, expanding our client base, and bringing on new talented employees to our team. Our fortress balance sheet and business model continue to be sources of economic strength for our business community, employees, and shareholders.

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Our Bank embodies a culture of Bankers whose only objective is to deliver unparalleled service to the business community versus being all things to all people like most banks today. By being all things to some people, CommerceWest Bank can provide customized and personally tailored banking services to businesses and their owners throughout California.

Our Bankers are experienced market leaders with a proven track record advising business owners and C-Suite Executives. Their passion for banking-and



commitment to being stewards of the funds they are entrusted-has built a solid and stable foundation. Business owners trust our knowledge in evaluating their financial service needs and advising them on ways to save time, increase operational efficiencies and enhance their cash flow by providing them with the credit facilities and treasury management services they need to help them grow their companies and protect their assets. Our Bankers take a deep approach to understanding financial conditions and trends to create a long-term customized solution.

Committed to our Community

In 2022, the Bank celebrated 21 years of service. While some Banks are leaving the California marketplace or closing their doors for good, CommerceWest Bank remains fully committed to our community. With the 2021 move to a larger Corporate Headquarters in Irvine, it has accommodated our unprecedented growth. This larger footprint enables us to continue growing for years to come.

We are committed to making a difference supporting the community. In the spirit of service, tens of thousands are raised annually for Southern California nonprofits, primarily focusing on children and individuals with disabilities, those experiencing a hardship in their life, and those battling life threatening diseases. As a result, CommerceWest Bank was named a **“Company That Cares”** by the Orange County Business Journal.

These are exciting times for our company, our team, and our shareholders. Our future is bright. Our goals are clear. We know that it is more important than ever to be able to count on your banking partner and we plan to continue to prove to the business community who the Best Bankers are in California.

Ivo A. Tjan, Chairman & CEO

Ivo A. Tjan is Chairman, President and CEO of CommerceWest Bank. He has been recognized by the Los Angeles Times as a 2022 Orange County Visionary and named in the OC500 Directory of Influence by the Orange County Business Journal. The Bank is headquartered in Irvine, California and serves businesses throughout California. He can be reached at itjan@cwbk.com or (949) 474-5278.



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WANT TO PREVAIL IN YOUR DIVORCE?

LOOK TO ISRAEL FOR STRATEGY



By Paul Nelson, Esq

What's the best way to win a war?

Start before the other side, then strike first. This was how Israel defeated the much larger combined armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the Six Day War of June 1967.

Conflict had been brewing in the Middle East ever since Palestinian guerilla groups triggered Israeli reprisals in Jordan and Syria. Tensions escalated throughout the next spring until Egyptian president Gamal Nassar showed Syrian support by using his navy to blockade Israel's port city of Elat.

But Israel was ready.

It had been monitoring its Arab neighbors closely since 1948. Also, it had spent the previous 12 years building one of the most formidable militaries in the world. Its intelligence service, the Mossad, was second to none.

Early on June 5, Israel responded to the Egyptian blockade by launching a massive, well-coordinated air attack. Within hours, Israel wiped out 90 percent of Egypt's air force—while it was still on the tarmac.

Israeli tanks then swept through the Sinai all the way to the Suez Canal while simultaneously shelling East Jerusalem with a devastating armor assault.

It was all over in six days.

Israel now controlled the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, the West Bank of the Jordan River, the Gaza Strip, and the entire Sinai Peninsula. It was in the perfect position to negotiate a cease fire.

All because it had prepared for this fight *years* ahead of time.

Divorce may be likened to warfare. If you're contemplating your own, you should approach divorce the same way. Get ahead of things. Don't be reactive.

If you're caught by surprise, you're likely to find you have no place to live, that key documents are unavailable or have suddenly "disappeared," and that events are happening far faster than your ability to handle them. Instead, give yourself the head start you need to stake out an advantageous position.

This is exactly what I advised a client we will call Anthony. He had a profitable mail order business estimated to be worth \$20 million. He claimed he funded the business 15 years earlier with \$10,000 from his own savings. Anthony also insisted his wife Sara had not contributed any money of her own, nor had she participated in the business in any way.

Although Anthony and Sara were getting along okay at the time, he suspected she was being unfaithful. As his counsel, I insisted he document his entire business history ASAP to prove his sole ownership. It took Anthony six months to attain all the necessary records, but he was eventually successful.

This was a good thing. Because in the final phase of such document discovery, he also confirmed Sara was in fact, having an affair.

Devastated to be right about his suspicion, Anthony was also ready.

When time came to divorce and divvy up assets, we could prove beyond a doubt that Anthony's business was entirely *his*.

Had he not done this work in advance? The pain of his wife's infidelity—coupled with the emotional roller-coaster that followed—likely would have made things far harder. Worse, it might have cost him millions and millions of dollars. Instead, like Israel, Anthony prepared ahead of time, and it paid off.

Are you too, facing divorce? I recommend you select the same strategy to get the best possible outcome. For just like in war, preparation *is* everything.

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Increasing Fraud Attempts: How to Stay Alert And Stay Protected

Fraud Attempts Are Occurring at a Higher Rate Due to our Increasingly Digital Environment

Digitization has left loopholes for cybercriminals to attack all of us. With companies already losing millions of dollars to cybercriminals, we see an urgent need to keep you informed with cybersecurity measures and the best tips for you to keep your business safe.

Cyber attackers are working around the clock to try to attack systems, computers, emails, bank accounts and every other element that could be compromised. The CBC Information Security and Risk Teams are dedicated to maintaining processes that keep our organization – and our client's money – safe.

Staggering Cyber Attack Statistics

In 2021, there was a 238% rise in cyber-attacks and fraud attempts, and a recent Intuit Quickbooks survey proved that 40% of small businesses have been hit with a cybersecurity breach. These attacks include a 105% rise in ransomware attacks according to Sonicwall, a cybersecurity company, and a 60% rise in phishing attempts. In a recent report by the FBI, Americans lost \$4.2 billion to cybercrime in 2020.

Top Cyber Attack Threats

There are many different and creative threats today. As we've all gotten more accustomed to a virtual world, it requires a much larger effort to validate identities and requests—and protect ourselves and our clients' businesses.

Targeted Digital & Phone Phishing Attempts

Targeted phishing (or spear phishing) is becoming increasingly popular. Unlike phishing, which casts a wide net, spear-phishing emails are highly targeted. Voice phishing or vishing is telephone-based version of this. Cybercriminals use social media and other public information to create personalized emails for specific individuals and adopt the guise of a trusted sender.

Spear phishing and vishing examples:

- Attacker sends a spear phishing e-mail related to a bank transaction, etc.
- Once the person clicks on the link, they receive a phone call where the attacker claims to be the bank's fraud department
- The attacker claims that someone is trying to withdraw money from the target's account, and that the target needs go to the branch to withdraw the money immediately
- The attacker states that once they withdraw the money, instructions will be provided to send the money to a "secured" account
- The attacker asks the target to stay on the phone for the entire transaction process

Business E-mail Compromise Attacks

The FBI publishes an annual report on cybercrime in the U.S. While most complaints were for phishing, non-payment scams and extortion, about half of the losses are from business-email compromise (BEC), romance and confidence scams, and investment fraud. According to the report, BEC scams recorded 19,369 complaints in 2020, as 19% drop from 2019, however it generated a \$100 million increase in losses.

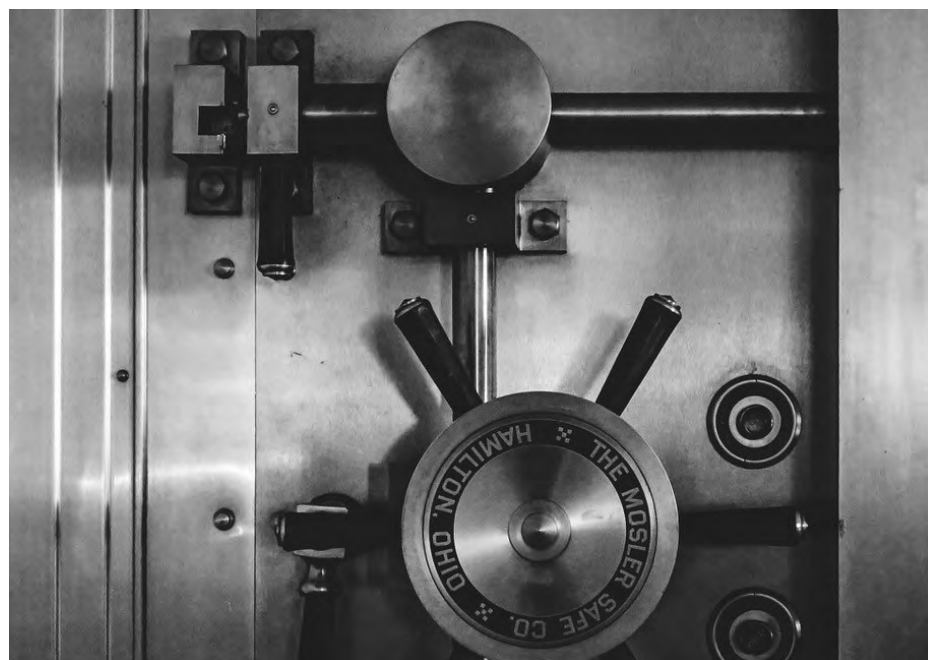
BEC scams are carried out by compromising business email accounts to modify transaction details so that funds are transferred to a bank account controlled by the attacker.

Business E-Mail Compromise Example:

- A customer or vendor had their e-mail account compromised and was asked to change the payment instructions
- They didn't inform the bank customer (e.g., your business) of the security breach
- The bank customer also didn't confirm the validity of the payment instruction change request
- Payment information was provided to an attacker, and multiple bank accounts were affected

What Can You Do to Protect Yourself and Your Business?

Simply stated: be politely paranoid. You may have heard these before, but it warrants a friendly reminder. Don't open attachments or click on links from senders that you do not recognize. When in doubt, verify the email or phone call's authenticity through a return phone call or text using previously known numbers, not any numbers provided in the email or the caller.



General Reminders

- Consider upgrading your antivirus solution to an Endpoint Detection and Response or Managed Detection and Response for advanced threat protection
- Apply Extended Detection and Response to your email spam filter if available
- Use multifactor authentication (MFA) for your email and other systems
- Schedule a time often to apply security updates to your computer and applications
- Back up your data daily and store it off site
- Use a DNS service, such as Quad9 or Cloudflare, or URL filtering software/appliance to block known malicious sites
- Stay alert to any abnormal signs within your bank account or business systems

Keeping Passwords Safe

Keeping your passwords private and complex is the best way to keep them secure. Keep in mind that support services will never ask you for your password by phone or email. Consider using a password management system and create a unique password for every website, system and application that you use.

Check The Source Prior to Clicking

For Services and People: If you receive an unexpected email or request, do not click the link and make sure it's really them. Instead, visit the online store or service the way you normally would to check for a notification, or contact the person via previously known numbers—not the email as it may be compromised.

For News or Entertainment: If someone sends you a link to the latest viral video or interesting news article, you can skip the link and use a search engine to find the content is a safer way.

At CBC, our focus is on client confidentiality, availability of financial systems and the integrity of the bank to ensure we continue to operate in a safe and sound manner. This includes following industry best practices on cybersecurity, data protection, system security hardening, security training and supporting our clients in every way we can.

Kevin Tsuei, CISSP, CISA, CEH

Kevin is the Information Security Officer at Commercial Bank of California. Prior to joining CBC, he worked for a boutique audit firm for 12 years, catering specifically to financial institutions. During his tenure, he led and oversaw hundreds of IT audit and network penetration tests. Kevin is a graduate of UC Irvine, and earned his master's degree from Harvard University.



Dare to Define™ Your Future



L-R: Shivi Tandon, MBA '20;
Fernando De Souza, MBA '20;
Alto Okamura, MBA '19;
Katherine Hunt, MBA '19

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The Reality of How the Law and the Metaverse Intersect

Increasingly, attorneys from all areas of law are being asked to analyze, structure, and guide participants in this new ecosystem – the metaverse.

A new form of computer code itself seemed to promise to be the governing authority of the next generation of the Internet – “Web 3.0”. A common belief among blockchain and crypto industry participants is that “code is the law.” This principle suggests that the rules and regulations that govern decentralized networks and protocols can be encoded in the underlying technology, rather than in the statutes and regulations of a centralized government or an agency that governs this technology.

In theory, this could eliminate the need for the traditional legal system. Experience in this realm—limited as it is—has already shown us that this is simply not true. Market participants may want to rely on technology, but at the endpoints of that technology are users, all of whom are subject to laws and regulations which were not written with Web 3.0 in mind.

Consider the area of tax law. Despite the decentralized nature of cryptocurrency, digital assets are subject to taxation

under U.S. law. However, there is uncertainty about how the IRS will tax cryptocurrency and blockchain activities.

Since the launch of Bitcoin in 2009, numerous questions have emerged, and many remain unanswered. For example, is the act of “wrapping” and “unwrapping” cryptocurrencies a taxable event? What is the tax status of liquidity pools? How are rewards received from cryptocurrency treated for federal income tax purposes? What is the tax status of a decentralized protocol governed by a “smart contract?” What happens if that entity does not issue Form 1099s or K1s to its “partners,” and in fact does not even know their legal names? To date, these questions remain mostly unanswered.

Increasingly, attorneys from all areas of law are being asked to analyze, structure, and guide participants in this new ecosystem, and thread the needle between remaining true to their ethos but also satisfying increasingly attentive regulators.

In another example, Web 3.0 provides for the combination of decentralized digital assets and intellectual property. This has resulted in several lawsuits which assert that the sale and marketing of non-fungible tokens (NFTs) infringe U.S. trademark and copyright law. Although these cases largely rest on established principles of law, they have the potential to provide guidance to the broader crypto industry as they decide whether well-known intellectual property principles translate into the “metaverse.” Similar issues abound in nearly every other legal practice area.

As a result, attorneys must be creative in applying old frameworks to new technology all while counseling clients

through regulatory and legal uncertainty. Attorneys cannot sit back and wait for guidance. Instead, over the past several years, the attorneys at Falcon Rappaport & Berkman LLP have learned the necessary skills, both through research and practical experience, to help clients navigate this new technological era proactively. Our firm utilizes an interdisciplinary approach to best confront these emerging issues at the intersection of various areas of law. Through this approach, we have found that despite the refrain of “code is law,” there is still yet a place for attorneys who can address the emerging legal needs of the digital asset industry.



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Adams Corporate Law Applauds Entrepreneurs

Starting a business is hard, and expensive. Entrepreneurs wear dozens of hats until their firms grow in size and reputation. Many startup mistakes can be corrected and adjusted as time goes by, but legal mistakes can lead to severe repercussions. Violating securities law, failing to protect your intellectual property, working with partners without legal protections in place – these are legal errors that can follow you. Our firm assists entrepreneurs to structure their business properly, protect it as it grows, and help assure it will be ready for sale or IPO when the time is right.

Entrepreneurs must cope with uncertainty to guide their new business. I sometimes play Dungeons & Dragons (D&D). The premise of D&D is you have a team, going into the unknown together. Dragons and goblins around every corner. Evil wizards waiting to rob you. Your team needs to each combine their various strengths in order to succeed. Successful entrepreneurs also must build a strong team, both internally and externally, and leverage their team's wisdom, experience, and specialized knowledge. As in business (and life) navigating uncertainty requires fellowship (i.e., playing well with others), inventiveness, hard work, and courage.

Uncertainty differentiates entrepreneurs from more established businesses. Entrepreneurs lack historical data and work in untested areas, yet, they persist. They willingly go into the unknown. That's unusual. Most people are afraid of uncertainty – good entrepreneurs embrace it.

Embracing uncertainty requires more than just courage. It is one thing to jump off a cliff, it is another to have properly prepared a parachute and received training to survive the landing. Preparation, hard work, and building a team helps us cope with uncertainty. Those who get along well with others (more friends) thrive in the unknown. It's good to have friends in the dark. Teammates on a quest. Add some extraordinary talents, you get success.

All the entrepreneurs in this issue represent people who have dealt with uncertainty and triumphed. Because they are courageous, play well with others, and have exceptional skills.

On the days that we all face uncertainty – may we keep these entrepreneurs in mind.

Addison K. Adams Esq.

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2023 GIVING GUIDE

The Orange County Business Journal's Giving Guide - published annually - features a wealth of information designed to help busy, philanthropic-minded executives choose the community partners and causes that best fit their initiatives.

- **Publication Date:** March 27, 2023
- **Space Reservations Deadline:** February 27, 2023
- **Resource Page Due:** March 6, 2023
- **Ad Materials Due:** March 13, 2023



For more information, contact Lesley Churchill at 949-910-8121 or churchill@ocbj.com.



Chapman's MSRE Program Launches Next Generation of Real Estate Professionals; Proves Competitive in Region

Chapman University's Masters of Science in Real Estate program provides a unique opportunity to learn the fundamentals of real estate development, finance and investment in the heart of one of the country's most dynamic real estate landscapes.

"There has never been a more important time, or a more opportune time, to become a part of the real estate industry in Southern California," says Henrik Cronqvist, dean of Chapman's Argyros School of Business and Economics. "We designed this program for people who want to make a real impact on the economy and how people live their lives. Whether they come from a real estate background or not, they will find the connections and knowledge they need to be successful."

The rigorous curriculum in the MSRE program is supplemented by frequent industry guest speakers – 90 so far – who offer real-world expertise and guidance for students who are just starting out. Students also visit ongoing development projects in the Orange County area.

In April 2022, five students from the program bested the University of California,

Irvine in a competition held by a national commercial real estate association. The Real Estate Challenge was held in Orange County for the first time by NAIOP, which has pitted USC against UCLA in a Los Angeles contest for 25 years.



Argyros School of Business and Economics

"Taking the 'Orange Cup' was a great signature accomplishment for the program," said Chris Lowe, director of real estate programs at the George L. Argyros School of Business & Economics.

The Chapman team – Isabella Zelinger, Darrah Shaygan, Robert Bond, Cole Fleming and Asher Friedman – is part of the second cohort in the history of the new program at Argyros.

"It was an honor to be able to represent Chapman and show what the MSRE program is all about," said Shaygan, who graduated from Chapman with a finance degree in 2021.

For more information about the MSRE program, please visit www.Chapman.edu/msre



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We believe passion and commitment are at the heart of every entrepreneurial venture. It's what fuels the entrepreneur to put their whole self into achieving a goal and pushing boundaries to be innovative in their approach.

Lugano Diamonds was founded with a passion for creating beautiful, one-of-a-kind jewelry. "Our skilled craftspeople are committed to creating exquisite, bespoke pieces. Our passion shows in all we do, from the procurement of the rarest gemstones to the meticulous attention to detail we take in creating unparalleled wearable works of art," says Moti Ferder, CEO of Lugano Diamonds.

In the spirit of that same dedication to excellence, Lugano Diamonds presents these extraordinary pieces – each created with the passion and commitment that the honorees exhibit.



THE PERFECT SET *Radiant Cut Diamond Earrings*

Four-carat radiant cut yellow diamonds are the central focus of these artfully set earrings.

GOLDEN ELEGANCE *Yellow Mix Cut Diamond Necklace*

Stunning in its simplicity, over 76 carats of mixed shape and round yellow diamonds sparkle in this chain necklace.

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1105 Media, Newport Beach*Rajeev Kapur, Chief Executive Officer*

Rajeev Kapur is a seasoned high-tech executive with broad global experience leading and driving innovation and the overall strategic agenda, P&L and sales for entrepreneurial start-ups, \$20-\$40 million midsize companies and with Fortune 500 companies such as Dell where he managed P&L's as large as \$1.6 billion million domestically and internationally. Currently, Kapur is CEO of 1105 Media, Inc. a PE backed leading provider of Business to Business Marketing, Events and Media services where he oversees a diverse portfolio of five companies that range from Big Data/Analytics training to lead generation in the private and public sector IT, Enterprise and Emerging Tech Sector.



Albright was named 'Lawyer of the Year' by the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce.

American Lending Center LLC, Irvine*John Shen, CEO*

John Shen's success story is a perfect example of the American Dream in the business world. On the heels of the financial crisis of 2008, he created a unique lending model by leveraging an opportunity in the capital market most people ignored. In the last ten years, he turned ALC, a small startup lender into a financial giant achieving a total revenue of over one hundred million dollars in 2021. During that time, Shen fully developed his talent of growing businesses. He started to collect so many business awards in the last few years. In 2017 he won the "SBA 504 Lender of the Year" award by Coleman Report, a national award for the leaders with the greatest achievements in the SBA 504 lending industry. Recently, ALC swept a number of prestigious national and international awards of "fastest growing companies" such as the Inc. 5000's list of "Fastest Growing Private Companies" in 2020 and 2021 and "The Americas' Fastest Growing Companies" by Financial Times in 2021 and 2022. ALC has also been rated as one of the "Best Places to Work" by the Los Angeles Business Journal multiple times.

**5.11 Tactical, Costa Mesa***Francisco Morales, Chief Executive Officer*

Francisco J. Morales was born in Caracas, Venezuela as the son of a Spanish Taylor and CPA mother who together owned an apparel factory. Because of this upbringing, Morales' entrepreneurial spirit and desire to build, learn, and grow business is inherent in his DNA. Morales spent his childhood learning all facets of the manufacturing business from management to ownership and every intricate detail in between. Fortunate throughout his career, Morales has continually been presented with opportunities and roles that allowed for growth and expansion - even within larger companies like L.L. Bean and Dick's Sporting Goods. Morales currently sits as co-founder and CEO of Costa Mesa-based 5.11 Tactical, the industry-leading provider of purpose-built apparel, footwear and gear for life's most demanding missions. Since its inception in 2003, Morales has been involved in all areas of the business including supply chain management, overall company strategy, as well as personally holding the patents to over a dozen of 5.11's most innovative fabrication technologies.

**Apriem Advisors, Irvine***Harmon Kong, Co-Founder*

Apriem Advisors is an award-winning, multi-generational, wealth management firm. Beginning in 1998, Entrepreneur, Harmon Kong rewrote the standards of the finance industry, aiming to care for every client like family. This initiative stems back from his decade spent on Wall Street, Kong once managed more than 500 household accounts with the constant expectation to bring in more. The sheer volume of clients left no room to service them, let alone have conversations to know their personal financial needs or goals. With a new mission to align the corporate agenda with the client agenda, came the birth of Apriem. Headquartered in Southern California, Apriem services clients in 29 states and globally in four continents. The company was named in Investment News 2022 Best Places to Work. A standout amongst competitors, Apriem focuses on the underserved corners of the economy through their initiatives: W.O.W (Women of Wisdom), Industrial Retirement Services, and Apriem Charitable services. Since 2017, Apriem has been consecutively ranked as a Top Registered Investment Advisor by multiple publications and later made Financial Times Top 300 Registered Investment Advisors in the nation. Additionally, in 2022 Apriem was listed as number 89 for CNBC's financial advisor list.

**Accurate Background LLC, Irvine***Dave Dickerson, Founder & Chairman*

As the founder of Accurate Background, Dave Dickerson's goal was to develop a background screening platform and service that used innovative, web-based technology to offer solutions that steadily improved the way companies and candidates connect. Today Accurate Background is the largest privately held screening company in the world and continues to grow. Accurate is a recognized industry leader with over 16,000 customers worldwide.

**Advanced Real Estate Services Inc., Irvine***Richard Julian, CEO*

Advanced Realtors was formed February 1, 1981 and incorporated as Advanced Real Estate Services, Inc. (ARES) on July 2, 1984. ARES specializes in investment acquisitions, property management, brokerage, and land development. Advanced's business model is to acquire underperforming properties, improve and modernize them, thereby increasing the revenue stream. In addition to carefully chosen newer properties, ARES specializes in making older properties more competitive with the newer properties in the marketplace. The property management arm of ARES, Advanced Management Company's (AMC) ability to successfully execute this business model has allowed it to reposition numerous properties in Southern California. Such property improvements include amenity re-design, re-plumbing, wood replacement, window and door replacement, HVAC and electrical improvements, cosmetic and structural enhancements, complete unit makeover, landscape renovations, asphalt repairs, and many other aspects of property upgrading. All these renovations are performed with minimal impact on the residents thus maintaining stable property operations. ARES employs more than 450 people and operates over 10,000 apartments in and around Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside and Orange Counties.

**AuditClub, Irvine***Chris Vanover, Founder, CEO & Chief Auditor*

Chris Vanover is on a mission to improve public accounting. He is a CPA with over two decades of public accounting experience in auditing, regulatory, and educational roles with international and regional firms, the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, and universities in Southern California. CPA firms are experiencing a critical shortage of qualified human capital. Recognizing the challenges of attracting and retaining qualified personnel, Vanover knew there had to be a better way. He examined the operational models of CPA firms and created an innovative new auditors-as-a-service model to provide CPA firms with instant access to talent and fractional flexibility. The new firm is AuditClub, the Audit Service Center for CPA Firms. A licensed accountancy corporation based in the US and registered with the PCAOB, AuditClub provides on-demand support for audit and assurance, quality control, regulatory matters, and training through a membership model. Members benefit from exclusive access to a team of experienced CPAs and specialists through technology-enabled and flexible month-to-month passes.

**ADYA and Spice Girl Sauces, Anaheim***Shachi Mehra, Executive Chef & Owner*

As executive chef and owner of award-winning ADYA restaurant in Anaheim, and founder of Spice Girl Sauces, Shachi Mehra has brought a new Indian experience to the region. Her career as a chef was catapulted by late-Chef Floyd Cardoz, who helped her embrace Indian food and her culture in an entirely new way during her five years with him at his renowned restaurant, Tabla. She went on to become Executive Chef of the first U.S. location of Michelin-starred Indian restaurant, Tamarind of London. She used the media attention and recognition she earned to open her own restaurant, ADYA, a honest, approachable concept that has allowed her to share the flavors of her culture with the masses. An ardent supporter of local farmers and sustainable practices, she takes great care in sourcing her ingredients. With ADYA, Chef Mehra created an original Indian experience that pulls from the fresh ingredients abundant at home in Southern California and the bright flavors and spices of her native India, and it has been met with open arms, hearts, and mouths by guests and media throughout the region.

**Aura Accounting Solutions, Newport Beach***Brandon Kordower, Founder & CEO*

Aura was founded by Brandon Kordower in January 2017 to provide local small businesses with month-end accrual financials well beyond the quality they're accustomed to receiving. Accrual accounting requires knowledge of properly matching revenues and expenses in the same period to accurately analyze business performance. Aura translates financial data into a meaningful executive summary that drives profitability, as well as address areas of concern. Third party recipients of the financial statements, such as banks, have peace of mind that the information they're receiving is clean and accurate, making it a much smoother exercise to receive loans or credit lines, outside investment, or successfully exit the business through a due diligence process. While Aura provides significant strategic value, it also comes at considerable cost savings relative to a qualified full-time employee. Aura currently has 11 full-time employees and serves over 70 clients nationwide, with most of those based in Orange County.

**Albright, Yee & Schmit, APC, Newport Beach***Clifton W. Albright, President & Founding Partner*

Clifton W. Albright is the president of Albright, Yee & Schmit, APC (AY&S), a California-based law firm formed in 1982. AY&S specializes in providing legal representation for employment, labor and tort defense to governmental and private entities. Mr. Albright was appointed to the Industry Trade Advisory Committee on Small and Minority Business (ITAC11) by former President Barack Obama and former President Donald Trump. Mr. Albright travels to Washington, D.C. to meet with government officials on international trade and trade relations. Mr. Albright was selected by his peers for Inclusion in The Best Lawyers in America (2023 Edition) in the area of Litigation - Labor and Employment. He was recognized among the Daily Journal's 2022 'Top Labor & Employment Lawyers'. Mr. Albright was also recognized as a 2022 Business of Law 'Legal Visionary' by the LA Times Magazine B2B, a 2022 'OC Visionary' by the LATimesOC B2B Magazine, and a 2022 'Face of Labor & Employment' by Orange Coast Magazine. The LA Business Journal named Mr. Albright a 2022 'Top 100 Lawyer' and a 2022 'Leader of Influence: Labor & Employment Attorney'. In 2017, Mr.

**Austin Taylor, Inc., Irvine***Ron Viggiano, President*

With over 35 years of experience Ron Viggiano has become the area's premier clothier by asking the right questions and understanding the clients wants and needs to help guide them into creating distinctive and personalized wardrobes. Using creativity and contemporary styling details he has built a loyal following of successful business leaders in Orange County.

**Bastion Amplify, Laguna Hills***Chris Bretschger, CEO*

Over the past year, Chris Bretschger has doubled the size of his family's long-standing advertising firm, IMW Agency, to make it the best-in-breed full-service marketing agency in Southern California. Rebranded as Bastion Amplify with Bretschger at the helm as CEO, his company has merged with Bastion Elevate to offer award-winning public relations and social media services - both disciplines rank No. 1. in Los Angeles and Orange counties by the respected, peer-reviewed industry ranking organization, Clutch. Through his leadership, Bretschger has presided





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over the historical merger, which is the largest in history for the marketing industry of Orange County. Not satisfied there, Bretschger has vowed to grow Bastion Amplify to be the largest independent agency on the West Coast and has already taken great strides towards that goal, adding new clients in the automotive, energy, technology and food & beverage sectors.

Beacon Pointe Advisors, Newport Beach

Shannon Eusey, Chief Executive Officer

Shannon Eusey founded Beacon Pointe Advisors in 2002 and, having experienced success and rapid growth, it is the largest female-run Registered Investment Advisory (RIA) firm in the country with 33 offices spanning 14 states. In 2011, she co-founded an industry leading initiative with the formation of Beacon Pointe's Women's Advisory Institute. The institute is focused on bringing women to the investment table, engaging women in personal finance. She co-authored the international best-selling book "Your Dollars, Our Sense: A Fun and Simple Guide to Money Matters," seeking to educate readers of all ages and financial circumstances in an entertaining, relatable, and informative manner. The book has been ranked #1 across six different Wealth Management, Finance & Coaching categories. Eusey also mentors high school students and Girl Scouts, hosts a summer internship program and financial literacy workshops at Beacon Pointe, and was an adjunct professor for four years at the UC Irvine Paul Merage School of Business. In addition, she regularly runs marathons at home and abroad, and is thoroughly engaged in her four children's philanthropic endeavors.

**Beyond Fifteen Communications Inc., Irvine**

Lauren Ellermeyer, Co-Founder & President

As a full-service PR and marketing agency, Beyond Fifteen Communications has built a reputation for going beyond typical industry standards to deliver an unprecedented level of media and market attention for its clientele. With its implementation of entrepreneurial ideas linked with results-driven strategies, Beyond Fifteen has redefined the typical agency/client relationship. Co-Founder Lauren Ellermeyer has utilized her innovative business style, instinctive eye for new talent and her public relations and social media expertise to grow Beyond Fifteen from startup to nationally-acclaimed powerhouse. During this time, the business has supported a variety of business-to-business and business-to-consumer brands spanning healthcare, technology, consumer package goods, energy, education and more. In addition to cultivating Beyond Fifteen's collaborative, "client-first" business approach, Ellermeyer also is committed to giving back to the community. She has held many roles at American Family Housing, including board member and philanthropy chair and is also an award committee co-chair for the Association for Corporate Growth (ACG).

**BHE Management Corporation, Laguna Niguel**

Marla Hemmel, President

Marla Brower Hemmel is the founder and president of BHE Management Corporation, a 29-year-strong premiere Homeowners Association management firm representing many major homebuilders in Orange County. Hemmel leads her firm with expertise and commitment to excellence that pleases both the developers, who hire her firm consistently to create the initial association rules and budgets, as well as the homeowners themselves. This creates relationships that continue for more than a decade in nearly every case. Hemmel is a leader in her industry, serving as past treasurer of California Association of Community Managers, past chair of the California Association Institute's Programs Committee, and an active member and sponsor of Building Industry of America, Orange County chapter.

**Blue C, Costa Mesa**

Eric Morley, Co-Founder & Chief Operating Officer

For nearly 25 years, Eric Morley's Blue C agency has been the go-to for brand strategy and marketing communications in Orange County and beyond. As co-founder, Morley has strategically guided the team in delivering branding know-how and measurable results to clients around the world including Irvine Company, Segway, Ingram Micro and Volcon ePowersports. In 2022, Morley proudly grew Blue C's electric transportation client base by adding three new brands. Morley was instrumental in the introduction of Connected TV (CTV), segmented linear TV and digital media planning and buying - all new services Blue C now offers to support its clients' many goals. To date, Morley and the Blue C team have guided clients through more than 12,000 marketing projects. A leader outside the office, Morley volunteers with numerous non-profits including co-founding the California Love Drop with Wahoo's Wing Lam and serving as Orange County Lead for the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride for Prostate Cancer. Morley also shares his expertise with local high schools and universities and is an active participant in marketing and advertising professional organizations.

**Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Orange Coast, Irvine**

Robert Santana, Chief Executive Officer

Robert Santana is CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Orange Coast (BGCCOC), which annually serves 9,500 youth and their families in Orange, Costa Mesa, Newport Beach, Irvine and Santa Ana. After serving in the U.S. Air Force in 2005, Santana returned home to his native Santa Ana to positively impact the lives of young people in his community. He started as a volunteer and mentor with BGCCOC and, within three years, became CEO in 2008. With his unique background in law enforcement, business management and child development, Santana has brought innovation, strategic vision and an entrepreneurial spirit to an organization with 80 years of impact. Santana oversaw the expansion of BGCCOC from a single site with 12 staff and 130 kids to 66 sites, with nearly 100 staff and up to 1,000 children served daily. Under his leadership, BGCCOC has raised more than \$70 million, allowing the Club to serve more youth, renovate Clubhouses, improve and expand programs, and become one of the country's premier Boys & Girls Clubs.

**Branded Group, Anaheim**

Michael Kurland, CEO & Co-Founder

Michael Kurland, CEO, writer, podcaster, entrepreneur, culture creator, and conscious capitalist. An award-winning CEO of a successful facilities management company, Kurland is committed to leading with purpose and giving back to his community. Kurland launched

Branded Group in 2014 and has led its year-over-year exponential growth and cultural transformation, which has been accomplished through the cultivation of a highly-regarded team of industry experts who strive to be better to their customers, communities, themselves, and to each other. This commitment has resulted in deep and long-lasting customer, vendor, and nonprofit partner relationships, innovative programs that drive customer satisfaction, and a respected position in the industry. Kurland is a well-established author of thought leadership articles in online publications such as Forbes, Inc., Huffington Post, and Thrive Global on topics such as leadership, company culture, social impact, and employee engagement and retention. In addition, his first book titled "Broken to Better: 13 Ways Not to Fail at Life and Leadership" will be available July 19th. He is also the host of the "BeBetter with Michael Kurland" podcast. Kurland also shares his facilities management expertise in case studies and industry publication articles. He is a sought-after speaker, sharing his entrepreneurial journey with aspiring small business owners and students.

**Built On Vision, Lake Forest**

Michael Saddik, Co-Founder & CEO

For more than 25 years, Michael Saddik has provided valuable insight and leadership to companies and boards seeking to develop new products, scale business, drive organic and M&A growth, and turn around underperforming segments. His record of success includes founding, scaling, and leading technology, Software, SaaS, and Cloud companies to market segment domination, profitability, and successful product acquisition. Saddik has the analytical expertise and business foresight to determine and seize market gaps ripe for disruptive technology solutions. As president of Avadencia, he led the feature development and resource management for the global construction industry's first cloud-based project management software. Following that, he sought out and brokered deals with potential partners to expand into the oil/gas, aerospace, and engineering industries. This resulted in the launch of Built On Vision (BOV), a multiple award-winning critical path method (CPM) forensics software built on an in-house designed award-winning AI. Since its release, the software made the 2019 Red Herring Top Product list and has been integral to the smooth-running of construction and infrastructure projects.

**Butcher's House, Costa Mesa**

Jeffrey Offer, Chef-Owner

Chef Jeffrey Offer opened his first restaurant Butcher's House at Costa Mesa's SoCo Collection in December 2021. Offer's menu is centered around dry-aged meats and rustic brasserie-style dishes representative of his hometown Toulouse in the south of France. In the weeks following its opening, the restaurant has already garnered critical acclaim. Born and raised in the South of France, Offer discovered his culinary inspiration at a young age and has kept a laser-focused vision of creating a life for himself in America. His storied culinary career spans over a decade across three continents. As a classically trained French chef, Offer brings more than 12 years of experience in cooking, kitchen logistics, and operations management to the opening of his first restaurant, Butcher's House. For Offer, Butcher's House is more than an homage to his culinary roots; it is the fulfillment of his lifelong American dream.

**C.R.E.A.T.E. Wealth, Corona del Mar**

Pam Scamardo, Founder

Entrepreneur Pam Scamardo is the founder of The C.R.E.A.T.E Wealth Network - the #1 free educational resource for commercial real estate investing. The organization's mission is to provide high quality commercial real estate education for all, with an emphasis on uplifting women leaders in the industry. Officially "job optional", Scamardo discovered the benefits of passive income while working in the aerospace industry. An aerospace engineer by trade, having been employed by Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and UTC Aerospace, Scamardo made a career pivot over 10 years ago and founded her first company TPK Properties. As a privately held multi-family investment company that acquires, manages and renovates medium to large-sized apartment complexes, TPK Properties has successfully syndicated over 100 units along the West Coast for investors, nearly tripling its portfolio in the last few years. Scamardo offers private multi-family investment coaching and is proudly serving as a Forbes Council Member and Cal State Fullerton's Center for Real Estate Director. Additionally, Scamardo is the author of "Create Wealth: How You Can Ditch the 9-5 with Multi-Family Investing."

**California State University, Fullerton, Fullerton**

John Bradley Jackson, Director of the Center for Entrepreneurship at CSUF

John Bradley Jackson is director of the Center for Entrepreneurship at California State University, Fullerton. At CSUF Jackson is a Professor of Entrepreneurship; he teaches New Venture Creation and New Venture Launch. Known affectionately as "Professor JJ", Jackson brings startup experience along with practical marketing and sales knowledge to the classroom from both Silicon Valley and Wall Street. Jackson has authored multiple books about marketing and entrepreneurship. He is the founder of the CSUF Startup Incubator which provides advisory services to early-stage startups. He also founded Titan Angels, LLC and Titan Angels II, LLC which both invest in high potential, scalable startups. He is also the founder of the Youth Development Fund, LLC.

**Carrick Capital Partners, Newport Beach**

James Madden, Co-CEO, Co-Founder & Co-Chair of the Investment Committee

James "Jim" C. Madden, V is an American entrepreneur, investor, and pioneer of the HR BPO sector. He founded Irvine, CA-based Exult, Inc., based on a concept, served as chairman and chief executive officer, and led the company's IPO in 2000. After merging Exult into Hewitt (NYSE: HEW) in 2004, Madden became a special advisor with General Atlantic, and later became a general partner with Accretive, LLC, a private equity



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firm focused on early-stage technology services businesses. In 2012, Madden co-founded Carrick Capital Partners, where he co-chairs the investment committee with Co-Founder and Managing Director Marc McMorris. He is actively involved in the identification, selection, and post-investment growth guidance of Carrick's portfolio companies. Madden is an active member of the boards of several Carrick portfolio companies including DailyPay, Everspring, Exiger, Factor Law, and Flatiron School. He also serves as non-Executive Chair of the board of directors of Genpact (NYSE: G).

Cheferbly, Irvine

Kevin Kim, Founder

Kevin Kim is the founder of Cheferbly, an innovative new private dining reservation platform for private chefs and caterers. The web-based platform is designed to democratize and demystify private dining while propelling private chefs and caterers into the spotlight. Cheferbly's mission is to provide a space that empowers consumers to explore and discover unique pop-ups and private dining possibilities. Cheferbly is a simplified booking solution that makes private dining accessible to everyone, from curious foodies to celebrating families to corporate decision-makers. Exclusive to private dining experiences, the first-of-its-kind platform simplifies the booking process for both chef and consumer. Cheferbly's robust reservation and guest management system is an attractive solution for private chefs and caterers by handling everything from event promotion to credit card processing. Similarly, the platform's streamlined booking process provides clarity to consumers through a comprehensive and visual directory of local private chefs and caterers and their bookable private dining and pop-up experiences, complete with courses, pricing, and booking details.

**Cobalt Robotics, Irvine**

Mike LeBlanc, President & COO

Mike LeBlanc was a United States Marine Corps Infantry and Intelligence Officer for ten years, serving three tours to the Middle East including two combat tours to Afghanistan, and was a technology adviser to the Pentagon before joining tech startup Cobalt. LeBlanc brings a unique perspective and entrepreneurial drive to his work and has an impressive track record leading Cobalt. With LeBlanc's leadership, Cobalt has experienced significant customer expansion and sustained explosive growth with robots now deployed on five continents. The demand for AI-based automation driven by the higher cost of human labor in the robotics industry is powering Cobalt's 979% revenue growth this past year which is a testament to LeBlanc's keen sense of leadership and entrepreneurial vision in the robotics industry. Leading enterprises and partners including Slack, DoorDash, Ally Financial, Woven Planet, and many others recently expanded their relationships with Cobalt with the help of Mike's direction. At Cobalt, he is leading a team of scientists, engineers and product developers that design the next generation of autonomous robots for modern enterprises as companies look to new innovations to automate security and improve safety.

**David Meltzer Enterprises, Ladera Ranch**

David Meltzer, Founder

The team at David Meltzer Enterprises are heading into 2023 with more momentum than ever. As part of Meltzer's mission to empower over one billion people to be happy, they work doggedly to create content that provides people with tools to pursue their potential. In recent years, the team has launched two business-focused television shows for Bloomberg and Apple TV, a pitch show called "2 Minute Drill" and the first late-night entrepreneurial show "Office Hours". 2 Minute Drill has already released four seasons and is set to record a fifth season in the coming months, while Office Hours will be airing its third season. In addition to Meltzer's content & distribution deal with Apple TV as a featured influencer, he has also launched a new digital show with legendary tennis coach Rick Macci entitled "Game, Set, Life". With recording locations at the Blue Wire studio in the Wynn Las Vegas and at SoFi Stadium, home of the NFL's Los Angeles Rams and Chargers, David Meltzer Studios also opened its third location in Orange County this year.

**Deep Lens, Columbus**

Simon Arkell, OLY, President

Simon Arkell is a hi-tech entrepreneur and investor with a focus on AI and healthcare technology. He is co-founder of seven venture backed companies, including Deep Lens, Predixion Software and Versifi. All three were acquired. His board memberships include the President's Council of Advisors and the Dean's Advisory Council for the Orfalea School of Business at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, where he also mentors startups at the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE). Deep Lens, which he cofounded in 2017 and seeded by local Orange County investors has had a very exciting story. Deep Lens is one of the fastest growing clinical research tech companies in the US, focused on matching cancer patients to life saving clinical trials with unique artificial intelligence-driven services to hundreds community cancer centers. Deep Lens and the Orange County investors that believed in him enjoyed a successful exit when the company was acquired in May 2022.

**Ducere Global Business School, Newport Beach**

Mat Jacobson, President & Founder

Mat Jacobson is a thought leader and an innovator within the education industry. As Ducere's founder and president, He has worked with presidents, prime ministers, global CEOs and other prominent leaders and has created a university group that is both industry-applied and career-focused. Ducere provides universal access to world-class higher education that is career-focused and helps professionals progress in their careers.

**Ducommun Incorporated, Santa Ana**

Stephen Oswald, Chairman, President & Chief Executive Officer

As chairman, president and chief executive officer of Ducommun Incorporated, Stephen G. Oswald oversees the strategic direction and board of a publicly traded Aerospace and Defense Company and has more than 30 years of experience in both large cap multinational public companies and private equity (PE). Oswald joined Ducommun, which is the oldest continuous

company in California, founded in 1849 by Charles L. Ducommun in 2017. He has led the turnaround of the company, roughly doubling the stock price, revamping the operations, completing four accretive acquisitions, securing Airbus as a long term customer (critical as large commercial air frame manufacturing is mainly a duopoly with Boeing) and managing the company successfully through the unprecedented downturn of Commercial Aviation in 2020 and 2021.

**Eden Financial, Newport Beach**

Nycole Freer, Founder, CFP

Nycole Freer has earned a reputation as an entrepreneur who leads with warmth, compassion, and a relentless dedication to helping others succeed. Founding Eden Financial after nearly a decade of serving young entrepreneurs, women and their children, Freer is sought out for her valued counsel and tailor-made approach. She has dedicated her career to working with her clientele as their financial "partner," seeking to educate them every step of the way so they can become more confident along their wealth building journey. Freer built Eden Financial as a one-stop shop powerhouse for those who value quality in both service and results. As an inspired leader who knows that true success comes from helping others, Freer is highly involved in a variety of personal and professional organizations. She believes in following your dreams and never settling for less than your potential. Freer holds her CFP® Designation, BFA® Designation, Series 66 License, Series seven Securities License, Accident, Life and Health Insurance License and a bachelor's degree in Personal Finance, Cal State Fullerton.

**Englebrecht Promotions & Events, Fountain Valley**

Roy Englebrecht, CEO

In the world of fight promotion, there are few names as respected as that of Roy Englebrecht. For nearly 33 years, the Southern California-based promoter has built a stellar reputation among fans, athletes, and his peers for delivering top-notch boxing and mixed martial arts events while continuing to innovate and move both sports forward. Having been licensed as a fight promoter in California, Nevada, Washington, and Texas, Roy Englebrecht Promotions has been called by numerous media writers as "The King of Minor League Fighting". Englebrecht has a proven track record of success for over three decades, starting with the renowned Battle in the Ballroom boxing events at the Irvine Marriott Hotel. The longest running pro boxing club show in the country at 26 years, the series featured 38 current or former world champions over the years, routinely selling out the venue. In 2007, Englebrecht introduced mixed martial arts into the mix, becoming one of the first boxing promoters to embrace the fast-growing sport. Englebrecht continued his string of successful promotions moving his Orange County based Battle In The Ballroom fight series to a new venue and a new brand with the launch in 2011 of Fight Club OC in The Hangar at the OC Fair & Event Center. Now in its 12th season, Fight Club OC has sold out 80% of their shows and is the only fight series in the country that offers VIP Suites and a cigar lounge at each show.

**Facial Lounge, Costa Mesa**

Amber Rose Johnson, Esthetician & Founder

"Skin Whisperer" Amber Rose Johnson is the expert esthetician and heart-centered mompreneur founder behind Facial Lounge. Established in 2000 in the idyllic enclave of Corona del Mar, California, this best-kept secret of LA and OC's elite offers every client a VIP experience to uncover their best complexion yet through holistic methods. Johnson's 25-plus years of in-depth industry experience are behind every innovative, organic treatment, including their signature vegan custom facial created as an alternative to the traditional "one-type-fits-all" treatment approach. In a tranquil bungalow setting custom-designed by Laura Brophy Interiors and inspired by Johnson's lively spirit, a client list that includes Hollywood A-listers finds the rejuvenation they need "to face the world beautifully."

**Fashion Camp, Irvine**

Erin Bianchi Hibbert, Founder & CEO

Fashion Camp is the ultimate creative learning space for kids and teens. The company was created in 2010 as a community education program through Orange Coast College where founder, Erin Bianchi Hibbert, was teaching while also managing public relations for Bloomingdale's in Orange County. After a year at The OC Mart Mix, where the business opened and quickly outgrew its first retail space, Fashion Camp moved to The District at Tustin Legacy in 2012. By expanding to a 3,000 square foot fashion studio, the capacity for classes, camps and parties blossomed over the following decade. With clientele steadily growing year-over-year, as new and returning young designers would create, design and sew, Hibbert realized it was time again to expand. In the fall of 2022, Fashion Camp took over a spacious new 13,000-square-foot studio at The Market Place in Irvine to meet the demands of its junior fashion designers. Today, Fashion Camp's 20+ trained instructors, who have each honed their skills in fashion design school and industry roles, now teach thousands of students each year.

**Fluxergy Inc., Irvine**

Tej Patel, CEO & Co-Founder

Tej Patel was born in Pomona and grew up in Arizona. After graduating with a master's degree in aerospace engineering with specialization in fluid dynamics from the University of California, San Diego, he went to work at San Diego's MagCanica, where he managed engineering projects for various clients including the U.S. Navy, Mercedes Benz and Formula 1 sports racing. At MagCanica, he worked with Ryan Revilla, another UCSD graduate with a degree in aerospace engineering. The two engineers and Jonathan Tu, a business administration graduate of Chapman University, decided to start their own company building an industry changing diagnostic platform to make lab testing more accessible. With a background in microfluidics, Patel thought to challenge the ease and availability of our health information and the high cost



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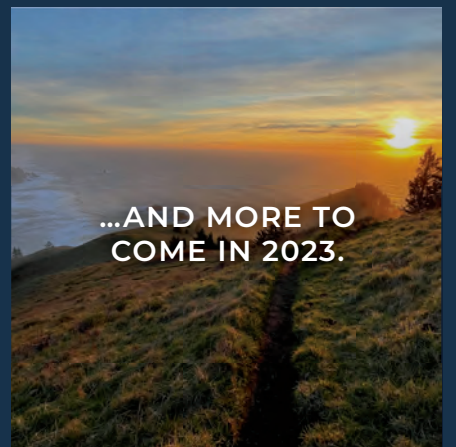
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burden in our healthcare system due to lack of rapid diagnostics and efficient clinical decision making. Fluxergy's platform is a highly unique technology in that can run a majority of lab tests in a compact platform and is highly manufacturable which is needed for widespread adoption, in multiple industries in both developed and developing countries.

GO RN, StaffGRIT, Haute Legs, Santa Ana

Vanessa Benavides, CEO & Founder

Vanessa Benavides, the founder and LatinX CEO of healthcare startup, Go RN, and native to Orange County is a beacon of innovation and empowerment. Her 20+ years in healthcare ranges from entrepreneurship to patient care, as Benavides is a registered nurse. Her multidisciplinary background in nursing plus her keen sense of curiosity lead her to Magnet, a healthcare innovation incubator through St. Joseph's Hospital. Thus, GoRN was born in 2016 as a technology "for nurses designed by nurses". GoRN has exponentially grown 350% from staffing two shifts per day pre-pandemic to 700+ shifts per day in 2021 with the use of our dynamic platform. The technology grew to being utilized across Southern California to support COVID emergency response, homeless crisis management, and nationally with opportunities in acute, non-acute, and travel. The GoRN platform has simplified three complex problems: staffing and scheduling, and transportation through our latest strategic partnership, Uber. Benavides knew our revolutionary technology could impact other industries, thus StaffGrit was born in 2021.

**Grand Welcome, Torrance**

Brandon Ezra, Founder & CEO

Brandon Ezra, resident of Orange County and founder and CEO of Grand Welcome turned his passion - love of travel, skiing, and surfing - into his career. He started his first company in his early twenties and within 10 years has successfully founded several vacation-related businesses, including Grand Welcome. Today Grand Welcome offers homes in some of the world's most highly attractive areas including Nashville, TN, Maui, HI, and Lake Tahoe, CA. From 2021 to 2022, Grand Welcome doubled its overall growth projections over 200%, and has gone from 14 franchisees to 60 across the United States. Grand Welcome is on an upward trend of success and franchisees are finding the systems and processes effective to earn profit within the emerging vacation rental industry.

**Hibner Design, San Clemente**

Maryanne Hibner, President

Maryanne Hibner brings a fresh perspective to the design industry due to her strong aesthetic and passion for design, as well as to her extensive background in design management. She gained a strong understanding of development, construction, budgeting, and property management from years of working for the Irvine Company as Senior Director of Design. She has an excellent ability to progress projects from inception to completion. Maryanne approaches every project with deliberate intention, elevating and enhancing each space to its fullest potential.

**Hoag, Newport Beach**

Jeff Hammond, Executive Director of Hoag at Home

Jeff Hammond is the executive director of Hoag at Home, a comprehensive home care service that provides patients with high-quality personalized care in the comfort of their home. Hoag at Home represents an evolution in Hoag's commitment to the community and a recognition of the changing demographics of the county. This new service allows Hoag to extend the world-class care that is delivered in Hoag hospitals, physician offices and health centers to a patient's place of residence.

**InBrace, Irvine**

Clint Carnell, Chief Executive Officer

Clint Carnell the CEO of InBrace, visionary leader, and serial entrepreneur in healthcare. Most recently, Carnell led BeautyHealth and its flagship brand, HydraFacial, from a acquisition in 2016 under private equity ownership to a public company with growing revenues 5x over five years. He is the cofounder and chairman of OrangeTwist, a health + wellness lifestyle brand redefining the med spa experience. OrangeTwist has over 15 locations nationwide changing the \$40 billion aesthetic market by providing the best services and the best talent. Previously, Carnell was the COO for Solta Medical from 2005-2011 taking the company public in 2006 developing the global brands Thermage, Fraxel, and Clear+Brilliant. During the early 2000s, Carnell founded and sold Charleston Renal Care to Davita and led Bausch & Lomb's US Surgical business from 2000-2005 during the development of LASIK. Carnell has served on the InBrace board of directors from 2020-2022 where he took over as CEO in March. He is a DUKE University graduate.

**jCyte and University of California, Irvine School of Medicine, Newport Beach**

Henry Klassen, Professor, Gavin Herbert Eye Institute, UC Irvine School of Medicine

Henry Klassen, MD, PhD, is professor of Ophthalmology at the University of California, Irvine. His research has shown that transplanted retinal progenitor cells improve the function of photoreceptors of the degenerating retina, and he continues to pursue the goal of translating these findings into a cell-based therapy for patients with retinitis pigmentosa (RP) and other blinding diseases. This effort has included co-founding a startup company, jCyte and successful completion of phase 1/2a and phase 2b clinical trials in RP. Dr. Klassen has a longstanding interest in neural plasticity and regeneration that dates to his undergraduate days at UC Berkeley and continuing through MD/PhD studies at the University of Pittsburgh. His clinical training included internship at the Cambridge Hospital, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, and residency in ophthalmology at Yale Eye Center, followed by a combined fellowship in medical retina and retinal research at Moorfields Eye Hospital and the Institute of Ophthalmology in London.

**Jetbuilt, Newport Beach**

Paul Dexter, Founder & CEO

Jetbuilt launched its sales and management software into a focused vertical of Audiovisual and IT contractors. The space had been served by a handful of aging platforms which had stopped innovating years before. With modest funding and strong innovations, Jetbuilt's cloud platform has become the dominating platform in the industry. It is now poised to become a comprehensive and collaborative ecosystem serving end-users, manufacturers, distributors and consultants.

**Kapture Vision, Irvine**

Nilo G. Low, CEO & Founder

In 2003, at just 19 years old, Nilo Low gathered friends together in her parent's backyard to raise funds for her best friend's mom, who was going through breast cancer at the time. What was intended to be a one-time cocktail party for a good cause became an annual affair and ignited a passion within Low- she knew she wanted to bring people together and create connection through experiences. A few years later in 2009, she launched Kapture Vision, a full-service event agency that does just that - brings people together, expands partnerships and delivers high-level hospitality. The agency has produced events for high-profile celebrities, global leaders and major sport and entertainment companies, as well as top non-profit organizations, ranging in size from 100-5000 attendees. The way in which she has led her agency's growth, from the early days of working from her kitchen table to what the agency is today, mostly through word-of-mouth, speaks to her unmatched leadership, determination and dynamic team. Today, Low continues to lead her growing agency while encouraging her team to find their own intersection between passion and purpose.

**Kaygen Inc., Irvine**

Rashmi Chaturvedi, President

Kaygen was founded in 2003 by Anshul and Rashmi Chaturvedi to fill the increasing global shortage of technical and data talent to accelerate digital transformation. As a minority woman-owned business (MWBE), the company went even further, embracing and building diversity, equity, and inclusion into its business strategy, model, and culture. The company was named Kaygen from the Japanese word, Kaizen, for continuous improvement, signifying how the founders continuously seek to bring diverse, expert talent to clients to create sustainable competitive advantage. Kaygen helps clients realize the value of their technology investments and provides them with key data insights so they can make the right decisions to drive growth. This business model proved to be a winning one when Kaygen grew 40% in the next two years. In 2020, at the peak of COVID, Kaygen reinvented its business model to talent-on-demand, driving 57% growth in 2021. As technology has continued to evolve at faster rates, Kaygen also evolved to stay relevant, innovative, and competitive. Chaturvedi and her team invested in research and development, partnering with research organizations, to bring innovative solutions to their customers, reinventing its business model, and developing new systems to serve clients in agile ways. Kaygen today provides talent and technology solutions to clients worldwide to accelerate digital transformation.

**Kibsi Inc., Irvine**

Tolga Tarhan, CEO

Tolga Tarhan has more than two decades of experience leading companies. He was an early pioneer of cloud-native thinking, popularizing developer automation-focused workflows and serverless application development. In 2013, Tarhan co-founded Sturdy.cloud, an AWS Premier Consulting Partner, which popularized these concepts as one of the most innovative AWS partners. In 2017, Sturdy was acquired by Onica, where Tarhan continued to lead the industry by pushing cloud-native concepts into the Fortune 500 and building Onica into the largest cloud-native AWS-focused professional and managed services company worldwide. In 2019, Onica was acquired by Rackspace Technology and Tarhan joined the executive team as the chief technology officer, where he helped Rackspace return to the public markets with an IPO. Most recently, Tarhan founded Kibsi, a radically new way to develop, deploy, and manage vision-enabled solutions at scale. Kibsi's cloud-native, low-code platform transforms existing camera feeds into actionable intelligence, so customers can instantly build and launch computer vision solutions. Tarhan continues to show thought leadership in the field through his extensive speaking engagements at events, industry conferences, and educational groups.

**La Peony, San Clemente**

De Anne Combs, Co-Founder and Development director of La Peony

De Anne Combs is the co-founder and development director of La Peony, an ethical women's luxury clothing collection crafted to move with you through every stage of life. A business development expert with an eye for refined fashion, she brings a background in entrepreneurial strategy to the task of creating an entirely new concept brand. Alongside 30-year friend-turned-business partner Melony Huber, Combs supports the establishment of a versatile fashion line that cultivates the blossoming beauty in every wearer while honoring the planet and a global community of artisans. Combs played varsity soccer and earned her BA in Economics/Sociology from the University of California Irvine. She then relocated to Arizona to complete her Masters of Public Administration at Arizona State University. There, she met longtime friend and La Peony Co-Founder Melony Huber. Although the two women were busy balancing busy schedules, multiple kids, and activities, they remained bonded over a shared commitment to creating real impact in the world. When Huber approached Combs about developing the La Peony brand, that vision became a reality.

**Lemon & Honey Day Spa, Orange**

Rebekah Zepfel, Owner & Esthetician Trainer

Rebekah Zepfel opened Lemon & Honey Day Spa in 2015 and has since established herself as a resilient and successful female business owner. With over 18 years of experience as a certified esthetician, Zepfel has led her business to success thanks to her dedication to training a knowledgeable team that pays careful attention to esthetic practices and



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offers customized care for every client. This year, Zepfel introduced Lemon & Honey University, a post-license development program that refreshes the L&H team on esthetic schooling best practices, and debuted new spa services like dermaplaning to meet the demands of guests. When COVID hit, she was forced to close the spa to the public, subsequently pausing her and her staff's livelihood. Luckily, Zepfel was in the final stages of launching Lemon & Honey Skin, a skincare line focused on education and skin archetypes, which kept the business afloat via online sales. Zepfel continues to proudly tackle the ups and downs of business ownership with grit, resilience and the faith that she will persevere.

Leonhardt Ventures LLC, Mission Viejo

Howard Leonhardt, Executive Chairman & CEO

Howard Leonhardt is an inventor with over 700 patent claims for medical devices, longevity and wellness. Over 600,000 patients have been treated with Leonhardt inventions. Leonhardt inventions generates close to \$2 billion annually in revenues with their acquirers. Most notable inventions include stent grafts and heart valve systems. He founded over 40 startups and led the team that completed first in world case of non-surgical stem cell repair of a human heart in 2001. Leonhardt led the only U.S. biotech IPO of 2008. He has raised more than \$150 million in capital for portfolio companies. Leonhardt has over 10 patents for bioelectric cancer treatments, over 30 patent claims for klotho based anti-aging and a patent for total organ regeneration.

**Live Good Inc., Irvine**

Jennifer Chi, Founder & CEO

Jennifer Chi has devoted her entire career to working on human rights matters. From her work at a public interest law firm in San Francisco to her policy experience in Washington D.C. and abroad, her passion for improving the lives of others has always been clear. While receiving her B.A. from Stanford University, Chi focused on International Relations and Philosophy, assisting scholars at the Hoover Research Institution in analyzing disease migration in developing nations. Her first job out of college was at a public interest law firm where she helped register and place homeless people into shelters and counseled detained children who had been trafficked into the country. She spent time at the U.S. Department of Education working on policy issues concerning school construction and safety in the post Columbine era. She earned her law degree from George Washington University before becoming an investigator examining factory production in Asia and working on human rights cases. As a human rights investigator, Chi observed countless workers overseas get sick from toxic materials, unsanitary conditions, while laboring excessively long hours for minimal compensation. Through her international experiences, Chi formed a vision of a new mode of commerce that would prioritize human and environmental health.

**Loko AI, Irvine**

Joseph Zaki, Founder & CEO

Joseph Zaki is the founder and chief executive officer of Loko AI. He is a pioneer in Artificial Intelligence with a specialization in real-time Computer Vision and Autonomous Systems. He has 20 years of Hollywood Blockbuster Visual Effects experience delivering groundbreaking Academy and Emmy award-winning Visual Effects, Virtual Reality and Mixed Reality for top Hollywood Studios, Advertising Agencies, Fortune 500 companies and AAA Game Studios. Zaki holds numerous US Patents in Machine Learning, Computer Vision and Synthetic Data and is passionate about creating jobs and career pathways for underserved communities in Orange County, California.

**Lorr, Mission Viejo**

Prasanna Hari, Founder

Prasanna Hari is a business transformation leader at Deloitte with over two decades of experience in driving large-scale transformation for fast-growing startups & Fortune 100 Tech leaders. His expertise in attracting & leading high-performing teams, providing thought leadership to executives internally + at client accounts & delivering innovative solutions that solve problems, increase productivity & drive record-setting ROI. At LORR we are giving you frictionless access as a bridge from web 2 to web 3 by helping you add this new channel to your omnichannel strategy in a way that is steeped in storytelling. We're finally bringing fun, culture, and social back to online shopping. One of the first hyper-realistic virtual world environments was created to help retailers move into the future.

**LS Carlson Law, PC, Aliso Viejo**

Luke Carlson, Owner

Luke S. Carlson always had an interest in business, real estate and the protection of wealth. During his collegiate career, he realized law was the best way to immerse himself in all three verticals. Today, as owner of LS Carlson Law, PC, he and his team of powerhouse attorneys service clients with their business, real estate, and estate planning needs. "By nature, I'm a strategist and love analyzing a situation to determine the best solution to a client's issue," says Carlson. "The practice of law provides endless opportunities to engage in strategic thinking. Whether it be against an opponent in litigation, which is simply a civilized form of war, or if it comes down to leveraging the laws to protect wealth and legacy, as in estate planning, strategy is essential." LS Carlson Law, PC has four thriving departments in CA, including Estates, Real Estate, Business, and Tax; the Firm expanded to FL in 2020 and this office continues to grow each year; and the Firm is launching an office in TX in 2023.

**Malaia's Microgreens, Irvine**

Malaia Martinez & Jaebin Yoo, Co-Founders

Young entrepreneurs Malaia Martinez (22) and Jaebin Yoo (22) are the co-founders of Malaia's Microgreens. Their specialty farm grows over 50 varieties of organic microgreens, edible flowers, and specialty herbs at their state-of-the-art indoor hydroponic lab in Irvine. Malaia's Microgreens is reinventing traditional agriculture with an innovative approach to sustainable



farming. Equipped with rows of tall shelves illuminated by bright grow lights, their hydroponic system looks nothing like a traditional farm. Built with scalable sustainability in mind, their farm is 90% more water efficient than traditional farms producing the same yield. Every drop of water used for farming is collected, filtered, and recycled. Most importantly, the farm is never restricted by the weather or seasons, resulting in an environment in which specialty products can be harvested year-round. The climatized, indoor growing environment is optimal for producing peak-of-season produce year-round.

Managed Direct Response, Irvine

Pat Mercuri, President & Founder

Pat Mercuri is founder and president of Managed Direct Response, one of leading Direct Marketing companies in Orange County. Mercuri is recognized as an innovator in the direct marketing and lead generation industries in Orange County. This is the eighth time that Pat Mercuri has been nominated for the award recognizing his long entrepreneurial spirit. Mercuri is recognized within the industry for his expertise in direct response having introduced several innovative marketing programs for the Mortgage, Solar, Automotive and Retail Services. During his career he has mailed over 200 million lead generating marketing materials. Mercuri begins his working day at 3:00 a.m. and doesn't stop until everything for the day is done, which makes Managed Direct Response the fastest in turnaround company for print and production.

**Manna Kadar Beauty Inc., Irvine**

Manna Kadar, Founder & CEO

Manna Kadar is the self-made, self-funded minority mom-preneur behind the fast-growing Manna Kadar Beauty family of brands, including Manna Kadar Cosmetics, Beauty and the Bump, Goddess by Manna Kadar, Haute Dog Luxury Pet Products, Mason Man Skincare, and Manna Kadar Luxe Bath and Body. She is the creator of the "7 Minute Face," a three-step, award-winning Beauty Simplified System that moms on-the-go all over are implementing. Leading with her heart, Kadar sits on the boards of Goodwill and USC's Women in Business while giving back 10% of the company's annual profits to philanthropic organizations. Asian-American and born in Paris, Kadar relocated to Lincoln Heights, California by age 5 and was raised by a strong Asian single mom and grandmother. Growing up in a tough neighborhood and being Asian-American, she witnessed first-hand the everyday battle to survive, viewing education and enterprise as a way out of the struggle. At age 16, she purchased her first cosmetics store at the local mall. At age 18, she became one of a handful of students accepted into college. Kadar stayed close to home, studying Finance and Distribution Management at USC. A natural-born entrepreneur, she used what she learned in the classroom to grow her mall-based cosmetics chain to seven stores in six years. After college, she sold her beauty business to enter the world of corporate banking. Over the next six years, Kadar excelled rapidly, yet missed the fulfillment and purpose that entrepreneurship provided. In 2007, she exited the finance world, taking everything she learned and applying it to her new venture: developing a chain of tanning salons that would one day lead to the Manna Kadar Beauty empire.

**Matregenix, Irvine**

Sherif Soliman, CEO

Dr. Sherif Soliman is a leading Material Scientist and founder of Matregenix. For over 15 years, Soliman has built on his extensive experience in biomaterials and nanofibers research and has planned, designed, and executed numerous nanofibrous polymeric structures for medical applications. His historical achievements in the creation of tissue scaffolds, as well as his expertise in medical device manufacturing, have earned him a reputation as a trusted partner to thought leaders and industry experts throughout the globe. One of his most rewarding achievements took place when a tissue-engineered scaffold he designed and developed became the first synthetic whole organ in medical history to be implanted into a patient.

**MCDA CCG, Placentia**

Michael Rash Jr, CEO

Michael Rash has worked in business consulting and advisory for going on 20 years. He is the founder and CEO of MCDA CCG, Inc., a full-service consulting and advisory firm, and has serviced over 570 businesses in over 15 market industries. As part of MCDA CCG, Rash has worked hard to drive confidence and innovation to the community and serve his clients best interests at all times.

**Mortenson Taggart Adams LLP, Irvine**

Craig Taggart, Co-Founding Partner

Craig Taggart, a founder of Mortenson Taggart Adams LLP, is an experienced trial attorney and class action litigator who has handled high-profile and high-stakes litigation matters throughout the United States for a diverse set of clients, including automotive manufacturers, medical device companies, contractors, accounting firms, and major financial institutions. Taggart has litigated some of the biggest cases in Southern California history, including the Bratz doll litigation, Countrywide Securities Litigation, and litigation arising out of one of the largest Securities Investor Protection Corporation bailouts in history. Taggart has defended companies in nationwide consumer and securities class actions, and he has argued cases before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth and Ninth Circuits. Taggart devotes a considerable amount of his practice to representing automotive manufacturers in class action and consumer litigation in state and federal courts. Taggart also represents clients in high-stakes securities litigation.

**Mortenson Taggart Adams LLP, Irvine**

Michael Mortenson, Managing Partner

Michael Mortenson is a founding partner of Mortenson Taggart Adams LLP. He is an experienced trial lawyer who represents and advises Fortune 500 companies, innovative startups, emerging middle-market companies, and high-profile individuals, as both plaintiffs and defendants, in complex, high-stakes matters in federal and state courts throughout the country. Mortenson's trial practice focuses primarily on business, consumer and employment litigation. He regularly handles matters involving fraud, breach of contract, breach of warranty, breach of

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fiduciary duty, misappropriation of trade secrets, products liability, whistleblower actions, discrimination, and retaliation for clients in various industries including automotive, technology, manufacturing, alternative energy, private equity and sports and entertainment. His work has been featured in various media outlets including The Washington Post, ABC News, Los Angeles Times, Associated Press, Law360, and others. Mortenson was previously the Chair of Consumer Litigation at Stradling, Yocca, Carlson & Rauth, and a partner at Baker Hostetler LLP.

**Mountain Mike's Pizza/Juice It Up!, Newport Beach**

Chris Britt & Ed St. Geme, Co-CEOs/Co-Owners

Visionary leaders, savvy entrepreneurs, and respected businessmen, Chris Britt and Ed St. Geme are the co-owners of two of the franchise industry's hottest restaurant chains. In 2017, Britt's private equity firm, Britt Private Capital, partnered with longtime friend and fellow Stanford graduate Ed St. Geme and his private investment firm, Jupiter Holdings, to acquire Mountain Mike's Pizza - a 40-year-old family-friendly pizza chain with more than 250 locations throughout California. The acquisition of Mountain Mike's Pizza, where they also serve as Co-CEOs, was followed a year later by the purchase of Juice It Up!, one of the nation's leading handcrafted smoothie, raw juice, and superfruit bowl chains. Since being acquired, both brands have achieved record-setting sales milestones and unprecedented unit growth for the OC-based chains with no signs of slowing down. Britt and St. Geme previously partnered in owning 43 Burger King restaurants. Helming one of the largest franchise groups in the Burger King system, they gained invaluable franchise experience, which has since been applied to their new brand ventures.

**Moxxe PR, Inc., North Tustin**

Mona Shah, President

Led by Mona Shah, Moxxe PR is a public relations and marketing firm that represented the region's most distinguished chefs and independent restaurants for more than 17 years. Moxxe has built a name for itself by focusing on creativity, experience, compassion, authenticity and integrity when representing local culinary leaders, including one of only three restaurants in the county to receive a Michelin Star, one of the most prestigious, globally recognized designations. Most recently, Shah was selected as one of Forbes' "Next 1000" for redefining what it means to build and run a business today, and being proof positive that American entrepreneurship remains resilient, vibrant and ever-changing.

**Mozverse, Ladera Ranch**

Zach Hirsch, Chief Evangelist

Zach Hirsch is a Gen Z thought leader, a leading voice in the creator economy, an entrepreneur, Web3 evangelist, podcast host, analyst, and influencer with a passion for sports, NFTS, and building the future Metaverse. He is recognized as the most accurate sports handicapper in the history of college football and regularly makes predictions for Betonline. Hirsch is the co-host of the Kiss and The Myst Worldstar Hip-hop Sports Podcast with his partner, the legendary rapper Jadakiss. He is also the co-host of the Fight Guys Podcast with former UFC Light Heavyweight Champion, Rashad Evans. Hirsch co-founded Mozverse Inc a Web3 Development Company with Danny Mozlin and was just awarded Inc. Magazine's Best in Business Award 2022. They have partnered with Scott Storch and launched LiveStadium to help artists connect with fans from around the world and help fans be able to attend events from their home.

**Old Brea Chop House, Brea**

Tony Fasulo, Owner

Since establishing Old Brea Chop House in late 2019, owner and operator Tony Fasulo has established himself and his steakhouse as an Orange County success story. With more than 35 years of experience in the restaurant industry and 20 years at a global steakhouse chain, Fasulo has led the restaurant through COVID, supply chain issues and the many other inevitable ups and downs restaurant owners face. Despite it all, he's maintained the restaurant's reputation as an Orange County staple that pays homage to the classics, while being inventive with rotating cocktails and weekly specials that highlight hard-to-find cuts of meat and seasonally available produce. Fasulo has made Old Brea Chop House a go-to spot for celebrating life's special moments, evidenced by their nearly full reservation book on holidays and weekends. Under Fasulo's skilled leadership, Old Brea Chop House has been recognized as one of the 75 Best Restaurants in Orange County in 2022, which wouldn't be possible without his passion and dedication to his restaurant.

**Outshine Public Relations, Newport Beach**

Talia Samuels, President

Named one of the "Best PR Agencies in America" by Forbes, Outshine Public Relations specializes in restaurant, hospitality, and culinary public relations. Founded by Talia Samuels in 2015, her agency represents an all-star roster including James Beard Award-winning and Michelin-starred chefs and new-to-market culinary brands. With deep roots in the hospitality industry, she has a passion for supporting hoteliers, restaurateurs, chefs, and food and beverage brands through her creative storytelling verticals. Recognized for her poise, tenacity, and integrity, Samuels is recognized as a force in her field. Her agency, Outshine Public Relations, is a full-service agency providing public relations, social media management, photography, videography, and digital marketing.

**PatientFi, Irvine**

Todd Watts, Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer

Todd Watts is the co-founder and chief executive officer of PatientFi, a point-of-sale platform used by healthcare providers to seamlessly offer their patients more affordable and flexible financing alternatives to pay for their healthcare treatments and procedures. Founded in 2017, PatientFi has quickly established itself as leading patient financing in medical aesthetics and has since expanded rapidly into new specialties. Today, PatientFi serves a broad national

network of 2,500+ medical providers in plastic surgery, medspas, dentistry, fertility, audiology and ophthalmology. Since it was founded, PatientFi has at least doubled its revenue every year. In 2022, PatientFi added another 1,500 providers, growing 120%. PatientFi also recently entered into a landmark co-marketing agreement with Allergan Aesthetics, the nation's largest medical aesthetics manufacturing partner, to provide affordable and non-predatory financing options to patients interested in using eligible Allergan Aesthetics products. The success of the strategic partnership with Allergan Aesthetics has since contributed to a 2X increase in sales in participating practices in comparison to sales within practices that did not offer PatientFi.

**Pelorus Equity Group, Newport Beach**

Dan Leimel, Jr., CEO

Dan Leimel is the CEO of Pelorus Equity Group and the managing director of The Pelorus Fund. He has more than 31 years of extensive industry experience including operating, owning and managing several corporations, loan servicing entities and a real estate fund. Over his career, Mr. Leimel has successfully underwritten and closed thousands of real estate transactions by raising capital for both debt and equity. His vast transactional experience is invaluable when underwriting complicated scenarios and structuring solution based terms to satisfy a broad spectrum of situations. Mr. Leimel possesses deep experience in risk mitigation and has expertly navigated adverse client conditions while still maintaining a fully transparent and equitable upside for the investor. His primary investment philosophy is to focus on capital preservation and mitigating risk in every investment.

**Petalfast, Irvine**

Jason Vegotsky, CEO

Jason Vegotsky is the chief executive officer of Petalfast, the first-of-its-kind full spectrum sales and marketing agency for the cannabis industry. Petalfast helps cannabis brands achieve rapid growth via its go-to-market accelerator program in California, and through its full spectrum of agency services available to brands nationally. Notable cannabis brands already engaged in the Petalfast platform include Space Coyote, Emerald Sky, Bloom Brands, and Yada Yada. The company, through its incubator program, also provides new and recently launched brands with direct access to leading retailers and opportunities to gain first-hand market analysis, while also offering select retailers the opportunity to see future brands before they formally hit the market. As an entrepreneur with an extensive background in sales and business development, Vegotsky leads Petalfast with a team of 50 professionals in sales, marketing, and brand management on a mission to revolutionize the go-to-market for California Cannabis brands.

**Port View Preparatory, Tustin**

Edward Miguel, Co-Founder & Principal

Dr. Edward Miguel, MA, EdD, BCBA, has dedicated his career to serving students and individuals with disabilities. He has worked in domestic violence shelters, residential treatment centers, group homes, and non-public schools. Currently, he serves as the president and CEO of Port View Preparatory Schools, overseeing two campuses in Orange and San Bernardino Counties. In addition to running one of the best non-public schools in the country, Dr. Miguel spends his time advocating for students with special needs, including pursuing changes at the governmental level. Dr. Miguel faced disabilities as a child after a childhood illness but recovered with the help of dedicated professionals in this field, motivating him to dedicate his life to this work.

**Powerhouse+Co., Santa Ana**

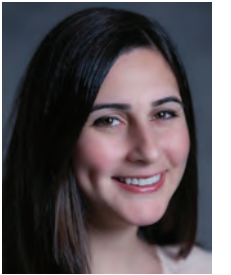
Kristin Daher, Founder & CEO

Since founding Powerhouse+Co. in 2015, Kristin Daher has continually advanced its standing as one of Orange County's premier, female-led firms. She has strategically reimaged the agency's approach to PR, influencer and social media programs - leveraging innovation, thought leadership and entrepreneurship. Daher's insightful growth measures have led to new hires, a diversified client list and endless possibilities for future success. Beyond her role in growing the agency, Daher has fostered a transformative culture defined by creativity, development and achievement. In many ways, she has molded Powerhouse in her own likeness. It's an upbeat, innovative, high-energy workplace where brainstorming yield equal parts productivity and laughs, unique personalities are always welcome, and collaboration is ubiquitous. In late 2022, Daher rebranded the company, evolving it from Powerhouse Communications to Powerhouse+Co. The "+Co." represents strength in numbers and the agency's core belief in the value of teamwork. With Daher at the helm, Powerhouse+Co. is a collaborative organization that's greater and more impactful than the sum of its individual parts.

**Prime Management Company, Irvine**

Pegah Fazeli, CEO

Prime Management Company, Inc has over 30 years of experience in providing complete professional management services for income properties throughout Southern California. Prime Management prides itself in its extensive knowledge of policies, regulations, procedures, and practices as they pertain to the various industries in which it deals in, e.g. retail of consumer goods, fuel service stations, health care facilities, single and multiplex housing, commercial buildings, new developments, etc. Prime Management manages and services over 20 businesses and properties throughout Southern California. Pegah Fazeli started the company six years ago to manage innovative businesses in the Southern California area. She is expanding operations into various new cutting edge fields, such as health care and energy.

**PRJKT Restaurant Group, Huntington Beach**

Alicia Cox, CEO & Founder

Alicia Cox, founder and CEO of Prjkt Restaurant Group, has redefined beachfront dining along California's vibrant coastline. While her innovation and drive have led her to open multiple

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notable restaurants, and even release her own wine label, Cox has found her niche in creating elevated seaside dining experiences. In 2016, her historic Bolsa Chica State Beach concessions launched - which included SeaLegs at the Beach, now a destination in SoCal for live music, comedy, and dining right on the sand. In early 2021, Cox signed a first-of-its-kind agreement with the California State Park System for new beach concessions along a three-mile stretch of Huntington State Beach. She's won various industry awards throughout the years, including five Golden Foodie Awards, Sacramento's Small Business of the Year, Entrepreneur of the Year by the Huntington Beach Chamber of Commerce, and was most recently named a 2022 Woman of Influence by the Greater Irvine Chamber.

**RAJ Capital and Revitate, Newport Beach**

Alex Bhathal, Founder & Executive Chairman

Alex Bhathal serves as managing partner and founder of RAJ Capital, the Bhathal family's investment office which includes the Revitate platform where he leads the firm's investment activities in opportunity zone development, workforce housing, sports-anchored real estate and is senior operating partner of Rx3 Growth Partners, a consumer growth fund co-founded by NFL star Aaron Rodgers. He is a nationally recognized leader in opportunity zone development and was named "Opportunity Zone Investor of the Year" by Globe St. in 2019 and a "Top 25 Fund Manager" by OZ Magazine in 2021. Bhathal is a board director for Compass Diversified (NYSE: CODI) and Mark IV Capital. Previously, he served as co-owner and chief executive officer of RAJ Swim and led the largest private equity backed acquisition in the history of the swimwear industry. Bhathal and his sister Lisa continued to run the company until they both exited the business in 2015.

**Rallio, Irvine**

Chuck Goetschel, CEO

After building and successfully exiting multiple businesses, over the past ten years Chuck Goetschel has built Rallio - the world's most intelligent, user-friendly, AI-powered social media management application. The App learns the user's business, analyzes previous content, and begins creating social media posts that have a high probability of performing well. It also leads the user as to what actions they should take to improve their online presence. The AI does the thinking, writing, and directing so the user can easily and confidently grow the impact of their social media presence and online reputation.

**Revere Real Estate, Irvine**

Nick Lind, Principal of Revere Real Estate

Nick Lind has led Revere Real Estate's continuous growth as a company over the last four years. What started as a two home real estate development project in Huntington Beach, has quickly grown to a current development pipeline of 14 homes throughout Southern California. With more projects to come, Lind has grown the company personnel with like-minded entrepreneurial individuals. The growth trajectory for Lind and Revere Real Estate has been built upon a strong foundation of experience and strategic planning. Prior to entering the world of real estate development, he was a financial advisor with Prudential. This career was a boon to the way that Lind approaches business. The lesson that echoes through both industries is that anything is possible with a plan. Every real estate project that Lind and Revere Real Estate embark upon, demands a thorough and meticulous scheme in order to be successful. Lind looks to continue on this trajectory and continue to diversify the breadth of projects that the company takes on.

**Revive Real Estate, Irvine**

Michael Alladawi, CEO & Founder

Michael Alladawi is a Southern California real estate veteran with a proven track record as a builder, investor, and respected home flipper. He created Revive Real Estate to share his industry knowledge and help homeowners maximize their profits when selling their homes. Alladawi's venture into real estate grew out of the US financial crisis in 2008 when he leveraged his crisis and cash management skills to move his family's investments from banks into the safe haven of real estate. When single-family homes were being auctioned off on the courthouse steps, Alladawi saw an opportunity to begin fixing and flipping houses. He then created a real estate investment fund that targeted value-oriented real estate investments and development projects in Southern California. Soon, he also began building new homes. He leveraged his experiences to create Revive, partnering with tech wunderkind Dalip Jaggi to develop the technology he needed to scale presale renovations. Today, Revive does more than help homeowners create generational wealth. Revive often creates life-changing impact as presale renovations increase seller profits significantly.

**SA Recycling, Orange**

George Adams, President & CEO

George Adams is CEO and president of SA Recycling, located in Anaheim, California. He has been in the scrap metal recycling business since 1977. Originally started by Adams' father almost 50 years ago as a single recycling metal facility in Anaheim, Adams Steel merged with Sims Metal Management in September of 2007 to form SA Recycling. SA Recycling now has over 130 locations in 16 states with over 3,000 employees and will process 5+ million tons of recycled metals annually, becoming the nation's largest scrap metal recycling company in 2022. The company's forte is shredding, with 25 shredders nationwide. Additionally, SA Recycling has four port loading operations in Long Beach and Los Angeles California, Savannah Georgia, and Brownsville Texas. The latest acquisition expanded into Brownsville, Texas, a ship breaking facility.

**Ship & Shore Environmental Inc., Signal Hill**

Anoosheh Oskouian, President & CEO

Anoosheh Oskouian's unique story, business success, and her philosophy on life has created a buzz across multiple channels. People recognize that she is a lesson ready to be taught and a voice that is necessary to be heard in this world. Oskouian and her environmental company

have been featured in several renowned publications including The Los Angeles Times, CNN Money, Bloomberg, Plastics News, Los Angeles Business Journal, and more. In 2015, she was esteemed the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. In 2017, she was named National Association of Women Business Owner (NAWBO) "Business Owner of the Year" and was voted as the Top 100 "Most Influential People" by the Orange County Register. She has been a guest speaker at several conferences including the Plastics News Women Breaking the Mold Conference and USC's Global Energy Network Distinguished Speaker series. In 2021, she was a panelist speaker at the Long Beach Qingdao Association Annual Business Luncheon, where she discussed topics of clean air and environmental stewardship in the face of climate change.

**Shopoff Realty Investments, Irvine**

William Shopoff, President & CEO

William A. Shopoff is president and chief executive officer of Shopoff Realty Investments, L.P., as well as numerous affiliated entities. Mr. Shopoff has more than 40 years of real estate and investment experience. His expertise includes the acquisition, development, and sale of new and redeveloped residential and commercial properties throughout the United States, as well as partnership structure, debt placement, venture capital and investment underwriting. Mr. Shopoff has acquired over 1,000 properties on behalf of his various entities, including the acquisition of over 6,000 apartment units (fee or mortgage loans), the entitlement of over 18,000 lots/units of land suitable for single-family or multi-family development, as well as millions of square feet of commercial projects. Additionally, the firm has undertaken numerous development projects, with current developments underway including high cube logistics buildings, a boutique hotel, apartments, luxury condominiums and single-family build to rent product. In addition to his real estate activity, Mr. Shopoff is also the co-founder and chairman of Vertimass LLC, a burgeoning business in advanced biofuels.

**Soul Community Planet / Miracles for Kids, San Juan Capistrano**

Ken Cruse, Founder & CEO Soul Community Planet & Chairperson Miracles for Kids

Soul Community Planet ("SCP") was launched in 2018 as a Social Enterprise. The vision of Soul Community Planet is to make the world a better place by serving those who value wellness (Soul), kindness (Community), and the environment (Planet). Soul Community Planet grew from an idea in 2018 to three hotels by the end of 2019. At the end of 2019, Soul Community Planet completed a Series A capital raise. At the end of 2020, after achieving overwhelmingly positive traveler acclaim, with each of its prototype hotels gaining significant market share against established, dominant brands, Soul Community Planet announced a \$210 million equity investment giving it the ability to add upwards of \$500 million in new hotels to the brand. This is proof that despite one of the most challenging years for hospitality on record - due to the pandemic - Soul Community Planet's new approach to Holistic Hospitality has been very well received by conscious consumers and positions the company for success as the post-COVID recovery continues.

**soul&beautyMEDx, Mission Viejo**

Linda Rank, Founder

Respected as a visionary, and highly sought after for her specialized care, Linda Rank has been at the forefront of the aesthetic industry for over 20 years. As the founder of soul&beautyMEDx, Rank has set the standard for the new era of excellence within the med spa industry. Creating a destination featuring aesthetic solutions to meet her clientele's tailor-made needs, Rank is committed to helping her clients defy the hands of time through restorative and supportive aging treatments. The innovative new location in Mission Viejo offers an unparalleled line-up of services, including laser, skin care and BOTOX® memberships at the hands of industry best practitioners. As an honorary speaker and national trainer for Allergan, she shares her keen aesthetic perspective and refined protocols with peers and professionals across the USA, in order to help elevate the industry. An established author, Rank developed her signature book, "Take Charge of Your Beauty," to empower individuals with skincentric treatments and soul deep philosophies.

**Standard Bearer Machines, San Clemente**

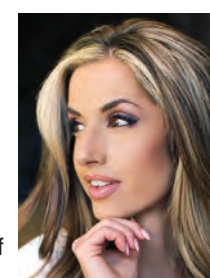
Peter Godlewski, Owner

Peter Godlewski is an entrepreneur, engineer, and accomplished business leader. After graduating with advanced degrees in engineering from Carnegie Mellon and Stanford University, he co-founded medical technology company Omnicell (NASDAQ:OMCL), which was the fastest growing company in Silicon Valley in 1997. Later, he drove rapid growth as a business leader in billion-dollar public companies and multi-million-dollar private companies. A committed outdoorsman, Godlewski brings the depth of his professional experience and technical know-how to the off-road EV market. He founded Standard Bearer Machines, LLC with his father in 2010 where he invented and developed the patented Rungu Dualie double-wheel e-bike - the most capable off-road e-bike built in the USA.

**Sterling Public Relations, Corona Del Mar**

Paula Steurer, Founder & President

2023 marks the 15th anniversary of Sterling Public Relations, which was founded by Paula Steurer as a Publicity, Branding, and Marketing hybrid in 2008. Steurer's innovative vision, strategic approach, and forward-thinking philosophy have played a vital role in propelling the brands her firm represents into the spotlight. With a passion for building brand identities and her innate ability to connect, engage, and drive brands to the next level, Steurer has become a trusted authority among entrepreneurs and executives. Her refreshing perspective on the world of PR, Marketing, and Branding has positioned her as a keynote speaker and workshop leader for nationally recognized brands such as Mindbody, Vizio, and Oracle. Additionally, she is among Entrepreneur Magazine's contributing writers and is a part of their esteemed Leadership Council. Through intentional development, Sterling Public Relations has become the in-demand firm for brands throughout California and North Texas who desire a competitive edge. The firm is designed for those who are ready to



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reimagine, reconnect, and reignite their brand strategy, messaging, and PR efforts.

STJ Consulting, Lake Forest

Scharrell Jackson, CEO

For over 35 years, Scharrell Jackson has operated at the top of her game. Recognized early on as a strategic-thinking and transformative leader, she quickly broke the glass ceiling, landing C-suite positions typically not available to women of color. She thrived, positioning companies to experience improved operational efficiency and unparalleled growth in scalability and profit. Today, coined as a "Corporate Fixer," Jackson is the CEO and founder of STJ Consulting Services LLC. Recognized as a nationally sought-after keynote speaker, leadership coach, and business consultant, her mission of leveling up leaders is achieved through her authentic, intimate, and powerful approach. In 2015, Jackson founded Leadership in Heels, a speaker series designed to motivate, inspire, educate, and equip leaders to advance their lives and businesses personally, professionally, and in their communities. A well-known philanthropic leader in Orange County, Jackson has left her mark in positively impacting the lives of those around her, serving on multiple local nonprofit boards, and helping to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars in support of the community. Jackson is not a typical leader, but one who inspires other leaders to greatness, making her stand out from all the rest.



Tarsus Pharmaceuticals Inc., Irvine

Bobak "Bobby" Azamian, MD, PhD, Co-founder, Chief Executive Officer & Chairman

Bobak "Bobby" Azamian cofounded Tarsus with Michael Ackermann, Ph.D., in November 2016 and has served as its president and CEO since September 2018, and as the company's chairman since December 2022. Since its founding, Tarsus has established a leading team and culture and has completed successful fundraising efforts through an IPO and global partnerships. Tarsus continues to advance its pipeline, including its lead investigational therapy for Demodex blepharitis, TP-03. Azamian cofounded and led two other novel therapeutics companies, Vibrato Medical, focused on wearable treatments for peripheral arterial diseases, and Metavention, focused on interventional treatments for metabolic diseases. Azamian currently serves on the Board of Vibrato Medical and previously held the role as Board Co-Chair, leading the company through Series A financing and securing significant NIH grant awards. Azamian served as president and CMO of Metavention, leading the company through multiple clinical trial programs and Series A through C financings. He began his biotechnology career at Versant Ventures and Third Rock Ventures, where he was an investor and board observer for numerous life sciences companies.



Sunstone Management, Irvine

John Keisler, CEO

John P. Keisler is currently the CEO & managing partner for Sunstone Management Inc., a venture capital firm located in Southern California that invests in diverse early-stage



technology startups through innovative public-private-partnerships that blend unique expertise across government, education, and private sectors. Prior to Sunstone Management, Mr. Keisler spent over 20

years in public service, most recently as the economic development director for the City of Long Beach. With approximately 500,000 residents, the City of Long Beach is the 7th largest city in California and a major engine of economic development for the region and the nation through its university, history of aerospace manufacturing, and its international seaport. Under his leadership, the organization created an innovative Blueprint for Economic Development, and helped to facilitate an historic increase of private sector investment in the city. The mission of the award-winning organization, and Keisler's personal passion, is to increase equitable economic opportunities for workers, investors, and entrepreneurs in Long Beach and throughout California.

Synoptek, Irvine

Tim Britt, CEO

Synoptek is a global systems integrator (GSI) and managed IT services provider (MSP). They offer comprehensive IT management and consultancy services to organizations worldwide. Synoptek works in partnership



with clients of various sizes—from mid-market to Fortune 100—while helping them strengthen their IT foundation, manage risk and compliance, and enhance their competitive position. With more than 20

years of experience, over 1,000 employees, and active customers across the globe, Synoptek provides services that include cloud management, cybersecurity, IT management, 24x7 end-user support, and transformative business consulting and system implementation. Throughout the years, they've grown into a prominent player in the technology industry. They've been repeatedly recognized as one of the Top 100 Cloud Services Providers by Talkin' Cloud and one of the Top Managed Services Providers by MSPMentor, among other honors from Inc. Magazine, Deloitte, and more. In 2022, Synoptek was recognized as Microsoft's Partner of the Year Award for Non-profits and completed three acquisitions: Rapid Technologies, Macquarium, and Optistar Technology.

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years, he has opened several iconic concepts throughout Orange County, including Jimmy's Famous American Tavern, French 75, Chat Noir, and Kachina, to name a few. In 2019, he opened his most recent concept, Tavern House Kitchen & Bar overlooking the Newport Beach Marina. Known for its elegant martinis and elevated comfort cuisine, the popular coastal location with its horseshoe bar is a hotspot among locals and visitors alike. Its menus offer a glimpse into Wilhelm's storied culinary career, showcasing some of his greatest hits from the past four decades exploring everything from French fare to Southwestern flare. In 2023, Wilhelm is opening Tavern at the Mission, a restaurant in San Juan Capistrano along the historic city's Mission Promenade.

**Tebra, Corona Del Mar**

Dan Rodrigues, Co-founder & CEO

Dan Rodrigues is chief executive officer and co-founder of Tebra, a leading cloud-based healthcare technology platform formed in 2021 with the merger of Kareo and PatientPop. Rodrigues led the merger, combining leading technologies from both companies to deliver an all-in-one, cloud-based software platform purpose-built to drive the success of independent practices and modernize every step of the patient journey. Tebra recently announced it had secured more than \$72 Million at over \$1 billion valuation to expand its digital healthcare technology platform. The investment solidifies Tebra's position as the digital backbone for independent practices and accelerates R&D to power a new era of healthcare. Headquartered in Southern California, Tebra has over 1,000 employees dedicated to helping more than 100,000 healthcare providers run more efficient and profitable practices while delivering outstanding patient care and a modern healthcare experience to more than 90 million patients in the United States. Tebra provides independent healthcare practices with a complete operating system for practice success.

**The Conscious Publicist LLC, Laguna Niguel**

Ashley Graham, Founder

Ashley Graham is the founder of The Conscious Publicist, a public relations firm that helps purpose-driven brands share their stories and methodologies with the world. Graham has always had a passion for writing, communication, and storytelling, and after working at traditional PR agencies and in in-house director roles, she wanted to do something more meaningful with her career. In 2016, Graham decided to start her entrepreneurial journey that focused on helping conscious brands share their messages of mindful leadership, social impact, and purpose. The Conscious Publicist has since become a leading PR firm in the industry, helping its clients share their stories in an authentic, engaging, and impactful way to succeed in today's competitive media landscape. Graham is known for her authentic and transparent communication approach and ability to connect with people from all walks of life. In addition to running The Conscious Publicist, Graham is also a writer and speaker and frequently contributes to various publications, podcasts, and blogs, advocating for purpose-driven brands and a way of living, all through the transformative power of storytelling.

**The Gerontologist Inc., Dana Point**

Kerry Burnight, PhD Founder & Principal Consultant

Kerry Burnight, PhD, is the founder of the advisory firm, The Gerontologist, Inc., and is on a life-long mission to improve the second half of life. Her firm provides solutions to everyday challenges that older people face. Her passionate approach to make older lives better includes: skillful and continuous listening to older adults; expertise in the physical, social, and ethical complexities of aging; and above all, love. When Burnight earned her PhD in Gerontology thirty years ago, she had the odd distinction of being the youngest doctor of Gerontology in the U.S. She taught Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology for 19 years at the University of California, Irvine School of Medicine. At the University's Clinical Geriatrics Center, she had a front row seat to observe thousands of people and their families navigate old age. Burnight co-founded and directed the nation's first Elder Abuse Forensic Center and the national non-profit, Ageless Alliance: United Against Elder Abuse. Burnight has spoken at the U.S. White House at the Elder Justice Summit, and at the U.S. Department of Justice. She has appeared on such tv programs as Dr. Phil, The Doctors, Money Matters, CBS News, NBC News, the Dr. Drew Show and have been a Keynote Speaker at hundreds of conferences.

**The Literacy Project, Newport Beach**

Sue Grant, Founder & Executive Volunteer

Sue Grant curated an impactful career within the nonprofit industry. Founding The Literacy Project, the organization has served 10,500 underserved students from low-income families. Under her leadership, she helped raise over \$4.7 million to provide a reading program at "no cost" to both the child and school within three states. The nonprofit's 30-hour program significantly changes a child's ability to read, averaging skill increases from 76% to 129%. The agency has donated \$1.92 million worth of reading games to 47,250 family members, promoting family literacy. Sue has invested heart and knowledge as a dedicated mentor to over 50 interns (Chapman University, CSUF, and UCI). She earned the California Congress of Parents, Teachers and Students Service Award, U.S. Congressional Service award, and a top five finish at the World Literacy Awards. She was a founding director with Coalition for Reading Excellence (Washington, D.C.), and participates in EURead's Educational Summit in Brussels.

**The Zandbergen Group, Laguna Beach**

Letitia Berbaum, Wealth Advisor & COO

Letitia Berbaum is paving the way for future generations of female financial advisors. Through "True Wealth" strategies, She is able to help her clientele become financially fit so that they can thrive personally and professionally. As partner and COO of The Zandbergen Group, Berbaum specializes in wealth management, asset transfer strategies for high net worth individuals and multi-generational families, and full-service strategic planning for business owners - from those seeking an entrepreneurial framework to those exploring an exit plan. Berbaum has been recognized as an outstanding wealth manager in several publications and has been named as an Orange County Five-Star Wealth Manager for seven



consecutive years. She has earned the Accredited Investment Fiduciary® (AIF®) designation, CEPA, and holds a Series 66 securities registration, as well as Long Term Care Insurance and Life Insurance licenses. Additionally, Berbaum's expertise has been featured by Forbes Business Council, and she is a part of the Brea Chamber of Commerce Women in Leadership Council.

The Zandbergen Group, Laguna Beach

Bart Zandbergen, Founder & CEO

Bart Zandbergen is an esteemed certified financial planner and the founder and CEO of The Zandbergen Group. Launching The Zandbergen Group during the pandemic, in the heart of Laguna Beach where he has been a long-time resident, Zandbergen has over 30 years of dynamic experience in the wealth management industry. As a respected authority in financial planning and investment advising, Zandbergen has devoted his career to helping his clientele achieve "True Wealth," through highly personalized wealth building strategies. Zandbergen holds his CFP designation from the College of Financial Planning in Denver, Colorado, as well as his Life/Health/Disability Insurance license and is a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst. Now in its fifth year of production, Zandbergen is also the podcast host behind The Zandbergen Report. His podcast show features commentary on the world of finance and investments as well as interviews with some of Orange County's hottest entrepreneurs, philanthropic leaders, and industry innovators.

**Toast Kitchen + Bakery, Tableau Kitchen + Bar, Wahoo's Fish Tacos, Costa Mesa**

Ed Lee, Co-Founder

Ed Lee is a first-generation Latin immigrant from Brazil and is the co-founder and managing partner of Wahoo's Fish Taco, responsible for the expansion and development of what has become one of the most iconic fast-casual restaurant brands in the nation. Founded in 1988 in Costa Mesa by Lee and his two brothers, Wahoo's Fish Taco now has more than 55 locations nationwide and one in Tokyo, Japan. With more than 40 years of experience in the restaurant industry, Lee is also the founder of some of Costa Mesa's favorite modern eateries, including Toast Kitchen + Bakery (which opened a second location in Tustin in late 2022), Tableau Kitchen + Bar and Fill's Bakeshop. A renowned restaurateur with a strong devotion to his community, Lee has dedicated much of his time and resources to giving back through fundraising programs at his restaurants, mentoring young chefs, he is known as the "restaurant whisperer", and advising as a board member for entrepreneurship programs and non-profit organizations. In addition, in 2022, Lee (along with his partner in Toast/Tableau, Chef John Park) was named OCBJ's Restaurateurs of the Year and Lee was also featured in OCBJ's OC 500. Lee also was named the Asian Business Association's Pioneer of the Year for 2022. And, also in 2022, he wrote a book about his experience with his son's suicide called "After," which seeks help in suicide prevention and awareness as well as to help families in the grieving process.

**Trilogy Financial Services, Irvine**

Jeff Motske, CFP®, President & CEO

Jeff Motske is the author of The Couple's Guide to Financial Compatibility, an accomplished executive, radio personality and host of The Jeff Motske Show, and financial advisor. More importantly, he is a believer in the power of everyday Americans and is committed to helping them reach financial independence. He began his career in retirement planning out of college, and as he watched the landscape of financial services, Motske saw how disconnected most of his industry was from the real-life issues of Americans. In partnership with Kevin Mackintosh, he created Trilogy Financial in 1999 to bring together resources on financial, tax and estate planning for middle-class Americans. Motske started Trilogy with the vision of improving the industry, a vision that is still guiding him today. In 2016, he spearheaded the creation of Trilogy Capital, an RIA asset management firm that provides investment solutions for everyday Americans. He is also committed to creating the next generation of financial advisors, which can be seen in Trilogy's development of multi-generational teams committed to providing clients seamless and top-notch service.

**Trinity Packaging Supply, Newport Beach**

Anthony Magaraci, CEO & Founder

Anthony Magaraci is an entrepreneur, thought leader, philanthropist, and musician. Magaraci founded Trinity Packaging Supply, the Amazon of wholesale packaging, at the age of 27 from his home office in 2010. Under his leadership, Trinity has consistently doubled revenue every two years and expanded to six offices nationwide, including corporate headquarters in Newport Beach, California. This sustained hyper-growth and his dedication to cultivating a fun, award-winning company culture has landed Trinity on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Companies in America list seven times in a row (only 1% of honorees have made the list seven times) and the Inc. Best Places to Work list three times. Magaraci is passionate about helping others and giving back to the community. In 2022 alone, he donated over \$2 million to charitable organizations. Inspiring and mentoring future entrepreneurs is also very important to Anthony. He serves on the Entrepreneurship Advisory Council for Rowan University and is featured in the book "Entrepreneurship: The Practice and Mindset." Magaraci was recently honored on the 2022 Greater Irvine Chamber's 40 Under 40 list.

**US ALLIANCE GROUP INC, Rancho Santa Margarita**

Fadi Cheikha, CEO

Fadi Cheikha, CEO of US Alliance Group (USAG), Electronic Cash Systems (ECS), and many other successful businesses, has established himself as a man of many talents, with a passion for building an empire that lacks comparison. Not only are the branches of USAG diverse, but the many other companies owned by Cheikha are unique in themselves. From payment processing, non-profits, salons, equestrian, property investment, & youth ministry, Cheikha's brand is the definition of diversity in entrepreneurship. With the expansion of his brands across the US, Cheikha and his companies are proud of the achievements they have made over the last 25 years. ECS has had the honor of ranking eight times on the Inc. 500/5000 lists as one of the Fastest-Growing Companies in America and six times as the top Fastest-Growing Private Companies by the Orange County Business Journal. Moreover, from 2019 to 2022, USAG continues to be recognized as a "Top Workplace" by Inc.



2023 EXCELLENCE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AWARD NOMINEES

500/5000, OCBJ, and the OC Register. In 2021 and 2022 Cheikha was recognized as a finalist for Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year. Additionally, in 2021, he was awarded C Level Focus's 10 Most admired CEOs and recognized by OCBJ's Excellence in Entrepreneurship.

Van Speed Shop / The Van Mart, Westminster
Duran Morley, CEO

Duran Morley is the chief executive officer of the Van Speed Shop and the online distribution hub called theVanMart.com. The Van Speed Shop is a turnkey Mercedes Benz van customization lifestyle company. In-house capabilities include full fabrication, upholstery, energy efficient electrical, installation and custom production. Vans can be produced in an eight-nine week period vs. the industry timeframe of six-nine months. The Van Mart is online e-commerce for people worldwide to purchase a comprehensive and innovative Van Speed part and DIY parts for customer conversions. At the age of 22, Morley built Van Speed into 26 employees and over a 26,000 square foot manufacturing and customization adventure facility. VanSpeed customers include sports athletes, celebrities, media celebrities and business leaders. Morley has been awarded the SEMA top 35 under 35 worldwide builders by SEMA and is currently on tour with the Adventure Van Expo stops throughout the western United States and is currently building digital mega media super star, Ken Block's Earthmover Mercedes Benz Sprinter Van in addition to 43 additional Ken Block signature series conversion vans.



Vincit USA, Irvine
Ville Houttu, CEO

Ville Houttu is the founder and CEO of Vincit USA. Originally from Finland, Houttu has grown Vincit USA from \$0 revenue to \$14 million in only five years. Prior to leading the company, he held various positions at different companies throughout his career, including an account manager at Teleperformance Finland, a senior account manager at Saska Finland, and director of sales at the Aricent Group. Houttu has an M.Sc. in Engineering and focuses on a lean working model while scaling operations in a flat hierarchy that prizes development and design innovation. Under Houttu's leadership at Vincit USA, he and the company have been featured in many notable publications, such as Inc. Magazine, TechCrunch, Forbes, Entrepreneur, and the WorkLife with Adam Grant podcast. Houttu is also a known public speaker whose 'Why Making Every Employee CEO For A Day Is Essential For Your Business' speech has been seen at the Nordic Business Forum's 2022 Speaker Contest, where he was a finalist, and the Arizona Technology Council's 2022 CEO Leadership Retreat.



Wales Communications, Costa Mesa
Jennifer Wales, President

Wales Communications was started on a dream, a dream to assist restaurants in the hospitality industry with developing consistent marketing strategies. The company is creating cutting edge digital platforms to tighten operations at a nominal cost in an already slim margined industry -

saving money on labor and costs of goods. As a professional photographer and the past marketing director for OC Weekly, Jennifer Wales is determined to build brand awareness for her clients through social media, SEO, web development and PR. Being a longtime server (working in over 14 restaurants prior to 'corporate America') it was a very seamless transition to the kitchen to photograph Orange County's greatest chefs and dishes, day in and day out. Wales saw the talent that was within the OC Weekly walls and originally petitioned the brand to start a creative agency under OC Weekly dubbed "OCWCA" (OC Weekly Creative Agency). When this idea was shot down by the new owner of the company, Wales left and started her own (and still works with many of the people she worked with at the paper).



WMBC & Human Wealth, Irvine
David Scott Coles, CEO & Founder

Scott Coles is the founder of Wealth Management & Business Concepts, Inc. (WMBC) and co-founder of Human Wealth™. Through the Human Wealth™ method, Coles is able to create financial strategies that support a person in living autonomously and with purpose. He strives to empower other financial professionals with Human Wealth™; transforming the way wealth planning and business coaching are approached globally through a science-based planning modalities to gain a more thorough understanding of client's wellbeing, goals, and resources to arrive at the best method of deploying their personal, financial and social resources to best meet their needs. Coles invests time every month supporting charitable causes and mentoring others. Most recently he has joined the board at Strive to help provide a safer education environment for kids in Watts, LA.



Yogi CPA, Orange
Zunie Nguyen, Founder & CEO


Zunie Nguyen is the founder & CEO of Yogi CPA, a consulting firm focused on financial independence for high-income earners and entrepreneurs. Yogi CPA has helped business owners throughout the pandemic obtain over \$9 million in SBA support, allowing businesses to keep their doors open. Ms. Nguyen is the winner of the 2021 AICPA & CPA.com Innovative Practitioner of the year award, the first Vietnamese American to win in seven years of this prestigious award. Ms. Nguyen is currently serving on the Digital CPA Advisory Board to drive innovation forward for the accounting profession. From the start of the pandemic in 2020, Yogi CPA startup has helped small businesses obtain over \$4 million in PPP Loans and \$5 million in EIDL Loans. The startup took on the challenges of providing these new services early on and continued to educate its clients on SBA rules in order to qualify for full PPP Loan forgiveness. Dedication to client service and constant innovation have allowed Yogi CPA to achieve the impossible: starting a business during a pandemic, building the client base from scratch, and creating sustainable client relationships.



Nominations for Best Places to Work

Nominations Deadline:
March 3, 2023

Publication Date:
July 3, 2023



Is your workplace great? We want to know!

The Orange County Business Journal is working on its annual listing of the Best Places to Work in the county. The list is scheduled to appear in our July 3 edition as part of a Special Report covering employers that make our ranking. It's among our most-read issues of the year. We're soliciting employers to participate in our selection process, which involves a two-part survey of employers and workers.

Making the list carries many fringe benefits. Your company will be part of a select group of employers recognized for their treatment, recruitment, and retention of employees. The list should be a source of pride for employers that can help with employee morale and recruiting. Making the list also brings good exposure to clients, customers, bankers, vendors, and peers.

Go to www.bestplacesworkorangecounty.com and nominate your company today!




Brandon Ezra
CEO & Founder

for your nomination of
Excellence in Entrepreneurship
'2023 OCBJ Awards'

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Entrepreneur FRANCHISE 500 TOP NEW & EMERGING FRANCHISES 2022

Forbes **airbnb superhost** **Franchise Times TOP200+** **FRAN-TASTIC 500 FRANCHISES 2022**

GRANDWELCOME.COM

Congratulations 2023 Nominees



1105 Media / **Rajeev Kapur**
5.11 Tactical /
Francisco Morales
Accurate Background LLC / **Dave Dickerson**
Advanced Real Estate Services Inc. /
Richard Julian
ADYA and Spice Girl Sauces / **Shachi Mehra**
Albright Yee & Schmit, APC / **Clifton W. Albright**
American Lending Center LLC /
John Shen
Apriem Advisors / **Harmon Kong**
AuditClub / **Chris Vanover**
Aura Accounting Solutions /
Brandon Kordower
Austin Taylor Inc. / **Ron Viggiano**
Bastion Amplify / **Chris Bretschger**
Beacon Pointe Advisors / **Shannon Eusey**
Beyond Fifteen Communications Inc. /
Lauren Ellermeyer
BHE Management Corporation /
Marla Hemmel
Blue C / **Eric Morley**
Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Orange Coast /
Robert Santana
Branded Group / **Michael Kurland**
Built On Vision / **Michael Saddik**
Butcher's House / **Jeffrey Offer**
C.R.E.A.T.E. Wealth / **Pam Scamardo**
California State University Fullerton /
John Bradley Jackson
Carrick Capital Partners /
James Madden
Cheferbly / **Kevin Kim**
Cobalt Robotics / **Mike LeBlanc**
David Meltzer Enterprises /
David Meltzer
DEEP LENS / **Simon Arkell, OLY**
Ducere Global Business School /
Mat Jacobson
Ducommun Incorporated /
Stephen Oswald
Eden Financial / **Nycole Freer**
Englebrecht Promotions & Events /
Roy Englebrecht
Facial Lounge / **Amber Rose Johnson**

Fashion Camp / **Erin Bianchi Hibbert**
Fluxergy / **Tej Patel**
Go RN & StaffGRIT / **Vanessa Benavides**
Grand Welcome / **Brandon Ezra**
Hibner Design / **Maryanne Hibner**
Hoag (Hoag at Home) / **Jeff Hammond**
InBrace / **Clint Carnell**
jCyte and University of California, Irvine School
of Medicine / **Henry Klassen**
Jetbuilt / **Paul Dexter**
Kapture Vision / **Nilo G. Low**
Kaygen Inc. / **Rashmi Chaturvedi**
Kibsi Inc. / **Tolga Tarhan**
La Peony / **De Anne Combs**
Lemon & Honey Day Spa /
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Leonhardt Ventures LLC / **Howard Leonhardt**
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LS Carlson Law PC / **Luke Carlson**
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Matregenix / **Sherif Soliman**
MCDA CCG Inc. / **Michael Rash, Jr**
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Mountain Mike's Pizza & Juice It Up! /
Chris Britt & Ed St. Geme
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Mozverse / **Zach Hirsch**
Old Brea Chop House /
Tony Fasulo
Outshine Public Relations /
Talia Samuels
PatientFi / **Todd Watts**
Pelorus Equity Group / **Dan Leimel, Jr.**
Petalfast / **Jason Vegotsky**
Port View Preparatory / **Edward Miguel**
Powerhouse+Co. / **Kristin Daher**

Prime Management Company / **Pegah Fazeli**
PRJKT Restaurant Group / **Alicia Cox**
RAJ Capital and Revitate /
Alex Bhathal
Rallio / **Chuck Goetschel**
Revere Real Estate / **Nick Lind**
Revive Real Estate / **Michael Alladawi**
SA Recycling / **George Adams**
Ship & Shore Environmental Inc. /
Anoosheh Oskouian
Shopoff Realty Investments /
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Bobby Azamian, MD PhD
Tavern House Kitchen & Bar / **David Wilhelm**
Tebra / **Dan Rodrigues**
The Conscious Publicist LLC / **Ashley Graham**
The Gerontologist Inc. / **Kerry Burnight, PhD**
The Literacy Project / **Sue Grant**
The Zandbergen Group / **Letitia Berbaum**
The Zandbergen Group / **Bart Zandbergen**
Toast Kitchen + Bakery, Tableau Kitchen + Bar.
Wahoo's Fish Tacos / **Ed Lee**
Trilogy Financial Services /
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U.S. Alliance Group Inc. / **Fadi Cheikha**
Van Speed Shop // The Van Mart.com /
Duran Morley
Vincit USA / **Ville Houftu**
Wales Communications / **Jennifer Wales**
WMBC & Human Wealth /
David Scott Coles
Yogi CPA / **Zunie Nguyen**

Luncheon & Awards Program

March 9, 2023

12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Tickets*: \$185 / Table of Ten: \$1750



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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Steve Jones

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