

# SOUTH FLORIDA BUSINESS JOURNAL

December 4, 2020

Circulation 9,242 / UMV: 346,000

SOUTH FLORIDA BUSINESS JOURNAL

40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Developer revises plans for project

New River development to have 784 units, new name  
BRIAN BANDELL, 8

## GENERATION NEXT

Millennials are ready for business

BY ASHLEY PORTERO  
PAGES 10-12



JOCK HAYES/SOUTH FLORIDA BUSINESS JOURNAL

CEO ROUNDTABLE

TECHNOLOGY OFFERS GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES, BUT IT COMES AT A PRICE 15-26



VENTURES

Papa to move HQ as it targets national growth

Family on-demand platform signs lease for office in Miami's Brickell as it creates positions.

EMON REIDER, 7

ON THE MONEY

Fitch reports negative outlook for Miami airport

Uncertainty, lower passenger volume hit revenue hard as pandemic rages into winter.

ASHLEY PORTERO, 6

THE LIST

Property and casualty insurance companies 28-30

BREAKING NEWS SPONSOR:

**DASZKALBOLTON**  
accountants & advisors

Breaking news online  
SouthFloridaBusinessJournal.com

Daily email updates  
SouthFloridaBusinessJournal.com/email

SOUTH FLORIDA BUSINESS JOURNAL

December 4-10, 2020  
Vol. 41, No. 20, \$4.50

80 S.W. Eighth St.  
Suite 2770  
Miami, FL 33130



CEO ROUNDTABLE

CEO ROUNDTABLE

## TECHNOLOGY ENABLES COMPANIES TO PROGRESS, BUT AT A PRICE

**INTRODUCTION**

Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, local CEOs have been tasked with leading their companies in ways they never could have imagined.

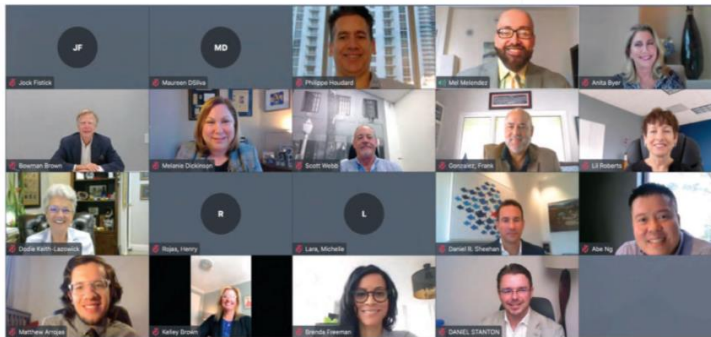
Every industry has been presented with challenges no one could have foreseen at the start of the year. But through those tests, the region's top executives have found ways to pivot and keep their companies afloat. It hasn't been easy. But by adapting and persisting through these uncertain times, chief executives in South Florida say their companies can emerge on the other side of this pandemic stronger than before.

That was the consensus among 10 South Florida CEOs who reflected on the challenges over the past nine months during a virtual CEO Roundtable held Nov. 12.

Moderated by Editor-in-Chief Mel Meléndez, the conversation was part of the Business Journal's Roundtable series, where CEOs, CFOs and HR directors offer insights on topics of keen interest to readers.

The panel was sponsored by Comcast Business, MBAC, Regions Bank and GCJ Worldwide Corp.

—Matthew Arrojas



JOCK PISTICK/SOUTH FLORIDA BUSINESS JOURNAL

**BY THE NUMBERS**

**88%**

Portion of U.S. companies that mandated or strongly encouraged employees to work remotely due to the pandemic

**41%**

Portion of employees likely to work remotely at least some of the time post-pandemic

**50th ANNIVERSARY**  
**MBAC**  
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS AND ADVISORS

- Tony Argiz**, Chairman & CEO
- Miguel Farra**, Chairman of Tax & Accounting
- Frank Gonzalez**, Managing Principal, Miami
- Adam Spiegel**, Managing Principal, Ft. Lauderdale
- Marjorie Horwin**, Managing Principal, Boca Raton
- Richard Rampell**, Managing Principal, Palm Beach

**TAX & ADVISORY SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR UNIQUE NEEDS**

Now more than ever, you need an experienced, high-level tax and advisory firm to help solve complex tax and accounting challenges, identify opportunities, and plan for the future.

Contact us today to stay a step ahead.

- Assurance
- Tax & Accounting
- Advisory
- Private Wealth
- Risk & Transaction Advisory
- Technology Consulting

MBACPA.COM

**MEET THE PANEL**



**BOWMAN BROWN**  
Chairman of the executive committee and co-chair of the financial services industry practice group, Shotts & Bowen LLP  
200 S. Biscayne Blvd., Suite 4100, Miami 33131  
bbrown@shotts.com



**ANITA BYER**  
President, Senior Byer Insurance & Risk  
900 S. Pine Island Road, Suite 200, Plantation 33324  
anita.byer@setmobyer.com



**BRENDA FREEMAN**  
CEO, Arteza  
1801 N.E. 22nd St., Suite 400, North Miami Beach 33181  
brenda.freeman@arteza.com



**PHILIPPE HOUDARD**  
CEO, Pipeline Workspaces  
1101 Brickell Ave., 8th floor, Miami 33131  
phoudard@pipelineworkspaces.com



**DODIE KEITH-LAZOWICK**  
CEO, Keith  
301 E. Atlantic Blvd., Pompano Beach 33060  
elizabeth@keithtam.com



**ABE NG**  
Founder and CEO, Sushimi Maki  
2334 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Suite 200, Coral Gables 33134  
abe.ng@sushimaki.com



**LIL ROBERTS**  
Founder and CEO, ZenDoo  
5900 N. Andrews Ave., Suite 1100, Fort Lauderdale 33309  
lil.roberts@zendoo.com



**DAN SHEEHAN**  
Chairman and CEO, Professional Bank  
396 Alhambra Circle, Suite 250, Coral Gables 33134  
dsh@probankfl.com



**DANIEL STANTON**  
Founder and CEO, Now Optics  
3801 S. Congress Ave., Palm Springs 33461  
daniel@nowoptics.com



**SCOTT WEBB**  
President, Kofor Hospitality  
105 N.E. First St., Delray Beach 33444  
swebb@kofor.com

BY MATTHEW ARROJAS  
marrojas@bizjournals.com

**B**y mid-March, 88% of U.S. companies had mandated or strongly encouraged their employees to work remotely due to the pandemic, according to a survey from Gartner.

South Florida was no exception, and the sudden work-from-home shift left local CEOs wondering how they'd manage employees from their home offices.

For Dodie Keith-Lazowick, CEO of Pompano Beach-based engineering firm Keith, that meant seemingly endless Zoom meetings at the start of lockdown.

"There were days when my headphones didn't come out of my ear," she joked, adding that Zoom meetings have been reduced since the summer.

The company leaders participating in the Business Journal's recent CEO Roundtable shared how technology enabled their ventures to operate successfully, despite the extended containment orders designed to curb the spread of Covid-19.



Editor-in-Chief Mel Meléndez

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

## CEO ROUNDTABLE

### QUOTABLES

#### WHAT'S BEEN THE MOST VALUABLE OR SURPRISING TAKEAWAY FOR YOU DURING THE PANDEMIC?

► **Brenda Freeman, Arteza**

"The value of family time. I've heard so many stories from my own employees about them being able to eat dinner with their families, which was a luxury they hadn't had in a while."

► **Bowman Brown, Shutts & Bowen LLP**

"I was really expecting our business to go off a cliff as the pandemic went on, but I've been shocked to see how productive we've been able to stay."

► **Dan Sheehan, Professional Bank**

"I'm not aware of another bank in the country that went public, bought a competitor and dealt with the pandemic in the same 90 days. I'm extremely proud of my team [for] stepping up."

► **Daniel Stanton, Now Optics**

"Just being able to continue to serve the community."

► **Anita Byer, Setnor Byer Insurance & Risk**

"I learned how to use the oven, and I found out I'm not a bad cook."

#### WHAT WILL STICK OUT TO YOU THE MOST WHEN YOU REFLECT BACK ON THE PANDEMIC?

► **Philippe Houdard, Pipeline Workspaces**

"The recognition that there is so much outside of our control. As the CEO, I believed in this illusion that everything was in my control. But with so much happening, I had to reflect on what I would do if I lost everything."

► **Abe Ng, Sushi Maki**

"Near the beginning of the pandemic, I did not miss the travel. I loved being in one city. But now I'm surprised about my desire to travel again. It's all flipped."

► **Lil Roberts, Xendoo**

"How it was a moment to stretch to the next level in leadership. How often are we able to work through something like this to learn more about business and the human condition?"

► **Scott Webb, Kolter Hospitality**

"The family time. My career has always been about working, and this gave me time to spend time with family."

► **Dodie Keith-Lazowick, Keith**

"How so many people have just been devastated. That sits heavy in my heart as we move out of this. Many lives will never be the same."

Anita Byer



Bowman Brown



Abe Ng



JOCK FISTICK/SOUTH FLORIDA BUSINESS JOURNAL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

But while grateful for the technology that allowed their teams to remain connected, continued reliance on software programs accessed from remote areas raised some concerns.

Plantation-based Setnor Byer Insurance & Risk President Anita Byer said she worries her company's increased use of third-party applications, such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, to maintain an efficient workflow could leave the company vulnerable.

"What happens if one of these sites goes down?" she asked. "What if they get hacked?"

Her company works to create its own original platforms whenever feasible, Byer said. That can lead to business opportunities. For example, her insurance company now sells a customer relationship management (CRM) tool it developed in-house to generate extra revenue.

Security is a grave concern for Bowman Brown, chairman of the executive committee and co-chair of the financial services industry practice group at Shutts & Bowen LLP in Miami. He said technology plays a role in virtually every step of legal proceedings now, so it is critical that the company's systems remain up to date and secure.

"If our technology - from phone systems to the internet - goes down, we're pretty much shut down," Brown said. "That makes security even more important, because we could get in a lot of trouble with the bar association if we have any kind of data breach."

**“If our technology - from phone systems to the internet - goes down, we're pretty much shut down. That makes security even more important.”**

**BOWMAN BROWN,**  
Chairman of the executive committee and co-chair of the financial services industry practice group, Shutts & Bowen LLP

To avoid potential breaches, Shutts & Bowen hired a dedicated security officer to keep the company's data secure and train employees to ensure they comply with strict security standards to avoid breaches.

That reliance on technology systems isn't limited to certain sectors. Abe Ng, founder and CEO of Miami-based restaurant chain Sushi Maki, said

even the food and beverage industry, which has historically been very low tech, has needed to embrace technology to keep up with consumer trends such as online ordering and third-party delivery.

"We're now more concerned with what Amazon or Uber Eats is going to do than the neighborhood sushi bar opening up down the street," he said.

About half of the company's sales are now digital, so Sushi Maki would be worse off had it not invested in hiring employees to navigate the online transition. That investment has helped the chain not only survive, but flourish in the midst of a pandemic.

But while technology advancements are welcome, continued improvements made in the tech field present a conundrum for C-suite executives, said Lil Roberts, founder and CEO of Fort Lauderdale-based online bookkeeping firm Xendoo. Constant updates to software and the introduction of more advanced hardware means executives must decide how to best invest their time and money.

"Every time one of these updates comes out, you need to reallocate time to retrain existing team members. Otherwise you'll lose productivity," she said.

While business leaders say their companies cannot remain stagnant, it could be harmful to chase anything new, as progress comes at a price.