

NEXT NEXT STEPS

A post-pandemic world

is—hopefully, possibly,
maybe—within sight.

For entrepreneurs, that
means one thing: It's time

to begin planning for
what's to come. Should
you be bold and take

risks? Adjust your leader-

ship style and workplace policies?

Stick with the old routine or shift
to a new normal? No matter your

choices, one thing is assured: You're
far from the only one facing them.

So we sought the counsel of today's
most successful founders to glean
their lessons from the past year—
and their strategies for the next one.

NEXT LEVEL





As someone once said, 'Never waste a crisis.' We used the pandemic to build, meet more people via Zoom, plug any gaps, and reassess existing assumptions. Now we're going to be expanding into new formats. We're excited to take our app out of beta and launch podcasts. ”



SNIGDHA SUR

*Founder and CEO
The Juggernaut*

Sur founded the Juggernaut, a media company focused on South Asians, in 2018. Last year, she was an *Inc.* Female Founders 100 honoree.



ERIC KINARIWALA

Founder and CEO

Capsule

Based in New York City, Kinariwala's online pharmacy was an *Inc.* Best in Business honoree in 2020.

“People who tried a product for the first time during the pandemic and had a good experience with it will continue using it. We're seeing that the people who used Capsule for the first time in March and April and May 2020—when they were really vulnerable and needed it—are actually using Capsule more than people who signed up before that.”



“If we learned anything in 2020, it was the power of getting in front of our customers. Our goal for 2021 is simple: get our products into as many grocery stores as possible and continue to bolster our e-commerce presence. So we're investing lots of dollars into products we plan to sell in the mass market and will be co-packing and distributing across the country—which is a first for us.”

LAURELL GALLUCCI

*Co-founder and CEO
Sweet Laurel*

Gallucci's Los Angeles-based bakery sells its products through its own website and at Whole Foods stores.



“I’m taking as many courses as I can—on digital marketing, on Amazon, on pay-per-click, on Facebook marketing. If I’m going to start investing in companies that require a digital marketing platform, I need to know a little bit more to make an informed decision and increase the probability of my success. True entrepreneurs never stop learning.”

DAYMOND JOHN

Co-founder and CEO

FUBU

The investor and *Shark Tank* star has launched multiple businesses since co-founding apparel company FUBU in 1992.



I’m redefining the company’s structure to help it work without me. It’s not going to be defined in the way a typical company is defined. It’s not going to be CEO, COO, CFO.

EILEEN FISHER

Founder

Eileen Fisher

Fisher’s eponymous fashion business has been a certified B Corp since 2015 and has a reported \$400 million in annual revenue.



“My power move of the year is making the transition out of CEO, while keeping my roles as lead designer, founder, and executive chairwoman. I am choosing to devote my time to what truly brings me joy and to areas where I believe our brand can have the greatest impact.”


KENDRA SCOTT

Founder

Kendra Scott

Scott’s Austin-based jewelry and home decor brand is reportedly valued at \$1 billion.

Partnership Makes Patient Care the Priority

 The endodontist-owned and led management team makes Endo1 Partners different from other dental service organizations

**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
— TEXAS —

N° 82
in Texas

1249%
3-Year Growth

400
Employees

53
Nationwide
Partner
Practices

The key for nearly every service business's success is investing time in its highest value activities. For dentists, that activity is patient care. Every minute spent on administrative and management tasks means less time to treat patients. Recognizing this as dentists themselves, co-CEOs Drs. Daryl Dudum and Matthew Haddad, and co-chief clinical officers (co-CCOs) Drs. Mark Haddad and Darron Rishwain, established the dental partnership organization Endo1 Partners.

Of the more than 200,000 dentists in the U.S., less than 3 percent are endodontists, or specialists in root canals. Despite their rarity, these dental professionals need the same kind of business support that many other dental practices require. That includes everything from marketing to accounting to human resources, compliance, and benefits management, Dudum explains.

“Endodontists want to focus on clinical work. That’s what they’ve been trained for,” he says. “What they haven’t been trained in is business management, which can take up a large portion of their day. Being able to stay focused on patient care not only yields higher patient satisfaction, but also improved profits.”

Endo1 Partners was established to bring together successful endodontic practices as partners in a larger venture. The practices receive all the support services they need to continue to fuel their business growth. In addition, they also gain access to the knowledge and expertise of a network of other successful endodontists. As partners in the venture, members are shareholders whose equity value grows with the success of the partnership. They can also take some equity out of the practice they’ve worked so hard to build without having to sell it.

TARGETING MARKET LEADERS

Unlike many dental partnership organizations, which often acquire struggling dental practices and work to turn them around, the practices



From left to right: Drs. Matthew Haddad, Mark Haddad, Darron Rishwain, and Daryl Dudum

that join Endo1 Partners are not turnaround situations. “Our model is to partner with the best of the best,” Haddad says. “We assume responsibility for the back-office work, so our partners can focus on what they do best—patient care and dentistry.

Those administrative services are offered a la carte, Dudum says. Partners can request everything from marketing support to help with scheduling, hiring, and recruitment. The endodontists decide for themselves what their practice needs to be successful; Endo1 doesn’t dictate. The only mandatory services all partners must use are payroll, benefits, accounting, IT, and compliance.

INVESTING IN GROWTH

Dental partnership organizations are the next wave in dentistry. Being part of a larger organization provides a competitive advantage that helps keep leading endodontists out front in their markets. “We do all the things you need to do to run a small business successfully,” Haddad says.



ENDO1PARTNERS.COM



HEIDI JANNENGA

Co-founder and chief clinical officer

WebPT

Jannenga's company, a rehab therapy software platform, is an eight-time Inc. 5000 honoree.

“One of our specific goals is to increase the diversity of our candidates by 30 percent for every open position in our company. Our people operations team has been tasked with capturing the right data to appropriately track candidates as well as broadening the areas we typically source candidates from.”



The pandemic showed me that I needed my team to feel connected and focused, so I've started to communicate a lot more often about how I'm feeling and the process with which we're making certain decisions. That's a stretch for me as a leader, but a good one.”



“We have designed the Ribbon approach: a fully detailed mission, vision, and operating model that decentralizes decision-making and empowerment across the organization. We aim to accomplish two years' worth of work in the next nine months.”

SHAIVAL SHAH

Co-founder and CEO
Ribbon

Based in New York City, Shah's homebuying startup raised a \$30 million funding round in 2019.




SANDRA OH LIN

Founder and CEO
KiwiCo

In the decade since Lin founded KiwiCo, the education tech company has raised more than \$11 million in funding.

Making it in Mobile: 19 Years of Resilience in a Competitive Industry

 Wireless industry solution provider Live Wireless shows what it takes to make it in a competitive industry: nimbleness, patience, and balance

No single decision or factor fueled Live Wireless’s explosive growth. “It was 19 years of learning, failing, and not giving up,” says President and Founder Mike Orlando. The Toms River, New Jersey-based business provides products and services to wireless companies and distributors, including asset management, device refurbishing, and buyback and trade-in programs so they can keep up with the soaring demand for mobile devices.

For Orlando, the recipe for longevity includes staying nimble and lean, understanding market trends, and always providing value to clients. Over the years, Orlando learned to use the company’s size to its advantage, focusing on niche client pain points larger competitors overlook. Live Wireless stores devices and parts on-site to provide carriers with inventory to “fill the gap” while they wait for shipments from overseas.

MADE TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR

Orlando’s entrepreneurial journey is a long one. His grandmother owned an ice cream store, and he started shadowing her at age 10. At age 17, he discovered his second passion when he got his first phone, a Nokia 3390. “I wanted to learn everything about it,” he recalls. That year, he opened a phone accessories store at a flea market. Within 12 months, he expanded to repairing, reselling, and trading phones, becoming one of the first shops in the country to buy back mobile devices, he says.

Orlando was so focused on business he almost didn’t graduate from high school. He recalls taking calls from vendors from the back of the classroom, selling devices to his teachers, and skipping class, with permission, to meet vendors in New York City. “I wanted to take over

**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
— NY METRO —

N° 5
in N.Y. Metro

291
on Inc. 5000

19
Years in
Business

1550%
3-Year Growth



Live Wireless President and Founder Mike Orlando and his wife, Mallory.

the world,” Orlando says, “but I only had one little store.”


NEARLY TWO DECADES OF RESILIENCY

That “one little store” is now a multimillion-dollar business. Orlando says growth was slow and steady for a while—then it snowballed. In the last decade, his work building client and partner relationships around the world and demonstrating industry expertise fell into place, and it was as if they couldn’t stop growing if they tried, he says. In challenging times, he would watch documentaries about entrepreneurs who had overcome hardship. He would also turn to his wife, Mallory. “Her unwavering support is almost indescribable,” he notes.

To prepare the company for the next stage of growth, Orlando has focused on uniting the team around a clear vision, as opposed to managing every detail himself. He credits the birth of his daughter, Harper, in 2015, and his son Ben, in 2020, for teaching him the importance of balance. “When you figure out how to help people drive the company on their own by inspiring them, not micromanaging, growth will come.” He adds that while success doesn’t happen overnight, resilience is rewarded.

LIVE-INC.COM

Staffing Agency's Focus on Service Leads to Growth

 Ironside HR succeeded by hiring from outside the industry and supporting staff needs



Doug Carter, Co-Founder and CEO at Ironside Human Resources

Sometimes getting fired can be a good thing. Doug Carter was fired a year into running a startup's staffing division. "They did me a favor," he says. His former employer struggled for several years, then shut down.

Carter decided it was time to make his dream of starting a business a reality. He and his wife Kara Carter co-founded Ironside Human Resources, a health care staffing company, in 2011. They focused on giving great service to a handful of clients seeking permanent job placements. They remained at two employees until 2017, when joining the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program, which required having at least three employees. "We went from \$450,000 in revenue at the end of the program to \$2.1 million last year," he says. This year, Ironside and its 17 employees are on track to bring in \$6 million.

That big shift came from adding temporary health care staffing, a field that exploded during the pandemic. While there are other players in the field, Ironside focuses on service. "Our goal is not to be the biggest, but the best," he says.

A DIFFERENT WAY TO RUN A BUSINESS

While Carter learned how not to run a business from his previous employer, he's

made his own mistakes too.

One of those lessons was how to hire. In Ironside's early days, he sometimes made offers during an in-person interview. That didn't work out well. They developed a longer vetting and hiring process with several rounds of screening and determining the candidate's interest level. It paid off. "I've learned to hire slower and fire more quickly," he said.

This hiring process decreased recruiter turnover. And clients gain dedicated recruiters knowledgeable about their businesses.

Carter doesn't hire people already in health care staffing. Instead, he often recruits from sales positions and service industries. "These people are used to having to hustle and work hard," he says, and he then provides several months of training.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND HIGHER PAY LEADS TO RETENTION

Ironside encourages work/life balance by offering employees the option to work shorter core hours of 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the office and the remainder from home.

Carter says that providing some employees opportunities to transfer into different roles helps with retention and discovering new talents. Ironside also doesn't cap commissions. "Ironside probably pays double what most firms pay, commission-wise," he says. "One of my employees makes more than I do."

The heart of their business is providing great service, and all employees take this motto seriously. That includes sometimes finding housing for candidates relocating or paying out-of-pocket for their relocation plane ticket, he says. "They go above and beyond to make sure the clients and candidates are taken care of. Ironside is successful because of the talent we hire."

IRONSIDEHR.COM

**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
— TEXAS —

N°76
in Texas

\$2.1M
Income in 2020

159%
3-Year Growth

15
Employees
in 2020



IRONSIDE HUMAN RESOURCES
HEALTHCARE TALENT ACQUISITION

“As a company that launched DTC and built our foundation on e-commerce, switching focus to brick-and-mortar retail is definitely a risk. Most retail-focused CPG brands start slow. We’re jumping in fast and furious with a huge number of stores right away. There will inevitably be growing pains we can’t anticipate, but it’s an opportunity for a huge payoff.”



JOHN SHERWIN

*Co-founder
Hydrant*

Sherwin co-founded fitness and wellness beverage company Hydrant in 2018. The company has raised \$16.8 million in funding to date.

BENJAMIN LEFEVER

*Founder and CEO
Certintell*

Lefever founded Certintell, a venture-backed telehealth company, to provide care for low-income, underserved patients.



“We’re proactively investing in new voice technology to improve the customer experience. It can be challenging to predict the direction of the market after such a turbulent year, but we are confident that investing in the right tools can carry businesses through the pandemic and beyond.”



We’re going headfirst into the employer-paid health insurance market. It’s a big space, and it’s very competitive. We feel good about it, but it’s certainly going to be a daunting task to grow our business model. ”



TODD FISHER

*Co-founder and CEO
CallTrackingMetrics*

Severna Park, Maryland-based CallTrackingMetrics is a 2020 and a 2021 Inc. 5000 Regionals honoree.

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Navy SEALs Create the Supplement They Can't Find in Stores

 OP2 Labs optimizes collagen proteins to hasten healing for medical injuries and athletes

When Alexander Kunz and Jeff Byers were Navy SEALs, they were always pushing their bodies to the limit. The commercial supplements they used to assist in healing training injuries were focused on building muscle, not aiding in recovery. “We learned there wasn’t an existing supplement market to provide a true, full-body benefit,” Kunz says.

They decided to create their own, cofounding OP2 Labs in 2012. CEO Kunz says that while American companies primarily focused on whey protein, they homed in on collagen. After two years of research and development, they launched their supplements in 2014.

ONE FORMULATION, TWO BRANDS

While their products all use the same unique nano-hydrolyzed collagen base, OP2 Labs created two brands for two customer types. ProT Gold is considered a medical food, requiring an FDA nutritional label. The OP2 Labs sales team markets the ProT Gold line as a non-prescription aid to hospitals, dialysis and chemotherapy centers, health care distributors, nursing homes, and physician offices. Clinicians use ProT Gold for 14 medical indications like wound healing and reducing joint pain and inflammation, based on medical studies showing rapid absorption and faster healing. The product is currently used in more than 4,000 health care facilities, Kunz says.

Frog Fuel is OP2 Labs’ human performance supplement for elite athletes. “We’re probably one of the only companies that bridged the gap between consumer and medical nutrition supplements,” Kunz says. Yet consumers still help drive sales and adoption of the medical brand, accounting for 20 percent of that business. Patients tell their physicians about



the product, Kunz says, which encourages clinicians to add ProT Gold to treatment protocols like post-surgical wound healing or as bed sore prevention.

GROWTH THROUGH BOOTSTRAPPING

The company was initially self-funded, and in the early years it couldn’t afford large manufacturing production runs. If the team sold out of their product, they had to wait 6 to 8 weeks for replenishment, so they needed to maintain customer interest until products were back in stock. They also learned the hard way that quality assurance is important for packaging as well as the formulation. Once, as they were about to fill 150,000 product pouches, they discovered the packaging was blemished. Though most customers were willing to buy the products at a discount, it was an expensive lesson.

The military taught Kunz and Byers to be adaptable. Though their board of directors approved a four-year corporate plan in 2019, the pandemic required them to pivot. They reevaluated their sales channels, warehouse operations, distribution system, forecasts, and budget. “I believe that’s why we continued to grow despite COVID,” he says. “If we stuck to the traditional way we did business, we’d have lost 60 percent of our revenue. We ended up growing 50 percent.”

**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
— TEXAS —

Nº 146
in Texas

4241
on Inc. 5000


87%
2-Year Growth

Founded in
2012



OP2LABS.COM

Agency's Leaders Bring Authenticity to Their Target Market

 Creative Digital Agency grows fast with an audience-first approach to its market niche

**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
— CALIFORNIA —

N° 51
in California

269%
Increase
in Revenue

20
Employees
in 2020

**\$30
million**
Bookings
to Date



San Francisco entrepreneur Jin Kim launched Creative Digital Agency (CDA) in 2017, after leading the services team at a mobile marketing firm.

Starting his agency in the hyper-competitive San Francisco Bay Area, Kim opted to rely on the hands-on operational knowledge he and his founding team brought to the startup, rather than hire veteran business managers to steer the launch, and he says it's the best move he could have made. Instead of spending big bucks to bring high-level executives on board, CDA was built by people who understood how to do the actual work: running ad campaigns, producing videos, and working with clients day to day.

By 2020, CDA's year-over-year revenue had increased by more than five times.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Kim, who immigrated to the United States from South Korea at age 6, says CDA has always prioritized understanding the culture of its target market of 24- to 40-year-olds better than the competition. The agency has continued to hire staff with an instinctive understanding of how to engage a modern and trend-setting demographic.

That authentic audience connection

produced success early on. In 2017, Kim and his team's understanding of young pet owners helped Merck Pharmaceuticals launch a wildly effective consumer incentives program for its Bravecto line of flea and tick medications, which quickly scaled across six countries in the U.S. and South America. The campaign boosted sales for each participating retailer by an average of \$28,000 per year and the product sold out in Brazil. "It was the campaign that put us on the radar," Kim says.

Industry awards and recognition followed, including wins from Mobile Marketing Magazine's EMMA Awards, the Mobile Marketing Association Global Business Impact Index, and a nomination for the Digiday Awards later that year.

With an influx of new marquee clients including the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board and Airbnb, the agency expanded and diversified, opening additional offices and production sites in Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and Seoul, Korea.

QUICK AND ADAPTABLE

Being independent and nimble enables CDA to get campaigns to market sooner than its larger competitors. The team produced a Coca-Cola ad for the 2018 Winter Olympics in just a few days. "We got the call Saturday morning to put a full production together and started shooting in Seoul on Monday morning," Kim says.

By staying true to its core "audience-first" philosophy, CDA has been able to quickly identify new opportunities for brands when targeting modern consumers, executing successful campaigns that combine traditional and digital engagement.

CREATIVEDIGITALAGENCY.COM

**CREATIVE
DIGITAL
AGENCY**



“

We are going to hire based on the assumption that the economy is going to pick back up in Q4. It is a risk; none of us has a crystal ball. But we must have good talent to ensure we capitalize on the opportunity.”

ELIZABETH GORE

*Co-founder and president
Hello Alice*

Gore co-founded winemaker Gore Family Vineyards as well as Hello Alice, which provides advice to entrepreneurs, with a focus on women, people of color, and veterans.



“Investment in growth is going to be my biggest risk. Entrepreneurs are risk-takers, though. You don’t get here by not being one.”

TIFFANY HAYS

*Founder and CEO
FUEL + The Focus Room*

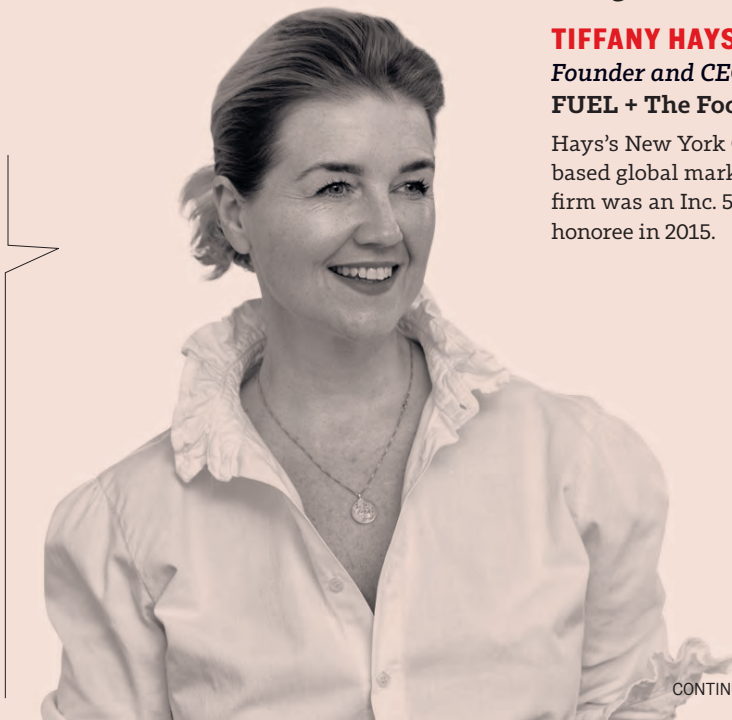
Hays’s New York City-based global market research firm was an Inc. 5000 honoree in 2015.

“We’ll open more stores this year than ever. It’s going to push and challenge us, but we are ready for it.”

JENI BRITTON BAUER

*Founder and chief
brand officer
Jeni’s Splendid
Ice Creams*

A certified B Corp, Bauer’s ice cream business sells frozen treats in national grocery chains and has shops in 11 states and D.C.



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No Ordinary Agency: This Digital PR Firm Makes Work Meaningful

 Digital communications and PR agency EvolveMKD nearly doubled revenue in 2020—a testament to the results it delivers for clients and its unique company culture

Before Megan Driscoll founded EvolveMKD, a New York City-based public relations and digital marketing agency, she asked herself, “Why does the world need another PR agency?” The answer came down to feedback she has received her entire career. Clients value her expertise, but the true differentiator is how she treats their businesses like her own. At EvolveMKD, Driscoll and her team make every decision with a client’s best interest at heart, even if it is at the detriment of the bottom line.

Since its launch in 2014, EvolveMKD has expanded beyond PR to offer digital and social media marketing, influencer relationship management, brand strategy, and campaign measurement. This integrated approach helps clients tell a “cohesive story,” Driscoll says. She also donates 10 percent of the company’s annual profit to charity. “When you are successful, I feel it is your responsibility to give the opportunity for success to others,” she explains.

GROWTH MEANS MORE THAN REVENUE

Amid a global pandemic, EvolveMKD achieved its biggest growth spurt yet, nearly doubling revenue from 2019 to 2020. Driscoll says success is a testament to the depth of relationships it builds with brands and to strategic investments.



**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
— NY METRO —

N°166
in N.Y. Metro

2x

Inc. 5000
Honoree
(2019, 2020)

100%

Revenue Growth
(2019–2020)

64%

Client-Retention
Rate

During the last two years, EvolveMKD built out its research and analytics capabilities and developed a proprietary measurement system, so every decision can be backed by concrete data. By delivering measurable results, EvolveMKD retains clients. But the interpersonal component is also important, Driscoll says.

While EvolveMKD is accepting new business—specifically integrated marketing work, Driscoll is particular about who they partner with. “We have to like each other,” she explains. “I always joke that if I don’t want to get a phone call from you on a Saturday—because one day I surely will in this industry—then you probably shouldn’t be a client.”

GETTING THROUGH HARD TIMES


Hard times are inevitable in business and a part of personal growth, which is important to Driscoll. When she is interviewing job applicants, she looks for self-awareness. “Obviously, I named the company Evolve for a reason. It’s important, that as people and as a company, we continue to evolve and change, especially in an industry that is so dynamic,” she explains.

Driscoll shares her own evolution as a leader. Prior to the pandemic, she felt like she was “faking it.” But her effective leadership during COVID-19 forced her to acknowledge her strengths. “I kept team morale up. I never cut a single job or salary. I stepped into my power as a leader,” she explains. With Driscoll at the helm, EvolveMKD is ready for the next chapter, which likely entails going deeper with existing clients and expanding into new markets. “I’m a lot more comfortable taking risks and being decisive now,” she says.

evolveMKD

EVOLVEMKD.COM

Technology Firm Succeeds with Strategic Partners

 Black Bear Technology Solutions uses strategic partnerships for growth

Rapid growth doesn't always equal success. A company too focused on winning contracts can lose sight of what initially made the company successful. Characteristics like flexibility, responsiveness to client needs, and attention to detail ultimately set your business apart, says Black Bear Technology Solutions' founder and CEO Kevin Andres.

Andres founded the company to tailor solutions, processes, and procedures to clients and their mission requirements. The strategy has worked well. "We're fortunate that a large part of our business development is answering the phone," Andres said, as referrals and recommendations drive new partnerships. Though widely known as a technology company, Black Bear's capabilities are more diverse, and the company teams up with strategic partners for any roles it can't fill internally.

While Andres founded the Washington, D.C.-area company in 2016, it wasn't his first rodeo. Previously, he helped Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs) build value for their shareholders. He is proud that the ANC companies he helped grow and nurture are still thriving today. The experiences he gained working with ANCs constantly remind him of the value of partnering with successful organizations, whether clients or government contractors.

STRATEGIC PARTNERING FOR GROWTH

Managing growth has been an important part of Black Bear's strategy. "So many people are looking for the big win," Andres said. "We're happy with modest and continuing growth. That means not accepting projects that would require the company to scale up quickly and dramatically. Taking on a project that's too big for the company could potentially do more harm than good." Even though his team members are experts at tackling new challenges, he always

**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
— DC METRO —

Nº 7
in D.C. Metro

Founded in
2016

263%
3-Year Growth

**\$3.8
million**
2020 Revenue



CEO Kevin Andres
(photo: Johnny Shryock)

wants to account for the learning curve that all new projects bring.

By strategically partnering with trusted industry partners, Black Bear has managed its growth while creating a talented and focused team of experts capable of performing work across the nation and around the world.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THEIR PEOPLE

"Our product is our people, and they're invaluable to the future of this company," Andres says. He credits his staff with building the company's reputation and meeting and exceeding the clients' requirements.


Andres' goal is to hire people with a solid work ethic, regardless of experience or credentials. "People who aren't going to let things fail, because that's not their nature. People who put the client's mission first," he says. "Pedigree is not what I'm looking for," he adds.

While some team members are hired for their expertise, Andres believes that teaching people and giving them a chance to grow is better than only hiring experienced talent. "Oftentimes, the client requires experienced subject matter experts, but given a choice, I'd rather take someone fresh out of college and teach them how we conduct business than try to undo what someone may have learned elsewhere," he says.



BLACKBEAR.TECH

More Ally Than Agency

 Product design agency Funsizе wins with a partnership-driven approach

**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
— TEXAS —

N° 94
in Texas

29
Employees
in 2020

33%
Employee
Growth
(2019 - 2020)

20%
Revenue
Growth
(2019 - 2020)

Funsizе

After establishing product design careers in New York City during the early days of the mobile boom, husband and wife Anthony and Natalie Armendariz returned to Austin, Texas, to start something of their own. In 2013, they founded Funsizе, a product design agency focused on serving enterprise design teams and startups through a long-term partnership approach they call the “Allied Team Model.”

OPPORTUNITIES EARNED THROUGH TRUST

Having spent time on both the in-house and agency sides of design, Anthony and Natalie believe that the successful agencies of the future will be those that can best serve the individual needs of in-house design leaders and their teams.

To do that, Funsizе provides services that extend beyond the typical scope of digital product design. That often means providing clients with unconventional services like budget consultation, staff augmentation, and assistance with hiring full-time designers.

It may seem counterintuitive for an agency to help a client become more efficient in house. However, Partner and Head of Design at Funsizе, Anthony believes this approach actually creates more project opportunities. He cites some of the agency’s multi-year partnerships with companies like Volvo and Credit Karma as proof.

“These are opportunities that are earned by trust,” Anthony says. “Design is never done. So, we do our best to make sure design leaders feel they can keep coming back to us and that we can support them with whatever their design needs are at that time.”

A PLACE TO FLOURISH

Funsizе believes the company’s success comes from their people and the close-knit nature of the culture. “We were trying to create a place to work where people actually care about each other,” says Partner and Design Director, Natalie. “Anthony and I are the type of people who



Co-founders Anthony and Natalie Armendariz

always wear our hearts on our sleeves. We just care about people.”

To foster the right environment, Anthony and Natalie tried to build the kind of workplace they’d been searching for when their design careers began. “We set out to create a sanctuary for like-minded designers to have a place to flourish and grow,” Anthony says.

Funsizе Partner and Chief Operating Officer Mari Chamoun adds that employees have the freedom to discover what they’re good at, try ideas—and sometimes fail—in their quest for the best solutions for each project.

Part of Chamoun’s role is ensuring that the agency’s clients understand its people-first culture. For example, Funsizе shuts down once every quarter to do a themed event called “Method Week.” During one “Experience” week, there was a company trip to Puerto Rico. A week themed “Give” was spent donating design work to four local nonprofits.

“Telling clients that you are going to be off in this industry for a week—that they’re not going to hear from us—is something that is challenging on the business side of things, but they come to realize the positive impact these experiences have on the people and, as a result, the work,” Chamoun says.

FUNSIZE.CO



DREW TODD
Co-founder and CEO
Feals
Founded in 2019,
Feals is a CBD
subscription service
based in Denver.



We've nearly tripled the size of our team since the Covid crisis began and are continuing to aggressively hire. We realize the current unpredictability of the marketplace, but feel confident that the growth of our business is worth the risk. ”

DAVID GIANNETTO

CEO
WorkWave
WorkWave, an SaaS business,
made the Inc. 5000 in 2016 and 2017.

“Separating from our parent company to become a fully freestanding entity is in itself risky, but it is being done so that we can launch a series of strategies and activities that will fundamentally change the role of WorkWave in the industries we serve.”



“As we've expanded into the beauty category, we're broadening our brand mission. Our new goal is to challenge and expand what womankind means to us—questioning gender roles and ultimately our perceptions of women.”




GEORGINA GOOLEY
Co-founder
Billie

Billie, a women's shaving and wellness products company, has raised \$35 million in venture capital and other funding.

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Meet the Brand on a Mission to Change Women's Lives

 This founder and CEO overcame her health struggles with natural remedies, then started Pink Stork to help others do the same.



Pink Stork Founder Amy Suzanne Upchurch did not have easy pregnancies—at least not with her first three children. While her husband was in the military, she was diagnosed with hyperemesis gravidarum, a severe type of nausea and vomiting. “I was juggling moving around the country, being pregnant, living in and out of hospitals; and my husband was gone. It was just a challenging time across every area of my life,” she says. After spending weeks in the hospital, Upchurch, only three months into her first pregnancy, contracted a life-threatening blood infection. Doctors told her she had 24 hours left to live. Her husband came straight from military training to see her, still in war paint. It felt like a scene from a movie.

Despite the news, Upchurch felt calm. “Such a sense of peace came over me. I thought, ‘No, this isn’t how it ends.’” Faith in God helped her find hope and perspective, and her health battle proved a beginning, not an ending. Fast forward to her fourth pregnancy, and rather than using a “pharmaceutical approach,” she developed a vitamin and mineral regimen with input from her mother, a nurse, to proactively treat her illness. “I had a completely amazing pregnancy. I was chasing three little kids around, and I didn’t have to

**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
— FLORIDA —

N° 26
in Florida

Founded in
2015

400%+
2-Year Growth

100+
Products

live in the hospital.” In 2015, the same year her fourth child was born, she launched Pink Stork, the wellness brand for women, to help others find holistic ways to feel better.

INSPIRING HOPE FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

A women-owned and run business, Pink Stork started with solutions for morning sickness and organically expanded to products for all stages of a woman’s life, including vitamins, supplements, gummies, and teas to help with PMS, fertility, pregnancy, menopause, nursing, and overall well-being. Starting small helped the business understand its customers and grow with them as their needs changed, Upchurch says. From the beginning, she focused on profitability and has increased revenue by 100 percent every year. In 2018, she had her fifth child, and another healthy pregnancy, using Pink Stork products.

This year, Pink Stork is No. 26 on the Inc. 5000 Regionals: Florida list, and Upchurch is forecasting continued growth. She plans to release about 50 new products in 2021. More importantly, she is finding new ways to create a sense of community and to connect women to others going through similar challenges. In 2020, Pink Stork created a Customer Obsession division devoted to delighting shoppers and making them feel valued. “We really want customers to understand how much we care about them,” she says. Her team of 65 employees feels the same, including her husband, who joined Pink Stork as COO in 2017. Upchurch sees her family and her business as gifts from God, and treats her company and customers with reverence. “We are not just selling products. We are changing women’s lives by giving them hope and inspiring them for a better tomorrow.”

PINKSTORK

[PINKSTORK.COM](https://www.pinkstork.com)

Digital Marketing Company Succeeds by Focusing on Specifics

 Jumpem is a marketing-department-for-hire, providing strategy, design, and SEO

Chris Gardner and Dennis Plunkett were using SEO and digital marketing tactics for several of their own businesses when they decided to help others. “We saw an opportunity to replicate our success and leverage our experience to help other businesses,” says Gardner, co-founder and managing partner of Jumpem. They wanted to provide better client service and a higher return on investment to companies using digital marketing.

Their focus the first few years was on several industries in their local, central-Florida community. But in 2016, they began working with one of the country’s largest off-campus student housing developers. That initial success led to Jumpem expanding heavily in that sector, and they now serve clients in this industry across the country. “But we’re very conscious about accepting competing clients,” says Plunkett, Jumpem co-founder and managing partner. “We have to turn down a lot of business, but ultimately we put our clients’ interests ahead of our own.”

JUMPEM: A SYNERGETIC MARKETING ARM

For most clients, Jumpem is a digital extension of the company, almost like its own internet



Dennis Plunkett (left) and Chris Gardner (right)

marketing department. The team spends time educating its clients about what it’s doing. “We’re very transparent,” Gardner says. “We want them to have full confidence and trust in us.” That includes campaign updates and ideas for new campaigns based on market changes.

While Jumpem usually manages all of its clients’ digital marketing, “you’re not just paying us for a website or pretty campaigns, but to get your message across,” Plunkett says. “You can have the nicest, best-looking website in the world, but if you have no traffic, or the traffic doesn’t convert, you have no sales.”

Gardner says that when working with new clients, he often sees that their campaigns are wasting 30 to 50 percent of the ad spend because they are overlooking vital details. Jumpem’s campaigns use in-depth research, artificial intelligence, competitive analysis, and a hands-on approach to generate results and continually evolve. “There’s no real secret formula to what we do. It’s about doing it right the first time and continuing to improve and pivot as needed,” says Plunkett. He says results alone typically pay for Jumpem’s service.

A COLLABORATIVE MINDSET

Jumpem trains staff from the ground up, whether in programming, writing, or other services. The company encourages a collaborative mindset and idea-sharing. That approach feeds into both its low employee and low client turnover rate, and it treats both as partners.

Jumpem purposefully has no sales team, nor do they spend time marketing themselves. “We found a lot more success with providing real results. That speaks volumes,” Plunkett says.

JUMPEM.COM

**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
— FLORIDA —

N°100
in Florida

25
Employees
in 2020

329%
3-Year Growth

**\$4.6
million**
Revenue
in 2020

JUMPEM

**Inc. 5000
Regionals**

**Local Award.
National Recognition.**



“We enable accelerated, real time, decision-making by harnessing data assets for scale and efficiency in Healthcare analytics.”

Analytical Wizards (AW) is an innovative company revolutionizing healthcare analytics through technology, artificial intelligence, machine learning (AI/ML), domain, and data science expertise. AW delivers unprecedented scale, productivity gains, and efficiency. Patent-pending WIZ, an omnichannel platform and IZE insights engine, enable AW to power its analytics for speed to insights. AW’s tremendous growth in past few years is fueling its mission to rapidly advance data-informed decision-making in healthcare.



MSI Express is a strategic, innovative contract manufacturing and packaging company. Our growing breadth of capabilities and trusted team of problem solvers are a perfect match for the challenges of today’s consumer packaged goods world. With an engineer as a founding partner, our company has a leg up on creating innovative engineering solutions to package your products faster and more efficiently. When others say ‘no’ to solving a problem, MSI Express says ‘bring it on.’

“MSI Express customers sleep confidently at night knowing their brand equity is safely in our hands.”

Board & Brush Creative Studio offers inspiring do-it-yourself (DIY) workshops for people who love to create and connect with friends. Our workshops provide guided instruction in a relaxed environment. Bring your creativity and a willingness to learn, and you will build a wooden décor piece from scratch that is worthy of your walls. Come alone or bring your friends and family to share in our DIY workshops. You will have a creative experience you won’t forget!

“Hone your own passion for décor and DIY projects; we hand you the tools and direction, you create the friendships and craft.”





"We are honored to be one of the fastest-growing companies within the nation's 2nd largest economy and small business community of nearly 3 million."

Headquartered in Austin, Texas, Accelerist is a female-founded and led technology company. Spearheaded by Founder and CEO Brittany Hill, Accelerist works with nonprofits and corporations across the U.S. and Canada to prospect, measure, fundraise for, and inspire profit-purpose partnerships through its proprietary SaaS Platform. Some of the industry's most prolific brands and nonprofit organizations rely on Accelerist's innovative solutions to drive corporate partnership strategy. The Accelerist platform empowers the people behind purpose-driven companies and causes to have a powerful impact quicker, easier, and with greater expertise.



First Page is not your traditional agency. We are a collective of remote marketing experts across the globe who left our full-time office jobs to do our best work with a side of adventure. We do organic channel growth marketing for tech/SaaS companies that want more revenue, leads, and traffic. Our goal is to increase customer revenue by three to five times. We grew our own revenue 465%, earning Inc. 5000 regional recognition in California.

"First Page is data-driven, not only in our clients' work but with our own business. Everything we do drives back to revenue."




TriggerPoint Media, Inc. (TPM) drives our clients' customer engagement by connecting when and where it matters most. From Fortune 100 and down, TPM builds digital marketing strategies utilizing customized indoor/outdoor digital signage, interactive kiosks, text messaging, and social media platforms, wrapping these strategies together for just the right engagement. TPM is a passionate, creative, and technology-driven team that drives not only our own success but thrives on driving the customers' success as well.

"TPM is a strong team for any client who wants to turn their vision into a digitally interactive engagement tool for market growth. We bring companies stories to life."



**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
**Local Award.
National Recognition.**

Doing Whatever It Takes to Fuel Client and Employee Growth

 Roger West Creative & Code drives results for its clients and attracts top talent to its award-winning workplace

Combine hustle and talent, and good things happen. Underscore your work with a focus on service, and good becomes great. That is the formula Roger West Creative & Code uses to drive results for clients, in turn, fueling its own revenue growth. CEO Michael Westafer founded the full-service digital marketing agency in Tampa, Fla., in 2007. At the time, blending creative, design, and technology under one roof was a novel concept. Westafer, a designer by trade, knew he could create an atmosphere that inspired creatives to do their best work while cultivating collaboration between departments. “I always say the good stuff happens in between disciplines,” he notes. Today, there are thousands of full-service digital marketing agencies in the U.S., but Roger West still stands out—not just for its long list of awards, including a Suncoast Emmy—but for its sought-after workplace and commitment to service.

ACQUISITION BY DESIGN

Roger West, No. 41 on the Inc. 5000 regional list, works with companies all over the country, with varying needs. But the most common reason clients reach out is because they are in high-growth mode. “Pull a list of the top companies that have been acquired here in Tampa, and we are involved with more than a few of them,” Westafer says, adding that,



From left to right: Michael Trocke, chief creative officer; Jennie Treby, president; and Michael Westafer, founder and CEO

**Inc. 5000
Regionals**
— FLORIDA —

N° 41
in Florida

1480
on Inc. 5000

665%
3-Year Growth

222%
YoY Revenue
Growth (2020)



typically, the only reason Roger West loses a client is because of acquisition.

Eight of Roger West’s clients have been with the agency for more than eight years—a rarity in marketing. Westafer’s proactive approach to service contributes to retention. “I’m a firm believer in service and doing whatever it takes to make clients happy. Clients shouldn’t have to ask us for anything. We should anticipate what they need and then deliver.”

RECRUIT THE BEST

Westafer has the same service-first mentality when it comes to his team. For the past three years, Roger West has been named a “Best Places to Work,” and a fastest-growing regional company, by *Tampa Bay Business Journal*. Westafer believes in treating people with respect, paying them well, and giving them what they need to succeed, including individualized training and development programs. Last year, when the company brought in a third party to survey employees, feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Its strong reputation helps recruit senior talent, so clients get to work with true experts, as opposed to junior account managers. Recently, the agency hired five team members, including a new president, Jennie Treby, a 20-year industry veteran with communications expertise. Westafer believes that entrepreneurs should not be the best at anything in their companies. Instead, they should find smart people who bring different strengths to the table.

Recently, Roger West bought an 11,000 sq. ft. office building, with plenty of room for more desks—and more awards. But while accolades are nice, Westafer thinks about the future through the lens of his clients. “We want to help them crush their goals and be the resource they can rely on,” he says. If they do that, growth will undoubtedly follow.

ROGERWEST.COM



“The pandemic has been a hard reset. There are some habits people have gotten into during the pandemic that they’re not going to give up even when the world opens back up. We’re going to meet our employees where they are and require only the ones in the local area to come in three out of five business days.”

DIANA LEE

*Founder
Constellation Agency*

Lee’s agency earned the No. 65 spot on the 2020 Inc. 5000 by producing hypertargeted digital advertising for more than 700 auto franchises, including BMW, Audi, and Volkswagen.



We’re practicing API, which stands for ‘assume positive intent.’ In an all-remote world where everyone is just sending digital communication back and forth, you can lose context. When you get a message, don’t second-guess it or think it’s someone being passive-aggressive; assume it’s meant in a positive way.

MICHAEL ACTON SMITH

*Co-founder and co-CEO
Calm*

Smith’s mindfulness business raised \$75 billion in 2020, driving its valuation to \$2 billion.



“We have yet to succeed at teaching America to pay more for people’s work. The restaurant industry exists for the purpose of making people feel better, but its compensation structure is actually fueling the opposite. I think one of the really important lessons of the pandemic period has been to think about who we want to be when it’s over. I know that our industry can actually lead the way in getting this right.”


DANNY MEYER

*Founder and CEO
Union Square
Hospitality Group*

In 2015, Meyer, the entrepreneur behind Shake Shack, Union Square Cafe, and Gramercy Tavern, experimented with banning tips in his restaurants to improve pay equity.

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Meet a Fast-Growing Business that Reimagined Used Car Sales

 Wholesale pricing and stellar customer service fueled a decade of growth for Automotive Avenues—with more expansion underway

Inc. 5000 Regionals
— NY METRO —

N° 86
in N.Y. Metro

95
Employees

125%
2-Year Growth

\$163 million
2020 Revenue



Some car dealers get a bad rap. Automotive Avenues, on the other hand, has a 4.8-star rating on Google, based on nearly 5,000 reviews. Since 2010, the Wall Township, New Jersey-based used car dealer has been coupling wholesale pricing with first-class customer service—a “winning formula,” says Bill Solko, founder and dealership principal. Automotive Avenues is the largest independent used-car dealership in the state of New Jersey, according to IHS Automotive, and has ranked on the Inc. 5000 for the last three years. Despite the pandemic, the company continued to grow, earning the No. 86 spot on the 2021 Inc. 5000 regionals list. Now, Solko is expanding to support more inventory and more satisfied customers.

A NEW KIND OF CAR-BUYING EXPERIENCE
Consumer expectations and shopping behavior have changed since Solko started the business, and some dealers can't keep up. A small fraction of customers are skipping dealers all together and buying online instead. Automotive Avenues offers online sales and ships vehicles nationwide, but Solko believes most car shoppers want to see the car in person. “You wouldn't buy a house without walking through it. For most people, buying a car is the second largest purchase they're going to make in their

lives,” he says. “Most people want to see and drive before they buy.”

Solko and his team of 95 employees work hard to create a welcoming atmosphere for customers and families and to be transparent about pricing and quality. “I would rather have a customer not buy a car and leave happy than buy a car and leave upset or disappointed,” he says.

EXPANSION WITH A FAMILY-FRIENDLY FOCUS

One of Solko's favorite things about running a business is getting to know people in the community. He is also excited to work alongside his children. His oldest son Noah has already joined the business, and his younger son Matthew plans to start after college. “I love that families are coming in to do business with my family,” he says, adding that consumer confidence means a lot to him, especially during COVID-19. Automotive Avenues invested significantly to keep customers and employees safe, for example, by adding climate-controlled outdoor seating, retrofitting the HVAC system, and deep cleaning and sanitizing vehicles.

Recently, the dealership began a \$6 million expansion project to add 11,000 square feet to its existing 17,000-square-foot facility. The new building will include an automatic car wash and 17 motor vehicle lifts, allowing Automotive Avenues to clean, service, and process more vehicles. As they build out the space, Solko will continue to focus on delivering exceptional service. “I'm the kind of person who can't sleep if I have a dissatisfied customer,” he says.

That kind of personal commitment should fuel continued growth—and more positive Google reviews—for Automotive Avenues.

AUTOMOTIVEAVENUESNJ.COM



“

What I try to get across in any work that I do with my team now is that I don't know what the right answers are, but I know that we'll make it if we have smart people and interesting ways of looking at a ton of data and insights.”

SHAN-LYN MA

*Co-founder and CEO
Zola*

Ma's wedding-registry startup has raised more than \$140 million in funding since its 2013 founding.



“During the pandemic, I tried to cut costs and batten down the hatches to ensure the company's survival. It got us through uncertain times, but caused me to over-function and become a bottleneck. Now, I plan to hire right and then step aside to let my talented team do what they do best.”

JILL ANGELO

*Co-founder and CEO
Gennev*

A 2020 *Inc.* Female Founders 100 honoree, Angelo started her Seattle-based digital health company in 2016.

“I would never have imagined being in an office and saying, ‘Let's all get on a video call to collaborate.’ But that's probably how we'll do large team meetings, because we get better participation, better ideas, and more input from across the business. So I think we need to continue making the most of the virtual office, and not let it feel like a detriment.”

AARON LEVIE

*Co-founder, chairman, and CEO
Box*

Levie was *Inc.*'s Entrepreneur of the Year in 2013. Three years later, his online storage business went public and was *Inc.*'s Company of the Year.

