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JULY/AUG. 2014



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AT THE TOP OF THEIR GAME

A special thanks to our Top Companies for making KC a great place to do business



When it was time to select our Top Companies for 2014, I for one did not envy our judges. I can only imagine how daunting it must be to pick just 10 winners from a seemingly bottomless pool of qualified candidates. Each and every company in Kansas City—no matter how big or small you are, no matter what industry you serve, and no matter on which side of the state line you reside—is valuable to our community because you contribute to our economy, our workforce and our livelihood. So please forgive me for sounding like an overzealous cheerleader here, but as far as I'm concerned, you're all winners in my mind.

That being said, our 2014 Top Companies are definitely in a league of their own when it comes to specific categories like employee empowerment, job growth, volunteerism, innovation, reinvention and customer service. And then there's always one "Top Company" that somehow manages to embody all of these attributes and then some. This year, we're proud to announce Shatto Milk Company as our Top Company in Kansas City for 2014.

I'll let you in on a little secret. When I found out Shatto had won Top Company and that I would be interviewing the owners, I felt almost starstruck. Having grown up not too far from the Shatto family farm in rural Missouri, my parents raised us on the belief that it was our neighborly duty to support area farmers. Besides, what's better than buying tomatoes picked earlier that morning or corn grown in a field within a few miles of your home?

So when my mom first laid eyes on that iconic glass bottle bearing the word "LOCAL" in 2003, she made a commitment to the Shattos, and in doing so, turned her relatives and friends into diehard fans. To this day, a Shatto Ice Cream Sammich is prime real estate in our household, and don't even get me started on those Cajun Cheese Curds. But I digress. Countless families just like mine have supported Shatto Milk Company since day one.

Deeply moved by the support they've received these past 11 years, the Shatto family made a commitment of its own: to abide by the highest standards of quality, freshness, service, environmentalism and community stewardship. And that is why they are so deserving of this award. Please join us at the Dark Horse Distillery on Thursday, July 24, to celebrate Shatto's success and honor our nine other Top Companies of 2014. Trust me, you don't want to miss this party.

See you there!

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Lindberg is a Kansas City-based photographer, wannabe surfer, sarcasm aficionado and drummer who loves his family and also tacos. A regular contributor to KC Magazine, KC Business and Good Health KC, Lindberg photographed the folks at ACS: Concrete Construction, JGrill Media and Pro Athlete for our 2014 Top Companies feature.

Don Simon

Simon, J.D./LL.M., is president and CEO of Simon Business Consulting Inc., a firm providing consulting services, such as business and marketing plan development, incorporations, intellectual property advising, franchising regulatory assistance and presentations, on the basics of starting a small business. In this issue's Simon Says, he discussed how to identify and fight the signs of Business Owner Isolation Syndrome.



Katy Schamberger

Schamberger is a downtown-dwelling freelance writer and blogger. Her love of all things KC reached a fever pitch with the publication of her first book, "Moon Kansas City." When she isn't writing, you'll find Schamberger exploring the city. She wrote On the Rise, Startup Spotlight, Daily Grind and three Top Companies features for this issue.



Lindsey Kennedy

Kennedy is a freelance writer who recently returned to the Kansas City area after attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has worked in both print and radio, and also enjoys photography, fashion, music and yoga. For this issue, she wrote our recurring feature in i3, There's An App For That.



Paul Andrews

Andrews runs a creative services company in the River Market along with his wife, Sonya, and teaches photography at a local college. He photographed the folks at Shatto Milk Company, PB&J Restaurants, Triple_I and Arrow Fabricare Services for our 2014 Top Companies feature.



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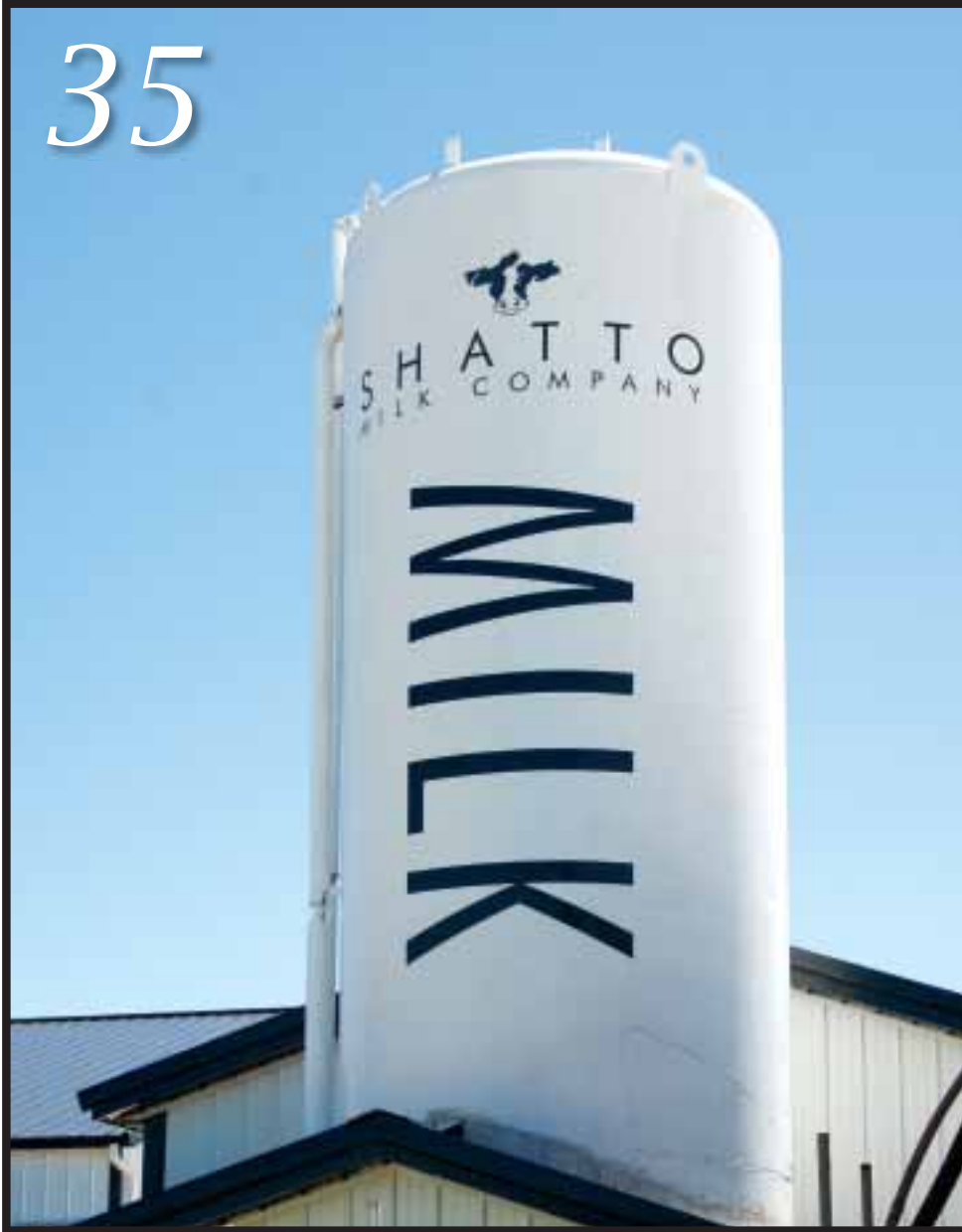
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TOP COMPANY

When dairy farmers Leroy and Barbara Shatto found they could no longer compete with large-scale dairies selling milk in bulk at low prices to dairy cooperatives, they founded Shatto Milk Company in 2003, supplying fresh milk in glass bottles to area stores. Today, the hugely successful farm pledges its support to the KC community by giving back in creative ways.



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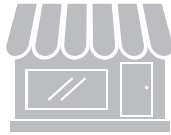


5 WAYS TO FIGHT OFF A CYBER ATTACK

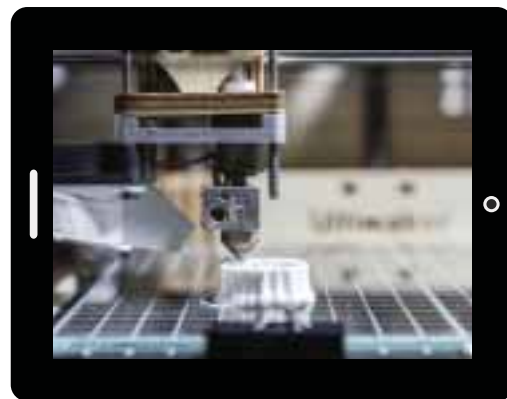


If you think your company is immune to cyber attacks, think again. Unfortunately, they've become a common reality in this day and age. In fact, T-Mobile, BBC, Target and the FEC were among more than 50 entities that experienced highly publicized cyber security issues within the last two weeks of 2013. No company is too large or too small to avoid an attack; studies reveal that nearly half of all security breaches involve companies with less than 1,000 employees. All businesses and their subsidiaries are at risk, and it's no longer a question of "if" but "when." Security breaches can impact all facets of your supply chain while compromising your technology, finances, reputation and stakeholder value. We'll show you how to fight back with five easy steps that will protect your company against a cyber attack.

TECH TRENDS FOR SMALL BIZ OWNERS



Did you know that nearly three out of four small business owners (SBOs) believed that investing in new technologies would offer a bigger return on their investment in 2014 than hiring new employees? As small businesses transform to keep up with the 21st century, comfort and comprehension don't always follow. Many SBOs wonder when is the right time to invest in new technologies. After all, investing too quickly—or not quickly enough—may hurt them or help their competitors. Brother International polled roughly 500 SBOs for its fifth annual Brother Small Business Survey, and the results may surprise you. We'll give you the full breakdown of trends regarding the relationship between SBOs and new technologies by way of a clever, easy-to-digest infographic ... because, honestly, who doesn't love a good infographic?



3-D PRINTING BUSINESS COMES TO KC



Lifform Studio in Park Place, Leawood, is giving Kansas Citians the opportunity to bring their photography and printing into the 21st century through more than 100 professional, synchronized cameras and a state-of-the-art, 3-D printer. The studio produce "lifeforms," which are full-color, high-resolution, 3-D figures that are custom scaled and detailed enough to produce characteristics such as facial stubble, piercings, pant creases, shoestrings and tattoos. The synchronized cameras capture a 360-degree photograph, which is then printed with the 3-D printer to produce the lifeforms, which are made from a material similar to sandstone.

ONE QUESTION

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO ON THE WEEKENDS?



"CHASE MY SON AND DAUGHTER EITHER ON THE SOCCER FIELD OR BASEBALL FIELD."

LES KAHL,
COOLEST OFFICES, P.14



"HAVE A FEW BOULEVARDS AT A ROYALS GAME OR PLAY GOLF WITH SOME FRIENDS."

JASON GRILL,
TOP COMPANIES, P.42



"PLAY WITH MY GRANDSONS AND HAVE DINNER WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY."

LEE HARIS,
COHEN-ESREY, P.68



"EXPERIENCE ALL OF THE FANTASTIC ART AND MUSIC KC HAS TO OFFER."

CHRIS DAHLQUIST,
SIMON SAYS, P.10



"WE'RE USUALLY GETTING DOWN AND DIRTY AT JUNKYARDS WHILE WE SEARCH FOR ROBOT PARTS."

NICHOLAS AND ANGIE SNYDER,
DAILY GRIND, P.70



"WEEKENDS ARE FATHER/ SON TIME, SO IT'S USUALLY A COMBINATION OF ZOOS, TRAIN STATIONS, BOUNCE HOUSES, YO GABBA GABBA AND OTHER 4-YEAR-OLD ADVENTURES!"

JASON ANDERSON,
STARTUP SPOTLIGHT, P.54



"CREATING ART FOR THE GAME IS MY RELEASE AND SO IS PLAYING WITH MY KIDS."

HERSCHEL HOFFMEYER,
ON THE RISE, P.66



"I HEAD OVER TO BB'S LAWN-SIDE BBQ OR KNUCKLEHEADS TO ENJOY SOME OF THE AREA'S BEST BLUES BANDS OR PERFORMERS."

BECKY WILSON,
WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES, P.18



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BRANDI BABCOCK:

"I LOVE TO VISIT MO WINERIES. GREAT WINE, GREAT FUN!"

GINA WINTERS HARVEY:

"GARAGE SALES, ROYALS BASEBALL OR CHIEFS FOOTBALL, NAP OR CHILL OUT."

JESSICA ANTUNES:

"SAND VOLLEYBALL, FRESH COCONUT WATER, BIKE AND SUNDAY FAMILY DAY!"



WHAT CAN YOUR HOME DO FOR YOU?

Now is as good of a time as any to take advantage of home equity.

by SHEILIA STOKES

Buying a house has long been considered the American dream. And today, homeowners are finding meaningful value by using the equity in that dream home to help finance other needs, whether they be paying college tuition, consolidating debt or remodeling a kitchen.

Home equity lines of credit (HELOC) are a way of establishing and utilizing a line of credit by using the equity in the home as collateral. With today's low interest rates and rebound in home prices, homeowners may have greater opportunity to borrow against their equity.

Another notable advantage with a home equity line is making purchases with a HELOC debit card. Using the card enhances the ease of paying for unexpected and needed purchases by providing a type of rainy day fund. Nobody plans for the furnace to break in the middle of winter, but it does happen. There is also a flexibility factor—the home equity line is something that can be accessed over and over as long as the credit is available.

Before making a decision, however, consumers should carefully consider all of their options. Ideally, since a home is likely to be one of the largest assets, a home equity line should be used wisely. Remember to be disciplined with spending habits. If an individual needs to use his or her home's equity for purchases, he or she should use it for items that will retain or add value.

HERE ARE A FEW OPTIONS TO CONSIDER IN UTILIZING A HELOC:

HOME IMPROVEMENT: This is one of the most common (and wisest) uses of home equity lines. Whether it is updating the bathroom or adding more space to accommodate a growing family, making upgrades or improvements to a home can increase



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the fair market value. Kitchen improvements have the most value, returning 94 percent of the original investment.

COLLEGE TUITION: A home equity line can be an excellent alternative to standard student loans based on lower rate, potential deductibility of interest and flexible payment options. It's very easy to pay for the college tuition with these devices. If families cannot qualify for student loan programs because of their economic status, a home equity line is a viable choice and has similar benefits with low interest rates and tax-deductible options.

DEBT CONSOLIDATION: An overwhelming majority of homeowners use a home equity line of credit for this purpose. The advantage is that it creates one payment to take care of all credit card debt, which in turn reduces the monthly interest charges, allowing the consumer to save or invest those dollars in other areas. By paying off credit card debt in this manner, the consumer can literally save thousands of dollars.

For example, the current national average interest rate for credit cards is about 15 percent. If the credit card debt was \$20,000, the consumer is paying about \$3,000 per year in interest. A home equity line of credit at 4 percent (not even calculating the effect of the introductory rate) would be \$800. The consumer's payments would immediately be impacted, more dollars would apply to principal and all interest may be tax deductible. The result: more dollars left for the consumer. Even in that scenario, it is virtually impossible for the interest to exceed the level of credit card interest, which oftentimes is two to three times higher than the rates on a home equity line. A word of caution, however, when using home equity for debt consolidation: consumers need to be careful to not fall into a downward spiral of continuing to accumulate charges and debt with their credit card after they have consolidated original debt with a home equity line.

Finally, before deciding to use the equity in a home as a financing option, individuals should seek counsel from their banker or financial advisor. This person is experienced in carefully reviewing all the home equity options to ensure it is the appropriate financial solution and that it is being activated in the most responsible and strategic way possible. **KC**



WHAT TO DO WITH TOO MANY LIFE INSURANCE POLICIES

Are your children grown and gone? Do you have life insurance policies you probably don't need anymore? When you're starting out, you may have bought life insurance to protect a surviving spouse and your children. You may have even purchased another policy to pay off the mortgage.

After all your kids have left the nest, you may not need life insurance coverage anymore. (To get a true picture, run a life insurance analysis or have a financial planner do one for you). How do you make the best use of these policies now? Here are three things to keep in mind.

1 Call the insurance company. Does your policy generate dividends? If your dividends are being used to buy more life insurance coverage, have that stopped and tell the insurance company to mail those dividend checks to you.

2 Ask if there's a cash value. How much will you get to keep if you terminate and withdraw that, i.e. does the insurer charge you a surrender charge? Or any other fees?

3 If you take the cash value, how much will be taxed? If it's a lot, consider a 1035 tax-free exchange to a cheap variable annuity to treat it as an investment. Or donate it to your favorite charity and get a tax deduction.

> *Sandi Weaver, CPA, CFP and CFA, is the owner of Financial Security Advisors, a fee-only financial planning firm based in Prairie Village, Kan. Visit financial-security-adv.com for more information.*



SAY NO TO BUSINESS OWNER ISOLATION SYNDROME

When it comes to running a business you don't have to be the lone wolf.

by DON SIMON

What is perhaps the greatest cause of small business failure? Is it lack of money? Nope. How about a bad location? Uh-uh. What about poor product or service distribution? Not quite. These aren't the causes of most small business failures. In fact, they are only the symptoms of a common disease known as Business Owner Isolation Syndrome.

Running a business can be a lonely affair. You work nontraditional hours. The business requires your constant attention. There are no managers, no colleagues, no happy hours and no office holiday parties. Once you take on the title of "owner," you generally become the sole decision-maker for virtually everything during the early years. It can be overwhelming with little or no input from outsiders.

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR AVOIDING BUSINESS OWNER ISOLATION SYNDROME:

1 CONNECT WITH A BUSINESS INCUBATOR. A business incubator is a building that is divided into units, which are leased to early-stage small businesses. They provide opportunities to share resources and learn from other businesses. Many incubator operators have capital to invest or links to potential funding sources.

According to Lee Langerock, executive director of the Independence Regional Ennovation Center, incubators can aid in reducing some of the hazards associated with starting a business. "Business incubators can help de-risk the upfront cost of doing business and provide the technical and collaborative expertise to proof out that business model," Langerock explains.

But not all incubators are alike. Shop around and find one that fits. "Interview the incubator managers first," suggests Nathan Kurtz, manager in entrepreneurship with the Kauffman Foundation. "Ensure they have the right expertise, mentoring and connections for your particular customer and problem segment."

Incubators are not intended to be permanent homes. Rather, they provide a temporary nurturing environment where businesses can get support until they are financially healthy. Upon reaching predictable profitability, the business moves into a more permanent location.

2 NETWORK WITH YOUR PEERS. Networking with other small business owners gives you an opportunity to interact with those who face many of the same day-to-day challenges as you. It can also lead to more business. "Networking is a great way to create relationships with other business owners," says Chris Nastav, owner of KC Web Specialists and member of the Kansas City Networking Group. "Industry-specific

networking groups are great for referrals too. Whenever someone in the group has a need, you can say, 'Hey, I know a guy!'"

But networking doesn't necessarily have to be through an organization. Anthony Ladesich goes about it in a different way. "Since starting Mile Deep Films eight years ago, I've missed having co-workers but have found ways to recreate those relationships," he says. "Others in the local film industry generally are solo businesses as well. We get together for lunch or to have a drink and exchange ideas, vent frustrations and discuss new projects."

Whether it's regular appearances at formal networking events or getting together informally with a small group of industry cohorts, peer networking can help you overcome Business Owner Isolation Syndrome.

3 GET A PARTNER. Before going this route, you should do a lot of soul searching. Deciding whether or not to bring in a partner is an important decision in the life of any business. Not everyone fits the bill. Look for someone with whom you can get along and share complementary skills.

Local artist Chris Dahlquist of Dahlquist Studios didn't have to look very far for her business partner. She found a good one in her husband, Kyle. "Being married to your partner means that you know where their abilities lie, you know how to communicate effectively and that you can trust them implicitly," she says.

But Dahlquist, who's been in business with her husband for 25 years, says her situation isn't for everyone. "It can be hard to keep private issues out of professional ones and vice versa," she admits. "It also takes a conscious effort to keep the business relationship from subsuming the marriage." ➤

Partnerships can present additional risk. But with proper execution, having a partner will give you someone you can work with and brainstorm and bounce ideas off of. Partners are also people with whom you can share the responsibilities, risks and liabilities of running a business.

4 FIND A MENTOR. A mentor is a person with more business experience who can help you hone your abilities and advise you on many of the challenges you face. They've been there, and they can provide pointers on business strategy or act as confidants when times get tough.

Judy Mills, owner of Mills Record Company, found a mentor in an unlikely place: the competition. "I have a mentor-type relationship with Kelly Corcoran of Love Garden Sounds. We call each other to compare notes, and I ask him novice questions. He's a good teacher, and I'd be foolish not to learn from him," says Mills who celebrated her first anniversary of being in business this past May.

A mentoring experience can last one day, one year or the entire life of your business. If you find someone who's willing to work with you, here are a few things to remember:

- > *Be honest and straightforward about the problems you face.*
- > *Leave your thin skin at home and listen to what your mentor has to say.*
- > *Don't blindly follow your mentor's advice.*

5 TRY SCORE. Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) is affiliated with the Small Business Administration and offers one-on-one counseling services, workshops and events. Sarah Carpenter of The Clutter Maven had a positive experience with a SCORE volunteer.

"It was easy to get an appointment," Carpenter recalls. "I sat with a retired accountant who walked me through some simple tips for managing the daily details for my business."

She says they also helped her with some of the more challenging aspects of her business such as bookkeeping and mileage tracking.

Business Owner Isolation Syndrome is one of the most common and possibly greatest challenges facing an entrepreneur. There's an old saying: "It's lonely at the top." But with help and input from others, it doesn't have to be. Good luck! **KC**

+ DONALD R. SIMON

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AND THE WINNER IS...

AD FARM

by KATHRYN JONES

AdFarm may be located right in the thick of downtown's ever-bustling creative hub, the Crossroads Arts District, but the office itself feels more like a rural retreat. Upon entering the space, guests are greeted by a rustic, antique windmill sourced from an old Kansas farm and showcased with dramatic up-lighting. Gorgeous mismatched panels of reclaimed wood bring warmth to the walls, while corrugated metal siding—suggestive of an old grain bin—add a touch of whimsy. Brainstorming sessions take place behind a pair of spectacular sliding barn doors that lead to a private conference room styled after an old silo.

It's an absolute showpiece, but more importantly, it's an homage to AdFarm's agricultural roots. The company was established in Canada by a group of former agricultural executives who saw a need for better representation by the advertising industry. They formed AdFarm in the '90s and continue to focus 100 percent on agricultural clients.

In addition to its offices in Calgary, Alberta, and Guelph, Ontario, AdFarm expanded to the U.S. a little more than a decade ago and now has offices in Sacramento, Calif.; Fargo, N.D.; St. Louis and KC—all close to major agricultural zones.

This is no coincidence, says Les Kahl, executive creative director and managing partner for AdFarm's U.S. operations. The company

purposefully set up shop near its clients' growing areas because it wanted to be close to the action. "We want to be out in the field with the growers," he explains.

So much so that AdFarm actually operates three farms of its own. The company grows soybeans in Aneta, N.D.; winter wheat in Vulcan, Alberta; and cassava and maize in Awutu Mankessim, Ghana.

"The farms help our staff learn more about agriculture, knowing exactly what it takes to grow crops as part of producing food, and also to understand some of the joys and pains that our clients go through," Kahl says.

AdFarm's first KC office was in the River Market community. Within a few short years, it outgrew the space and relocated to the former Western Union building at 7th and Walnut where it stayed until 2014.

In February, the company moved less than two miles to its current space at 2101 Broadway Blvd. AdFarm was the first tenant to inhabit this nearly century-old property after its recent transformation to a multi-use commercial space. It now shares the building with Pezzettino Italian Deli & Market and software consulting firm Valorem.

Finkle/Williams Architecture not only designed AdFarm's new 6,768-square-foot office on Broadway, it was also the architect of record for its previous space in the Western Union building as well as the company's Sacramento branch.

Coincidentally, the Leawood-based architect was already working on the \$7 million restoration of 2101 Broadway Blvd. when the building's owner asked if it would be interested in designing an office belonging to one of the new tenants. >



“By chance, it was AdFarm,” says Adam Gerber, senior project architect with Finkle/Williams. “We had the privilege of already knowing who they were as well as the new space they were moving into, so it’s been nice to maintain that connection. AdFarm is probably one of the easiest clients you could ever have. They are so nice that you want to work extra hard to make sure everything goes well for them.”

The renovated building is LEED Gold-certified, which is the highest ranking achieved for sustainable construction projects. It’s a befitting workspace for AdFarm in particular because it coincides with the company’s mantra of environmental stewardship.

“Farmers are the greatest environmentalists because they really are stewards for the land,” Kahl says. “We wanted to make sure that this is reflected in our practice and how we do business. When we learned about some of the environmentally friendly features, it really sealed the deal that this was the right space for us.” **KC**



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HEAR US ROAR

New research indicates a steady rise of women-owned businesses on both sides of the state line.

BY SUSAN FOTOVICH MCCABE

At a young age, they call it “girl power.” But by the time women reach adulthood, “girl power” moves full speed into lucrative careers and even entrepreneurship. So it’s no surprise that women are starting 1,288 new businesses each day, double the rate from only three years ago, according to the 2014 State of Women-Owned Businesses Report, commissioned by American Express OPEN. The report includes a detailed analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau and found that during the past 17 years, the number of women-owned businesses has increased at 1.5 times the national average.

The report shows that women are choosing an entrepreneurial path at record rates, estimating that there are more than 9.1 million women-owned businesses in the U.S. (compared to 8.6 million in 2013). These businesses generate more than \$1.4 trillion in revenue, employ 7.9 million people and account for 30 percent of all enterprises.

“To our surprise, nearly 1,300 new female businesses emerge each day,” says Julie Weeks, American Express OPEN research advisor. “It might be an artifact of the recession. Women may have left the labor force on their own or because of layoffs and decided to start their own businesses.”

Another reason, Weeks suggests, could be due to the success of Encore Entrepreneurs, a joint effort by the Small Business Administration and AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) to guide people age 50 and older into new careers as business owners. But regardless of age, she says more women—particularly those with higher education and strong managerial experience—are giving it a try.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT

While state rankings place Missouri and Kansas at 35th and 48th, respectively, in the growth of the number of women-owned firms over the past 17 years, both are trending upward. Missouri, for example, has increased by nearly 40 percent since 1997, while Kansas has improved its numbers by nearly 30 percent.

Kansas has an estimated 70,900 women-owned firms, employing 73,300 (in addition to the owner) and attributing to roughly \$10.5 billion. Conversely, Missouri has an estimated 143,800 women-owned firms, employing 143,000 (in addition to the owner) and attributing to roughly \$22.7 billion.

This growth represents a steady increase in the influence women-owned businesses have on the U.S. economy, Weeks says. Since 1997, women-owned firms have added 11 percent more jobs. In fact, these businesses have emerged from the recent recession as second only to publicly traded companies in U.S., with 274,000 net new jobs since 2007.

Imagine the economic impact if more of these new, women-led ventures were transformed into thriving businesses, Weeks says.

ACCESSING VITAL RESOURCES

Locally, female professionals have witnessed the growing trend.

“I started my first company 30 years ago and can certainly attest to the fact that one had to look hard to find other women who owned and ran their own businesses,” says Kansas City-based Motional Multimedia Owner and President Nancy Zurbuchen. She also co-founded the Kansas City Council of Women Business Owners (KC-CWBO) and serves as its executive director.

“At the time, I didn’t know I was an oddity, but according to the statistics, I guess I was. There were so few of us then,” Zurbuchen says. “I was simply following an internal impetus to start and grow a business. I recall attending one women’s business group and discovering that the topic for the evening was ‘How to Get a Raise Out of Your Boss.’ Now there are so many resources and programs available locally and nationally; women should utilize them urgently!”

And yet despite those resources, Kansas City’s Lead Bank recently conducted research revealing that 35 percent of area women business owners planned acquisition strategies, but that 75 percent are underfunded. As such, Lead Bank recently launched its “Women in Business Initiative,” providing strategic and operational advising, as well as competitive financing options, low fixed rates, and long-term loans.

JUST FOR HER EXPO

While financing can be a challenge, most women believe that it’s worth the struggle to build a company—if not for their careers, for their families. That was the impetus behind Teddi Hernandez’s decision to leave her corporate position at Hallmark Cards after 24 years and become an entrepreneur. ▶

Hernandez and her business partner, Aimee Jacobson, co-own the Overland Park-based Just for Her Expo, an annual conference showcasing more than 300 booths filled with fashions, accessories, beauty products, food, and health and wellness items catered toward women. The sixth-annual Just for Her Expo took place from May 30 to June 1.

Because Just For Her targets female vendors and customers with its events, Hernandez says most of the female business owners she encounters tend to have the following traits in common: they're either mature women who left long-term careers to follow their passions, or they're younger women who have zero desire to work for a big company and mustered up the courage to start their own business.

"Many women are leaving the corporate world because of family responsibilities," Hernandez says. "There are women-owned businesses popping up all over, and we enjoy having the chance to help them reach new consumers as our vendors."

Hernandez says she takes pride in her successful, rapidly growing business. "I get up in the morning thinking about it and usually find myself thinking about it the moment my five children are done with homework and ready for bed," she says. "The sense of accomplishment comes from the fact that our business is owned by two women, that our entire staff is made up of women and that the guests at our retail events are all women."

NATURAL-BORN LEADERS

Achieving a work/life balance was important to Kansas entrepreneur Laura Schmidt, founder of Prairie Village-based sock company Notes to Self. Her socks, which feature positive affirmations like "I am Smart," or "I am Strong," are sold online and through 1,000 retailers nationwide. The business started in her home and now operates from an area warehouse with a staff of nine.

"I truly see myself as an entrepreneur, not a female or male entrepreneur," Schmidt says. "So that in itself might be a sign of movement toward more equality. In my first business, where I spent 20 years in direct sales, my decision to start that business was greatly influenced by my desire to have the flexibility to raise my children. Even though our children are [now] in college, I still value the flexibility to travel to visit them at college whenever I choose and to work around other personal choices and priorities."

On the other side of the state line, Kansas City-based Portfolio Kitchen & Home Owner Geri Higgins says to thrive as a female entrepreneur requires the same ingredients and effort as any successful business, regardless if it's run by a man or a woman. She admits there are some natural female qualities—such as being good at multi-tasking—that may offer an advantage.

"I think for any business owner to have an opportunity for success, they have to be confident, have a plan, focus on the intended outcome and not be tethered by the expectations of others," Higgins says. "I believe that strong leaders should have a vision and approach their vision with passion, not fear."

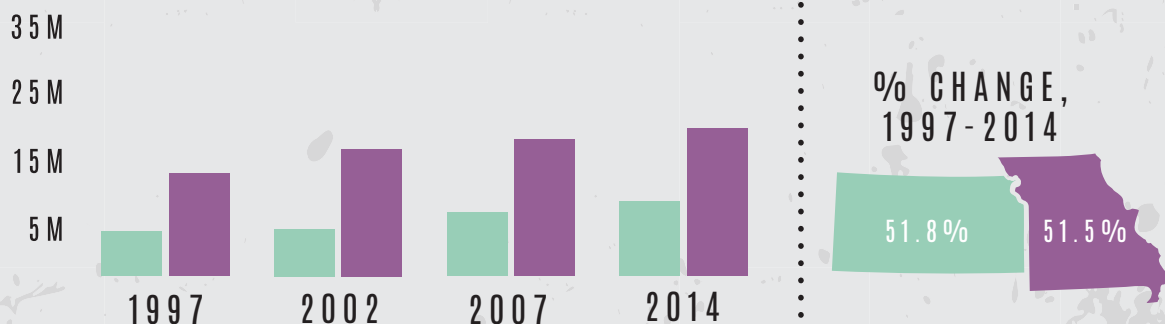
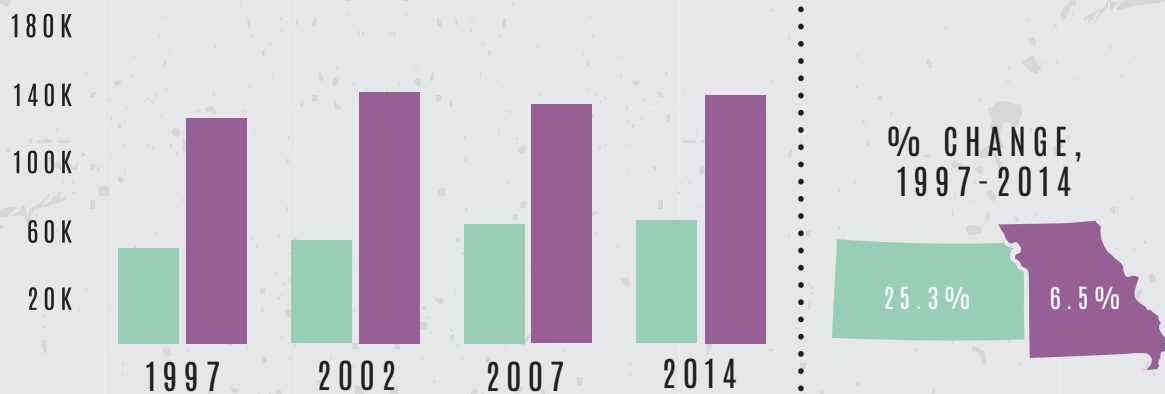
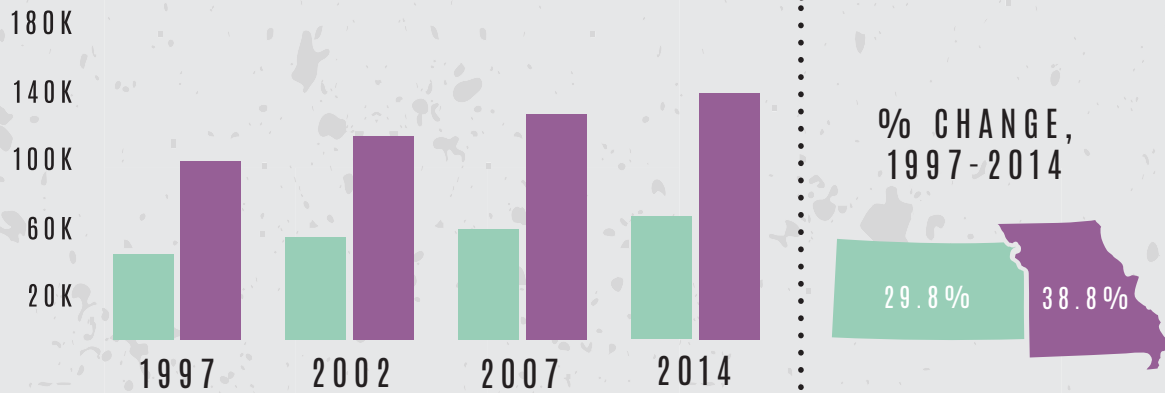
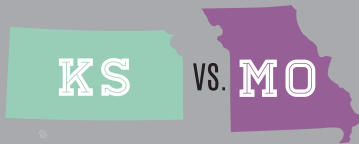
Regardless of the upward trend in women-owned businesses, KC-CWBO's other co-founder, Becky Wilson, who owns WDS Marketing & Public Relations in Overland Park, says that while that number grows, the size of women enterprises remains smaller than their male counterparts in terms of the number of employees and gross revenues. However, she sees the silver lining.

"The upside is that these small businesses and micro-enterprises fill an important market niche in addition to allowing women to generate income, manage their future and have important flexible family time," Wilson says. "There is a highly enjoyable sense of self-satisfaction in business ownership, and women have discovered how rewarding that can be." **KC**



"THERE ARE SO MANY RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS AVAILABLE LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY; WOMEN SHOULD UTILIZE THEM URGENTLY!" - Nancy Zurbuchen

TRENDS IN GROWTH OF WOMEN-OWNED FIRMS





*we make
quality
healthcare
accessible*

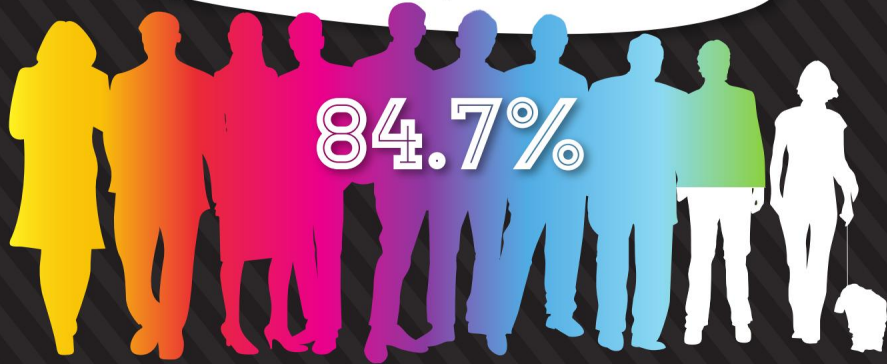
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TEVA

PSYCHOLOGY of color

 when people buy



84.7% of consumers cite **COLOR** as the primary reason they buy a particular product

93%

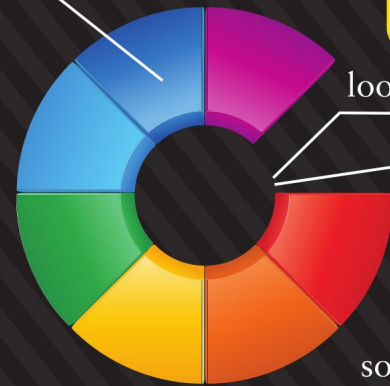
look at visual appearance

6%

look at texture

1%

decide on sound or smell



80%

think color increases brand recognition



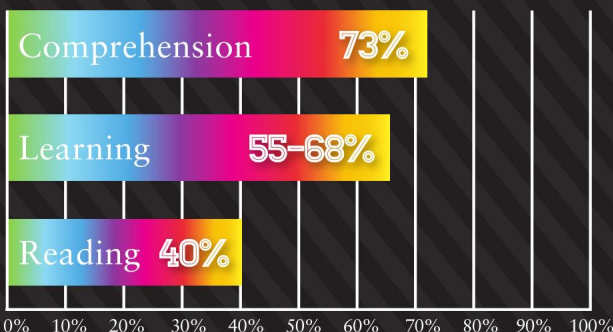
52%

of shoppers did not return to a store due to overall aesthetics

outcome of the use of color

Ads in color are read up to **42% MORE OFTEN** than the same ads in **BLACK AND WHITE.**

color can improve 



Research reveals people make a subconscious judgment about an environment or product within **90 SECONDS** of initial viewing. Between **62%** and **90%** of that assessment is based on color alone.

purple

EMOTIONS

- Showed royalty, wealth, success, wisdom
- Many kings wore purple as robes

POLITICS

- Used for royalty, but hardly used in modern politics

MARKETING

- Used often in beauty or anti-aging products
- Used to soothe or calm
- Represents a creative, imaginative, wise brand

blue

EMOTIONS

- Associated with water, peace
- Most preferred by men
- Represent calmness or serenity
- Curbs appetite
- Known as a "cold" color
- Perceived as constant in human life due to sky and ocean being blue
- Most used color for offices

POLITICS

- Represents Conservative parties worldwide
- Used for Democrats in the USA

MARKETING

- Often used in corporate business because it's productive and non-invasive
- Creates sense of security and trust in a brand.

green

EMOTIONS

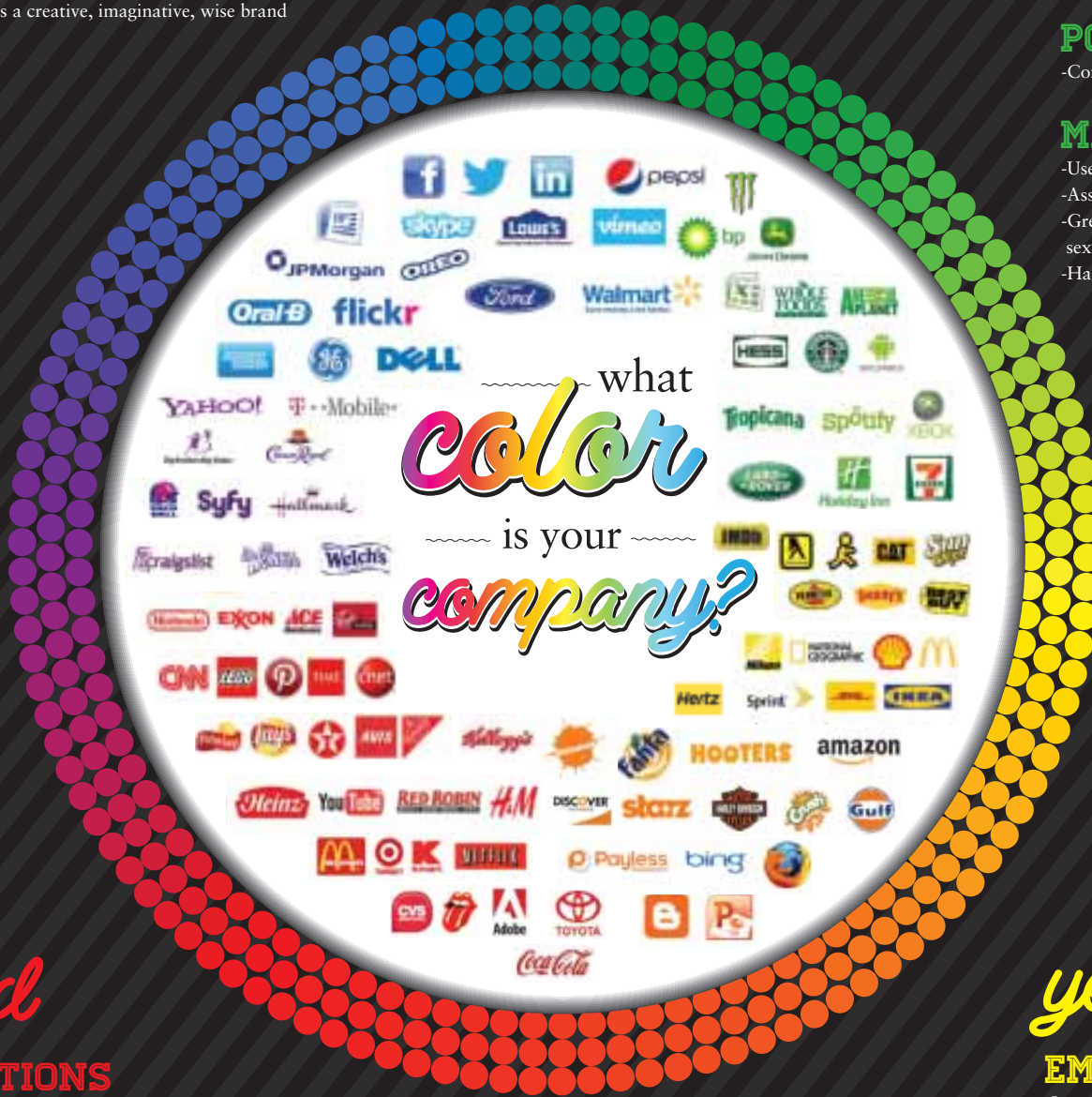
- Constitutes health, tranquility
- Symbolizes money
- Denotes nature
- Alleviates depression
- Workers in a green environment have fewer stomach aches
- Green is used in night vision goggles because the human eye is most sensitive to it and is able to discern most shades of it
- Represents growth

POLITICS

- Connected to environmentalists

MARKETING

- Used to relax in stores
- Associated with wealth
- Green M&M's are said to send a sexual message
- Has long been a symbol of fertility



red

EMOTIONS

- Evokes strong emotions
- Encourages appetite
- Increases passion and intensity
- Red roses symbolize love

POLITICS

- Represents Communist or Socialist parties worldwide
- Used for Republicans in the USA

MARKETING

- Increases heart rate
- Used by restaurants to stimulate appetite
- Creates urgency often seen in clearance sales
- Used for impulsive shoppers

orange

EMOTIONS

- Reflects excitement, enthusiasm
- Shows warmth
- Warns of caution

MARKETING

- Signifies aggression
- Creates call to action: Buy, Sell, Subscribe
- Found in impulsive shoppers
- Represent a friendly, cheerful, confident brand

POLITICS

- Orange is the national color of the Netherlands and its royal family

yellow

EMOTIONS

- Increases cheerfulness, warmth
- Causes fatigue and strain on the eyes
- Makes babies cry
- Stimulates mental process
- Stimulates nervous system
- Encourages communication

POLITICS

- Represents Liberalism

MARKETING

- Represents optimism, youthfulness
- Used to grab attention of window shoppers
- Shows clarity



— | *innovation* | —

SKYPE'S DIGITAL HYPE

Microsoft ups the ante on video conferencing with its yet-to-be-released Skype TX.

by ALEX SHER

For years, Skype has been a leader in video calls. Its software allows friends to have a conversation over live video and even provides a platform for long-distance business meetings. Now the Microsoft-owned company has made videoconferences even more professional with Skype TX. Designed with broadcast studios in mind, it provides call output in full-frame HD-SDI formats with embedded or balanced audio.

Skype TX consists of both hardware and software to seamlessly add videos to any production. It sends video both ways, so both the caller and broadcast studio receive live HD-SDI video and audio from the other. The software automatically deals with ratio mismatches and creates video/audio free of all notifications, signals, adverts or pop-ups. One of Skype TX's most impressive features is its ability to sync up more than 30 callers.

Whether trying to get footage from a concert, breaking news from a distant city or live interviews streamed from around the world, Skype TX can virtually add video and audio from anywhere. Guests calling in are broadcast live, and Skype TX can connect multiple locations instantly.

"The Jimmy Kimmel Show" and various other TV shows have utilized Skype TX to cover events and organize interviews. The technology

allows fans to ask their favorite celebrities and athletes questions through one-on-one video chats during live interviews. Skype TX has even broadcasted daily video diaries of athletes during the X Games. In Aspen, Olympic gold medal winner Sage Kotsenburg answered fan video message questions straight from the snow.

Perhaps one of the most innovative users of Skype TX is TEDx, the international community platform that enables experts to share ideas on anything and everything relating to technology, entertainment and design (TED). Skype's latest technology has already enriched TED's broadcast videos by bringing various experts from throughout the world together to have real-time discussions.

For instance, the TED conference in Vancouver used Skype TX for a live choir event. Thirty vocalists—singing remotely from 28 different countries—took part in a 100-person choir by joining the performance live over a video call. On August 9,

TEDx will continue to use Skype to cultivate live global collaboration right in the Kauffman Center for TEDxKC.

Skype TX is transforming the world of technology by allowing more communication than ever before to happen in real time. Although Skype TX is not yet available to the public, you can learn more about it at media.skype.com/skype-tx. **KC**



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

KCADC President and CEO Bob Marcusse reveals the three main things that will attract new companies to KC.

by BOB MARCUSSE

Like most industries, economic development continually evolves to meet the demands of a changing global marketplace. Companies always have, and always will, meticulously evaluate infrastructure, real estate, building sites and incentives when reviewing relocation and expansion opportunities. That will never change.

So what has changed? More than ever, location decisions by today's companies are driven by less-tangible assets like culture, neighborhoods, accessibility and the ability to attract talented people.

Let's explore this a bit further:

WORKFORCE AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Companies today are in a global race for talent. The available pool of high-performing professionals is shrinking as the Baby Boomer generation retires and the 20 percent smaller Gen X is left to fill in the gaps. The much larger Gen Y is at least 10 years from being able to step into highly skilled roles or senior-level positions, meaning competition for the best candidates is a high-stakes game.

Today, cities must prove to a company that they can attract the best and brightest, and develop the talent needed to support that company's growth. Our regional higher education institutions and workforce training programs have become increasingly critical and regularly step up to design innovative and customized partnerships that make it easier for a company to choose a KC location. But our competition is doing the same; we need to be faster and more agile if we are to continue to supply the fuel that powers our economic engine: our workforce.



AIR SERVICE

As the global marketplace continues to shrink, there's a clear expectation that major cities can support national and international business travelers. The KC region's central location already offers a unique advantage in that travelers can be on either coast, in most cases, within three hours. However, the most important amenity we can offer is frequency of non-stop service to major markets, including international markets. While we don't control airline schedules, anything we can do to facilitate travel from KCI will benefit all of us. Air service and the facilities that enable that service are not optional amenities; they are vital to the very future of our region.

LIFESTYLE

More than any other time, livability and lifestyle are having a significant influence on where companies choose to locate new or expanded facilities. We are regularly fielding questions related to entertainment, nightlife, neighborhoods, schools, dining and the music scene. Our KCADC Talent Recruitment program has become a unique competitive advantage for KC. Today, we regularly showcase our region as a lifestyle destination right alongside all of the traditional economic development assets and business case. For a company to employ the best talent in the world, we must offer not just a great job, but a great place to live.

In the world of economic development, communities must be prepared to adapt and change to the requirements of changing business needs. This may require investing in infrastructure, developing unique incentives or focusing on non-traditional community assets. Together, we can build a future KC that will always compete for the best if we invest today. **KC**

> **BOB MARCUSSE** is president and CEO of the Kansas City Area Development Council. For more information, visit thinkkc.com.

LIVEKC LIVENS UP THE PARTY

A grassroots initiative backed by the city’s most powerful companies aims to attract more Millennials to KC.

by NICOLETTE MARTIN and KATHRYN JONES

They’re obsessed with craft beer and mustaches. They see the world through an Instagram filter and recall their greatest memories not with a scrapbook or slide projector, but by scrolling through their iPhone’s camera roll. They’re compulsive tweeters, brazen bloggers and serial entrepreneurs determined to make a difference in their community. They’re Millennials, and Kansas City wants more of them.

LiveKC is a grassroots initiative backed by some of the city’s mightiest and most influential companies—Hallmark, Sprint, Cerner and Black & Veatch, to name a few—with the mission to draw more Millennials to the area. The movement is spearheaded by Sporting Kansas City’s ownership group, OnGoal LLC, whose five founders include Cerner chairman of the board, CEO and co-founder Neal Patterson.

“Really, the goal is simple,” says Ashley Voss, business development manager for Sporting Club Events at Sporting KC. “We want Kansas City to be a more attractive place for young people to live, work and play. We have long-term civic agenda goals, but right now, we are planting the seed and developing the culture for young professionals to come together.”

Over time, LiveKC will embark on a broad-scale effort targeting housing, jobs, transportation and entrepreneurship. But for now, the main focus is to generate buzz and captivate the hearts and minds of young professionals in their 20s and 30s. In fact, LiveKC’s corporate partners recruited their own employees in the Millennial age range to serve as LiveKC ambassadors.

“Ultimately, we look to create a critical mass of people at unique events,” Voss explains. “This ranges from an amateur table tennis tournament with several start-up ventures to ideation sessions with LiveKC members at Sporting Park to creating a pop-up lounge at the Plaza Art Fair that served as the meeting place for Millennials.”

One such event was Smash(KC), an epic ping pong battle that took place in early November at Ingenology’s Crossroads office. More than 150 attendees enjoyed games of table tennis, free kegs of Boulevard Beer and the chance to mingle with Sporting KC players—all for a good cause. The event raised nearly \$5,000 for SportingKC’s charity, The Victory Project.

The EveKC New Year’s Eve party is perhaps LiveKC’s most lauded event, but that soon may change considering what it has planned for its summertime soirée. The Fiery Stick Open will take

place July 18 on the north lawn of Liberty Memorial. You won’t find brass-buttoned blazers or fancy silverware here—just music, food trucks, giant-sized beer pong, competitive leisure sports and a chance to win \$1 million.

“We hope that the Fiery Stick Open will become Kansas City’s mid-summer spectacular,” Voss says. “We’re creating an environment where you can participate in bocce ball, badminton, eat from local food trucks and mingle with 3,000 of your closest friends.”

Oh, and an Oregon Trail Pub Crawl of our very own is rumored to be on the LiveKC events docket, which Millennials will not want to miss. Join the movement at livekc.org. **KC**



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GOTTA HAVE IT



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The Power Grid automatically goes to work when a device is connected, alleviating the pain of pulling out a dead phone because you forgot to turn the charger on. Five LED lights, which indicate your Power Grid's charge level and a function that powers off your charger when not in use for seven seconds, allow you to optimize the device's charging capabilities and prevent it from wasting energy when not in use.

Don't want to go it alone? Charge with friends! The durable, lightweight charger—available in black, pink, green and blue—is equipped with two USB ports and a power-house battery designed to hold enough charge to power up most phones twice or fully charge two phones at once. If you're an Apple user or just want to connect multiple devices without getting all of your cords in a mess, Tego Power sells a black, white or mint three-in-one trio cable equipped with three of the most common charging tips:

**Apple Lightning connection* (for the iPhone 5/5s, and newer iPod Touch)

**Apple 30-pin connection* (for iPhones older than the iPhone 5)

**Micro-USB connection* (for Android)

To purchase a Tego Power Grid (\$59 for one or a three-pack for \$125) or a Tego trio cable (\$19.99 for one or a three-pack for \$39.99), visit tegapower.com/collections/power-grid. —*Nicolette Martin*

PRINTING A BETTER FUTURE...IN 3-D!

Recently, 3-D printers have made huge strides in medicine, engineering, industrial design and more. Using an additive process to build objects (meaning they layer materials on top of one another), 3-D printers have been able to create toys, clothing and furniture. The printers allow engineers to test out designs without contacting external production plants, thus making printing one object just as cheap as mass-producing it.

Biomedical engineers are learning to print with live cells too. Printers already exist that can create muscle cells, vascular cells and stem cells. In fact, Cornell University has even created ears that are much more likely to be accepted by the human body than their synthetic counterparts.

While 3-D printers have completely changed many professional industries in the past decade, they are also becoming much more accessible to casual consumers. Right now, 3-D printers easily cost more than \$1,000. However, the Micro is revolutionizing the world of 3-D printing so that anyone can print anything. The printer, which is currently on Kickstarter, will utilize Micro Motion Technology with a microchip embedded inside of the printer's head for precision.

The Micro is compatible with various materials and will print in a variety of colors with its 3-D Printer Filaments. It comes with M3D software so that non-coders can use it, but it also supports open-source software for the more advanced printer. Visit printm3d.com to pre-order your Micro for only \$299. —*Alex Sher* ▶



WATCH OUT, GOOGLE GLASS—SMARTWATCHES ARE IN STYLE

Look no further than your wrist for the easiest way to keep up with the news, control music and tell time. Smartwatches are enriching the smartphone experience by alerting wearers of incoming notifications no matter where their phone is. In loud concerts, it's easy to miss an incoming call. Stopping to check emails during meetings comes across as rude. Looking at your phone in the middle of a movie theater is distracting to others (and will get you thrown out if you're at the Alamo Drafthouse). But smartwatches alert you whenever you get an incoming text or email without needing to search for your phone or disturbing people around you.

Sony's SmartWatch 2 is already available for \$199. It allows users to initiate calls and is compatible with most Android phones. The Pebble comes with a stylish metal or leather band, is compatible with the Apple Store and has its own vibrating alarm clock for only \$229. Samsung's Gear has a large 1.6-inch screen and activates when brought to the user's eyeliner. It is available for \$299 and sends outgoing calls and text messages with voice control. There are also rumors that Apple will be releasing the iWatch in late 2014 with a curved glass for a better fit and new technology to track workouts and more serious health issues; it might even predict heart attacks. —Alex Sher



JAMSTIK LETS YOU ROCK ON WITH YO BAD SELF

A Minneapolis-based company is giving a new meaning to the term “traveling musician,” creating the only mobile-friendly guitar that allows you to turn your Apple product into a real musical instrument—anytime, anywhere. Named one of Popular Science's top inventions last year, JamStik—made by Zivix—creates a whole new musical experience by connecting wirelessly to Apple devices, bringing musical accessibility to anyone with an iPhone, iPad or Mac.

Funded by an Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign, JamStik uses an infrared, light-sensing fretboard that “sees” finger placement and provides real-time feedback, and its portable design with real strings and frets maintains the feel of a traditional guitar without the hassle of tuning. The device works not by producing its own notes, but by sending codes of the musical notes you are “playing” to the receiving device, which in turn changes them into sounds.



The 15-inch-long device—equipped with a rechargeable lithium battery—features an assignable “D-Pad” that provides real-time performance controls, enhanced Musical Instrumental Digital Interface (MIDI) functions and more, and it's compatible with Apple's GarageBand and hundreds of other apps. If JamStik is your first attempt at learning to play the guitar, the bundled JamTutor teaching system shows on-screen finger positions, how-to videos, lessons, challenges and practice activities.

According to the product's Indiegogo campaign, JamStiks were scheduled to enter mass production in early June, and deliveries were expected in the weeks that followed. To learn more or to pre-order your own JamStik for \$299.99, visit jamstik.com. — Nicolette Martin **KC**

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An illustration on a teal background featuring a computer monitor with a webpage layout, a glowing lightbulb, a fountain pen, a keyboard, a mouse cursor, a globe, and a calendar icon.

GRAPHIC & WEB DESIGN

An illustration on a green background showing a desktop monitor with a bar chart and a magnifying glass over it, a tablet with a pie chart, a cloud, and gears.

SEO
(SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION)

WE PRINT
BROCHURES,
BUSINESS
CARDS AND
BANNERS,
TOO!

An illustration on a dark blue background depicting a stack of papers with a website layout, a hand saw, a power drill, gears, a paint bucket, and various tools like a screwdriver and wrench.

WEB MAINTENANCE

An illustration on a red background showing a computer monitor with a world map, a smartphone, a speech bubble, and various social media and business icons like a lightbulb, camera, mail, and heart.

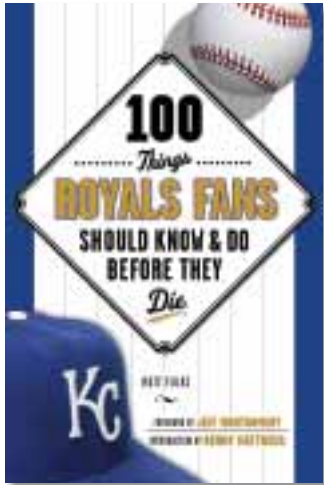
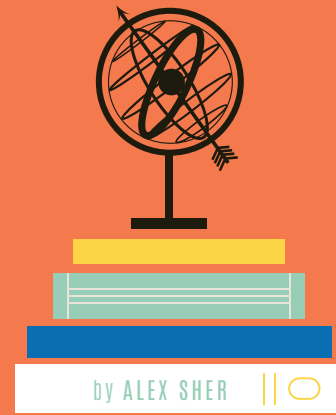
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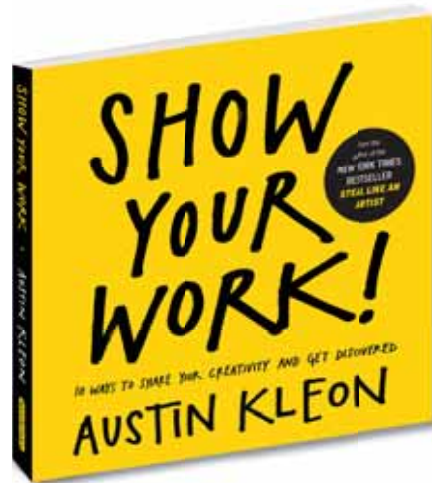
what's on your NIGHTSTAND?



ARE YOU LOYAL TO THE ROYALS?

Matt Fulks is a freelance journalist and avid sports lover who has written more than a dozen sports books and contributes regularly to the *Kansas City Star* and *Royals Baseball Insider*, the official publication of the Kansas City Royals. In his new book, “100 Things Royals Fans Should Know & Do Before They Die,” Fulks provides a bucket list for all Royals fans. He explores many of the most endearing and inspiring Kansas City Royals moments and provides interesting statistics about the team.

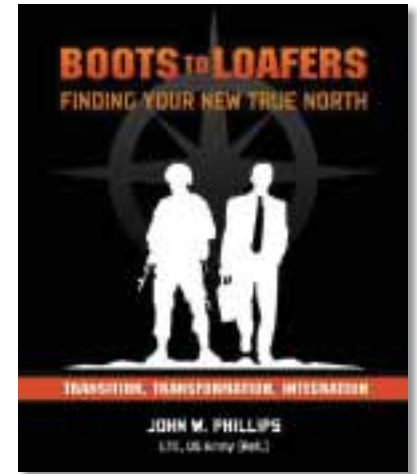
In addition to providing facts and figures about Royals players and teams and commemorating some of the more beautiful moments in the team’s history, the book shares some silly stories too, including George Brett’s pine tar incident while living with Mark Gubicza and Bret Saberhagen. Suffice it to say, “100 Things Royals Fans Should Know” does not leave anything out when it comes to the Royals experience. Gain deep insight into the Royals through interviews with the players and feel proud of all of their accomplishments while laughing hysterically at some of the team’s funnier moments. This book will make you fall in love with Kansas City all over again. “100 Things Royals Fans Should Know” is available on Amazon for \$12.75 and \$9.99 on the Kindle.



TRUE TALENT TAKES TENACITY

Everyone’s an artist in today’s day and age. Expressing yourself is easier than ever, thanks to blogging and social media. With an Instagram-equipped smartphone in your hand, you’re instantly a photographer. But why are some people discovered for their passions, while others are not? It all comes down to self-promotion and knowing what to share, according to Austin Kleon’s new book, “Show Your Work! 10 Ways to Share Your Creativity and Get Discovered.”

Kleon shows artists how to put their work out in the open by learning how to connect with their audiences. For instance, telling others about the process behind your work will cultivate a stronger interest in what you do. The book itself is a shining example of how this can be done, thanks to a behind-the-scenes chapter at the end. Its 10 guiding rules include: “You do not have to be a genius,” “Share something every day,” and “Do not turn into human spam.” Chock-full of optimistic quotes and eye-catching graphics, “Show Your Work!” gives artists the confidence to pursue what they love and then present it to the world. The book is available at most major booksellers and online at austinkleon.com/show-your-work/.



FROM COMBAT TO CORPORATE

The national unemployment rate in 2013 sat at 7.3 percent, but the unemployment rate of veterans who served post 9/11 was a staggering 10 percent. This could be due to communication problems between veterans and their prospective employers. Businesses find military resumes hard to understand, and veterans have trouble applying the skills they gained in the military to civilian jobs. To ease the transition between military and civilian careers, retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel John W. Phillips wrote “Boots to Loafers: Finding Your True North,” a field guide for veterans to successfully land a job.

Phillips shares what he learned while making his way up to a mid-level executive role at The Coca-Cola Company. He emphasizes that veterans are not alone in their confusing transition and provides advice for settling into a new career as well as a civilian household. Broken up into three main steps of a veteran’s journey: transition, transformation and integration, the book goes into detail on how to learn about a job opportunity, write a resume, successfully dress for and speak at an interview and ways veterans can apply their military skills to a successful civilian career. “Boots to Loafers” is full of encouraging quotes and includes a useful chart, which makes for quick and easy reading. It’s available at most major booksellers or online at bootstoloafers.com. **KC**

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT?

Apps these days are a dime a dozen, which makes it almost impossible to filter out the ones worth downloading. Have no fear: KCB's trusty tech geeks are here! Each issue, we reveal our top five must-have apps.

by
LINDSEY KENNEDY

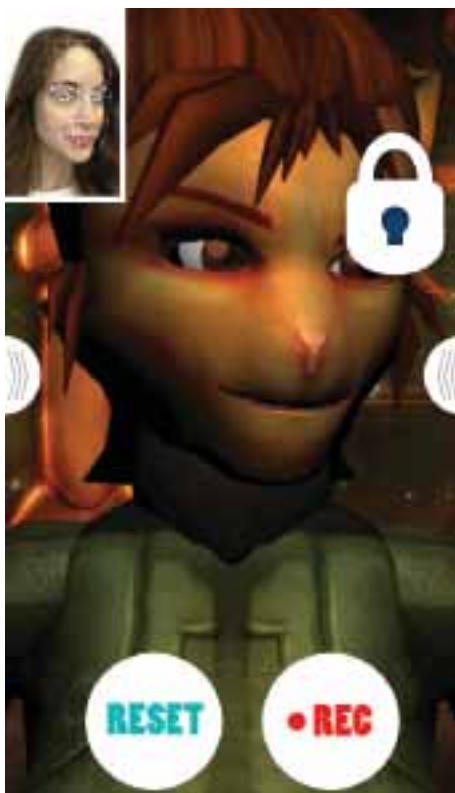
1. CLOAK

We all have people in our lives we would rather not run into. While the explosion of check-in based social media and loyalty apps has ensured that many of us consistently publicize our whereabouts, there has yet to be a mobile technology whose application helps users avoid each other. Enter Cloak, a free app for iOS that scours popular sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Foursquare to consolidate the location-specific check-ins of your friends and enemies alike. Especially for people whose social circles utilize social media to broadcast their activities, cloak is an ingenious way to turn the tables on the more unpleasant over-sharers among us. In a tech-obsessed world, it seems only natural that the progression of location-based technologies has them marketing themselves as a method for social avoidance, and this is perhaps why Cloak was heavily downloaded in its initial weeks on the market.



2. BOULEVARD BEER FINDER

When the mood strikes for a Bourbon Barrel Quad or Tank 7 Farmhouse Ale, what is a Kansas Citian to do besides go from one establishment after another in aimless search for their favorite Boulevard brew? Thanks to KC-based software company Rarewire, there is finally a solution for Boulevard lovers on the go. The Boulevard Beer Finder is an iOS app that uses a connected device's location to pinpoint nearby vendors of KC's beloved Boulevard beer. The app also provides detailed by-the-brew data, informing even the most knowledgeable fans and connecting them through social media links. To alleviate the possibility of an anxiety-ridden futile quest for your favorite seasonal brew, this free app might just save your night. ➤



3. NITO

Digital animation is one of the most rapidly advancing fields in technology, so it's no surprise that technologies like facial tracking have found their way into the world of mobile apps. Nito is an app that employs facial tracking—like that used to create 3-D digital animation—to bring personalized avatars to life. A user calibrates the avatar by placing their face within the tracking margins. Once this is done, the animation matches the user's expressions with impressive detail. Although Nito currently only offers a selection of pre-set avatars, the app will soon allow users to design and personalize their own. Nito can be used to record messages for friends, create digital shorts to share on social media or just to watch the animated avatar come to life. The vision behind Nito goes beyond the simple fun of watching your own personal digital cartoon. The app's creators believe that avatars will have a prominent position in the future of technological communication. Their use as personal representation is already common practice, with gaming and social media platforms often relying on avatars as a means for individual expression in an increasingly digitized world. Though currently only available for iOS and Apple computers, Nito creators plan to expand to Android and Windows devices by fall of this year.

4. KITESTRING

When Kitestring founder Stephan Boyer found himself calling to check on his girlfriend while she walked home through a dangerous neighborhood, it sparked the idea for his remarkably useful app. Kitestring is an SMS text and Web-based service that checks on users as they trek unfamiliar or dangerous territory. Free and compatible with all smart devices, Kitestring works by alerting pre-set emergency contacts if a user fails to respond to a programmed check-in. Before jogging solo or picking up a Craigslist purchase, users program a duration of time for their errand. Kitestring sends a check-in via text message, and the user must reply within five minutes or their emergency contacts will be notified. Users can easily extend the length of their trip by sending a simple text to update their ETA. For additional security, a password can prevent someone other than the user from checking in on his or her behalf. Another feature allows users to enter a “duress code,” which sends an alert to emergency contacts while appearing as though the check-in has been completed. Although initially intended for situations like his girlfriend's less-than-ideal commute, Boyer found that the service has served a wide variety of functions. “I've been pleasantly surprised with great feedback from several other demographics, including mountain hikers, real estate agents, the online dating community and the elderly,” he says. Acting as the concerned mother of the app world, Kitestring serves up peace of mind and could potentially even save lives.



5. FIRECHAT

Firechat is the messaging app that ingeniously utilizes an iOS feature to provide free text messaging with or without Wi-Fi or network connection. It uses Apple's Multipeer Connectivity frameworks to connect to devices nearby through Wi-Fi or Bluetooth, thus establishing a wireless mesh network with the engaged mobile devices. In “Nearby” mode, Firechat opens sessions with devices in the same vicinity, which can send out messages anonymously to anyone within range (the messages themselves are not private, as anyone in the surrounding area can access them). The crowdsourced connectivity of Firechat opens a plethora of doors for app developers, but at present, it provides unprecedented free messaging no matter the connectivity environment. The ability to communicate when connectivity has been compromised or is unavailable means that everything from natural



disasters to densely populated places like sports arenas need not be the technological nightmares they once were. The anonymous nature of Firechat (users register with only a name) has obvious benefits for anyone looking to communicate incognito, and the lack of a centrally located shutoff makes Firechat an anti-censorship dream come true. The app's latest version allows users to open their own chats specific to certain interest groups or locations, and it even features an “Everyone” mode that displays conversations across the country. Firechat represents just one of the many possibilities presented with mesh technologies, and its position as one of the top 10 social networking apps in 80 countries is no accident. **IC**



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KC
BUSINESS

TOP

COMPANY

AWARDS 2014







words KATHRYN JONES | photo PAUL ANDREWS

These days, the only way for an old-fashioned, family-owned farm to succeed in the 21st century is to think innovatively as a business while staying true to its core values, and that is precisely why Shatto Milk Company is our Top Company for 2014.

Technically, Shatto celebrated its 10th anniversary last year, but the farm itself has been operating in Osborn, Mo., since the late 1800s. After witnessing countless dairy farmers go out of business due to the low milk prices being paid by large dairy cooperatives for bulk milk, Leroy Shatto and his wife, Barbara, knew it was a matter of time before they faced a similar fate, yet they refused to give up.

In 2003, the Shattos went back to the way things were done a long time ago: bottling their milk fresh and hand-delivering it to a small group of stores in the Kansas City and St. Joseph areas. Locals were intrigued by the handsome glass bottles emblazoned with bold statement words like “Pure,” “Local,” “Family” and “Moo!” and were hooked after the first taste.

“The secret is that we do very little to our milk,” says Matt Shatto, son of Leroy and Barbara. “We do not over-pasteurize the milk, which can burn the sugars in the milk and take away from the natural taste. The fact that our milk can be from cow to store in as little as 12 hours preserves its freshness. Fresh milk equates to better-tasting milk. In addition, we take really good care of our cows. A happy cow is truly a better milk-producing cow.”

Because the cows don’t receive artificial growth hormones to produce more milk than what’s naturally possible, and because the farm is vertically integrated (meaning the milk production, bottling and product development are all done in-house), the company’s production capacity is limited to just under 200 gallons of milk per day. Suffice it to say, Leroy and Barb’s main challenge now is keeping up with the demand.

Shatto’s chocolate milk—consistently rated among the best in the world—flies off supermarket shelves. Its more unique milk flavors, such as cotton candy, cookies & cream, banana (created at the behest of a 7-year-old on one of the farm’s public tours), and root beer have developed a cult following among children and adults alike. And to say

the company’s butter, cheese and ice cream are “udderly” decadent would be putting it mildly.

Shatto is a nationally recognized leader in the dairy industry based upon its product freshness, quality and packaging as well as its simple yet memorable approach to marketing. The company’s sole commercial is of Leroy sitting on a milk bucket next to one of the cows while he answers a fan letter.

“Dear Leroy,” he reads. “Shatto Milk is so great, why not share it with the whole country? You could franchise your business. Shatto Milk would be everywhere. You’d be rich and famous. What do you say? ... Rich and famous? No thanks!”

“At this time, we are 100 percent focused on serving only the Kansas City and St. Joseph markets,” Matt explains. “We are much too small and our focus is much too narrow to ever consider national distribution.”

Although Shatto has received countless accolades for its product innovations, its environmental stewardship and community service are what earned the company the coveted Small Business of the Year for the State of Missouri and National Small Business of the Year Runner-Up awards in 2006.

In addition to offering incentives to shoppers who return empty Shatto bottles to local grocery stores and switching from paper towels to reusable washcloths during the milking process, the company partnered with Peculiar, Mo.-based Elmwood Reclaimed Timber to use its leftover sawdust as natural bedding for the cows. “It helps a local company get rid of their waste and allows us to repurpose a product vs. buying something new each time we need updated bedding,” Matt says.

Shatto has partnered with more than 50 local charities, from Harvesters and the Humane Society to the Special Olympics and Ronald McDonald House Charities, as a way to give back to the very community that helped it survive in hard times.

“Eleven years ago, we made the decision to bottle our own milk because we could not make it any longer selling in bulk like most dairies do,” Matt says. “The community has been very kind and supportive of us, thus we want to do all we can to give back and be supportive of them.” **KC**

EMPLOYEE

EMPOWERMENT



words SUSAN FOTOVICH MCCABE
photo AARON LINDBERG

ACS: CONCRETE | CONSTRUCTION

BETH DRINGENBERG

JESSE LOCKARD

MIKE DENNY

RYAN
DRUSSEL

It's not easy to think like a family in the workplace. But for Olathe-based ACS: Concrete | Construction and its small staff, fostering empowerment benefits both employees and the company.

With a staff of 15 during heavy, seasonal periods, ACS is a cutting-edge design/build firm specializing in residential outdoor living spaces and commercial concrete polishing. And while the family-owned business routinely wins industry awards for its concepts and designs, it's the admiration of its employees that has become the hidden gem in this local company.

"Both ACS President Mike Denny and Vice President Don Denny are very involved and dedicated to each employee—personally and professionally," says ACS Office Administrator Jesse Lockard. "In fact, Mike and Don have devoted themselves to helping their employees grow to their potential, including helping with medical bills, home remodels, philanthropy by way of local charities, holiday gift giving and more."

For homeowners, ACS helps make the most of home life by expanding the functional and entertaining aspects of a house beyond the back door and into the yard, making the space more enjoyable and more livable. From fire features to water features, carpentry to masonry, concrete placement, construction and even the design, ACS works closely with homeowners to bring the inside of your house—out.

Each member of the staff is hands-on with every project, demonstrating a level of craftsmanship and ingenuity that sets ACS apart from the competition. Mike, a certified master concrete finisher and polisher, serves as chairman of the Decorative Concrete Board, for which he helped create a specifier's guide for both decorative concrete and polished concrete placement, and as president of the Concrete Promotional Group of Kansas City.

The greatest challenge facing ACS is finding balance between the growth of the business and its employees. This past year, five employees gave birth to new additions, requiring some flexibility in staff roles and responsibilities.

"Mike has always allowed me the time off that I've requested to put my son first," Lockard says. "He also sets up meetings for each employee to sit down with a financial adviser (at no cost to the employee) to discuss how best to save for and invest in their own future."

That kind of dedication pays off in improved productivity, which ultimately benefits its customers, according to Lockard.

"I think potential customers should find comfort in knowing that when they are choosing to contract our company for their project, they are making the choice to invest in our families as well. They are allowing our designers to stretch their creativity, our workers to show off their craft and for each of us to be blessed with one more day of work to provide for our [families]. We spend a lot of time learning and fine-tuning our trade, but we spend all of our time as parents and children of our own families. We treat each client as if they are yet another extension of our own." **KC**

Regardless of industry, every company wants to grow and thrive, yet the path to success isn't always an easy one—especially if that growth happens at a rapid pace, which is exactly what happened at PB&J Restaurants, Inc.

“Our massive growth of seven restaurants this past year and in the present has been tough and stretched some of us thin,” says Brian Flavin, IT Director at PB&J. “We’ve overcome those obstacles by recruiting the best people in the business and using our great chefs, managers and trainers to set all of the new restaurants up for success.”

In addition to a restaurant portfolio that includes YaYa’s Euro Bistro Kansas City and Burnt End BBQ, PB&J recently introduced two new concepts: Newport Grill, an “oceanside oasis” created by PB&J co-founder Paul Khoury, and Paradise Diner, which features “the finest, freshest, sustainable and locally sourced food served up just the way you like it—fast, friendly and fun.”

Bringing new restaurant concepts to Kansas City is one of the company’s top priorities. And this commitment to giving guests the food, drink and experiences they crave is one of the many reasons why PB&J has been around for nearly three decades. Another reason? The company’s employees.

“PB&J has been around for 27 years because of the great people who do what’s right, do their best and show people they care while having fun doing it,” Flavin says.

The company’s impressive retention rates speak to the employee dedication that’s an integral part of PB&J’s culture.

“This year, we will give away our 42nd, 43rd and 44th Harley Davidsons for 15 years of employment with PB&J and, the year after,



words KATY SCHAMBERGER | photo PAUL ANDREWS

we’ll give away six more, making 50 Harley Davidsons given to people who have worked for us for 15 years,” Flavin says. “People like to work for PB&J because we care about them and make work fun.”

That sort of commitment doesn’t stop once you’re outside PB&J’s offices or restaurants. Ongoing community involvement is also an important part of PB&J’s success.

“We support our local farmers at all of our restaurants as much as possible,” Flavin says. “We donate thousands of dollars to various organizations every year and raise between \$25,000 and \$50,000 annually for local Catholic schools. We also support many of the local high schools with donation nights and other fundraiser support. The PB&J team believes in treating others as you would like to be treated, which is very important in our community.”

Dedicated employees, innovative restaurants and a commitment to community involvement? PB&J Restaurants has undoubtedly crafted the perfect recipe for success. **KC**





words KELSEY CIPOLLA | photo DAVID SHAUGHNESSY

Ground-breaking innovations, state-of-the-art account monitoring software and top-notch customer service have allowed Gragg Advertising to deliver big benefits to clients and earn major accolades, including a spot on Inc.'s list of the fastest-growing companies in America.

But it is what the 20-year-old, River Market-based company does at no cost that makes it a true star of the Kansas City business scene. "We believe it is our responsibility to give back to the community while building a better agency, and our employees have embraced that," explains President and COO Darryl Mattox.

Thanks to its expertise in a variety of fields, from branding and digital marketing to affiliate and aggregation management and data services, one of the best ways the company gives back is by donating the time and talents of its staff.

"We are privileged to share our talents to support our clients' missions and enrich local communities," Mattox says, adding that each department plays an important role in the success of the company's pro bono accounts.

When it comes to working with clients, the online technology-focused, full-service, strategic advertising agency goes above and beyond to make sure it's doing all it can to deliver value. That work ethic extends to helping an ever-expanding list of pro bono clients, which has included the Humane Society of Greater Kansas City, the Salvation Army and City Union Mission.

Additionally, Gragg sponsors several vital fundraisers, such as the annual Trolley Run benefiting the Children's Center for the Visually Impaired and City Union Mission's "Women Who've Changed the Heart of the City" event.

The company has also worked to help the city itself, championing efforts to revitalize downtown KC by hiring local talent and growing its client base through local accounts with a dedication honored by the Downtown KC Council and Economic Development Corporation last year.

"This is a great city with a long history, and we are dedicated to its continued prosperity," Mattox says.

To help better ensure that prosperity, the company created an employee-led volunteering program known as Gragg Gives Back, which expanded its efforts in 2013 with the addition of regular monthly activities.

Last year, Gragg volunteers collected more than 300 pounds of pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House of Kansas City, provided more than 170 meals to Harvesters, donated supplies to the Humane Society and handcrafted Valentine's Day cards for patients at Children's Mercy Hospital.

"Gragg Gives Back provides employees an opportunity to organize volunteer events based on what is important to them," Mattox explains. "Whether it is serving food at a soup kitchen or reading stories to children at Children's Mercy, giving back with no expectation makes us better citizens." **KC**

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words KATHRYN JONES | photo AARON LINDBERG



JASON GRILL

Whether he's interviewing local innovators on KMBZ's "Entrepreneur KC" radio show, writing a piece for The Huffington Post explaining why our burgeoning Midwestern tech hub is "not flyover country," or helping a tech firm gain exposure through his PR firm JGrill Media, Jason Grill is your quintessential Kansas Citian who keeps his hometown close to his heart.

Through a unique combination of media and government relations, business consulting, and local and national commentary, JGrill Media helps establish mutually beneficial relationships among key players in the community that all want the same thing: "To make Kansas City the best to place to live and do business," Grill says.

"Whether you need advice, are looking for capital or want to meet with someone at the Kauffman Foundation, people here have a vested interest in seeing other entrepreneurs succeed and will actually help you build your business while building their own," he continues. "There's a Midwestern value here that believes that strengthening the community is very important."

Building relationships and making introductions is one of the key ways Grill does his part. Although he "never would have guessed" he'd someday have his own company—or rather companies, plural, since he's also one of the owners and cofounders of Sock 101—JGrill Media is basically the culmination of Grill's illustrious career as an attorney, author, adjunct professor, entrepreneur, political advisor, media correspondent and two-term Missouri state representative.

"I've always liked media, politics and connecting people, and all of those things are important for what I do now," Grill says. "I know who the players are, how to get meetings set up and how to interact with the media. Being a legislator taught me how to campaign and how to fundraise. And as a business owner and startup cofounder, I understand the needs of young companies from a relationship, media and growth perspective."

Drawing upon his eclectic background, business savvy, legal knowledge and strategic media approach, Grill has a seemingly effortless knack for fostering partnerships that not only help his clients grow and get noticed, but solidifies his own position as a superstar in the community.

His contagious optimism and unwavering civic pride only fuel his popularity. "I just like talking to people and building relationships," Grill admits. "It keeps you sharp and helps you grow as a person so you can build more relationships."

It's hard to predict what this serial entrepreneur will do next. "I don't think I'll ever settle into one role," Grill says. "When I was a kid, I wanted to be a football player one year, and then the next year, I wanted to be a baseball player. I think that's the nature of being an entrepreneur. And I think that's what makes JGrill Media unique because it works in different verticals to provide services that no other affordable and hands-on KC company can provide." **KC**

INNOVATIVE

RE/MAX STATE LINE

THE SCOTTIE BRODERICK TEAM



words KATY SCHAMBERGER
photo DAVID SHAUGHNESSY



SCOTTIE BRODERICK

GREG FRANKLIN

Scottie Broderick is no stranger to innovation. After starting her real estate career in 1977, she later achieved the distinction of having the first assistant (and, as a result, the first team) in the Kansas City real estate industry.

And since then, the founder of the Scottie Broderick Team and co-owner of REMAX State Line Real Estate Inc. hasn't slowed down, even while dealing with an industry that's been dramatically disrupted by technology and change.

"The biggest change in today's market is a lack of communication," Broderick says. "We can do an entire deal without meeting the seller, buyer or realtor, and in that case, I think you lose a whole lot."

Broderick has no qualms about pushing her team to not only deliver superior service and experiences, but also to constantly be on the lookout for ways to do things differently.

"REMAX State Line is 31 years old this year," she says. "For an independently owned real estate office in the Kansas City area, just staying afloat is innovation. When the housing market was steadily growing through the 1980s, we had agents building ironclad relationships within their circles of influence. In the mid- to late 1990s, when new construction was booming, our agents were forging partnerships with builders. And during our most recent recession, our agents had to dig deep with their relationships and also adapt to short-sale, foreclosures and other distressed properties."

That sort of knack for finding—and capitalizing on—opportunity is a hallmark of Broderick's 34-year career. Although the former New York City model never expected to become a realtor, she soon realized it's what she loves—well, most of it.

"I quickly found out I wasn't a paper person," she says with a laugh. "I had a terrible time getting my stuff turned in when I first started. My husband used to joke that I couldn't balance a checkbook but I could manage a closing to the penny."

Today, Broderick doesn't just manage closings—she oversees the REMAX State Line office and a six-person team. She's considering adding two new team members—and although eight people doesn't sound like a lot, for Broderick it's the ideal number. "If you get past eight team members, you lose that control, camaraderie and family feeling," she says.

And for Broderick, real estate is very much a family business. Her daughter, Heather, joined the business 16 years ago and now works as a team leader.

Although the Broderick Team's success is undeniable, it hasn't been an easy road. Market turbulence sparked by the recent recession didn't just make for a tough real estate environment—it also led to a major change.

"In the past year, we reached a serious decision," Broderick says. "We had just gone through one of the worst five-year stretches in real estate and had to decide if we should sell, reduce our size or jump in. We opted to buy another agency and combined more than 60 agents in one office."

The office continues to add more agents each month and, according to May 2014 statistics, was the No. 1 REMAX office in the state of Kansas—proof that Broderick and REMAX State Line co-owner Greg Franklin made the right move for the long haul. **KC**



★ REINVENTION ★ TRIPLE-I

words SUSAN FOTOVICH McCABE | photo PAUL ANDREWS

When going forward, sometimes it's necessary to look back. Revisiting its heritage is how Overland Park-based Triple-I weathered the country's economic storm several years ago. The business-to-business technology consulting firm recently reenergized its brand, returning to its entrepreneurial roots and fostering a new culture that thrives on agility.

Realizing it was no longer economical or practical to be "all things to all people," Triple-I now collaborates with regional, national and global technology companies that provide value-added services and solutions to its clients, jointly achieving results that matter. Today, Triple-I's primary market is in the Midwest, and its clients include more than 300 different companies across all verticals. Its primary services and solutions include Web development, mobility solutions, user experience, social computing, IT optimization and Talent as a Service (TaaS).

"During the most recent economic downturn, we lost a significant portion of our revenue," says Triple-I Marketing Communications Manager Mary Noulles. "Prior to the recession, much of our business came from the government sector, so rather than accept the new normal, we embraced the new reality to no longer worry about the uncertainties, complexities and risks of the new normal. Our renewed brand conveys 'Integrity, Insight, Innovation' in alignment with our focus on the application of emerging technology, and our new website is a testament to our robust business ecosystem."

As a result, Triple-I has transformed its sales process and increased its focus on commercial clients, which has led to a dramatic shift in its revenue sources, Noulles says. In fact, as the company nears the end of fiscal year 2014, it has recovered its losses and then some, never once going into debt. Triple-I recently expanded its team, filling a total of six high-level positions since July 2013, with plans to continue to invest in quality people.

Founded in 1971, Triple-I has come a long way. The firm began working with TWA, implementing the former airline's first real-time passenger reservation systems. In the 1980s, Bell Labs engaged Triple-I to develop and implement enhanced systems for worldwide message switching. And in the 1990s, when Time Warner needed help developing a state-of-the-art, full-service multimedia network, Triple-I won the contract.

"The Kansas City region is a unique synthesis of Silicon Valley innovation and Midwest values," says Triple-I President and CEO Perry Puccetti. "We're about 'we' vs. 'me,' allowing us to form strategic partnerships with firms of all sizes—whether it's VML, a global firm, or Moblico, a startup. We may be perceived as relatively small within the regional tech industry, but we play big, thanks to Kansas City's symbiotic ecosystem and our innovative mindset."

According to Noulles, Triple-I has always believed that from challenge rises opportunity, and the company's attitude is one of finding a way to win. "This 'soul searching' allowed us to rediscover who we are as an organization—something that is necessary to understand where we have been in order to know where we are going," she says. **KC**



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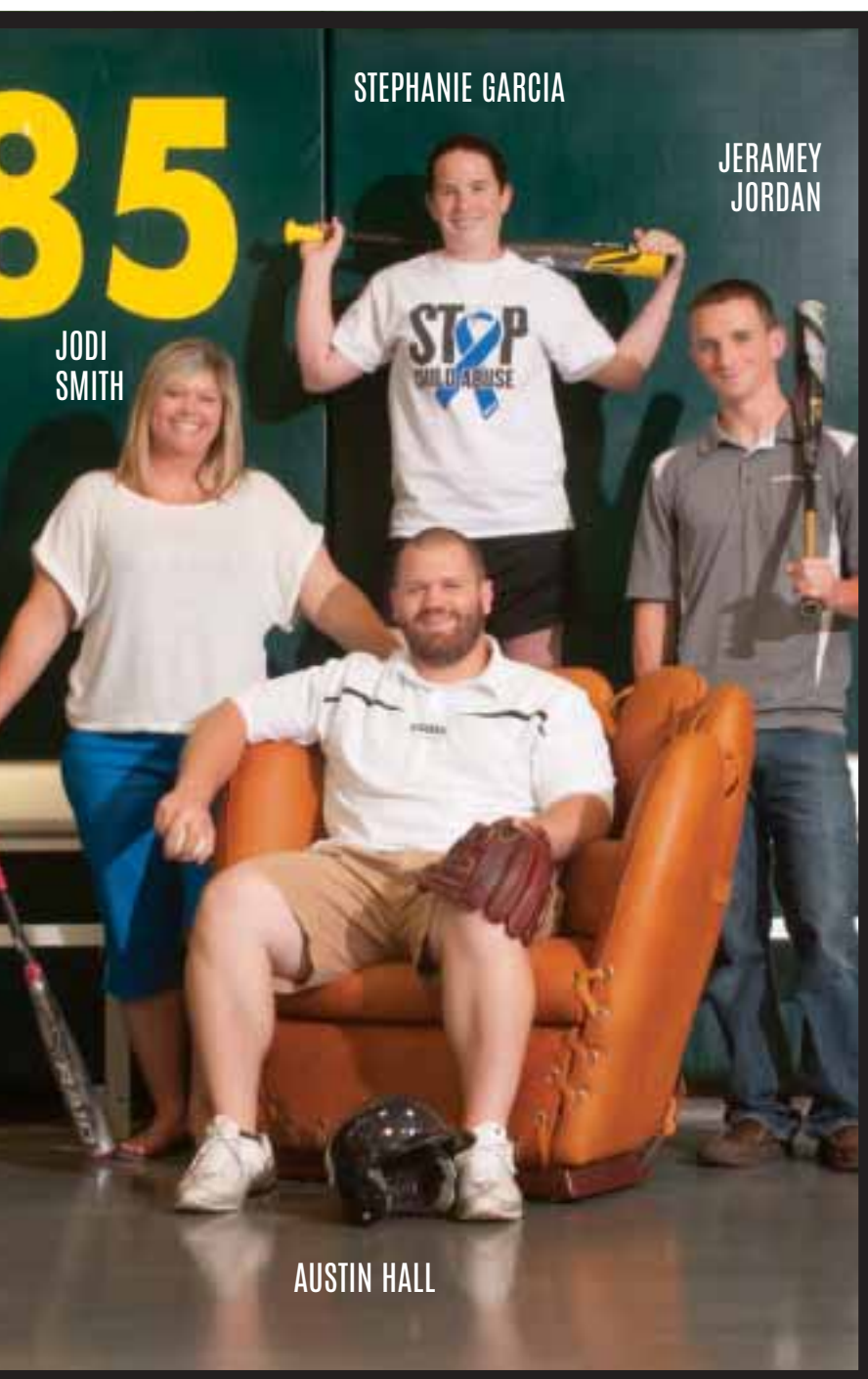
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COOL COMPANY



PRO ATHLETE, INC

words KATY SCHAMBERGER | photo AARON LINDBERG



STEPHANIE GARCIA

JERAMEY JORDAN

JODI SMITH

AUSTIN HALL

Just how cool is online baseball and softball retailer Pro Athlete? For starters, consider the company's philosophy on job titles.

"My official title is 'No Title,'" says Andrew Dowis. "I act as COO, but we don't care about titles. We all do a little bit of everything."

Established as a local brick-and-mortar sporting goods store in 1987, Pro Athlete moved operations entirely online in 1999 with the rollout of the company's first website, BeAPro.com. Today, Pro Athlete owns JustBats.com and JustBallGloves.com—two eCommerce sites that specialize in the sale of baseball and softball bats and gloves.

Working in the technology-driven world of eCommerce is undoubtedly cool, yet at Pro Athlete, inventive employee perks help contribute to a culture that fosters employee productivity, well-being and fun.

"We have free haircuts, free massages, made-to-order breakfast and free lunch prepared by an in-house chef," Dowis says. "There's a swimming pool, batting cage, racquetball court, ping pong tables and game room that employees can use during the day to take a break and be active."

Pro Athlete also pays 100 percent of its employees' health insurance. And because giving back to the community is a top priority, every Pro Athlete employee receives a stipend that they can donate to the charity of their choice.

Given those sorts of benefits, it's no wonder that employee retention levels are high. And when employees reach a milestone in the company's Years of Service program, they're rewarded with the ultimate prize: a personalized bobblehead doll that's crafted to look just like the employee.

These perks (and others) all underscore the company's larger goal: to provide a great work environment.

"Being an eCommerce company, we're always open," Dowis says. "We have employees who work a lot of hours because they want to. We provide a great environment so they can take meaningful breaks and feel energized. We do work really hard and put in a lot of effort, but we also know how to have a good time while doing it. Nobody wants to come in and dread work, so we try to make it fun while producing quality results on a daily basis."

Creating that sort of work environment is a two-way street. Dowis says the management team is constantly collecting employee feedback and works to implement ideas so that all of the employees are more invested in the company. In fact, employee feedback helped spark significant changes with company management.

"We had an inexperienced management team and no real clear-cut system for management," Dowis says. "During our Employee Engagement assessments, our employees called us out on it, so we reacted. We built a system for managers to all get on the same page and manage the Pro Athlete way. We built a Relationship Building Initiative (RBI) to get managers and employees talking more and gaining more trust with each other. The employees have noticed the changes and are excited about the direction in which things are heading."

Company perks are cool—but at the end of the day, it's this sort of commitment to employee satisfaction and well-being that's a true testament to the company's culture and success.

"Our leadership genuinely cares for the people who make what we do possible," Dowis says. "They love keeping the focus on the employees because they're what keeps us here." **KC**

MARKETING

CANDID MARKETING + COMMUNICATIONS

words KELSEY CIPOLLA | photo DAVID SHAUGHNESSY

Being better isn't just the goal at candid marketing + communications, it's the principle the company was founded on.

Building a better kind of agency was the reason President Becky Freetly-Graber left her corporate marketing job in 2005 to start the Lee's Summit company. In the nine years since, candid has found its sweet spot in Kansas City's marketing community.

"Carving this niche as a B2B agency is our innovative way of finding a 'blue ocean' in the crowded landscape of Kansas City ad agencies," explains Vice President Sara Freetly-Grubb.

candid has also made its mark as one of few agencies in the region with a strong focus on economic development, exemplified by the company's work with long-time customer Kansas City Power & Light (KCP&L).

Working with KCP&L's online economic development site selection database, candid manages public relations and social media, develops marketing and advertising materials, and consults on sales messaging and strategy to elevate brand awareness to help generate leads and maintain communication with contacts throughout the country.

Other clients in the field include the Wyandotte Economic Development Council and Southwest Johnson County, and the agency continues to expand into other facets, including commercial real estate, construction and development, transportation and logistics, and animal health.

If it sounds like a lot for the small team to tackle, that's because it is. But the candid crew is always game for a challenge, especially those associated with making the complex accessible.

"We describe our firm as a strategically creative marketing powerhouse with an industrious spirit, which stems from the principals' passion for taking difficult subject matter and boiling it down to manageable messages, developing targeted marketing campaigns that speak to the right audiences and deploying tactics that move the needle for our clients," Freetly-Grubb says.

And candid's clients are pleased with the results they're seeing. Since 2008, the company has retained an impressive 90 percent of retainer clients. The rate reflects the benefits of the company's approach to serving clients, which can be characterized as high impact and efficient but with a personal touch.

"At candid, we treat every client like they are the only one," Freetly-Grubb says. "Because of our size, our clients enjoy hands-on relationships with the people who work on their account, which means everyone on the candid team is accountable for their success."

Since its early days, the agency has accumulated numerous awards (36 to be exact) from organizations including the Business Marketing Association of KC, International Association of Business Communicators, Non-Profit Connect and the International Economic Development Council, and most recently, the Hermes Creative Awards.

What's next for the self-described powerhouse? As candid enters its 10th year, Kansas City can expect more hard work, more happy clients and an even bigger footprint in B2B marketing from the company.

"Many in our industry might not consider these type of clients to be sexy enough," Freetly-Grubb explains, "but we love the work we do and would take marketing railroads, 500,000-square-foot buildings and a cure for diabetes in dogs over donuts and hamburgers any day." **KC**



DAVE
CLAFLIN

SARA
FREETLY-GRUBB

BECKY
FREETLY-GRABER

JULIE
NIEMANN
LARSON



words SUSAN FOTOVICH MCCABE | photo PAUL ANDREWS



ROBERT
GERSHON

BRUCE
GERSHON

SUSIE SHATZ

STEPHANIE
GERSHON

For Arrow Fabricare Services, adapting to changes in technology and society over a span of a century is only natural for the Kansas City-based dry cleaning company. Founded by Joseph Gershon in 1914, his son, Robert, joined the family business in 1947 upon returning from World War II. Robert—who is now 88 years old and comes into the office part time—focused primarily on building a reputation for quality dry cleaning by catering to and seeking the recommendations from Kansas City’s fine department stores.

Robert’s son, Bruce, joined the business in 1974 and became owner of Arrow in 1988. It was Bruce’s uncle, Melvin Gershon, who invented the foam press pad in 1948, holding a patent on it for 17 years. The pad, which has undergone a few changes, is still manufactured and widely used in the dry cleaning industry today. Robert and Melvin also invented the thumb switch for an electric steam iron, which was further developed and manufactured by Cissell. It is still used today.

Despite surviving a century in an ever-evolving business, Arrow Fabricare Services’ greatest challenge is holding the line on pricing in today’s economy without sacrificing profitability. It requires significant thought and strategic planning, according to Arrow Fabricare Services President Bruce Gershon.

“One of the things that we did was look at all of our expenses and try to find ways to save on things like payroll expenses, insurance, telephone and internet, supplies and utility costs,” Gershon says. “We also looked at production, route and shipping costs. And we looked for ways to add new lines of business, better promote the lines we already have and add more customers.”

In some ways, the company went back to the basics in terms of reducing costs. For example, it changed payroll service providers and went back to its phone and cell phone providers to see what they could do to reduce company costs. Additionally, Arrow Fabricare Services invested in and installed solar energy panels on 70 percent of its roof to save on utility costs.

“We meet with our managers daily, weekly and monthly to constantly study our processes, look for areas where we can improve, and learn from our mistakes,” Gershon says. “We are already one of the most diversified dry cleaning operations in the country, so finding new lines of business isn’t easy.

“But we have now added Ultrasonic cleaning capabilities to our drapery and blind cleaning division, as well as our fire restoration division,” he continues. “To add new customers, we use every opportunity possible, including our sales staff, online sales, social media, our managers, customer service representatives and our 100-year reputation for quality work.”

Through the years, Arrow Fabricare Services has followed trends in an effort to stay current. In 1993, the company worked with Polo Ralph Lauren to produce a vintage clothing line called RRL. It later transformed its cleaning plant into a production facility that processed different styles of leather jackets and coats, vests, belts, boots and shirts, as well as denim jeans for which it developed a patented process to create a weathered, vintage look.

Green technology continues to be important too. The company improved its cleaning systems, lowered its water consumption and instituted a recycling program. Through equipment upgrades, it improved its natural gas usage by 50 percent.

“Arrow has weathered time and continued to grow successfully for more than 100 years,” Gershon says. “We did this by developing strong customer relations within the community and by providing and committing to superior quality.” **KC**



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THINK TANK



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Kansas City is home to finger-licking barbecue, a deeply rooted jazz scene and, unbeknownst to some, America's animal health corridor. In fact, between Columbia, Mo., and Manhattan, Kan., sits the single largest concentration of animal health interests in the world.

With its high concentration of animal health and nutrition research, innovation and production companies, the Kansas City region accounts for more than one-third of the total sales in the global animal health market.

The KC Animal Health Corridor, an initiative of the Kansas City Area Development Council (KCADC), provides unique benefits and opportunities for collaboration, growth and success by hosting two internationally recognized industry events.

KC Animal Health Corridor Homecoming, held each August, offers an exclusive gathering of animal health CEOs and industry leaders from across the country and around the world. In its ninth year, Homecoming attendees will connect with more than 800 members of the international animal health community while being treated to a discussion on leadership, talent and teamwork presented by University of Kansas men's basketball coach, Bill Self. The evening's program will also feature the annual Iron Paw Award, a Corridor update and roll out of new regional asset data.

The sixth annual KC Animal Health Investment Forum offers one of the only opportunities in the world for early-stage companies in the animal health sector to present their vision and business plan to potential investors and strategic partners. The Forum also provides a unique opportunity for established venture capital investment firms and animal health companies to hear from emerging businesses.

Over the last six years, more than 210 early- and mid-stage animal health companies have applied to present at the Investment Forum, hailing from 10 countries, 37 U.S. states and 95 different cities. Of those who applied, more than 60 have presented. Presenting companies have held more than 100 one-on-one meetings with potential partners and have raised more than \$130 million.

The Investment Forum is widely recognized for its growing influence within the global animal health industry. This is best seen through the consistent quality of applications and mounting list of attendees, which reached a new high in 2013 with more than 300 registered.

The Investment Forum even attracts inquiries from funds that have never invested in the animal health space, and in 2013, the Forum represented the largest gathering of venture capitalists and investors ever in Kansas City. ▶



▶ FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE KC ANIMAL HEALTH CORRIDOR, AND TO REGISTER FOR THIS YEAR'S EVENTS, PLEASE VISIT KCANIMALHEALTH.COM.



IN THE FAST LANE OF THE **AUTO INDUSTRY**

As the second-largest automotive hub in the U.S., following Detroit, the Kansas City region is in the fast lane and top-of-mind for automotive manufacturing companies looking to be near customers and high-performing assembly operations. “Kansas City wasn’t affected over the last two years when the automotive industry experienced turmoil and large plants were being closed or downsized,” says Chris Gutierrez, president of KC SmartPort Inc., an affiliate of the KCADC. “Our region’s two largest plants were instead reinvesting during that time, adding thousands of new jobs.”

Production of the all-new Ford Transit kicked off in May 2014 at Ford’s newly retooled Kansas City Assembly Plant. Ford has invested \$1.1 billion to retool and expand the facility and has added more than 2,000 jobs at the Kansas City plant—more than half of them new hires—to support high demand for the Ford F-150 and production of the Transit family of commercial vehicles.

One of General Motors’ largest investments in its history is the Fairfax plant in Kansas City, Kan. GM announced it would invest \$1.5 billion in North American facilities in 2013 and \$600 million of that investment is going into the Fairfax plant. Included is the construction of a new 450,000-square-foot paint shop, the installation of a new stamping press and other upgrades. These nationally significant reinvestments have resulted in a flood of interest from suppliers to Ford and GM:

- Grupo Antolin North America is investing \$15.7 million in a 148,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Kansas City, Mo., to produce overhead liners for Ford’s Transit vans.
- Martinrea International Inc. is investing in a 275,560-square-foot facility in Riverside, Mo., that will supply the GM assembly plant in Fairfax, Kan., creating nearly 300 jobs.
- LMV Automotive is investing \$49.7 million to build a new 253,600-square-foot manufacturing operation in Liberty, Mo., creating 166 new jobs.
- Janesville Acoustics is investing \$13.4 million in a new 155,000-square-foot automotive manufacturing facility in Warrensburg, Mo., to produce truck liners specialized carpets and dash liners, along with general acoustical insulation for the GM Chevy Malibu.
- Yanfeng USA Automotive Trim Systems’ \$45 million investment in its 258,000-square-foot Riverside, Mo., manufacturing plant will produce interior trim components for GM’s assembly plants in Kansas City, Kan., and Wentzville, Mo.
- Adrian Steel is investing \$4.7 million in a Kansas City, Mo., facility that will create 39 new jobs and install trade packages, shelving, partitions and other cargo management solutions for the new Ford Transit vans.

For more information on Kansas City’s growing recognition as an auto-hub, visit kcsmartport.com.



WHO'S HIRING IN KC?

The following companies have recently announced new facilities or offices in the Kansas City area and are actively seeking candidates for a variety of positions. To learn more about new businesses moving to KC visit ThinkKC.com.

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aviationtech.mcckc.edu

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GAMING THE SYSTEM

Gamification is poised to have a significant effect on things like data collection, and Insights Meta is ready to help make it happen.

by KATY SCHAMBERGER

When Jason Anderson decided to relocate to Kansas City from the West Coast, he knew he wanted to continue his career in the games industry and maintain his focus on gaming and research. The solution? Anderson channeled his inner entrepreneur and created Insights Meta, a market research gamification agency fueled by a simple yet critical guiding principal.

“We want to bring what we know about the games experience into the traditional market research world,” Anderson says.

It’s an approach that makes sense, especially given the ongoing proliferation of gaming and the growing need for gaming-inspired intelligence.

“There’s doing research for games and there’s building games for research applications,” Anderson says. “On the gamification side, that’s where we’re focusing most of our new product development effort. We’ve been working with large research agencies to find ways to gamify the traditional survey and focus group experience.”

Anderson describes the gamified survey framework as “a Survey Monkey for games-based research.” Consider a typical survey, for example, that might show a participant 15 different screens while asking the individual to pick which ones they like the most.

By incorporating gamification, the survey could instead include a card game with built-in rules that will elicit the same sort of choices and decision scenarios so that the survey takers could “model out the same outcomes without having participants go through a tedious exercise,” Anderson says.

With surveys becoming an increasingly ubiquitous part of the online experience, especially for retailers and service providers, finding an innovative yet effective way to gather data is undoubtedly needed. And although it may initially seem like a gamified survey might only appeal to a younger demographic, Anderson says his research disputes that theory.

“What’s really fascinating about that example is that we ran a large multi-country study with about 20,000 participants, and the gamified survey was strongly preferred over the traditional way of doing things,” he says. “There wasn’t any real gender bias either.”

The potential for this sort of data collection application is so compelling, in fact, that Insights Meta recently won a notable accolade for the concept. Anderson entered the Insight

Innovation Competition at The Insights Innovation eXchange, which gives businesses of different sizes and maturity an opportunity to submit concepts for ways to innovate within the research practice.

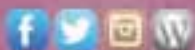
Insights Meta took home second place at the most recent competition in Amsterdam as part of IIX Europe—recognition that Anderson says has already led “to some really good traction with potentially large licensees for the technology down the road.”

To better serve those in the gaming industry, Insights Meta is also examining ways to build a dedicated product testing facility in which people could try out products that are under development, an immersive experience through which clients can collect invaluable feedback about how to refine and improve their games.

“There aren’t a lot of resources locally for manning those sorts of projects, but we think we can build that up,” Anderson says. **KC**



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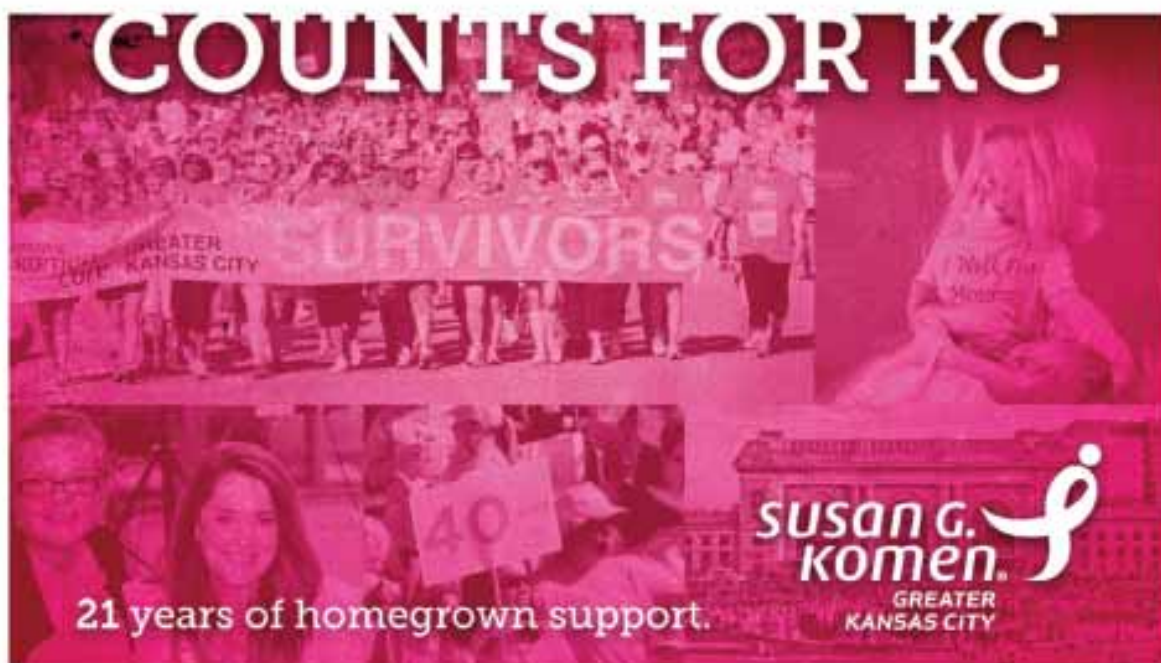


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KUDOS

CHARLES W. SHIELDS

Peggy Dunn, Chairman of the Truman Medical Centers (TMC) Board of Directors announced that the incoming TMC President and CEO is Charles W. “Charlie” Shields, who currently serves as COO of TMC Lakewood. Shields will replace longtime TMC CEO John W. Bluford III, who announced in late February that he would retire in July.

“Charlie was a great addition to the TMC team four years ago, and I am confident that he has exactly the right mix of business savvy, people skills and political acumen to lead Truman through today’s rapidly changing healthcare landscape,” Dunn comments. “When paired with our outstanding management team, I feel very good about the future of Truman Medical Centers.”

COPEKEN BROOKS

Commercial real estate firm Copeken Brooks has added two professionals to its team: Jodi Belpedio and David Nickloy. Bepedio joins the firm with more than 20 years of experience in real estate investment, asset management, property management and leasing. As Copeken Brooks’ vice president of acquisitions, she will match clients’ investments to Class A real estate nationwide.

David Nickloy joins Copeken Brooks in the tenant and corporate services group. He will help companies with multiple locations make strong real estate decisions across various markets. He previously worked in business development with a large distribution company, opening new facilities in multiple states.

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

The Ronald McDonald House has added three new leaders to its board: Jim Walsh, vice president at DST Systems; Donn Hess, managing director of product strategy at J.P. Morgan Retirement Plan Services; and Gretchen Gold, partner at Lanthrop & Gage. Curtis Landherr, vice president and general counsel at CSM Bakery Supplies North America, will serve as board president.

This board of directors oversees the local chapter of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Kansas City. It represents the organization’s mission, sets the vision and strategy of the chapter and builds fundraisers. Since January 2013, the Ronald McDonald House of Kansas City has been expanding. Its latest campaign “Hope Grows Here, is raising funds for a new 20-bedroom Ronald McDonald House in KC.

SIGNS BY TOMORROW

This year, the Johnson County Library added a room called MakerSpace, which allows library guests the opportunity to make computer-enhanced projects with various software and hardware programs. Guests can create actual toys and games or design newsletters and websites online. Signs By Tomorrow, a signs and graphics store in Overland Park, spearheaded the effort.

“It was quite a challenge to create and install this specialized visual communications piece,” owner Cece Corona says. “The overall effect of the graphics in the library was to create imagination and inspire the guests. It was well worth the effort when we saw the finished product.”

Signs By Tomorrow received an award for its work on the MakerSpace project at the Alliance Franchise Brands Convention in Nashville.

POLSINELLI

Polsinelli recently announced it is the exclusive legal sponsor for the Sprint Accelerator. The law firm will provide legal assistance for the 10 companies participating in the program. Each company that selects Polsinelli as primary council will receive \$10,000 credit for legal fees and assistance on everything from financing to healthcare regulations to intellectual property protection.

Polsinelli also added attorney Scott R. Thein as an associate in its capital markets practice. Thein will specialize in the securitization of commercial loans and other financial transactions. He is a member of the Missouri Bar Association.

DERON PEAK

Deron Peak joined Bone McAllester Norton PLLC as the director of technology. In his new position, Peak will plan, manage and direct the technology and communications systems for the law firm. He will oversee the operation and maintenance of the networks and represent Bone McAllester Norton in the International Legal Technology Association.

Peak has more than 20 years of experience in IT management. He specializes in operations and budgeting, project management and network administration. He previously served as the director of information technology for the Dean Mead firm in Orlando, Fla.

BHC RHODES

BHC Rhodes promoted Ryan Elam to project manager in the firm’s development services segment.



Elam has managed projects for large area developers in Kansas City, including Village West Luxury Apartments and Central Industrial Park. Elam has seven years of engineering experience and has worked for BHC Rhodes since 2012.

The company also announced that Tom Degenhardt received his certification as a licensed professional traffic operations engineer. This distinction places Degenhardt among a unique group of engineers with expertise in traffic and transportation analysis, operation and design. Degenhardt has worked for BHC Rhodes since 2013 and is currently its public work services team leader.

RUBINBROWN

Sunti Wathanacharoen joined RubinBrown's business advisory services group. He has more than 17 years of experience enhancing clients' business performance through increasing financial results and operating efficiency. He's worked in various facets of business operations in industries ranging from healthcare to government to technology.

Todd Pleimann, managing partner of RubinBrown's Kansas City office and the partner in the firm's assurance services group, was elected to the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce board of directors. He is excited to be a part of the chamber's Big 5 initiative and "honored to serve the Kansas City business community amongst fellow business, civic and government leaders," says Pleimann. His term on the board will last through Oct. 31.

DAVID CACIOPPO

In March, professionals from throughout Kansas City gathered at Boulevard Brewing Company for the Kansas City's Direct Marketing Association's (KCDMA) annual AMBIT awards.

Dave Cacioppo, the CEO of local digital marketing agency and email service provider emfluence, won the top award of the evening. He received the 2014 Bob Stone Direct Marketer of the Year for his more than 20 years of dedication to the direct marketing industry. He is the first exclusively digital marketer to be honored with this award, proving that Kansas City is at the forefront of up-and-coming technologies.

Cacioppo was nominated for the award by past recipients and his peers. He has been active with KCDMA for years and is honored to be acknowledged by such an innovative organization. "The level of marketing talent prevalent in the KCDMA is truly remarkable," Cacioppo says. "Participation in this organization has helped me become a better marketer."

CHUCK SEARLE

Global marketing agency VML has promoted Chuck Searle to chief client officer. Previously, Searle served as the executive director of services. In his new position, Searle will lead the company's client services department and head major client engagements, including Gatorade, PepsiCo and Southwest Airlines. John Cook, president and CEO at VML, cited Searle's passion for client engagement and strong leadership qualities as a reason for his promotion.

Searle has worked for VML since 2000. He started as a media associate and has since served in various leadership positions throughout the client services department. He hopes to engage more customers than ever before through digital media and evolve the company's services to better meet their needs. While the current co-managing directors will continue daily management and leadership in the department, Searle will focus on implementing the best client engagement possible.

NICK APPLGATE

Nick Applegate joined Financial Security Advisors as a financial analyst. In this position, Applegate will focus on retirement planning, employee benefits, estate planning, insurance college planning and tax strategies. He graduated from Graceland University with degrees in both accounting and business administration. Applegate has interned with both the Kansas City Chiefs and the Missouri Mavericks. He also worked for a national copier company and is the youth group leader of his church.

RONNIE BURT

The Kansas City Convention & Visitors Association (KCCVA) selected Ronnie Burt as its new president and CEO. Burt started his career in marketing at Caesars Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City. He joined the Atlantic City Convention and Visitors Authority as an intern and quickly ascended the ranks to national sales manager. He joined the Baltimore Area Convention & Visitors Association in 1999 as director of national accounts, eventually leading its sales efforts in the role as vice president of convention sales and services.

In 2006, Burt served as the organization's interim president and CEO, where he managed a staff of more than 50 employees and a \$9 million budget. Upon joining KCCVA in early June, he manages a staff of 40 and a budget of \$10 million in an effort to attract visitors to the Kansas City region. **KC**



DON HESS
BOARD MEMBER AT
RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE



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SCOTT THEIN
ASSOCIATE AT POLSINELLI'S
CAPITAL MARKET PRACTICE



GRETCHEN GOLD
BOARD MEMBER AT
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KUDOS is the department in which we highlight business promotions, awards, new hires and any other special announcements about people and businesses in the Kansas City metro area. Have news or promotions that you would like to share? Email them to kjones@thisiskc.com. Please include the name of the person you would like to applaud along with his or her formal job title and a 100-word biography and hi-resolution photograph. Submissions may take up to two issues to appear.



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NETWORKING CALENDAR JULY/AUG

FRIDAY, AUG. 1

FACE2FACE Bring at least 50 business cards, a one-minute elevator speech and a winning smile and prepare to network at this fast-paced event. Gain the opportunity to spread the word about what you do and connect with other local companies doing amazing things. KC Chamber sponsors this event and has been working with other organizations to attract a diverse group of members. \$10 for chamber members, \$20 for nonmembers. The Board Room at Union Station, 30 W. Pershing Rd. Visit kcchamber.com for details.

SATURDAY, AUG. 2

FREEDOM FUND BANQUET Support the Johnson County NAACP in its fight to ensure racial equality in all aspects of life. This year's Freedom Fund Banquet has the theme "NAACP 105 Years: Elevating the American Voice" and will feature journalist, activist and radio host Joe Madison. \$65. The reception begins at 5:30 p.m. and dinner begins at 6:30 p.m. Doubletree Hotel, 10111 College Blvd., Overland Park. Visit jnaacp.org for more information.

FRIDAY, AUG. 8

IT ROUNDTABLE Meet other tech-savvy professionals and discuss the latest and greatest in the world of IT. Exchange ideas, referrals and solutions over a delicious lunch. This event is only open to Overland Park Chamber of Commerce members and costs \$10. Noon—1:30 p.m. AT&T Board Room on the first floor of the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce, 9001 W. 110th St., Overland Park. Visit opchamber.org to register.

TUESDAY, AUG. 12

THE INNOVATOR'S MINDSET Delve into the mind of an innovator by learning how to think like one. Sue Mosby, UMKC Bloch instructor and founder and CEO of Infinium, will be leading this innovation consultation. The course costs \$495 or \$1,200 for three of these day-long UMKC seminars. 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Bloch Executive Hall on the UMKC campus, 5108 Cherry St. Visit bloch.umkc.edu/executive-education/seminars/upcoming-seminars for more information.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 13

WEDNESDAY WAKE UP Survive the long work week with a Wednesday morning pick-me-up. Expect great coffee, interesting people and a delicious breakfast. The Overland Park Chamber of Commerce will also provide door prizes and brief updates. There is another Wednesday Wake Up on July 9. There is no cost for members to attend; \$10 for nonmembers. 8—9 a.m. Saint Luke's South Hospital, 12300 Metcalf Ave., Overland Park. Visit opchamber.org to register.

THURSDAY, AUG. 14

CHAMBER AFTER HOURS Relax after a long day at work with the Lee's Summit Chamber of Commerce. Socialize and build your business at the same time. 4:30—6 p.m. Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, 56 NE Sycamore St., Lee's Summit. The Lee's Summit Chamber is hosting another Chamber After Hours on July 10. Visit lschamber.com to register.

THURSDAY, AUG. 21

iKC THE UNCONFERENCE Say goodbye to boring sessions and long, pointless speeches. Welcome to the Unconference, the open-format conference to support collaboration in whatever interests you. Sponsored by the KC Chamber of Commerce and Think Big Partners, the Unconference brings together thousands of entrepreneurs and innovators to speak about anything they want. Attendees set the agenda as they arrive, choosing to lead sessions they design and attend whichever sessions they want. Union Station, 30 W. Pershing Rd. Visit ikctheunconference.com for details.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 27

LEAWOOD YOUNG PROFESSIONALS AFTER HOURS Leawood Young Professionals is a group of businessmen and businesswomen between the ages of 21 and 39 who are passionate about networking and supporting their community. Connect with other young adults and enjoy Parisi's delicious drinks. Register at leawoodchamber.org by August 25 at 5 p.m. There is no cost for Leawood Chamber members to attend; \$15 for nonmembers. 5—6:30 p.m. Parisi Café, 5245 W. 116th Place, Leawood. For more information, visit leawoodchamber.org. **KC**



AUGUST 22-23 MURDER MYSTERY WEEKEND

Put on your classiest 1950s garb and jump into a murder mystery related to President Truman's 1948 election. The Independence Chamber of Commerce organized this monthly weekend event titled "The Mistaken Prognostication." Enjoy two nights in the Higher Ground Hotel, delicious breakfasts and a Wine Tasting while enjoying the mystery put on by Omnibus Theater Company. \$350 per couple. 7:30 p.m. on Friday through 11 a.m. on Sunday. Higher Ground Hotel, 200 N. Delaware St., Independence. Visit ichamber.biz to register.

Have an event that you would like to share with our readers? Email your event information to kjones@thisiskc.com. Please include a brief description of the event as well as the location, date, time and how to get more information. Submissions must be received at least 60 days prior to the beginning of the month in which the event occurs.



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BEST PLACES IN KC

THE GENTLEMAN'S EDITION

We'll show you where to go for a well-cut suit, a clean shave, a guys' night out and a romantic evening with that special someone.

by KELSEY CIPOLLA

Aristotle Onassis once said, "The secret to business is to know something that nobody else knows." While that can be a winning strategy when it comes to making an impact at the office, we don't like keeping secrets. Check out our picks for the best places for guys to enjoy a night out on the night, woo a date and look their best (and feel free to spread the word).



BEST PLACE TO GET A HAIRCUT THE GENTS PLACE

Trying to get a promotion or close a big deal? Make sure you look the part. For grooming that's a cut above, it doesn't get better than The Gents Place in Leawood, where you'll find an attentive staff and a long menu of services that includes simple haircuts, which all come with a steamed towel and neck shave, to a straight razor shave and shoe shine.

The grooming destination also offers spa treatments such as facials and massages in a space that retains its masculine edge, thanks to its rustic interior dominated by warm wood and leather, and amenities like a top-shelf bar, cigars, pool tables and flat screens—features that helped get it named one of the "Manliest Barbershops in America" by Men's Health.

For gentlemen whose grooming needs extend beyond the occasional haircut, the barbershop offers five different memberships available to purchase monthly or annually that entitle you to free and discounted services and priority access to networking events, helping you look your best for getting down to business. ➤





BEST PLACE TO
BUY A SUIT
PINSTRIPES CLOTHING

Dressing for the boardroom doesn't have to be boring. Move your basic blue and black suits to the back of your closet and add some interest to your business wardrobe. From classic to creative, Pinstripes Clothing on the Country Club Plaza offers something to suit every style, with almost 20 years of experience making men look good and showcasing brands like Samuelsohn, Jack Victor, Joseph Abboud, Peter Millar, Jaz, John Cooper and many more.

Dapper Dons will love the store's classic cuts and wide selection of ties perfect for the big meeting or a business trip, while more

adventurous dressers can choose one of the more trendy and modern looks, including slim fit suits, which guarantee you will make a stylish and confident first impression. The hard to please and hard to fit will appreciate the opportunity to work with Pinstripes' expert staff to create the perfect customized, made-to-measure suit.

With a notable selection of dress shirt and shoes, plus weekend-ready sportswear from brands like Patagonia and Barbour, updating your whole wardrobe requires just one painless shopping stop. ▶





BEST PLACE FOR A GUYS' NIGHT OUT WESTPORT ALE HOUSE

Even the hardest working businessmen need to let loose with friends. And no matter what your ideal guys' night out entails, Westport Ale House has you covered.

Beer? The bar serves a lengthy list of brews with a twist—all of the drinks are made in America and served on draft or in cans.

Catching the game? Not seeing the score is nearly impossible at the new Westport hot spot, thanks to the more than 20 TVs and three huge projector screens placed throughout the building.

Food that will actually fill you up? Ditch the tiny portions and sky-high prices for an evening of male bonding over

juicy burgers, upgraded hot dogs and other all-American dishes with a creative twist, including the Tank 7 donuts, which have already become legendary in the few months since Westport Ale House opened in the former home of Streetside Records.

The doors are open until 1 a.m. every night except Sundays, when it closes at midnight, giving you plenty of time to catch up and chow down. And if you feel like a change of venue, you'd be hard-pressed to find a better selection of places perfect for guys' night out within walking distance. ▶



PROVIDED



BEST PLACE TO
IMPRESS
----- A DATE -----
MANIFESTO

There are plenty of ways for a date to take a turn for the worse, starting with the place you pick. While dinner and a movie is always a classic (and some would say dull) choice, we're all for injecting a little excitement and elegance into your dating game, which is exactly why Manifesto is the perfect pick.

The 48-seat bar boasts a speakeasy feel and a rich sense of history, thanks to its home in the basement of the nearly century-old Rieger Hotel. Your date will be impressed you took the time to make a reservation and even more pleased with the carefully crafted cocktails served up by Ryan Maybee & Co.

It's hard not to feel the love while you're sipping one of Manifesto's seasonal cocktails or a classic like the Ward & Precinct, made with Buffalo Trace Bourbon, lemon, orange, homemade grenadine and Angostura bitters, in this dimly lit bar.

Bonus: You're just steps away from Howard Hanna's award-winning upstairs eatery if you prefer to save drinks for after dinner. **KC**



Who will make the list of 2015 Five Star Wealth Managers?

See the special section
in the January issue



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PLAYING TO WIN

A local game designer scores big with his first creation.

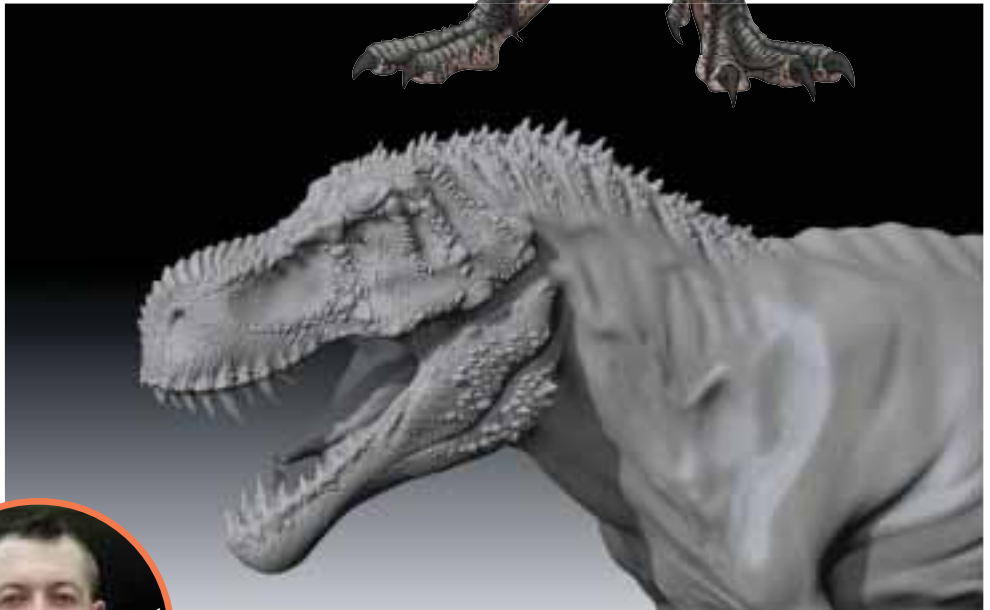
by KATY SCHAMBERGER

Choose your apex dinosaur, hunt prey, evolve your genetics, grow stronger, fight bosses and dominate your friends.

Welcome to the world of Apex Theropod, a deck-building game in which players participate as one of nine apex predators competing for a territory. The game, however, doesn't make it easy—and not only do you have to conquer a number of potentially life-ending threats, you also must dominate the competition.

Think the game sounds exciting? You're not alone. The game's creator, Kansas City resident Herschel Hoffmeyer, launched a Kickstarter project in March to raise the \$4,000 needed to bring the game to fruition. Word of mouth soon spread like wildfire among popular gaming sites, pushing the fundraising amount well past the initial goal. And when a perfectly timed Forbes article was published the last week of the campaign, eager prospective players quickly pushed the fundraising amount from \$38,000 to the final total: \$51,364 from 847 backers.

Now that he has ample funding with which to bring Apex Theropod to the general public, Hoffmeyer is busy completing some remaining testing and finishing the game's artwork, all of which he created himself. A second-year KC Art Institute student, Hoffmeyer opted to change the artistic elements from the original designs that were digitally drawn. Apex Theropod now features 3-D art that's rendered as a 2-D image, an option that Hoffmeyer is now pursuing because 3-D art, a newer style, has recently evolved to "look realistic on a 2-D medium," Hoffmeyer says. ➤



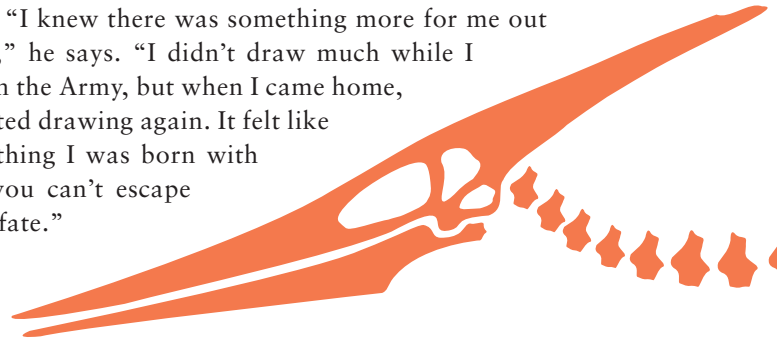
DRAWING A DREAM



Spend some time talking to Hoffmeyer and it's clear that his creative drive emerged early in life. He started drawing before he was 5; it's "the first thing I remember doing in my life," he says. Dinosaurs, dragons and other creatures were his subject of choice—so much so, in fact, that Hoffmeyer remembers his mom taking him to the library so he could check out more dinosaur books then spend hours carefully recreating the images.

His interests later expanded to include games, during which time he didn't just enjoy the entertainment factor of games like *Twisted Metal* and *Halo*. He also learned to appreciate the mechanics and skill involved in creating each game, which later inspired him to pursue a game design degree through the Art Institute.

Hoffmeyer took an eight-year hiatus from art when he served with the Army Infantry. And although he enjoyed serving with the military, he realized he was meant to follow another path. "I knew there was something more for me out there," he says. "I didn't draw much while I was in the Army, but when I came home, I started drawing again. It felt like something I was born with and you can't escape your fate."



DESIGNING A VICTORY

Once Hoffmeyer decided to turn his creative pursuits into a profession, he knew he wanted to create and design games. "My initial plan before I even got to school was to make my own games, be my own crew leader and eventually have someone working for me," he says. "I knew it wasn't going to happen overnight."

The St. Louis area native enrolled in the Art Institute and moved to Kansas City to study the school's game design curriculum. In one of his classes, the instructor asked students to create weekly game prototypes. After learning about deck-building games, Hoffmeyer became captivated by the mechanics of that particular gaming style.

He opted to combine a deck-building game with his long-time passion—dinosaurs—and his classmates' response prompted Hoffmeyer to consider options beyond the classroom. "I just created something fun, and people really started to like it," he says. "I thought it would be easy to make this game real."

Hoffmeyer began designing *Apex Theropod* in December 2013 and launched his 30-day Kickstarter campaign in March. The game is scheduled to be available this fall, and a distributor is currently shopping *Apex Theropod* to prospective retailers.

Juggling the demands of the game and coursework makes for a hectic schedule. Yet Hoffmeyer, a father of two, is no stranger to staying busy. "I'm pretty much home all the time, so it's easy to work on this and be a dad," he says.

Creating and launching *Apex Theropod* has proved to be an invaluable learning experience for Hoffmeyer, especially as he considers his next move. "I wanted to see where my potential was, so I created this game to see if my initial dream is still possible," he says.

The verdict?

"I'm very excited with where it's going right now," Hoffmeyer says. "I plan on finishing school and taking things one step at a time, but I'm moving in the right direction." And although Hoffmeyer is currently immersed in the captivating world of *Apex Theropod*, he's also planning what's next. "I already have another game in my head that I'm anxious to get started on," he says. "This one was more of an experience to get my feet wet. Now that I have a fan base, I can show them where my imagination can go." **KC**



READY TO PLAY?

If you want to test your skills in *Apex Theropod*, visit Herschel Hoffmeyer's website, Die-Hard Games LLC (www.diehardgamesllc.com) to pre-order the game ahead of its fall 2014 release date.



AT HOME WITH COHEN-ESREY

The Kansas real estate firm brings comfort and affordability to families in small communities.

by SUSAN FOTOVICH MCCABE

Imagine moving to or living in a smaller town—perhaps even a rural community—and not having access to apartments with the modern amenities you would otherwise find in a bustling metropolis. In many of these smaller communities, new, multi-family housing rarely makes its way onto the scene, mostly due to the expense related to new construction and the costly rental fees passed onto the residents.

“In smaller markets, it’s almost impossible to build new, and it’s because of a general lack of resources, whether that’s financing or the lack of skilled labor,” says Lee Harris, president and CEO of Cohen-Esrey Real Estate Services, LLC.

Nevertheless, the Mission, Kan.-based firm has found a way around these obstacles in order to provide residents with contemporary apartment communities at affordable prices. How? By renovating historic hospitals, former schools, hotels, mercantile and warehouse buildings and converting them into senior and workforce housing, he explains. This way, Cohen-Esrey can achieve that affordability its residents demand, while still providing them with beautiful, modern residences.

In Kansas City, for instance, new apartment rentals can easily amount to \$900 per month for a one-bedroom unit and \$1,200 per month for a two-bedroom unit, Harris says. But in Colby, Kan., where Cohen-Esrey is transforming an old hospital into 30 units at a cost of \$7 million, rent will likely be as low as \$350 a month for a one-bedroom apartment.

Another issue at play, Harris says, is the growing number of seniors. While there are hundreds of thousands of small towns around the country where the population is stagnant or declining, the number of seniors is on the rise. Finding safe and affordable housing for elderly residents in small towns is extremely difficult, but they still need homes that offer the quality of life our seniors deserve.

For example, in 2011, Cohen-Esrey completed the remodel of the Woodson Senior Residences in Yates Center, Kan., population 1,417. The building was originally built in 1886 as a hotel, where Jesse James, Teddy Roosevelt and Wild Bill Hickok all once stayed. Cohen-Esrey turned it into 10 units for seniors and financed the project with low-income housing tax credits as well as federal and state historic tax credits.

“I recently did a walk-through the Woodson project, and while I was there, an elderly resident stopped me to tell me what a blessing it was to her,” Harris says. “That, in itself, is a testament to our objective of making a positive difference in people’s lives.”

This segment of the firm’s work is accomplished through Cohen-Esrey Affordable Partners, LLC (CEAP). Formed in 1994 to develop and acquire affordable multi-family housing across the United States, it has developed or acquired 57 properties totaling nearly 4,000 units. The firm utilizes Section 42 tax credits as well as HUD programs to achieve its mission. CEAP acquires existing tax credit properties of 32 units or more, which are nearing or have reached the end of the initial tax credit period. Its professionals redevelop and recapitalize these properties using those Section 42 tax credits.

Additionally, CEAP actively purchases existing apartment complexes. The firm completed the first for-profit Section 236 de-coupling in the nation and has structured a number of projects utilizing tax-exempt bond financing, Federal Home Loan Bank loans, HOME loans, state and federal affordable housing tax credits, state and federal historic tax credits and a variety of other programs. In an older section of Overland Park, for example, Cohen-Esrey has taken this approach with the Sundance apartment complex at 6101 Foster, just south of Shawnee Mission North High School.

This segment of its business is what sets Cohen-Esrey apart from the competition, Harris says, and is possible because the firm has established or acquired the various business units it needs to keep all the work under one roof.

“One reason we can go to Colby is because we have a development, construction, supply chain management, subcontracting unit, tax credit syndication business (which eliminates the middle man), property management and apartment acquisition unit,” Harris says. “It puts us in a unique position.”

Beyond its Affordable Partners division, this “family of companies,” Harris says, also includes Cohen-Esrey Communities, LLC; Construction Technologies, LLC; Service Technologies, LLC; Cohen-Esrey Apartment Investors, LLC; Cohen-Esrey Capital Partners, LLC and PrimePoint Partners, LLC.

PrimePoint provides a wide range of products used in apartment properties including appliances, heating and cooling equipment, hot water heaters, washers, dryers, doors, frames, hardware, counter tops, cabinets, plumbing fixtures, light fixtures, window coverings and other items.

The company successfully aggregates the buying power for all Cohen-Esrey business units to achieve the best prices for quality products to the benefit of its portfolio. As such, the firm is able to secure substantial discounts, and the savings are passed along to the benefit of Cohen-Esrey managed and developed properties. ▶

Another “family” in Cohen-Esrey’s focus is its own family of employees. With 400 on staff, Harris says the firm continually strives to achieve a small family culture. One of the ways it fosters that culture is through community service. Cohen-Esrey regularly participates in community service projects in the Kansas City area as well as projects in the smaller communities the company serves across the nation.

“We’ve really worked on our culture,” Harris says. “At times, we’re all a bunch of entrepreneurs working toward a single goal. But then we’ll have a situation where everyone quickly comes together as a family when someone in our organization needs help.

“We had one employee volunteer to donate his paid time off to another employee who was ill. It’s heartwarming.” **KC**



**“WE’RE ALL A BUNCH OF ENTREPRENEURS
WORKING TOWARD A SINGLE GOAL.”**
lee harris, president and ceo of cohen-esrey

NERD ALERT

Local entrepreneurs turn a geeky interest into a flourishing career.

by KATY SCHAMBERGER

On any given weekend, you'll likely find Nicholas and Angie Snyder exploring antique stores, scrapyards, estate sales and flea markets—essentially, anywhere where they “can find a lot of really good junk,” Angie says.

Before you call a hoarders hotline, rest assured that the duo are on a mission to turn these now-forgotten treasures into something even better: robots.

Nicholas and Angie didn't immediately realize that they shared a love of robots—after all, as Nicholas says, it's not a typical topic of conversation.

“We met back in college in 2002 and, a couple of years later, got married,” he says. “We didn't realize we both loved robots until about 2007. I don't think we were ashamed of it; it just never really came up in general conversation.”

Once this nerdy skeleton burst out of the closet, Nicholas and Angie realized they wanted to do more than simply talk about and appreciate robots: they wanted to create them. They founded their delightfully geeky company, Nerdbots, and embarked on a mission to create their first robot, a graphing calculator-obsessed fellow named Leotron.

Because Nicholas and Angie are never sure what sort of parts and pieces they'll find, Nicholas says the parts usually dictate what sort of robots they build. Occasionally, however, they'll find themselves in need of a specific part—an arm, for example. In that instance, they might head somewhere like Home Depot, where they tend to attract interest from fellow shoppers.

“We'll take an armless and legless torso into Home Depot and people give us the strangest looks,” Nicholas says. “People will ask us, ‘What are you looking for?’ We're just looking! I guess not many people go to the pipe aisle just to browse.”

Completing a robot's construction doesn't mean it is finished. After a robot is created, the Snyders give it a name and quirky bio that they write based on observations and ideas that Angie diligently collects.

“I keep a little notebook in my bag, so every time we think of something that we find kind of nerdy, we jot it down,” she says. “When it's time to write a bio, I have all of these great ideas and interests that the robots can have.”

The scholarly Dremel, for example, is enamored with chemical physics and evolutionary biology. Sassy Wilma Wilson loves to make PowerPoint presentations about nuclear magnetic resonance and chemical bonds that she shares with her friends. And the jaunty Admiral is drinking protein shakes in an effort to bulk up so that he can achieve his dream: attending a prom. ➤



As for the original Nerdbot, Leotron, well, he's "always been rather partial to lists, spreadsheets, diagrams and charts," according to his bio. "His favorite possession is his graphing calculator, which he's proud to say he can run even with his eye closed. He's an avid comic book collector and drinks Starbucks lattes in order to stay awake during his late-night science experiment marathons."

In an effort to share their nerdy pride with as many people as possible, Nicholas and Angie have created additional merch, including T-shirts, stickers and, most recently, the ultimate in geek chic: leather pocket protectors that they debuted in June at Kansas City's Maker Faire.

More merchandise—and, of course, more robots—are in the works. Although Nerdbots currently remains a passion project for Nicholas (a team lead at Cerner) and Angie (a graphic designer at Hallmark), the two hope to one day make a full-time career out of Nerdbots.

Until then, Nicholas and Angie won't stop spending their free time creating robots or scouting potential parts—unless, of course, they're indulging another geeky passion.

"We go to the library a lot, and we actually check out books and bring them home," Nicholas says. "The speed reader that is my wife goes through all of hers plus mine in a week or two."

Adds Angie, "We also watch a lot of documentaries, especially anything about space. I guess we're a good fit—we have quite a nerdy resume." **KC**



> LET YOUR NERD FLAG FLY
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