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ON THE COVER: Photo of Jules Porter by John Haynes



Join us for a conversation about gender equity and diversity in corporate leadership. Are we making enough progress? This is your opportunity to gain important insights from executives who share their experiences, challenges, and advice as women in leadership.

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Twin Cities Business is a publication of MSP Communications 901 N. 3rd St., Suite 195, Minneapolis, MN 55401 612-339-7571, fax 612-336-9220



Gaming the System

Embracing all aspects of diversity strengthens our tech community.

By Allison Kaplan



Tech 20 list includes the innovators behind a medical device that tracks cardiac arrhythmias through the cloud, enterprise software designed to modernize the manufacturing industry, and an energy program intended to drastically reduce carbon emissions. But let's talk video games.

CB's third annual

Jules Porter is the founder of Seraph 7 Studios, a Minneapolis game development company poised to revolutionize—or at least enlighten—a nearly \$160 billion industry. (Video game revenue, up 20 percent in 2020, now exceeds revenue from movies and North American sports combined, MarketWatch Inc. pointed out in January.) Seraph 7's first game, due out this year, attacks monsters much larger than any gaming screen: racism and gender inequality. It stands up for senior citizens, too. In Porter's breakthrough game, Ultimate Elder Battle Royale, many of the superheroes are women and people of color who grow old and fight enemies with weapon-

ized walkers. Characters are voiced by older local actors.

Driven by her overwhelming desire to build empathy, fight racism, and break down stereotypes, Porter enrolled in law school in 2014. But somewhere between writing

briefs and absorbing news of another police shooting, Porter began to think she could reach more people through video games, which are now played by three out of every four Americans, according to the NPD Group. "I realized it was such a great covert teaching mechanism," Porter told associate editor Tess Allen in an interview for

our Tech 20 feature (page 22). "People are so sick of diversity training. A good way to bring multiculturalism into their lives is through art. And in video games, you are actually playing through the story, walking in someone else's shoes. You see how your decisions impact the world around you."

I can't think of anyone better to represent the possibility and power of changing the world through technology in 2021 than Porter, who is on our cover and this year's Tech 20 list, along with many other creative individuals who are tackling big problems and opportunities with fresh eyes. That's a far bigger challenge than learning to code. It's why Yu Sunny Han, founder/CEO of Fulcrum, which makes software for the manufacturing industry, interviewed 1,400 people to make 20 diverse new hires. (And you thought you were overloaded with Zoom meetings?)

"I'm asking people to do something in a creative way—they can't follow an old blueprint," Han says. "I want to hire people who can tell us what to do."

Starting something truly new in tech by definition requires innovative thinking. But after the year we just endured, from lockdowns to uprisings, the energy around the tech sector feels particularly electric. A "sense of urgency" is how Reed Robinson, co-founder of tech accelerator Beta. describes it. Robinson's new early-stage investment firm Groove Capital closed its first round of financing in January at \$3.8 million—three times more than his initial expectations. He described Groove's investors as a mix of entrepreneurs, aspiring mentors, and senior-level leaders at large Minnesota corporations. "This is a long, cresting wave that has been slowly building for 10 years," Robinson says. "You can see it in the form of more startups, competitions, accelerators, industry groups, mentors, and community engagement. The whole community

is waking up to the fact that we build great businesses here. We have more to invest in."

New business starts surged to a 13-year high in 2020, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Likewise, the pandemic forced many established businesses to completely rethink and rebuild—moves that generally involve becoming more reliant on tech. With crisis comes clarity. "Life is fragile," Reed adds, "and we have to do what we can with the time we have."

That includes addressing profound racial disparities, from funding to training to products themselveslike a video game that positively represents multicultural characters. Porter is realizing her vision thanks to support from entrepreneurship competitions at the University of St. Thomas and Finnovation Lab in Minneapolis. When it comes time to raise capital, her chances in the Twin Cities appear more promising today than they did a year ago, thanks in part to newer VC firms that pledge to prioritize diversity, including Matchstick Ventures, Groove Capital, and Bread & Butter Ventures.

"I'm earnestly hopeful this is not just a blip," says Bread & Butter Ventures managing partner Mary Grove, who herself is part of the change as a woman and daughter of Thai immigrants (hear her story, from Silicon Valley to the Twin Cities, on a recent episode of the TCB podcast By All Means). She's now in a position to support diverse founders and advocate for diverse talent at all levels of new organizations. Just six months after launching, 43 percent of Bread & Butter's founders are people of color, and 30 percent are women. Diversity, in Grove's mind, also extends to the types of businesses her firm is funding: software, health care, ag tech, fintech. "We already have a successful startup ecosystem here—it's time to start being a little louder about telling the story."

We're all for making some noise.

"People are so sick of diversity training. ... And in video games, you are actually playing through the story, walking in someone else's shoes."

> -JULES PORTER, SERAPH 7 STUDIOS

starters

Edited by Adam Platt

RECREATION

Sweat It Out

A Duluth sauna builder offers an old cure for modern woes.

hough 2020 is finally in the rearview mirror, the anxieties it ramped up won't disappear soon. A Duluth company thinks it has a solution.

"The sauna's the best way I've known to soothe the stresses of the modern world," Justin Juntunen says. He's not talking about one of those toaster-oven-sized heaters you stick on the wall and cover with a handful of stones. He means the real Nordic thing: a cozy cedar structure with an authentic sauna stove, big rocks, and proximity to snow or a body of water for the proper "hot and cold" experience.

Since 2018, Juntunen's fastgrowing startup, Cedar & Stone, with around 10 employees and a quarter million in revenue, has operated a community structure in Duluth's Canal Park that

visitors can rent for a true sauna experience.

In 2020, he branched out into constructing custom saunas for those who want a touch of Finland by their home or cabin. Expect to spend \$30,000 to \$60,000 depending on how you outfit it.

"What's driving sauna nationally and worldwide right now are the wellness benefits, which are being talked about and researched" by entities like Mayo Clinic, Juntunen says. Those studies highlight "the things that my grandparents always said about sauna."

But not just any sauna. "If you don't know sauna culture," Juntunen says, "you'll say, 'Well, an infrared sauna is really cheap and that little thing would do the trick.' But I'd reply, 'Sure, microwaves can make you food and you'll get calories. But you don't get a steak dinner from a microwave.' "

And though sauna is thought

of as a seasonal pastime in the U.S., Juntunen says he "saunas" more in the summer than in the winter.

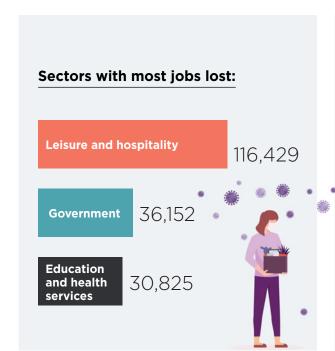
While most of Cedar & Stone's installations have been regional, customers from Florida and California who've found the company online are ordering. Juntunen says they want structures "that are designed well and are going to last." In other words, with the same durability as the worries of the world.

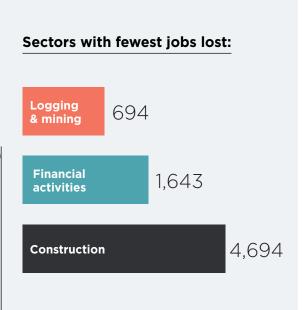
-Gene Rebeck

THE FINE PRINT

The Hardest Job Is Finding One

Minnesota lost 238,056 jobs in 2020. By the end of the year, the state had regained only 36 percent of jobs lost when the pandemic first hit. The leisure and hospitality sector, which includes bars and restaurants, accounted for 49 percent of the job losses in the state. Curiously, government and health care were also hit hard. All sectors lost jobs; the categories faring better simply lost fewer. —Burl Gilyard





ON MY SHELF

Beyond Cokes and Smokes

A south Minneapolis convenience store strives to rise above a universe of low expectations.

onvenience stores typically elicit images of indifference, from food and drink to service and attitude; their appeal is mostly ease of use. But a small, inconspicuous station at the corner of Lyndale Avenue and 36th Street in Minneapolis called 36 Lyn Refuel Station has been working hard to break the stereotype.

"I want to have great offerings where people don't feel guilty about making a purchase at a gas station," says owner Lonnie McQuirter. Customers today care more about what they put into their bodies and the environment and about where products are sourced, he says. "We sell products that we stand by."

36 Lyn isn't new—McQuirter opened it in 2005—but he's spent years curating its offerings and reputation to craft a business that broke the indifference mold. "Real satisfaction is not in profits," he says. "There's a million easier ways to make a living, but ... I like being able to meet the needs of my customers, give directions, and provide value. It may not be as glamorous or sexy as other industries, but I've grown to appreciate its importance to communities."

Half of the products on 36 Lyn's tidy shelves are locally sourced and organic. Customers can

"I want to have great offerings where people don't feel guilty about making a purchase at a gas station."

-LONNIE MCQUIRTER

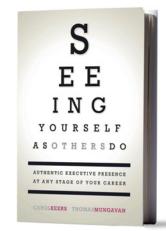
buy items like Cry Baby Craig's Hot Sauce, Thomasina's Cashew Brittle, prepared food from Afro Deli, and coffee from Big Watt, Wesley Andrews, and Peace Coffee.

"When we were first approached almost 10 years ago about having our organic, bike-delivered coffee served in a BP station, we were skeptical," says Peace Coffee's Kyle Feldman. "But all it took was one conversation with Lonnie to realize that our brand would be in very safe hands. He is a visionary, a

community servant, and a steward of a more holistic way of doing business."

In 2021, 36 Lyn will quit selling BP gas and affiliate with Minnoco, a Little Canada-based gasoline wholesaler designed for independent owners. "With 150,000 convenience stores in the U.S.," McQuirter says, "I need to do my best not only to operate well, but also to help consumers differentiate 36 Lyn from the crowd." —Tess Allen





Seeing Yourself as Others Do: Authentic Executive Presence at Any Stage of Your Career by Carol Keers and Thomas Mungavan

"I recommend Carol's book to everyone (and she is local!). Taking the time to think about how our message is received and what the person across the table (the Zoom?) is thinking makes me a better leader and a better person."

—Lauren Pradhan, founder, Lauren Pradhan Strategy Consulting

starters

MEDIA

Can Neighborhood **Newspapers Survive?**

People may be at home, but that doesn't mean their local rag is thriving.

he pandemic was fatal for many community newspapers. After three decades in business, the Southwest Journal folded at the end of 2020. pummeled by the loss of advertising dollars as neighborhood businesses struggled. Several suburban titles— the Bulletin in Woodbury, the Hastings Star Gazette, Eden Prairie News, and Minnetonka's Lakeshore Weekly News—all shut down shortly after Covid hit last year.

Despite casualties, two venerable publishers are still standing.

Last year the St. Paul-based Villager (once known as the Highland Villager) started asking readers to shell out \$59.88 for 26 editions per year. That works out to \$4.99 per month. "It's the cost of a cup of coffee," says Michael Mischke, publisher and owner.

But it's also a tougher sell.

"It's a very difficult thing for a paper that's been free since 1953 to begin asking for subscriptions when I'm still forced to [home] deliver for free for the benefit of our advertisers," says Mischke. "[But] the advertising dollars just don't support it anymore, and that was the case even before Covid."

Mischke says that he started to see a gradual decline in advertising dollars in 2006 as everyone was gravitating to the internet. He says revenue was down 20 percent in 2020, but he adds that 2018 and 2019 were already challenging years.

The Villager is approaching 2,500 paying subscribers, but Mischke says that he'd ideally like to see 20,000. At its peak, the Villager

was printing 60,000 copies. Today it's closer to 42,000 after cutting distribution in sections of Minneapolis and Mendota Heights to focus on core neighborhoods between the Mississippi River and downtown St. Paul.

The Southside Pride newspaper was founded in 1991 just a few months after the Southwest Journal started. Founder Ed Felien wears many hats-owner, publisher, editor, and columnist—and operates on a shoestring budget.

"We're still alive. We're a bit more of a modest operation than

Southwest Journal was," says Felien. "We're on the poor side of the tracks so our sights are a little bit lower."

Felien publishes three different monthly editions aimed at different neighborhoods: Powderhorn, Nokomis, and Riverside. His print runs are small, between 5,000 and 6,000 copies per edition.

His 2020? "It was a little bit worse than 2019," says Felien. "We gave away free ads in February and March. Our advertisers were hurting as bad as we were."

Who is running in Ward 2? Corporate welfare to Health Partners

> But Felien is optimistic about an economic rebound in 2021. "There's going to be a slow rebirth," he says. "We're coming back." Felien is now 82 years old and has no plans to slow down. "Not yet," he says.

Mischke makes it clear that the future of the Villager is uncertain: "We've lost so many advertisers to closures already. It's within the power of our readers to keep us in business." -Burl Gilyard

The illustration below appeared on the final issue of the Southwest Journal in December.





Knowledge is power

This month's tools for living that business leaders rave about.

Podcast | The Twenty Minute VC "I recommend it to investors, entrepreneurs, and anyone interested in learning more about the tech and VC landscape. Host Harry Stebbings does an incredible job sourcing top-notch guests and does thoughtful research and prep for what is always an entertaining, open, and productive conversation." thetwentyminutevc.com -Mary Grove, managing partner, **Bread & Butter Ventures**



Podcast | I Spy "Real spies share stories about actual events that took place during their careers. It's fun to escape with real-life 007s." -Rick Monro, vice president, Outsource Consultants

Health Care | Vault Health At-Home Covid-19 Test Kit

"Through the state of Minnesota, I signed up for Vault to send me an at-home saliva kit. They overnight the test to you, you collect your sample while on a Zoom call with their team, and you overnight it back to them. Results come in about 24 hours after the sample is received. It's free to Minnesota residents." vaulthealth.com —Lou Ann Olson, head of PR and digital, Tunheim





Software | Superhuman

"Embarrassingly luxurious software that makes email feel amazing. I never have to touch the mouse. It's so simple." superhuman.com —Yu Sunny Han, founder/CEO, Fulcrum Pro



TODAY, WE BUILD TOMORROW.

Xcel Energy congratulates all the Twin Cities Business 2021 Tech 20 innovators, great talent putting Minnesota businesses on the map. We're proud of our very own Tim O'Connor for leading the effort to produce carbon-free hydrogen energy at our nuclear plants. His outstanding leadership helped pilot a game-changing effort to produce hydrogen with zero carbon emissions. This emerging technology is helping drive innovation in the energy industry and is a cornerstone to accomplishing Xcel Energy's 100% carbon-free electricity vision.



REAL ESTATE

Burnsville Center's New Center

Despite a foreclosure and new ownership, the city remains hopeful about a new and improved downtown.



t's common knowledge that 2020 was a trying year for retail businesses (to say the least). Burnsville Center was no stranger to those struggles. Numerous vacancies have popped up in the mall for about five years, most notably the closure of Sears in 2017.

Then 2020 came. In August, the mall went into foreclosure; thenowner CBL Properties, a real estate investment trust, cited vacancies and rent reductions as the primary cause of the default. By year's end, New York-based Kohan Retail Investment Group had purchased the mall.

Burnsville Center, which opened in 1977, remains open and relatively unchanged to customers.

There are fewer stores to shop and masks must be worn, but otherwise it's business as usual. But behind the scenes, the City of Burnsville has been brainstorming the next 30 years. Its comprehensive plan, known as the Burnsville Center Village Redevelopment Vision, aims to completely transform the mall and surrounding areas north and south of County Road 42 by mixing retail with housing, hotels, parks, entertainment venues, public transportation, and more—all to create a "Main Street type of feel." Burnsville's assistant community development director Regina Dean says the city hopes the current mall tenants will stay and be a part of the new community.

Since the city does not own the

"The viability of it continuing strictly as retail is highly unlikely."

-MIKE SIMS,
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
LAUNCH PROPERTIES

mall and its surrounding properties, the project is entirely developer-dependent, Dean says. "We're doing everything we can to eliminate any roadblocks." The city has already rezoned from commercial-only to mixed-use.

Twin Cities real estate veteran Mike Sims, senior vice president at Launch Properties, agrees that Burnsville will need to reposition and incorporate various uses, as is the trend for malls these days. He says the center is well positioned, "with good access, good visibility, and strong traffic ... but the viability of it continuing strictly as retail is highly unlikely."

As of press time, the city had yet to hear from new owner Kohan, though it did tell the *Star Tribune* in an interview that it shared most of the city's goals. The company's involvement will be necessary for any future developments, and the city is eager to establish a relationship.

-Jenna Grundtner

CONNOR STEINKAMP PHOTOGRAPHY (BURNSVILLE CENTER) ALUN REECE / ALAMY (CAPITOL)

The Virtual Lobbyist

How do you lobby a legislature that meets online?

hat do lobbyists do when they're shut out of the Minnesota State Capitol during the legislative session?

Kevin Goodno is dealing with that challenge. He leads a team of eight lobbyists employed by the Minneapolis-based Fredrikson & Byron law firm. When the legislative session opened in January, the House was operating virtually, while the Senate opted for a hybrid model.

"Being at the Capitol regularly allows you to pick up information that you normally wouldn't pick up if you were just monitoring things remotely," says Goodno, a former legislator and commissioner in the Pawlenty administration.

In the pre-Covid days, if he needed to talk to four lawmakers, Goodno says, "I could just stand outside the House chambers and connect with maybe three out of four pretty easily as they are going into a floor session or coming out." While waiting, he also might hear useful information about other bills by simply running into legislators and other lobbyists.



That informal conversation is no longer a regular part of the daily rhythm of the legislature. And 2021 is a challenging session because lawmakers are dealing with a projected budget deficit and Covid-19 measures.

In the virtual environment, Goodno says, "legislators, for the most part, have been pretty responsive." Fredrikson's lobbyists are known quantities: Tara Mack was a Republican House member; former senator Jeff Hayden became a Fredrikson lobbyist after losing his seat last year; and Shep Harris is mayor of Golden Valley.

"You need to be a people person to do this job," Goodno says, but the days of close conversations in Capitol corridors are temporarily on hold. —Liz Fedor

TCB

Nonprofit Event Calendar

Nexus Family Healing

The Resilient Parent Webinar Series

February 10 and March 10, 2021; 11 AM - 1 PM

Join the child and family mental health experts at Nexus-FACTS Family Healing for free online support to help parents support their child's mental health.

Learn More: ow.ly/nbUT50D7WZa

Lifeworks

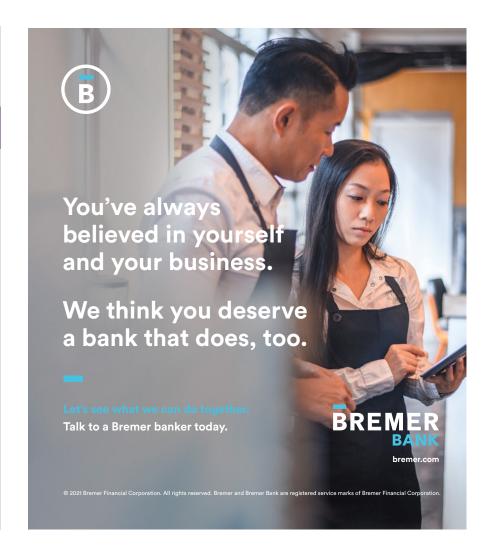
2021 Lifeworks Services Virtual Celebration

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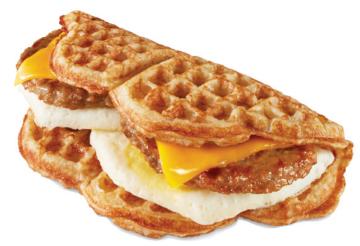
Learn More: lifeworkscelebration.org





amped up

Edited by Tess Allen



Move Over, Eggo

After years of delighting the Twin Cities with its fresh waffles, St. Paul-based Nordic Waffles is now conquering the freezer aisle.

t's been a challenging year for restaurants and fresh food vendors. When Covid-19 hit last year, St. Paul-based Nordic Waffles had to rethink its entire concept of made-fresh sweet and savory Norwegian waffle sandwiches, served hot at fairs, shops, and

restaurants around the Twin Cities. To continue growing in 2020, founder Stine Aasland turned her attention to the grocery-store freezer aisle.

Aasland had big dreams from the start. She founded Nordic Waffles in Norway, selling her fresh waffle sandwiches out of her convenience

store in Oslo, before moving to the U.S. in 2016 to grow the brand beyond what her small home country could offer. After traveling from coast to coast studying American waffles, she landed at the University of North Dakota's Center for Innovation entrepreneurship incubator, where she developed her American recipe and brand. She then moved to the Twin Cities and began selling her freshmade waffles at small fairs, festivals, and markets.

The waffles were an instant hit. By 2019, its second year with a booth at the Minnesota State Fair, Nordic Waffles sold more than 47,000 waffles in 12 days. The company had also established a slew of foodservice partners, such as coffee shops across 10 states, and launched its first booming retail location at Potluck Food Hall at Rosedale Center.

Then in came 2020 and Covid-19, and out went restaurants and events.

"Next thing we knew, the executive orders were coming down, we were shutting down our retail store, our [retailers] were shut down other than some convenience stores, and we were sitting looking at ourselves going, 'What are we going to do?' " says CEO Jeremy Ely.

With the decline of restaurants

came an increase in grocery sales. According to a Supermarket News survey of food retailers and wholesalers, grocery retailers saw frozenfood sales increase by 63 percent between March and August 2020. Plus, Ely says, at the time, the sector in the Twin Cities was leaning into an opportunity to create a Minnesota State Fair food experience in grocery stores, offering an alternative for both consumers and vendors.

In the span of six weeks, Nordic Waffles redeveloped its most popular item, the egg and cheddar bacon waffle sandwich, into a ready-to-heat frozen product and got it on the shelves at 23 Lunds & Byerlys locations by June.

"In light of the pandemic and Nordic Waffles' desire to continue getting their product to customers, we recognized our opportunity and ability to assist them in doing so," says Steve Sorensen, director of center store at Lunds & Byerlys. "The strong sales supported our decision." Nordic Waffles quickly became Lunds & Byerlys' top-selling breakfast sandwich.

"By August, we had transitioned to a [contracted packaging company] to help us meet production demand, and we were maxed out in production every single day," Ely says.

Other Local Fresh Food Brands at a Grocery Store Near You

While there are countless Twin Cities brands that began selling packaged provisions out of their restaurants during the pandemic, very few made it into grocery stores. Why? It's not easy. "Selling your product through another retailer is a whole other level of complexity and challenge," says Lauren Pradhan, founder of Lauren Pradhan Strategy Consulting and former executive director of Minneapolisbased food and agriculture accelerator Grow North. "It not only requires a great product and brand, but there are also a variety of rules and processes that a brand has to go through." -T.A.

Meet three other local fresh food brands that rose to the challenge:

Love You Cookie

When husband-and-wife co-founders Sahr and Sarah Brima launched Love You Cookie in August, they intended to sell primarily in local coffee shops. But they quickly realized that, at least during a pandemic, their plan wasn't going to work. In November, they started packaging their "OG" chocolate chip cashew and their double chocolate peanut butter cookies for sale in retail outlets. Today, they're available at co-ops around the Twin Cities, with plans for continued expansion. *loveyoucookie.com*



Quebracho **Empanadas**

Belén Rodríguez founded Quebracho in 2018. With experience from The Bachelor Farmer under her belt, Rodríguez initially sold charcuterie. savory pies, and empanadas under the Quebracho brand at farmers markets and fairs. But when Covid

hit, she turned to frozen empanadas to pull her through 2020. Currently. Quebracho sells its spinach and ricotta empanadas at 15 Twin Cities locations. This year, Rodríguez is working to expand Quebracho's retail partners and get its USDA license to sell its beef and chicken empanadas too. quebrachomn.com

T-Rex Cookie

Tina Rexing has been selling her giant cookies since 2015 through farmers markets, local restaurants and concessions, a cookie truck for events and corporate visits, as well as in her own shops in Eagan and at Ridgedale Center. When the pandemic shut down many of her avenues, Rexing began testing take-and-bake options on friends and customers. In January, T-Rex Cookie rolled out three flavors

By the beginning of 2021, Nordic Waffles had added an egg and sausage waffle sandwich, expanded to more Lunds & Byerlys locations, and added Kowalski's, Hy-Vee, and other grocery chains and independent retailers for a total of 157 grocery locations across Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota.

"2020 was an incredible year for food-based startups. ... Some brands did incredibly well and others suffered," says Lauren Pradhan, founder of Lauren Pradhan Strategy Consulting and founding executive director of Minneapolis-based food and agriculture accelerator Grow North. "Food has always been so central to people's lives, and during the pandemic, it became even more so as we looked to comfort foods, foods that fuel us, and foods that make us feel whole."

This year, Nordic Waffles is working toward packaging single-serve frozen offerings for convenience stores and continuing to expand the brand in the Midwest. But the ultimate goal for the year, Ely says, is to get into Target stores.

Ely says Nordic Waffles will also continue to offer the fresh waffles that started it all and will continue with the Minnesota State Fair, which it considers its flagship event. —T.A.

of frozen dough—monster, chocolate chocolate chip, and caramel chocolate chip—to grocery stores across the Twin Cities metro. "It's a slow process to get frozen dessert space," Rexing says, "but I'm making good progress." trexcookie.com





Putting the Soul Back in Supermarket

With a shiny new location, Good Grocer is determined to prove you can grow a business with volunteer staff.

sign hanging in Kurt Vick-man's office reads "Be a force for good," reminding the founder and CEO of Good Grocer why his business exists: to make fresh, quality foods accessible and affordable for everyone in the community.

Unlike traditional grocery stores, Good Grocer relies on volunteers. "Because volunteers drastically reduce our operational costs, we're able to pass those incredible savings on—not only to volunteers but to all shoppers who walk through the doors," Vickman says.

In return for their work, volunteers receive a 20 percent store discount, a percentage that will gradually increase as the store thrives.

More than 400 volunteers signed on before the store's January opening in its new location. More are needed, but Vickman is confident interest will grow once people see the store.

The reopening of Good Grocer at 27th Street and Nicollet Avenue in south Minneapolis, on a stretch best known as Eat Street, comes two years after its first location on Lake Street was forced to close to make room for the I-35W expansion project. At 8,500 square feet, the store is more than twice the size of the original, and it's sleeker too: white walls, modern shelves, neon signs, and a café (opening in the spring). It offers more than 10.000 products, including organic produce, fresh cheese, meat, and seafood, all at competitive prices. And for those who need more assistance, Good Grocer added a food outlet where second-rate items-like dented cans, banged-up boxes, seasonal items, or lightly bruised produce—are 75 percent off.

"The fractured nature of our community starts to get mended by relationships between hundreds of volunteers, formed around this cause of food affordability," Vickman says. "The idea that 'causes create the best communities' is true. By capturing a community committed to this cause, we are fundamentally breaking barriers that exist economically and racially in our community."

Beyond the economic advantages of Good Grocer's business model, like being able to offer

"There are people just waiting to be asked to participate in something meaningful," Vickman says.

customers and volunteers low prices because of the store's low operational costs, Vickman says running on volunteers gives the business a soul.

Connie Rutledge, CEO of
Minneapolis-based social business
incubator and accelerator Finnovation
Lab, says businesses can be a force
for good in many ways, such as by
donating money or maintaining a sustainable environmental footprint. To
achieve a mission beyond profits, she
says businesses need to outline how
they're going to operate and how
their operations serve the community.

"The volunteer model is a great way to build community and momentum for your mission-driven business, but you also need to plan for a transition," Rutledge says. "There will come a time, as a business grows, that you will need to move from relying on volunteers to being able to effectively utilize volunteers and a paid staff."

Currently Good Grocer employs 10 full-time staff members.

"Volunteers are some of the most underutilized assets in the world," Vickman says. "There are people just waiting to be asked to participate in something meaningful. We need to build the right structure to invite them in to participate and contribute." —Jenna Grundtner



The Gretzky Maneuver

A hockey stick-shaped curve is every company's path out of the pandemic. The key is staying a slap shot ahead of your competitor's plan.

By Rajiv Tandon

taught Minnesota North Stars hockey players when I was a professor at what is now the University of St. Thomas. I taught the players business skills after their NHL days were over, and they familiarized me with the intricacies of a very fast-paced game.

The only thing I remember from that class is ice hockey great Wayne Gretzky. An accomplished player, he explained his extraordinary acumen this way: "I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been." I have frequently used this declaration as a metaphor for a successful strategy by anticipating a future state and not solely relying on the present conditions or history.

When you play the game with the Gretzky strategy, sometimes—forgive my mixing of metaphors—you find yourself out in left field. So you must be equally adept at hustling to get back in the game.

Covid-19 has disrupted everyone's plans and expectations. Beyond the enormous loss of life, every business has faced significant disruptions. Entrepreneurs always face risks and even fear as they build their business, but in 2020 it was at a speed and scale never seen in our lifetime. Yet as we highlight elsewhere in this issue, several local small businesses have thrived during this very pandemic.

With vaccines or herd immunity around the corner, every company is skating toward the next normal. In many cases, these plans anticipate a return to some relatable version of the past. More likely than not, the puck is somewhere else. Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell



With vaccines or herd immunity around the corner, every company is skating toward the next normal. In many cases, these plans anticipate a return to some relatable version of the past. More likely than not, the puck is somewhere else.

remarked that the economy as we knew it is over: "We're not going back to the same economy, we're going back to a different economy."

Uncertainties will continue, thanks to aspects of the pandemic that are not yet well understood. Entrepreneurs, it behooves you to build up your Gretzky muscle. Creating a company against long odds has already established your credentials as an accomplished player. The best

move is to push your organization to experiment with new ideas more quickly, well before the team is entirely comfortable. Test and implement several approaches and institutionalize those that emerge as the most effective. At the same time, keep a keen eye on continually refreshed microdata about what is happening and if there is a need to amend. Plan on near-continuous and instant recalibration. The larger

objective is to find, during the crisis, the business model and strategy that is beginning to take hold in the future marketplace.

Ask and engage your entire team for ideas to uncover the new model and strategy for your company. Today the group may be primed to contribute out-of-the-box ideas they may have been reluctant to offer before. The time is opportune to use your looser organizational structure as a distinct advantage for everybody to pitch in and do whatever is needed. The bonus, in the long run, is an agile organization.

Two typical critical uncertainties are the future of remote work and your customers' behavior. Will there be a wholesale shift to remote work in your domain? Will consumers return to their old ways? These are the most important questions to ponder.

This pandemic is not over. You still have an opportunity to gain an advantage over your more established competitors. Many have a structure that has become rigid. Many are likely to spend thought and resources preparing for a return to 2019 normal. Their preoccupation with a traditional approach is your opportunity to score.

Competitive dexterity will define your company beyond this pandemic for many inevitable structural shifts. Playing to where the puck will be is the key to elevating your organization from a competent player to a Gretzky.

Rajiv Tandon is executive director of the Institute for Innovators and Entrepreneurs and an advocate for the future of entrepreneurship in Minnesota. He facilitates peer groups of Minnesota CEOs. Reach him at rajiv@mn-iie.org.



Meet McKnight's New President

Tonya Allen says she's looking to get into some "good trouble" in her new foundation role.

By Sarah Lutman

onya Allen becomes the fifth president of the McKnight Foundation on March 1. With more than \$100 million in annual grantmaking, the foundation plays a catalytic role for Minnesota's nonprofits, particularly those working in McKnight's regional focus areas in the arts, Midwest climate change and energy, and its broadly defined area of "vibrant and equitable communities." Allen previously was president and CEO of the Skillman Foundation in Detroit. In a recent interview, she discussed how she'll approach her McKnight leadership position.

What did you do to learn about Minnesota to help you decide this could be a place for you to work and call home? I looked at big statistics for the state. I was curious about average income, average educational attainment, what the employment rates were, what the quality of life looked like, how the state thought about taxation-all of those things were important to me. I wanted to see whether this is a place that was progressive enough to tackle the challenges that McKnight has identified in its mission. That was the first body of work I looked at.

Second, I looked at the demographics of the state and how they were changing. I looked at the economy, and I looked at the leaders who were in place. I wanted to know: What kind of leadership is there? Are they bridge builders or do they put up walls? I was so pleased to find that there were so many bridge builders in

place and people who were really open to solving problems and working to show up authentically.

[Finally, I looked at] the robustness of the philanthropic sector and the corporate sector. What kinds of things were they interested in? How did they partner? What were their ambitions for the community? I was also looking for people who were interested in getting into good trouble, because that's the kind I want to get into.

Minnesota and Michigan both have "red" and "blue" regions, and they have sharp divides between their urban and rural populations. How do you bring the state of Minnesota together? That's not just a great question for me, it's a great question for our country—that we figure out how to stop being polarized and find ways to find common ground and unite. I've had great opportunities to work on really tough issues with colleagues from various sectors and to work across political lines.

I work with a very important principle. It's really how I believe cross-collaboration, cross-cultural, cross-political work gets done, and I call it the 70/20/10 principle. On any topic you're working on, for the most part, people can agree on 70 percent. If you're passionate about climate or if you're passionate about racial equity or whatever the issue is, you can usually agree on a large number of items.

The challenge is that there are some things that you definitely never will agree on. That's the 10 percent. Then there's a gray area where there's another 20 percent where you might be able to negotiate. My goal is always



to move us from the 70 to the 90 percent range and never stop at the 10 percent. We have to set goals and aspirations and culture that allow us to listen to each other, not come [to the discussion] with predisposed expectations and biases about what's driving people's values and their work. If there are people who want to do good and create change, we can find a way together, if we listen and work collaboratively. That's my approach.

So you don't need to wrestle someone to the ground over the 10 percent.

Right. The point is, let's do what we can together on the things we agree on. And then once we get that success under our belt, that gives us possibilities; it gives us muscle memory that will allow us to try to do some things that are even harder than what we've done before. That's the spirit that I'll bring: How do we build the capacity of our state to tackle tough problems?

What is your goal for your relationship with the corporate sector here?

When I talk about the corporate sector, I'm not talking about their charitable giving but about their responsibility as corporate citizens. That's the place where I think business and the non-profit sector come together, around the sweet spot of impact. Business is interested in high-quality places to

live and work. To do that we need business leaders to embrace good climate solutions and racially equitable practices, both as individuals and for their institutions. Change comes from institutional practices and individual behaviors and also from corporate practices. Then we need them to contribute societally, and I know that's the ethos of corporations in the Twin Cities.

How do you see the connections among McKnight's separate program areas? I want to make sure that we have coherence across our programs, that they reinforce and impact each other. How do we ensure that all of these great assets, all of these great ideas, all these great investments really go full throttle? We are a placebased foundation fundamentally, and that means no matter where we work, we really believe that we have to listen to people: that we have to prioritize their voices, that we have to make long-term commitments with them and forge deep relationships and partnerships, that we have to do this work together and trust the people on the ground.

Sarah Lutman is a St. Paul-based independent consultant and writer for clients in the cultural, media, and philanthropic sectors.



Big Business Practices for Small Business Brands

Investing in intangibles can be the key to success at any size.

By Aaron Keller

very business was considered "small" at some point in its history. Some go big, but some stay small and do quite well. The size of a business in common measurements (revenue, employees, locations) is less relevant than the size of your customer base and the corresponding loyalty of customers.

An example: Many new ventures in natural and organic products found their first customer and only channel to market to be Whole Foods. It became a pattern in the category—invent a new natural product, start up with funds from friends and family, get into Whole Foods, and then raise real money to scale. Pacha Soap is a great example, and you can find their beautiful bars of soap as you enter most Whole Foods stores.

Yes, this might run contrary to some of the lessons you had in business school, like "You can't have a successful business with just one customer." To every rule taught in an MBA program, there's an exception and something to learn from it.

In a small business, your customers are your investors. They expect to see a return, whether it comes in the form of trust or hand soap. These investors know you and you know them. It becomes an important relationship and far more meaningful than those in big business. When I invest in Tesla, Elon Musk doesn't know me from Mr. Rogers, but the Take 16 craft brewery in Luverne, Minnesota, knows my name and favorite beer.

Small business is intimate business.

There are so many things a small business brand can do that don't cost a dime—but do require creativity, sometimes a shift in thinking, and the fortitude to make it happen. Here are three to frame up a perspective:

Consistency. The more intimate the relationship, the more consistent you need to be, from how you communicate to the visual and written language of your brand. Striking a consistent tone communicates stability, professionalism, and thoughtfulness, which engenders trust.

Loyalty. The economics of loyalty have a currency in punch cards, points, and rewards. But true loyalty can't be bought; it has to be earned. And loyalty is a two-way relationship. The larger the brand or business, the more likely it is that we, as customers, become transactions. As a small business, loyalty can be a social contract with a stronger bond than any legal contract. The results should be rewarding for both parties.

Personality. The factor that changes everything. A personality makes a brand interesting and is often the most challenging to manage. It is a perceived risk to have "too much personality," hence many brands have too little and forgo opportunities to form deeper relationships. Brands of all sizes have the capacity to be creative—they just need the confidence to express it.



For every Pacha Soap purchase, the company donates a bar of soap and gives to small business initiatives worldwide.

Now let's get down to the practicalities, because the smaller the business, the less time for contemplation and pontification. A small business needs to be nimble and pragmatic in the face of slow-moving larger competitive machines. Here are some questions you can start asking yourself and working on now:

Who is responsible for the marketing work?

If everyone does it, then no one does, so assign the tasks. Writer, designer, developer, and decision maker—those are the essential roles to get a brand set straight. If you don't have those, you can contract a part-time CMO from a staffing firm like Chief Outsiders. Auditing how you're doing requires a researcher and some marketing expertise to analyze the findings. Yes, there are a couple dozen more roles that could be filled, but a small business needs more generalists than specialists.

Where does this fit in the budget?

Any marketing budget should include content creators (writer and designer), content distribution (ad buy, social, PR, digital development), and measures to gauge whether it's working (research and analysis). Getting someone to write an article about your team

is no different than hiring a writer for a creative ad campaign. Many businesses feel comfortable investing in a physical asset; building a brand requires comfort investing in an intangible asset. And just as you'd have someone "tune up" a physical asset, you'll need to do the same for an intangible one.

How do we measure the results?

Do the outputs match or exceed expectations? Write down what you'd like to see happen from a marketing effort (objectives, strategies, tactics) in a clear and understandable manner. Check back on it monthly, quarterly, or whenever you get twitchy. Marketing and building the big asset (brand) is a business practice. It fits into the Entrepreneurial Operating System or any other model you use to manage your business progress. Just like you never see the wind, only the results of its existence, looking for intangible metrics takes a similar effort and trust in the indicators.

Small business, in aggregate, is far larger than big business in so many ways. Stay small as long as you can—it keeps life much more interesting.

Aaron Keller (aaronkeller@capsule.us) is co-founder and managing principal of Capsule (capsule.us), a Minneapolis branding agency.



Why Being Old Is New Again

Is it time for employers to take a cue from the political world?

By Linda L. Holstein

oseph R. Biden turned 78 years old on Nov. 20, exactly two months before being sworn in as president of the United States. Eighty-one million people of all ages voted to hire him to lead the country. He succeeded a president who is 74 years old. Biden's most significant competitor for the Democratic nomination, Sen. Bernie Sanders, is 79. At the time of the 2020 national election, the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, was 80; her avowed nemesis, then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, clocked in at 78.

This phenomenon of septuagenarian national leaders dominating every news cycle has not, unfortunately, trended down to the American workplace.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers over 50 still make up at least a third of the American workplace. But "over 50" is a far cry from imagining the gal in the next cubicle contemplating the ninth decade of her life. U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that workers in their 70s only make up 15 percent of all full- and part-time employees.

Why do companies continue to resist hiring, and keeping, very mature workers? No one would credibly accuse most of the aforementioned politicians of not working "hard enough" or "lacking the stamina to do the job."

While human resources departments have dictated that one must never mention the word, or even the concept of, "age"—a no-no in the personnel world for the last 30 years—a 60-year-old applicant is going to look

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is at the peak of her career at 80.

just that: 60. Omitting the year of your college graduation on your resume isn't going to fool anyone. What needs to change, according to AARP, is a wholesale revision of how older people are portrayed in advertising.

They are routinely pictured as needing help, smiling gratefully at the latest medical miracle available in their sunset years, and obsessing over their grandchildren. What they are almost never doing in an ad is working.

In September 2019, AARP collaborated with Getty Images to revamp the 50-plus age stereotype. Especially troubling to ad researchers was not only the absence of clearly older people in any kind of work environment, but the mere 5 percent of ads that actually show older generations using technology. Yet according to the Pew Research Center, 69 percent of individuals 55 to 73 years old own a smartphone. While pandemic-related marketing campaigns featured poignant shots of

quarantined oldsters FaceTiming with their grandchildren, there was nary a shot of a 75-year-old in an office Zoom call. One exception was Joe Biden, and he had an awfully big screen to display the video call that was facilitated by someone else.

The old people currently running Washington would probably say they earned their respect. Most, but not all, would point to decades of ascending the seniority system, of mastering the increasingly brutal media spotlight, of simply learning how to negotiate. These hard-won skills are not unique to the political class.

Nonetheless, mandatory retirement rules still abound in corporate America, as well as in most state governments, including the judiciary. Minnesota, like many states, forces judges to retire at 70. Forty-six state and appeals court judges in New York recently terminated because of drastic court administrative cuts all happened

to be age 70 or older. Court rules normally allowed New York judges to apply for two-year extensions to their tenure until they reached age 76.

In 2020, however, the 70-and-older judges got the boot, despite their cumulative decades of experience and desire to keep serving. Nine of the terminated judges sued, claiming age discrimination. As noted in the jurists' complaint, "this mandatory retirement age [70] may have made sense when it was adopted in 1869 and an individual's life expectancy was approximately 40 years." The average life expectancy in the U.S. is now 79.

One of the litigants, a 70-year-old from Rochester, New York, gave the *New York Times* a copy of the email he sent to the chief judge who made the decision. The Rochester judge, noting how hard he and his colleagues had worked during the pandemic, begged his boss for mercy, saying, "when things were at their worst this past spring, we were there for you. We were pushed and prodded and heavily leaned on to clear out pending matters and keep things above water. Now where are you for us?"

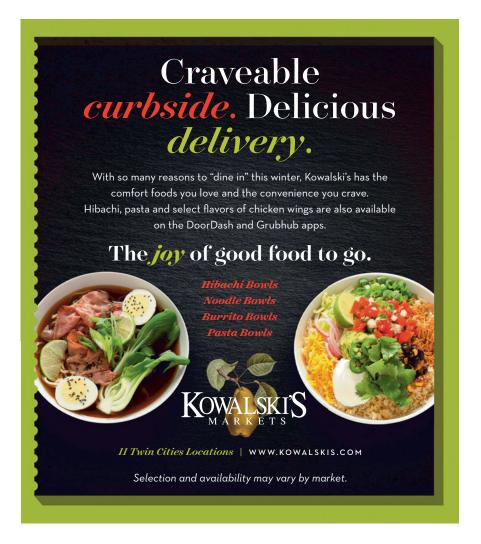
Federal judges are appointed for life, thereby avoiding the inconvenience of facing re-election or the grief of forced retirement. But the individuals sitting on state court benches around the country, who are the jurists most Americans are likely to interact with when they "go to court," are vulnerable by law. Perhaps they can take encouragement from the 70-plus-year-old politicians Americans continue to vote into public office and choose as their leaders. The notion of a "go-getter" in the workplace might be joined, we can only hope, by the desire to hire and retain someone

Linda L. Holstein is a Minneapolis writer, trial lawyer, and veteran employment law attorney. Holstein also mediates employment and business law disputes (holsteinmediation.com).

Why do companies continue to resist hiring, and keeping, very mature workers?







PLATTITUDES



Business as Usual?

Do we prepare for the next pandemic, and who pays for it?

By Adam Platt

n this issue we present a fascinating article about the state of Minnesota's hospitals. It's a story about hospital capacity and the response to the pandemic, but it is, in microcosm, also a story about all the other medical sectors and industries that were caught flat-footed last March and struggling over how to move forward.

Much remains murky about Covid-19, but some conclusions are manifest: We were unprepared. We had a mask technology, N95, that all but rendered viral spread moot. Except that we didn't have enough of them. A year later, we still don't. Hospitals continue to complain of inadequate supplies of these masks and more basic protective gear gowns, gloves, plastic shields. As for the public, we are still wearing cloth and surgical masks of indeterminate value, so the pandemic continues to govern us rather than vice versa.

Over the summer I had the good fortune to interview Minnesota C-suite legend Greg Page about his board service to 3M. We got off on a tangent and discussed repatriating production of essential medical supplies to U.S. shores. Page ran Cargill for years and now serves 3M, both globally diversified companies. He is a staunch believer in the power of global supply chains and production, and the efficiencies they deliver.

We talked about how, if the U.S. were to become self-sufficient in production of everything

identified as of crucial national security interest, it would add layers of unsustainable cost across the business spectrum or would require a government commitment to pay for it.

(President Biden invoked the Defense Production Act to ramp up medical supply production, but it will have little impact on vaccines production—a specialized process ill-suited to most drug manufacturing settings.)

Which brings us to my colleague Dan Niepow's feature story. Minnesota's hospitals have been at the center of our

We had a mask technology, N95, that all but rendered viral spread moot. Except that we didn't have enough of them. A year later, we still don't.

response to Covid-19. In the early lockdown, when the virus was poorly understood, the hospitals had disease modeling that showed their facilities would become quickly overwhelmed. So we closed our economy and a lot of health care as well, leading to enormous financial losses for the state's medical sector and layoffs of doctors and nurses. The capacity crunch didn't come.

In the early lockdown, hospital beds sat empty because they were only handling medical emergencies. By the fall, hospitals were busy. As Niepow's story notes, a "healthy" hospital is normally two-thirds to 85 percent full. ICUs tend to operate at even higher levels of occupancy. So when the Covid spike hit hospitals operating "as usual," there wasn't much room at the inn.

Though various care systems and individual clinicians sounded repeated alarms in the media, the medical system mostly continued elective procedures, and mitigation took the form of closing restaurants, bars, and youth sports. But when *TCB* queried Dr. Rahul Koranne, CEO of the Minnesota Hospital Association, he poured cold water on the idea that the state needs more medical personnel, hospital beds, and ICUs.

The dialogue is little different from the one I had with Greg Page last summer. Minnesota regulates hospital capacity to control costs in the sector. Whether this benefits consumers or merely the industry sector is an open question. But if the state were to instead encourage expan-

sion, it would add substantial fixed costs to care systems.

We don't know if the next severe pandemic is two years away or a century away. But if it's the former, and the only way to deal with it is to repeatedly open and close our economy, we'll be in a world of hurt. Conversely, if the next pandemic is a century off, building more hospital beds in an era when inpatient care is becoming the exception rather than the rule could cause care systems to disinvest in facilities and services that are more critically needed.

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented us with a series of difficult choices. Having billions of N95 masks at our disposal could have mitigated terrible economic pain, while mandated investments in vaccine production and testing capacities also seem worthy, given the growing array of pathogens we face. Hospital capacity is a more difficult equation.

It is not hyperbole to say Minnesota's hospitals could not handle the fall surge. But if we are going to ask our nonprofit care systems to prepare for the next pandemic in their facilities, it is quite obvious that taxpayers will need to pick up a large part of that bill.

Adam Platt is TCB's executive editor.



TCBTALKS —

Secrets of Success: **Small Business**

In a year that's challenged virtually every industry and put extreme pressure on small businesses, many local companies pivoted, held on, or even thrived thanks to dedication and determination. Join us as we spotlight small businesses and bring together expert advisors to share advice as you plan for 2021.

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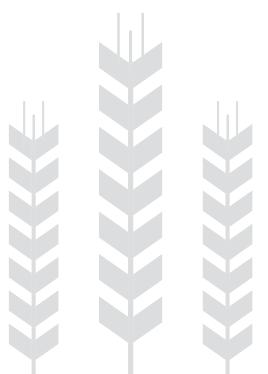
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CARGILL IS POWERING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC, BUT ITS TOP EXECUTIVE WORRIES ABOUT INCOME INEQUALITY AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES THAT STYMIE ECONOMIC GROWTH.



BY LIZ FEDOR



hen you do business in 70 countries across the globe, uncertainties in weather, politics, and market demands are a given. Adapting to constant change is par for the course for David MacLennan, CEO and board chairman of Cargill. But he acknowledges the coronavirus has been starkly different than a cyclical economic downturn.

"In the early days of the pandemic," MacLennan says, "I was concerned we might crash

our IT system." That calamity didn't happen when employees were adjusting to remote work. Most Cargill plants kept running. "Obviously we had some moments when we had to close our plants because of illness," he says. Beef plants in Canada and Nebraska were among Cargill facilities temporarily idled because of Covid-19.

But Cargill has fared remarkably well in the face of the novel coronavirus. For Cargill's fiscal 2020, which ended in May, the privately held company generated \$114.6 billion in revenue, a 1 percent increase over the previous year.

MacLennan spoke to *Twin Cities Business* recently about navigating the pandemic and Cargill's growth strategy. MacLennan, known internally as DMac, succeeded Greg Page as Cargill CEO in 2013. He is only the ninth person to hold the job since the company was founded in 1865. In 2015, the board elected MacLennan its chairman.

Beyond steering the giant agribusiness company with 155,000 employees, MacLennan is an outspoken leader in the business community on state and federal issues. In his *TCB* interview, he answered questions about the destruction of the middle class, the challenge of rebuilding Minneapolis, and Cargill's racial reckoning.

The son of a veteran Cargill employee, MacLennan did not join Cargill until 1991, a decade after he earned his bachelor's degree in English from Amherst College. He also holds an MBA in finance from the University of Chicago. A recent chairman of the Minnesota Business Partnership, MacLennan serves on the board of Ecolab.

You were Cargill's CFO in 2008 during the Great Recession, and you are serving as CEO during the pandemic. What are your takeaways from crisis events that you are applying to manage Cargill?

You've got to have as a core competency, or as part of your culture, the ability to make quick decisions, to be agile, and, more importantly with Covid, to be resilient. With Covid, there's been so much more uncertainty. It proved to be far more widespread and destructive than anyone imagined in the early days of March and April.

The lessons learned are: You've got to have resilience and the ability to stay the course, to keep true to your values, to keep true to your strategy. Senior leaders have to have the ability and skills to articulate



a message of optimism that is properly framed with reality. In a big multinational like ours, get the decision-making authority to the most appropriate level as fast as you can. You cannot make decisions on behalf of China or Brazil or India or Singapore sitting in corporate offices in Minneapolis.

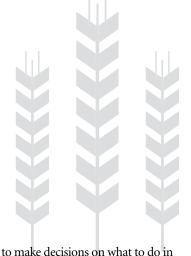


So your decisionmaking became more decentralized?

Some of it did; some of it didn't. We had an executive crisis action team. So our Cargill CAT in the early days would say, "Directionally, here is where we want to go with the company in terms of standards for shutting down and also trading information." So we knew where were the outbreaks coming the fastest or where we needed the resources. We also had regional CATs for Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America. In China they went through [Covid] for the first 60 days [after the outbreak there], and by April they were pretty much back to normal. You certainly couldn't be making policy decisions that were very appropriate in North America or Europe but completely inappropri-

Our beef supply chain in North America was under significant stress in the early days, so we had

ate for China.



those locations in North America very quickly. Obviously they were very different than what we might be doing in Argentina or Western Europe.

Under the new Biden administration, what key changes in policy do you anticipate that could have a major impact on Cargill's businesses?

Modernizing the United States' immigration policy, which we are fully supportive of. I don't yet know what their stance or policies will be toward China, but our farmer customers depend on China for markets to sell their products. I'm hopeful that there will be less antagonism toward China in terms of trade policy. In the short term, I think the most important priority is Covid relief and helping those who are most vulnerable and who have been hit the hardest. Ideally there will be an infrastructure bill. We are users of America's waterways, railroads,

highways, barges, trucks, ships, and port facilities.

If you could encapsulate Cargill's overarching principles on trade policy, what would they be?

We believe in open trade. We believe that food and agriculture should not be used as a weapon to try to create policy changes in our international relationships. Our belief is one of comparative advantage, meaning produce what you are best suited to produce in terms of your climate, soil, skill set, and your manufacturing capabilities. Then use open borders for trade to fill in the gaps for the products that you need.

If the federal government were more functional and made policy decisions in a timely fashion, how would that help businesses?

It would allow for business growth. Business success is directly linked to the health of the American consumer and the American population, which was affected by the [second] stimulus bill negotiations dragging out [until December]. Creating certainty and allowing businesses to operate quickly and plan with certainty ultimately is the best thing you can do for the U.S. economy.

What are your top business goals for Cargill in 2021 and beyond?

First of all, we want to expand our presence and our business in Asia. You've got [a huge portion of the world's population living in that region, and Asia is not a monolith. We also want to move ahead with diversifying our portfolio into specialty ingredients and to new foods that consumers of the future are going to want.

We do have a plant-based protein business, and that's going to be a growing part of the world's preference. We are feeders of salmon and shrimp today, but we also want to be processors, like we are with poultry and beef, of seafood as well. Bio-industrials is an area of focus. We recently made an acquisition of a bio-industrial company, which is making products from agricultural products to go into beauty products. Those are some of our areas of focus for 2021, but also we've outlined them in our strategy we are calling Cargill 2025.

Beyond leading Cargill's employees, you are a business leader. As chairman of the Minnesota Business Partnership, you gave a candid speech in 2018, saying, "We must get back to

being a more unified Minnesota."

How do we begin to do that?

I felt that there was an underappreciation of the contributions that the Minnesota business community makes to the state in terms of employment and philanthropy. I was frustrated at that time because I felt that there was a picture being painted in political circles that big is bad and businesses get a big break and businesses are abusing their position or not doing the right thing.

The rhetoric has calmed down since then. As we come back in 2021 from Covid, but also in Minneapolis from the devastation following George Floyd's killing, the business and the political communities are really going to need to come together to restore downtown Minneapolis. We're not successful as a state or a community without a healthy and thriving business community.

You've previously expressed concerns about Minnesota's tax levels. What's your message to Gov. Tim Walz and Minnesota lawmakers who will be determining the next two-year budget during the legislative session?



You don't want to be the highest-taxed state in the

"I'M HOPEFUL THAT THERE WILL BE LESS **ANTAGONISM** TOWARD CHINA IN TERMS OF TRADE POLICY."

nity to the state but doesn't make us an outlier in terms of taxation policy on a national basis.

country, whether it is either corporate rates or individual rates. We understand that living in Minnesota has a lot of privileges. But we still need to be able to recruit talent to come here, and we still need to be competitive with other world and domestic companies. We want to support the social programs and social aspects in the state that need to get done, including educating children.

Getting Minneapolis back up on its feet is something the business community is going to need to support. So my message would be: Let's work in partnership to make sure that there's good strong fiscal policy that brings the strengths of the business commu-

You've talked about the need to "fight against isolationism." Tell me why you're worried about nativist messages.

The last four years had more nationalist messages and isolationist messages than in the past. Our belief is we need to connect as a global citizen and as a world, whether it's on trade or on cultural or educational ideas. In terms of being able to grow the American economy and state economies, we have to rely on more than just domestic sales. If we become just inwardly looking and isolated, that's not healthy for our economy.

Do you think there should be additional interventions, from either business or government, that address creating a larger and more robust middle class?

At the heart of what has been going on in this country for the last five to 10 years is the destruction of the middle class or the pushing down of economic classes as people have either lost jobs or lost skills. Whereas another class of Americans has prospered and created more and more wealth. So that type of inequality and that type of separation by economic circumstances is not a good thing for our country long-term. I think business has an obligation to make sure that there are skills-retraining programs for workers. Continuing to reinvest in manufacturing capabilities, in the skills and talent of the

people who run those facilities, is much needed and one of the many things that I think businesses need to do to help shore up and grow the middle class.

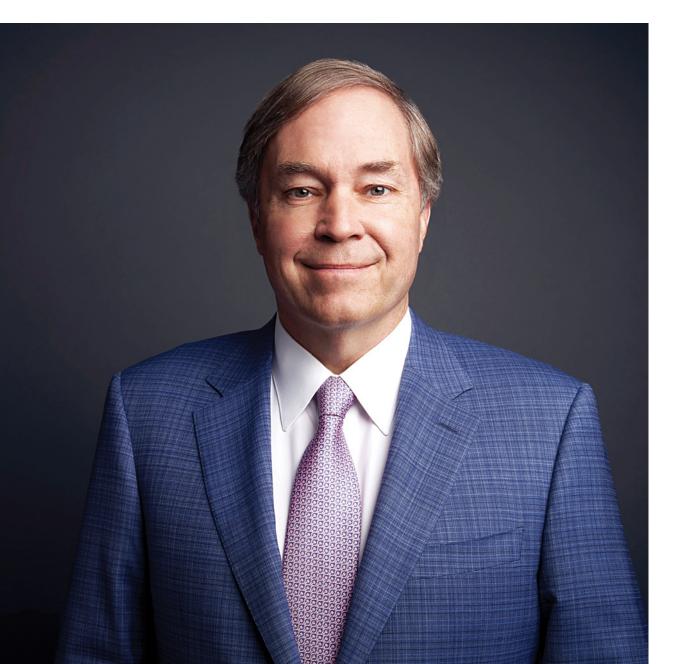
You've lived in the Twin
Cities a long time, and
you've seen that a racial
reckoning has unfolded in response
to George Floyd's death in May. What
are you doing to promote a diverse
workforce at all levels at Cargill?

First and foremost, we have signed on to the Paradigm for Parity, which is to achieve 50 percent gender parity in our ranks by 2030. [We also are striving for] 20 percent for African American leadership by 2030. We just joined a coalition called the OneTen partnership, which is to hire 1 million African Americans in the United States in the next 10 years. Initially, there are 37 companies that are sponsors of OneTen. I think that will grow.

In particular, when we talk about inclusion and diversity, we discuss what we need to do to change the culture and the profile of our company. For example, we went through all of our job descriptions and scanned for words or language that subliminally may have discouraged either persons of color or women from applying for a job. We made changes and we found that not only were applications from diverse candidates increased, but those jobs getting filled by diverse candidates were increased as well.

I ask all of my direct reports, at mid-year and year-end, to tell me what they have done in terms of inclusion, equity, and diversity. It's not only subjectively, but also statistically. [I ask them to] tell me what your representation is as we aspire to reach the 50 and 20 percent goals.

Liz Fedor is the senior editor at TCB and previously covered politics and business at daily newspapers.



Meet the Minnesotans leading tech innovation at 20 companies, emerging and established.

BY

Tess Allen, Burl Gilyard, Allison Kaplan, and Dan Niepow Try to imagine the past year without WiFi. Without Zoom and Slack. Without the ability to visit a doctor virtually or transfer documents through the cloud. While the Covid-19 pandemic continues to affect lives and businesses and disrupt the economy in ways no one imagined a year ago, it has also highlighted technology's essential role in our lives.

"Technology is enabling the remote workforce that is keeping the economy afloat, the distance learning keeping students on track, the telemedicine helping to maintain community health, and the communication tools keeping us all connected," says Jeff Tollefson, president and CEO of the Minnesota Technology Association.

And while the tech tools are important, it's the people behind them who are the real innovators.

"From the inventor or engineer with the idea to the CIOs leading digital transformations at their companies, it's all

about the people," Tollefson says.

TCB's annual roundup of tech leaders represents both startup founders and corporate executives working on advances in health care, manufacturing, and even gaming. And they choose to do it here, in Minnesota, where talent recruitment, retention, and funding can be more challenging than on the coasts.

"When Ryan Broshar brought [global seed accelerator] Techstars here [in 2015], it was a major national signal and started to convince companies to bring their headquarters here. Now, more investors are setting up here too, and we're starting to change the tone: You don't have to move [from Minnesota] to be successful," says Taqee Khaled, head of strategy at the Nerdery. "We still need to do good advocacy work, but it's a pretty cool time right now in Minnesota."

—Tess Allen





TAQEE KHALED

Head of strategy, Nerdery

The pandemic synthesized Taqee Khaled's diverse skill sets like few others in the tech industry can claim. Before he got into management consulting, Khaled studied neuroscience and epidemiology at the University of Minnesota under Michael Osterholm, one of the most famous experts in the field. "[Osterholm] predicted this pandemic in class a decade ago-even mentioned Wuhan as a region to watch," Khaled says. Since the early days of his career in research at Medtronic and with the Minnesota Department of Health, he has shifted his focus to the increasingly digital role of health care. "I didn't come at it from a business perspective; I came at it from curiosity," he says. Digital health became a gateway to consulting on all things digital. At Nerdery, Khaled helps companies in manufacturing, retail, education, finance, and more think broadly about solving problems through technology. "The pandemic is prompting more directto-consumer fulfillment," he says, using a retail term that can also apply to health care. "There's a massive battleground in how you serve consumer experience."

RYAN BOSSHART

CEO, phData Inc.

Started in 2014 and growing quickly, Minneapolis-based phData is a tech company whose focus is data and machine learning. PhData brings its "big data" tech expertise to customers that are not as digitally savvy. "I consider us the glue between next-generation data platforms and machine learning platforms," says CEO Ryan Bosshart.

After a blip in the spring when the pandemic first hit, 2020 turned out to be a very good year for phData. As businesses everywhere started working remotely, the demand for technology ramped up. "Traditional companies were saying, 'Is there a way that we can digitize our business?' " says Bosshart. "By the time midsummer came along, we started to see our pipeline really start to build up again to the point where, this fall, we were superlatively busy. ... We were fully back in growth mode." PhData posted revenue of approximately \$21.5 million for 2020. The firm now has about 170 employees, including an office in India, after adding 44 people during 2020.

"We were fortunate to have found a market and a strategy that really works and is scalable," says Bosshart. "We need to continue to scale what we're doing today to new customers and new markets."







CAROLINE KARANJA

CEO, Guided Pulse Solutions (formerly 26 Letters) & Hack the Gap

It's hard to know where to start in addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). No one knows that better than Caroline Karanja, which is why she launched Guided Pulse Solutions (formerly known as 26 Letters) in 2017. The nonprofit merges data and consulting to deliver its softwareas-a-service e-learning platform, primarily to businesses to help them understand their biases and how they can improve. "We gather data through assessments and focus groups to understand the challenges impacting our workplaces and our communities," says Karanja. "With that insight, we

create learning opportunities through our digital, bite-size content and action-driven strategies to address the gaps identified." In 2019, Guided Pulse Solutions acquired Hack the Gap, an organization that uses hackathons to innovate, collaborate, and bridge opportunities for women, nonbinary, and BIPOC technologists, allowing DEI work to touch more individuals and businesses. In 2021, Karanja hopes to broaden accessibility through both Guided Pulse and Hack the Gap by offering more services, partnering with more organizations, and making some content available for free.

CASEY HELBLING

Founder/CEO, Software for Good

After several years as a software developer for corporate clients, Casey Helbling founded Software for Good in Minneapolis in 2010 to combine programming and his passion for volunteer work. One of the state's first public benefit corporations, Software for Good established itself as a go-to web developer for social and environmental impact organizations. But in 2020, in the face of a global pandemic, national and local civil unrest, and a dipping economy, the agency stepped up in a broader way. Software for Good worked on Minnesota's Covid-19 Housing Assistance Program, developing a system to distribute housing relief funds to people affected by the pandemic, as well as working on projects for the City of St. Paul, the Greater MSP Economic Development Partnership, and organizations focused on forest conservation, animal welfare, and inclusive health care for the LGBTQ+ community. The agency also pivoted its summer internship program, which "offers hands-on career experience to up-and-coming developers, including people whose backgrounds







JON PEARCE CEO, Zipnosis

Virtual care platform Zipnosis has been around since 2009. but it didn't really get off the ground until the pandemic made virtual health care a necessity. Minneapolis-based Zipnosis sells its software to health care providers of all kinds-urgent, primary, mental and behavioral, post-operative, occupational health, and more. In 2019, the company facilitated a couple hundred thousand visits, but in the first week of March 2020, it hosted 80,000 Covid-19-related virtual visits alone. By the end of the year, it had helped diagnose and treat nearly 2 million patients. To

> handle the surge and its now 56 health system partners around the country, **Zipnosis** nearly doubled its team in 2020 to 51 employees. While Pearce fully recognizes the

role that Covid-19 played in getting Zipnosis off the ground, he believes the company's momentum will continue to trend upward. "It's an audacious goal," he says, "but we think we have the opportunity to touch every future health care encounter at some point."



are underrepresented in

tech," to be fully remote,

Helbling says.

TIMOTHY O'CONNOR

technology to solve global

challenges."

Executive vice president & chief generation officer, Xcel Energy



An old-school utility company probably isn't the first thing that comes to mind when people think about Minnesota's tech landscape. But Minneapolisbased Xcel Energy is leaning on its engineering and technological prowess to embark on a new pilot project that may change energy production for the better. Executive vice president and chief generation officer Timothy O'Connor is helping to lead the charge. Under a \$14 million project authorized by the U.S. Department of Energy, Xcel is partnering with the Idaho National Laboratory to produce hydrogen at one of Xcel's Minnesota nuclear plants. The project, which planners say won't produce any carbon, uses a high-temperature electrolyzer to separate hydrogen and oxygen molecules in water at the plant. The resulting hydrogen could be used in fuel cells for the transportation industry or in a blend with natural gas, among several other possible applications, O'Connor says. "It now starts to open the door of 'What are the other practical, feasible possibilities for hydrogen, and what are the economics of those paths?' " he says. "I do think economics is going to determine the direction, but the good thing is, no matter which direction we go, more hydrogen use means more decarboniz[ation] overall." Like several other companies, Xcel has pledged to drastically reduce its carbon emissions over the next few decades, making the hydrogen project a perfect fit for the company's long-term goals. The utility company aims to be 100 percent carbon-free by 2050.

TREND TO

WATCH:

"More health care

visits are going to

happen outside of

traditional care

settings than in."

JULES PORTER

Founder/president, Seraph 7 Studios

It may sound like a contradiction—a video game company designed to build empathy and showcase equity. But in a male-dominated industry notorious for violence as part of the product, Jules Porter believes there's another way. Troubled by events of the last decade, like the killing of Black teenager Michael Brown by a white police officer during Porter's first year of law school in 2014, she began to question how a career in law could really serve justice in a world seemingly devoid of empathy.

Porter found her answer in video games, which she believes can teach compassion without players even realizing they're learning. "In video games, you're playing the story," she says. "You're playing through someone else's shoes and seeing how your decisions impact the world around you."

She founded her console video game company, Seraph 7 Studios, in Minneapolis in 2018. The company, which will launch its first game this year, focuses on creating diverse characters from all over the world. The International Leadership Institute gave Porter an award recognizing her characters for advancing international understanding.

Seraph 7 Studios is also developing an applied work-study program for local high school students, set to launch at a St. Paul school in 2022. Students will work on the company's video games for a paycheck and school credit. In 2021, Porter is on track to convert Seraph 7 Studios to a public benefit corporation, participate in the American Express and iFundWomen's 100 for 100 program, and continue working with a team of consultants to develop the curriculum for the work-study program.







JON P. OTTERSTATTER

Co-founder/CEO. Preventice Solutions Inc.

Eagan-based Preventice Solutions is a digital health company that makes BodyGuardian, a wearable prescription-only medical device connected to a cloud-based infrastructure. which allows doctors to remotely track patients with cardiac arrhythmias.

What sets the tech apart is that doctors can track a patient's heart from four different perspectives: short-term, long-term, cardiac event, and mobile cardiac telemetry. "That's a very unique capability: a four-in-one monitor," CEO Jon Otterstatter says.

Preventice is no startup. Founded in 2007, the company now has approximately 1,000 employees, an office in Rochester, and locations in North Dakota, California, and Texas. Last year was a landmark: Preventice landed \$137 million in a Series B financing

round and posted net sales of \$158 million, up 30 percent from 2019.

TECH WISH LIST:

In January, Preventice agreed to be acquired by Boston Scientific for \$925 million. Otterstatter will stay on with the company. Boston Scientific has invested in Preventice since 2015.



NICK SCHNEIDER

Chief financial officer. Arctic Wolf

Cybersecurity firm Arctic Wolf is something of a rarity among tech companies. Founded in Sunnyvale, California, in 2012, the company announced plans in October 2020 to relocate its global headquarters to Eden Prairie. Nick Schneider, Arctic Wolf's CFO, says the team was attracted to the North Star State for its plethora of tech talent. He notes that the company's Eden Prairie office, which opened in 2016, has become its largest office by employee count.

In 2020, with legions of white-collar workers trading cubicles for kitchen tables, Schneider says the company, which serves customers in all 50 states and parts

of Canada, has seen a steady uptick in demand for cybersecurity services. "Cybersecurity is going to evolve as a result of what's happened in the past year. and I think we're well-positioned," Schneider says. "People are realizing the ways in which they thought about security can change in an instant." Raised in Eden Prairie. Schneider was Arctic Wolf's first Minnesota-based employee, but he certainly won't be the last: With a fresh \$200 million Series E raise in hand, the company is looking to add scores of new workers. The Eden Prairie office, which employs around 250 now, will likely add about 150 more by year's end, Schneider says.



GRADY
HANNAH
CEO, NightWare

An Apple Watch app that curbs nightmares? That's what Minneapolis-based NightWare promises, and it's been steadily gaining traction and national attention over the last several years. The company's platform, available by prescription only, monitors the wearer's heart rate and body movements to determine when they are having a nightmare. Then the app gives a gentle vibrational nudge—just enough to rouse them from the nightmare but allow them to remain asleep. CEO Grady Hannah describes the process as a "micro-arousal," something that occurs naturally throughout a regular night of sleep. The company's technology, developed in 2015 by Tyler Skluzacek while he was a computer science student at Macalester College, hit a key regulatory milestone in November 2020, obtaining FDA clearance to begin marketing the platform. Since then, NightWare has landed its first two customers: Veterans Affairs hospitals and the U.S. Department of Defense. Hannah notes that the technology is applicable to anyone who has nightmares, "but as a small startup, we have to choose where we focus. So we chose to focus on the veteran population." The company, which employs five people and has only recently started generating revenue, has piqued the inter-

est of dozens of VA doctors around the country. Now, the team spends time educating as many health professionals as it can. In Hannah's view, Minnesota's depth of talent and resources makes it an ideal place to launch a new

nesota startups," he says. "Minnesota is a sleeping giant of technical excellence."

startup. "I'm a big

believer in Min-



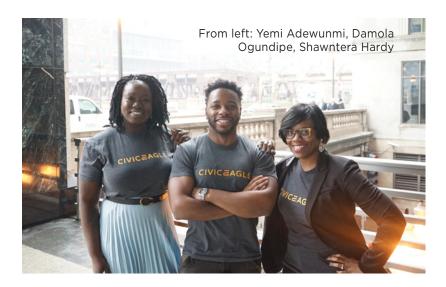
DAMOLA OGUNDIPE, SHAWNTERA HARDY, & YEMI ADEWUNMI

Co-founders, Civic Eagle

Like many startups, St. Paul-based Civic Eagle is different from what its founders first envisioned. It started as a B2C concept—which for Civic Eagle meant "business-to-constituent"—and its app, Eagle, offered citizens a way to track legislation.

But the business model proved unattractive to investors, so in 2018, the founders pivoted to Enview, a B2B cloud-based platform that caters to public policy professionals, advocacy organizations, chambers of commerce, law firms, think tanks, and even some government clients. Users can track, analyze, and collaborate on legislation in all 50 states and the federal government. "Most policies don't happen in a vacuum," says co-founder Shawntera Hardy. "[Enview is] driving productivity, it's driving action, and it's driving access to the legislative process and the federal congressional process."

Investors agree: So far, Civic Eagle has raised nearly \$2.5 million in financing. "We never pivoted from our mission," says Hardy. "Public policy can have an impact on how you run your business."



TREND TO WATCH:

"Covid has forced the distributed work and remote/ digital health trends to the forefront, but this is still affecting a relatively small percentage of patients and workers. I expect these capabilities to continue and grow more complex and consumer friendly. People don't want to go to five different services for their remote care; they want more integrated experiences."



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JASMINE RUKIM

Co-founder/CEO, Monicat Data

CASSIE UTT

Co-founder/project operations, Monicat Data

St. Paul-based Monicat Data provides market insights and technology development to creative industries—like arts, design, and marketing—that typically like to spend "less time planning and more time creating," CEO Jasmine RuKim says. 2020 was a banner year for the 4-year-old company, which more than doubled its staff to 10 long-term contractors. The company is ready to move past the contract-for-hire model and plans to hire three to five part-time and full-time employees this year. Also on the docket for 2021, RuKim and co-founder Cassie Utt say they will be working on the development, testing, and beta release of Monicat's new Yellow Platform, a software platform to help creative teams and independent creatives unify their workflow and manage projects. The two are also in the midst of 100 days of coaching from industry experts—part of their prize as participants in the American Express and iFundWomen's 100 for 100 program.

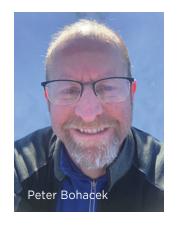


PETER BOHACEK & **MATT VONK**

Co-founders. Pivot Interactives

High school physics teacher Peter Bohacek and college physics professor Matt Vonk were frustrated with the limits of classroom teaching. "We disliked the compartmentalization that you're either doing a lab or you're doing a lecture. There are a lot of things that would be great for students to learn that you can't do in your classroom, yet you don't want to just draw a picture or describe them," Bohacek says. So in 2016, the duo launched Pivot Interactives, an online science education platform. When you can't conduct certain experiments in the classroom or at home, Pivot Interactives offers the next best thing: interactive virtual experiments. It's more than just videos; teachers and students can adjust variables such as slope or chemical measurements to see how the changes affect outcomes. The first few years, Pivot Interactives sold a little here and there, but it wasn't much, Bohacek says. Then came Covid and the need for remote learning. Between March and September 2020, Pivot Interactives' sales and volume increased 50-fold. Entire school districts, including Minneapolis and Washington, D.C., began using the videos to teach science classes. Their next goal? Proving to their customers that interactive videos have value even when students are back in the classroom. The co-founders continue to broaden their content and will soon be developing programming for middle-schoolers.





ON VONK'S **RADAR:**

"What is inspiring to me, in both brick-and-mortar and online tech, is the creation of community. I live right by a Mill City Running store and, pre-Covid, they would host several runs a week and people would just get together. I see the same thing happening online with platforms like Strava, where it's creating this community of people who have shared goals and shared



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CARL & BRIAN DOUGLASS

Co-founders, DI Labs

Versatile, quick, and able to produce personal protective equipment, 3D printing emerged as a hero of the pandemic. And fielding some of the increased demand from companies large and small is a relatively unknown digital manufacturer based in Willmar. DI Labs provides 3D printing services and prototyping to a host of companies, including Toro, 3M, Hormel, and Polaris. Founded by brothers Carl and Brian Douglass in 2013, the company has grown from a small niche startup to a budding

manufacturer with a reach into consumer products, aerospace, medical devices, defense, automotive,

and other industrial applications. In 2020, DI moved from its original home base in Spicer to a new facility in Willmar that's about eight times larger, says Carl Douglass, an Ohio native who relocated to central Minnesota for an engineering job years ago. In 2020, the company produced about 750,000 printed parts; the year before that, that number was just 100,000. "We're substantially larger than we were a year ago," he says. "We've grown quite dramatically, and we're

projecting to do that again this year."

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JARED SIELING

Founder/CEO, Chanl Health



Each year, doctors advise more than 7 million patients to participate in cardiac rehabilitation, but around 80 percent of them never enroll. "The result is unacceptably high levels of complications, rehospitalizations, and premature death," says Jared Sieling. Founded in 2017, Chanl

Health is a virtual cardiac rehabilitation program aimed at making rehab more accessible and convenient so that more patients are willing and able to participate.

At the onset of the pandemic in 2020, hospital systems were suddenly forced to adopt telehealth options to continue providing care for patients who could not visit in person. To help, Chanl offered its services for free to hospitals around the country. In the first three months of the pandemic, Chanl implemented its virtual service at more than 40 hospitals that had shut down onsite

rehab programs. By the end of 2020, the company had doubled its staff to 10 in order to meet a 3,000 percent increase in demand. In 2021, Chanl is on track to launch partnerships with several prominent U.S. health systems, and Sieling expects to more than double Chanl's team in the Twin Cities.

JOHN HAYNES (HUBEL); BUCCINA STUDIOS (KERMISCH)

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ALLISON HUBEL

Founder, BlueCube Bio

Cell therapy holds tremendous promise for treating cancer, injuries, and a host of illnesses, but there are a few practical barriers that make it trickier than typical medical treatments. As the name suggests, cell therapy involves putting living cells into a patient to help overcome a disease or condition. "What's complicated is the supply chain for those cells is much different than it is for a medical device or a drug," says Allison Hubel, founder of BlueCube Bio. As therapeutic cells pass from the lab to the hospital to the patient, the cells have to remain alive. Founded in April 2020, BlueCube Bio manufactures products that keep therapeutic cells alive by cryopreservation (i.e., freezing them). The startup, which operates out of an incubator space at the University of Minnesota's Stem Cell Institute, took home the top prize in the MN Cup startup competition in September. As of early January, BlueCube was still prerevenue, but given the demand for its products, Hubel anticipates a "short runway" to ongoing revenue streams.





YU SUNNY HAN

Founder/CEO, Fulcrum



"There's no future of innovation that doesn't include innovation in manufacturing," says Yu Sunny Han, founder of Fulcrum, a cloud-based business software system that assists with planning, quoting, quality control, and inventory tracking. Launched in 2019, Fulcrum specifically

targets the manufacturing industry, which isn't known for early adoption; Han estimates that 12 million manufacturers are using outdated software. With a large wave of CEOs hitting retirement age and the next generation climbing the ranks, Han says interest in modernization is

skyrocketing. Since last fall, Minneapolis-based Fulcrum has hired 20 new employees, mostly engineers, bringing its staff to 34. Han takes culture seriously: "We have a 'no a—hole' policy," he says, "which rules out one in four people." Fulcrum interviewed 1,400 people to find its next

20 hires and, in doing so, increased gender diversity from 19 percent to more than 40 percent women on the team. "We're asking our team to take risks and be more creative," Han says. "I can't be the source of all ideas, and we can't go off of what's been done before."

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BHARAT **PULGAM** Co-founder/CEO, Pikup

Bharat Pulgam and his partners were still students at the University of Minnesota in 2018 when they launched a concept called Runerra, an app that connected someone who needed a few things from a store with someone who was already headed out shopping. In 2018, Runerra participated in the Target + Techstars retail accelerator program. When the app launched in early 2019, it focused on college campuses. But business came to a standstill as schools shut down because of Covid-19.

"We found that we had a unique opportunity in neighborhoods ... to connect neighbors," says Pulgam. Customers pay nothing to use the app, now called Pikup. Pikup makes money by charging monthly subscription fees to its retailers. It has now raised close to \$1 million from angel investors, and nearly 1,000 Twin Cities neighborhoods are on the app. Local retailers using the service include Target, Kowalski's, and Caribou Coffee. Pikup also won the high-tech division of the 2020 MN Cup.

In 2021, Pikup is rolling out a feature allowing customers to place delivery orders with restaurants. Restaurants will make deliveries themselves, allowing them to build new customer bases. Pulgam adds that Pikup won't charge partner restaurants the same steep fees that other third-party delivery services do. "People are stuck at home, and they want to support businesses," Pulgam says. "Pikup is a great partner for that."



2020 INSIGHT:

"It's been fascinating to move from spending most of my career launching and growing startups to working at a large company. The [lesson] is that moving ideas forward [in a large company] isn't that much different than creating a technology startup—it all comes down to relationships and testing your assumptions, iterating and telling the right story that compels people to act."



JOE **SERRANO**

Director of digital strategy, Best Buy

With experience creating and leading new innovation and growth at Fortune 500s, a Big 4 advertising agency, and a Big 5 consulting firm, plus 15 years of experience founding five digital commerce startups, Joe Serrano is well-equipped to help steward Best Buy's technological innovation and its mission to enrich lives through technology. With so many people working, cooking, learning, connecting, and entertaining from their homes these days, Best Buy needed to offer services that keep customers coming to its stores instead of seeking technology elsewhere. Best Buy set up services

such as curbside pickup and one-on-one consultation services, while Serrano helped the company explore new multichannel fulfillment models amid rising online sales. For 2021, Serrano says that Best Buy will continue "leaning heavily into letting our customers tell us what they need and how they shop," adding, "As someone who came from the startup world, I truly understand the importance of following real-world, real-time evidence from customers to guide us." Serrano also plans to dive back into the startup ecosystem this year by becoming an adviser and



MARC KERMISCH

Chief technology officer, OptumRx

OptumRx prioritizes affordable and accessible health care, a longstanding social issue made even more glaring by the pandemic. Owned by UnitedHealth Group and a division of Eden Prairie-based Optum, OptumRx specializes in delivery and clinical management of affordable prescription medications and consumer health products. Chief technology officer Marc Kermisch joined OptumRx in April 2020. Leaning on his experience as former chief information officer of Bluestem Brands and Red Wing Shoe Co., he brings entrepreneurial strategy to OptumRx's internal and external technologies. Using data gathered from OptumRx's 330 million customers worldwide, Kermisch and his team are working to streamline the customer experience. In 2020, Kermisch's team participated in the relaunch of OptumRx's mobile app, making it easier for patients to auto-refill

prescriptions and have them sent straight to their doors, a critical feature in the age of Covid-19. He and his team also oversaw the launches of Optum

> Perks, a discount card that lowers the cost of prescriptions by up to 80 percent at pharmacies nationwide, and Optum Store, an e-commerce shop where consumers can maximize their HSA/FSA dollars. Kermisch and his team also improved the company's digital experience for customers, making it quicker and easier for customers to onboard with Optum-Rx and refill prescriptions online.



TREND KERMISCH IS **WATCHING:**

digital watches to more advanced health devices, patients can bring the health systems into their homes and better communicate with their care providers 24/7, ultimately improving health outcomes.





Most of us assume the pandemic exposed a frightening lack of hospital bed and ICU capacity in Minnesota. The hospital systems don't exactly see it that way.

By Dan Niepow

n early October, Fairview Health Services made a surprising announcement: Though the Covid-19 pandemic was nowhere close to over, the health system laid out plans to shutter Bethesda Hospital in St. Paul, which had been the only facility in Minnesota specifically dedicated to Covid-19 care. Ramsey County would go on to lease the space as a homeless shelter.

At the time, Fairview officials pinned the decision, in part, on a crippling loss of revenue: For the first six months of 2020, the health system, which serves many parts of the state, lost an unanticipated \$163 million.

"To improve health outcomes and experience for our patients, we must be willing to do things differently," Fairview president and CEO James Hereford said in a statement.

Yet a month later, Gov. Tim Walz closed gyms and other large-capacity businesses, plus seating at restaurants, and stopped youth sports to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and not overwhelm hospital capacity. This action put thousands of Minnesotans out of work and put sectors of the economy already reeling from the pandemic back in survival mode.

In a mid-December press conference, where the governor extended his pause on indoor dining, Walz warned that hospitals were on the verge of "catastrophic" capacity issues. Daily media updates told of Covid patients shuttled around the

state in search of capacity, and the number of available beds in the metro area hovered in the single digits.

The two actions, in sequence, likely posed a head-scratcher for many Minnesotans: If hospital capacity was the issue, why did Fairview close the state's only hospital exclusively dedicated to Covid-19? And what exactly do state officials mean when they talk about "capacity," anyway?

The ostensibly contradictory nature of hospital capacity stems from the fact that capacity isn't determined by beds alone; it's a complex puzzle that involves space, staff, and equipment. When one piece of the puzzle is missing, the entire system goes askew. What complicates the puzzle further is a decades-old law on the books that prevents health systems from expanding or building new hospitals without legislative approval. Though at least one hospital exec we spoke to wished for more flexibility, hospital systems are, generally, on board with the regulatory control and say the state's health care infrastructure has functioned as designed in the face of a worldwide health crisis.

A BID TO PREVENT OVERBUILDING

Under a 1984 law, health systems looking to add beds or build a new hospital must first submit a request to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). The request is passed along to the legislature, with the department's assessment. State legislators either craft an exception to the moratorium or reject it. In the end, lawmakers have the final say.

"The system has been stress-tested by two surges of the Covid pandemic," says Dr. Rahul Koranne, president and CEO of the Minnesota Hospital Association (MHA). "This is not hypothetical. ... We have clearly shown in the spring of this year and in the last several weeks of fall and winter that the health care infrastructure has withstood the stress-testing of a global pandemic."

Hospitalizations in Minnesota due to Covid-19 reached a peak of 1,840 on Nov. 30. For perspective, in 2019, the state had a total of 11,364 "patient-ready" beds—i.e., beds that wouldn't require hospitals to make any physical changes before accepting patients (per MDH data). That's less than 20 percent of overall capacity, but it's important to keep in mind that hospitals have non-Covid patients to take care of, too. Generally, those patients far exceed the number of Covid hospitalizations. What's more, according to MDH data, the state actually had more than 16,000 licensed "banked" beds, which could be converted for patient use if needed.

Koranne maintains that "the physical space to provide care to Covid-19 patients has never been an issue since the very beginning of the pandemic. There has always been excess bed capacity available."

It's a good thing for hospitals to run high occupancy. If they ran at a low occupancy and had a lot of open beds and staff just waiting around, that is going to add costs to the system.

- Dr. Rahul Koranne, CEO **Minnesota Hospital Association**

That's why MHA stresses the importance of "care capacity"—the combination of beds, staff, and equipment to take care of patients. Koranne acknowledges the tough economic consequences of state-mandated lockdowns, but he argues they were necessary to keep care capacity in balance and to keep the state's overall Covid-19 case count low.

"Minnesotans have sacrificed for many months to help ensure that we have enough care capacity to meet the needs of both Covid and non-Covid patients," he says. "Without those sacrifices, it is likely that more people would have contracted Covid, needing hospital and ICU care and stress-testing our system even more."

CONTROLLING COSTS OR COMPETITION?

Hospitals, unlike hotels, don't really like 100 percent occupancy. There's no industry standard, but many urban hospitals around the country run at a rate of around 65 percent, though it's a complex issue and varies depending on an individual institution's capacity. Regions Hospital in St. Paul, for instance, runs on an average occupancy rate of about 88 percent, says CEO Megan Remark.

On the other side of the coin, low occupancy isn't ideal, either. "It's a good thing for hospitals to run at high occupancy," notes MHA's Koranne. "If they ran at a low occupancy and had a lot of open beds and staff just waiting around, that is going to add costs to the overall health care system."

Regions is also an exception in another way: The hospital, operated by HealthPartners, obtained one of the few waivers to Minnesota's moratorium. In 2018, the legislature approved an exception that allowed it to add 55 new beds, though the system initially asked for 100.

"We are closely coming up against the number of bed licenses that we were granted," Remark says. "By the end of 2021, we will have opened all 55 of the beds. \dots From a moratorium perspective, we hope, going forward, to have the tools and the flexibility to help us better plan and meet the needs of the community in the future."

Including the Regions expansion, the state has granted just 28 exceptions to the moratorium since it was enacted in 1984 to control health care costs. Before the restriction was in place, the state had a "certificate of need" law, which functioned similar to the moratorium but only required approval from a state health agency, not the legislature. But legislators determined that the law "did not appear to control growth in medical facilities and health care investments," according to a 2016 MDH document. A moratorium, then, "was seen as a more effective way of limiting investments in excess hospital capacity."

Minnesota's restrictions aren't totally unusual; 35 states and D.C. have some form of a certificate of need law for new hospital beds.

HealthPartners first asked the state for a waiver in 2017, and other hospital systems quickly objected. Both Fairview and Allina Health questioned the need. Fairview, in particular, said the added beds could threaten the viability of its nearby but aging St. Joseph's Hospital.

Minnesota's health care systems are nonprofit businesses, but they are not charities. They depend on insurance companies and Medicare to fund most operations, so if their cost structures are not competitive, they often cannot raise prices. An open playing field might result in a spate of newer and more modern hospitals, compared to many of the aging facilities that dot parts of the local landscape, but experts say such an environment risks creating a facilities "arms race" that drives up overhead without commanding additional revenue.

The resistance to Regions' expansion points to another reason some health care execs favor the moratorium: It limits competition.

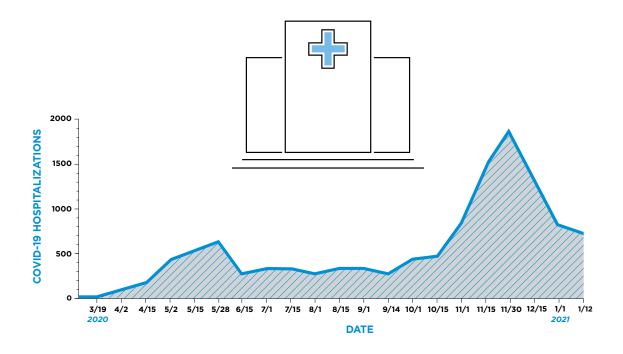
"If it was easy to build a new hospital, there's the possibility that all sorts of outside companies would come in and compete," says Allan Baumgarten, an independent health care analyst based in Minneapolis. "Hospitals are seeing that more and more of their care is shifting away from the inpatient side to the outpatient side. Yet the inpatient side still represents a large share of their revenues, and in a competitive market they face losing those revenues to other health systems."

Thomas Stratman, a health economics professor at George Mason University in Virginia, agrees. "Hospitals tend to like [the certificate of need law] because it means fewer competitors," he says. "In my view, the way to bring costs down is to foster competition."

But the hospital association doesn't see it that way. MHA execs hold that the

A CLOSER LOOK: COVID-19 HOSPITALIZATIONS

Minnesota was hit with two Covid-19 waves, pushing hospitalizations to high points in mid-May and the end of November. On Nov. 30, the state logged its highest number of Covid-19 hospitalizations at 1,840 patients. Yet the percentage of beds occupied by Covid-19 patients has generally remained in the single digits. These hospitalizations nonetheless pushed hospital capacities to the breaking point, state officials said.



DATE	% OF HOSPITAL BEDS OCCUPIED BY COVID-19 PATIENTS
3/19/2020	0.05
4/1	0.40
4/15	1.47
5/1	2.75
5/15	3.71
6/1	4.09
6/15	2.63
7/1	1.94
7/15	1.89
8/1	2.36
8/15	2.18
9/2	2.25
9/16	2.06
10/1	3.15
10/15	3.32
11/1	5.89
11/15	11.00
11/30	13.71
12/15	9.75
1/1/2021	6.67
1/15	4.56

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA COVID-19 HOSPITALIZATION TRACKING PROJECT

moratorium actually brings down health care costs for systems, patients, and insurers. That's why the association has long supported the moratorium and continues to do so to this day.

"From our standpoint, there's a very clear reason why this moratorium is needed," Koranne says. "It works and it actually is helping Minnesotans."

Of course, other factors are in play in determining health care costs. Stefan Gildemeister, Minnesota's state health economist, put it this way: "The moratorium, if it had a role in preventing excess capacity and therefore higher prices, likely played a subordinate role compared with other factors such as market power, the role of purchasers and payers, and the role of government."

If moratoria aren't the silver bullet for reducing costs, what else can be done? Some argue that more transparency with hospital costs could make a difference. Peter Bartling, a health care consultant and former CEO of Minnesota Oncology, argues that publishing prices might help bring down care costs. As of Jan. 1, hospitals are now required, under a Trump administration rule, to disclose prices for various services, though it remains to be seen how that will change health care

"Nobody would buy an automobile without knowing the costs. Nobody would purchase a home without knowing the cost," Bartling says. "If you publish the pricing, at least people would know the difference between having it done at an independent radiology setting versus having it done at a hospital. You might be amazed at the pricing spread."

THE NEXT PANDEMIC

All that said, there's another lingering question: How are local hospital systems

planning for the next pandemic, given the state's contention that they were nearly overwhelmed by this one? Might they attempt to add general and/or ICU beds?

Well, likely not, for several reasons. For one, the state still has a plethora of licensed beds. In 2019, about a third in the Twin Cities metro went unfilled, Koranne notes. Plus, Covid-19 has accelerated a trend toward more outpatient, non-hospital care for routine diagnostic and treatment procedures such as colonoscopies and low-risk biopsies. Even before the pandemic, some insurers were pushing patients toward care in outpatient settings because it costs less.

"If a service can be delivered at an equal quality and at dramatically lowered cost," says Bartling, "these services should be in the network, not in hospitals."

Telemedicine, too, has emerged as a key way to provide some routine medical services without requiring hospital or office visits.

"Until the pandemic hit, I don't think there was anybody who was clamoring to build new hospitals or saying there's a need not being met out there," Baumgarten says. "The pandemic has obviously been terrible, but it's a short-term blip, a short-term surge in the need for capacity."

And indeed, it's hard to make the case for more hospital space with the increased use of virtual visits and outpatient clinics for more and more services.

"If you look at the health care system of the future, there's going to be much more care provided as an outpatient and in the patient's home," Koranne says. "We're not going to need as many hospital beds because more care is going to be provided through this modality. ... We will never go back to delivering care like we used to."

Dan Niepow is TCB's online editor.

Secrets of Success:



2020 couldn't bring down these **10 Minnesota companies.**

Their determined leaders share the strategies and savvy moves that positioned them well for postpandemic prosperity.

BY TESS ALLEN, LIZ FEDOR, BURL GILYARD, ALLISON KAPLAN, ADAM PLATT, AND GENE REBECK

hen the calendar finally flipped to 2021, small business owners everywhere breathed a huge sigh of relief. Anyone who hadn't gone out of business during the year of the pandemic could congratulate themselves just for staying afloat and surviving.

Twin Cities Business is spotlighting a variety of Minnesota businesses that pivoted, quickly adjusted to the new reality, and made it through the year.

Some operators actually benefitted from the pandemic. Because many people were working remotely and sheltering in place, everyone was cooking and baking a lot more at home. That was good news for Wrenshall-based Locally Laid Egg Co. Winona-based Wenonah Canoe saw an uptick in demand starting in the summer. Paddling a canoe in the middle of a lake is a great way to socially distance.

Federal stimulus dollars boosted personal savings, to the benefit of the Falcon Heights-based

Spire Federal Credit Union. Bloomington-based Hoyo increased sales through effective networking.

Just about anyone who could tapped federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans for a business boost. More than 102,000 Minnesota businesses landed PPP loans averaging \$110,000.

Beyond dollars, small businesses knit the fabric of community. "We don't have big bank accounts," says Sammy McDowell, whose restaurant, Sammy's Avenue Eatery, in the heart of north Minneapolis, kept beating even during Covid shutdowns. "Even though they make less than some of the bigger chains, [small businesses] still support the community and individuals in the community a lot more than the bigger chains. That's why I believe it's important to have them in the community."

If there's a common thread among these disparate businesses, it's a mix of determination and an ability to adapt quickly as markets change. Here's to better days—and better business—in 2021.

—Burl Gilyard

TCB Talks: Secrets of Success Feb. 18, Noon-1 p.m.

Join us for a virtual panel discussion featuring small business leaders from Finley's, Hoyo, and NParallel, with expert insights from Bremer Bank. They'll share lessons learned from a most challenging year and advice to help you plan for 2021. Registration is complimentary at tcbmag. com/events/sbss21.

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Locally Laid Egg Co.

NOTEWORTHY: Produces specialty eggs

FOUNDED: 2012

HEADQUARTERS: Wrenshall

EMPLOYEES: 2-3 full-time; 8-9 seasonal

Neophyte farmer Jason Amundsen had a vision: providing Minnesotans with fresh eggs laid by chickens that roam freely in open pastures. The birds would enjoy better lives, and customers would enjoy tastier eggs. In 2012, Amundsen and his wife, Lucie, started the Locally Laid Egg Co. farm on land near the family's Duluth home. Skilled writers and marketers, the Amundsens' clever online posts and provocative ad copy ("Local Chicks Are Better") quickly attracted attention. Locally Laid eggs are now available in supermarkets and food co-ops throughout Minnesota.

Locally Laid was fortunate that demand for eggs generally remained robust in 2020. (The exception was the food service sector, though that makes up only about 10 percent of the company's customer base.) If Amundsen has learned anything during his eight years in business, it's don't put all your eggs in one basket. That helped the company remain nimble and continue to grow, even during a pandemic.

THREE WAYS LOCALLY LAID HAS
ADDRESSED BUSINESS CHALLENGES:

DON'T RELY ON ONE SOURCE. Because chicken flocks cycle in and out of production, "there are times when we have too many eggs and times when we have too few," Amundsen says. What's more, northern Minnesota winters make chicken farming all but impossible. A few years ago, Amundsen began contracting production to other Minnesota farms



located farther south: "Our contracts specify animal welfare, pasture rotation, nutrition of the feed, and other things we focus on."

piversify your products. "Traditionally, people in agriculture are price takers, not price makers," Amundsen says. Even suppliers of high-end specialty eggs are beholden to supply and demand. In 2016, Locally Laid established the first U.S. commercial honeyberry orchard. In 2019, the orchard yielded its first crop. This distinctiveness of the product (honeyberries resemble elongated blueberries) gives Amundsen more control over the price he can charge. He expects honeyberry revenue to grow 50 to 100 percent annually over the next four years.

SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE. Pre-pandemic, Locally Laid advertised regularly on Facebook and through a Minnesota Public Radio sponsorship. Amundsen pared back in 2020. Given the extraordinary economic dislocation during the pandemic, he says, "telling everyone the benefits of local foods and pasture-raised eggs" might seem insensitive. The company plans to resume advertising this year.



Traditionally, people in agriculture are price takers, not price makers."

 $-\mathit{fason}\ \mathit{Amundsen},\ \mathit{Locally}\ \mathit{Laid}\ \mathit{Egg}\ \mathit{Co}.$

Sammy's Avenue Eatery

NOTEWORTHY: North Minneapolis cafe with two locations known as neighborhood

gathering spots **FOUNDED:** 2012 **EMPLOYEES:** 9

It seems like everybody in north Minneapolis knows Sammy McDowell, proprietor of Sammy's Avenue Eatery on West Broadway Avenue. Since the small café opened in 2012, it's been drawing people for more than just its sandwiches, establishing a reputation as a community gathering spot.

"That's what we are known for: a good meeting spot, a good space where people can be. I say it's America, how America really should be," says McDowell. "We have all types of people coming into the eatery, from the white executives to the Black executives to the so-called thugs ... single moms, single dads. Everybody comes here."

People outside of north Minneapolis might know McDowell, too. He was featured on CNN in April as part of a story on struggling small businesses.

He compares the pandemic to a hurricane and its aftermath.

"It was a hot mess. We stuck together and got through it," McDowell says.

Sales were down about 50 percent throughout 2020. But he kept the doors open and did it without laying off any staff. Café hours were reduced, the landlord of the Broadway location was accommodating, and McDowell landed a PPP loan to help the business survive. He also offers catering, which provided a periodic boost during the year.

It's also clear that McDowell sees his business as a higher calling. He expanded in 2019, with a second location on Central Avenue in Northeast Minneapolis.

"I'm glad I'm there, because there's not a lot of Black business in that area," says Mc-Dowell. "I'm very spiritual about the things I do. I absolutely know that I'm there for more than just to sell sandwiches."

Thoughts of calling it quits? "No. Why should I?"

ADVICE ON STARTING AND RUNNING A SMALL BUSINESS:

"I would tell [people considering a small business] to make sure that it's something they're passionate about," McDowell says. "Because [there will] definitely be ups and downs in the business. Find your passion and shape a business around the passion."



Brave New Workshop

NOTEWORTHY: Renowned improv theater that conducts corporate workshops and delivers keynote speeches

FOUNDED: 1958

HEADQUARTERS: Minneapolis

EMPLOYEES: 7-10

In 1997, John Sweeney and his wife, Jenni Lilledahl, bought improv theater Brave New Workshop from legendary founder Dudley Riggs. In 2020, the coronavirus forced the couple to shutter the theater at 824 Hennepin Avenue in downtown Minneapolis.

"In 62 years, we had never missed a weekend of shows," Sweeney says. "Not when JFK got assassinated. We did a show every weekend of the Vietnam War. We did a show the night of 9/11."

While it was heartbreaking to halt live stage shows, Sweeney has been laser-focused on virtual keynotes and corporate training sessions. Those business lines have produced about 70 percent of the company's revenue over the past several years.

"Everyone thinks we're a comedy theater, but 250 times a year we're in front of a corporate audience somewhere across the globe," Sweeney says. UnitedHealthcare, Microsoft, and Hilton are among Brave New Workshop's repeat customers.

Many of the keynotes and training sessions address learning a mindset that enables innovation and excellence in leadership, sales, and customer service. (Sweeney's team also produces customized videos.)

"My heart tells me that the ROI will come a lot faster [in businesses] if everyone is loving where they work and feels that they are being treated well," he says. During the pandemic, he adds, "humanity is being considered more in the workplace."

Sweeney recently spoke at large virtual events for Medtronic and Be the Match. "As a performer, you still really miss being in front of a crowd," he says. "As far as the mission of our work, we are able to actually affect more people now."

KEY STEPS BRAVE NEW WORKSHOP TOOK TO REMAIN VIABLE:

- Adapted corporate training to recognize employees' stress and anxiety caused by working from home during a pandemic.
- Provided superior virtual programming for long-term corporate customers.
- Created a virtual sales training program to help people sell via video calls through use of storytelling and improvisation.

2021 GOALS: Survive as a business and continue to use transformative laughter to help people find their best mindset.



Finley's

NOTEWORTHY: Natural dog-treat brand that donates half of its profits to support people with disabilities

FOUNDED: 2016

HEADQUARTERS: Minneapolis **EMPLOYEES:** 3 full-time; 27 part-time

The company that is now Finley's natural dog treats got its start in 2016 as a classroom project by former special education teachers Kyle and Angie Gallus, who wanted to help their students gain job experience. It quickly grew into a regional brand and became the husband-and-wife duo's full-time focus. Four years later, the Minneapolis-based startup was poised to launch in 70 stores throughout the Pacific Northwest. But when the first major Covid-19 outbreak hit Seattle, orders were cancelled, and Finley's was left sitting on a

significant amount of excess inventory.

With consumers shifting to online shopping, Finley's jumped on the trend. Kyle Gallus had already been in talks with national e-commerce pet supplier Chewy.com, and with product ready to ship, he brokered a second-quarter 2020 launch on Chewy. "Within 48 hours, we sold through the initial product order, and they ordered another six weeks' worth of products," Gallus says.

Then Target wanted in. For two years, the couple had been in talks with a Target buyer who praised their product and mission— Finley's dedicates 50 percent of net profits to elevating people with disabilities—but said the company needed to reach scalability before it would be ready for mass market. A fast-tracked launch last summer on Target.com went as well as the Chewy launch. In the end, Finley's tripled its annual sales.

The momentum continues: In February, Target will launch the brand in select stores around the country. Finley's recently signed a partnership with KeHE natural foods distributor and expects to launch soon at Albertsons and Safeway grocery stores across the country.

WHAT THE PANDEMIC TAUGHT THE GALLUSES:

LESS IS MORE. "We thought we wanted business from everybody. Now, we see we can be really strong with a few key partners," Kyle Gallus says. "We also scaled back on assortment to focus on what was working best."

KNOW YOUR WHY. Pre-pandemic, Finley's relied on in-store demos to introduce consumers to the product and the mission of employing adults with disabilities. Sharing the story is more challenging right now, but that's made the founders think even more deliberately about partnerships, hiring, and branding. "It's not just a mission slapped on a bag," Angie Gallus says.

KEEP LEARNING. "A year ago, I had no idea what it meant to send a truck to a Chewy.com distribution center," Kyle Gallus says. "Being a small team working with bigger partners, I need to learn this. As teachers, we're still learning. That's what Covid's taught us."





Spire Federal Credit Union

NOTEWORTHY: Financial cooperative with assets of \$1.5 billion

FOUNDED: 1934

HEADQUARTERS: Falcon Heights

EMPLOYEES: 300

That banking would figure out a way to have a great year in a pandemic is perhaps academic. Still, some financial institutions are easier to root for than others, and Spire Federal Credit Union is one of those. Owned by its customers (it's a cooperative), Spire is the proverbial little engine that could, bouncing back from a disastrous run through the 2008 recession. CEO Dan Stoltz took over in 2010 and has guided the credit union through a period of strong growth (assets and employees tripled) with an emphasis on marketing and personal service.

"Normally, recessions hurt financial institutions," says Stoltz. "What's so unique about this downturn is that Spire and many others are doing well." That's in large measure due to the impact of federal stimulus money and a giant jump (20-30 percent) in the personal savings rate, driven by a lack of opportunity to spend, as large sectors of the economy went dormant. Plunging interest rates drove a record number of home loans as well.

■ HERE ARE FOUR FACTORS THAT SET UP SPIRE'S CONTINUED SUCCESS, EVEN IN A YEAR LIKE 2020:

VISIBLE MARKET PRESENCE. "You can't sell a secret," quips Stoltz, whose gray goatee is familiar to viewers of cable TV and visits to local stadia. Spire is a marketing partner of the St. Paul Saints and utilizes Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins as a spokesperson. "I'd like to think that marketing played into our growth."

TECHNOLOGY. Stoltz's IT team has grown from three people in 1999 to 25 today. "I can't afford what the big banks do, but I follow them very quickly," he notes. Stoltz says the burdens of technology investment are the No. 1 driver of small credit union mergers into larger systems.

REAL ESTATE. "Our niche is high touch," Stoltz says. Though Spire sent half its workforce home to work in the pandemic, it continues to operate 20 branches, from Isle in northern Minnesota to Eden Prairie in the southern metro, and growth remains a constant. Spire absorbed or merged with six other credit unions over the last six years.

BLENDING DIGITAL AND IN-PERSON SERVICES. The 2020 pivot that will serve Spire in the future is its shift to a reservation system for inperson banking, which it intends to maintain even after Covid-related capacity restrictions end.

2021 GOALS: Enhancing technology and branch expansion into the western and southern metro, as well as St. Cloud.



You can't sell a secret. I'd like to think that marketing played into our growth."

 $-Dan\ Stoltz$, Spire Federal Credit Union



CAITLIN ABRAMS (KUEPEI

Wenonah Canoe Inc.

NOTEWORTHY: Maker of handcrafted canoes

FOUNDED: 1967
HEADQUARTERS: Winona
EMPLOYEES: Approximately 70

In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, is there a business more Minnesotan than a canoe factory? Family owned and based in Winona, Wenonah Canoe is a nationally respected brand that's been a strong industry player for decades. But when the pandemic first hit, sales started sinking.

Revenue dropped more than 25 percent in the second quarter of 2020, says Bill Kueper, Wenonah vice president. "There were very scary days in early May because we didn't know what was going to happen."

As it became clear that Covid-19 would persist but the world was not going to end right away, demand surged. Sitting in a canoe offers "inherent social distancing," Kueper says.

"The retailers this year—if it floated, they could sell it. We were replenishing their shelves from our warehouse faster than we could refill our warehouse," he says. "The entire paddle sports industry globally was embraced like never before."

Wenonah manufactures canoes, kayaks, and accessories. Avid paddler Mike Cichanowski founded the company 54 years ago in his dad's garage. "He still comes in every day," Kueper says. As business boomed last summer, Wenonah hired 20 more workers in its factory and an additional staffer in the office.

But there's no time to celebrate. Kueper says it's important to focus on long-term business stability.

■ KUEPER'S ADVICE ON TAKING THE LONG VIEW:

DON'T OVERHIRE, EVEN WHEN BUSINESS IS GOOD. "Since we are family owned, we want to give the employees sustainable employment," says Kueper. "As this paddle sports market ebbs and flows, we just don't want to overstaff and [then] have to lay off great people."

FOCUS ON TURNING SHORT-TERM GAINS INTO LONG-TERM BUSINESS. The pandemic "brought a lot of health and new vigor to the outdoor industry that we haven't seen for a while," Kueper says. "We've been given this great opportunity; we've engaged with new [customers]. Now we have to retain them."



Craft & Crew

NOTEWORTHY: Restaurant group known for casual neighborhood gathering spots FOUNDED: 1976; became Craft & Crew in 2014 LOCATIONS: Hastings, Hopkins, Minneapolis (2), St. Louis Park EMPLOYEES: 250 pre-pandemic

Craft & Crew is a west metro-based restaurant company with multigenerational roots in Minnesota. President David Benowitz joined the business 17 years ago, working with his father, Steve, who founded the business in 1976, buying a "working-class" tavern in Hastings, now called the Bar DraftHouse.

A little over a decade ago, Benowitz saw changes in the southeast Minneapolis neighborhood where his Rail Station tavern was located. The neighborhood was getting younger and hipper, and its taste in alcohol and food was changing, so he made the risky decision to change his customers. The Rail Station became The Howe, creating a template for what is soon to be a six-outlet group spread across the metro area.

"Our vision is to be a neighborhood place, not to compete with destination restaurants," says Benowitz. Sixty percent of C&C's customers are regulars who visit two or three times a week. The business model is to seek out locations in underserved neighborhoods. "We'll never be downtown or Uptown," he says.

Craft & Crew employs a savvy formula, rooted in real estate. It only opens where it can own its space, which is uncommon in the

restaurant industry. This has reduced its vulnerability in the pandemic, because it doesn't have to worry about paying rent to someone else. "You want to control your own destiny," says Benowitz. "A lot of restaurants are struggling with landlords right now."

Last March, the company pivoted to takeout, created all-season outdoor patios, and doubled down on social media and marketing to make sure its guests knew how C&C was operating through the ups and downs. Benowitz says 2020 revenues end at 40 percent of normal, but that leaves this restaurant group in a better spot than many of its peers.

■ BENOWITZ'S ADVICE FOR BUILDING A
HOSPITALITY BUSINESS THAT CAN WITHSTAND
UPS AND DOWNS:

PRIORITIZE STAFF DEVELOPMENT. A focus on culture and retention is unusual in an industry built on turnover. "Success in this business is 30 percent skills and 70 percent mindset and communication."

INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY. The pandemic compelled C&C to invest in third-party delivery technology and internal operations software, which enables the company "to measure and react to our profit/loss in real time vs. waiting four to six weeks for true numbers," Benowitz says. "The delivery technology allows us to integrate all of the services within our POS. This saves so much labor and headaches and means fewer mistakes and faster service for our customers."

2021 GOALS: A Minnetonka expansion.

All Seasons Garment Care and Tailoring

NOTEWORTHY: Provides high-quality dry-cleaning and tailoring services

FOUNDED: 1971

HEADQUARTERS: Deephaven

EMPLOYEES: 45

Steve Rettler made what he terms a risky move during the pandemic, acquiring Sir Knight Cleaners. Rettler, president and owner of All Seasons Garment Care and Tailoring, did a cash transaction for the closed Sir Knight operation, adding dry-cleaning stores in Mound, Victoria, and Waconia to his company's portfolio.

Because dry cleaners have experienced steep revenue declines during the pandemic, Rettler acknowledges there's a "downside risk" to expanding, but he thinks the company will be better for it after Covid-19 fades and people start dressing up again.

It's a business calculation that Rettler made 27 years after earning an economics degree from St. John's University. Right after college, he joined his in-laws' dry-cleaning business, and he and his wife, Aimee, bought the company from Bill and Rebecca Fish 17 years ago.

Crystal and St. Paul were the original dry-cleaning locations. Today, Rettler's employees work in a dozen locations. Most dry-cleaning production work is done in a Crystal facility, with retail locations scattered across the metro area.

Rettler also started two businesses that complement the traditional dry-cleaning company. He founded Evermore in 2013, which focuses on cleaning and preserving bridal gowns. A second business, Twisted Thread, employs a team of tailors.

Some of the tailors work in MartinPatrick3, the upscale North Loop clothing store.

"There are a lot of synergies that are created among the three brands, which really helps us because we are diverse enough that we are not completely relying on one stream of business," Rettler says.

"We're not out of the woods yet," Rettler says, adding that he hopes to obtain a second PPP loan. "Our sales are down 50 percent or more, but our fixed costs haven't changed. We still have rents, insurance, and our payroll hasn't dropped 50 percent."

While his company is "bleeding cash" right now, Rettler says he's doing everything possible to control costs and serve longtime customers.



RETTLER ACTED DECISIVELY TO ENSURE HIS COMPANY WOULD SURVIVE THE PANDEMIC. AMONG HIS KEY SURVIVAL STRATEGIES:

CUT STAFF AND REDUCE STORE HOURS. While many businesses tried to hold on to "normal" as long as possible, Rettler moved quickly to avoid digging a bigger financial hole caused by a huge drop in customers.

STABILIZE FINANCES. When in crisis, accept any help available. Rettler secured a PPP loan.

RAMP UP DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS. Rettler wanted to make sure customers knew his stores were still open. He also enhanced his revenue base by publicizing that All Seasons does specialty cleaning, including rugs and furniture cushions.

2021 GOALS: Adapt the business model to align with reduced customer demand so the company emerges in a strong position postpandemic.



NOTEWORTHY: Maker of packaged Somali foods

FOUNDED: 2015

HEADQUARTERS: Bloomington **EMPLOYEES:** 7 part-time

Like many packaged foods brands, Hoyo experienced a spike in sales early in the pandemic as Minnesotans stocked up for the initial lockdown. But that uptick was short-lived.

As a small company specializing in sambusa, a Somalian stuffed pastry, Hoyo relies heavily on grocery store demos, a practice that couldn't survive Covid health restrictions.

"We're selling products no one in Minnesota has heard of. If you can't taste it, it's tricky," says CEO Matt Glover, whose cofounder, Mariam Mohamed, set out to fill a void in the frozen foods market and to create jobs for Somali women (Hoyo means "mother" in Somali). In 2020, Hoyo quickly moved to selling on Amazon, but the small company wasn't equipped to ship frozen foods. Instead, it focused on its shelf-stable Basbaas sauce and plans to introduce a second sauce this year.

If you give a small amount of kindness to people, they stick with you."

-Mariam Mohamed, Hoyo





Even without demos, Hoyo managed to expand from 50 to 80 stores across the Midwest and ended the year with revenue up 50 percent over 2019.

HERE ARE THREE MOVES THAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE:

ENTER BUSINESS COMPETITIONS. A 2020 MN Cup semifinalist, Hoyo won the 2020 JTM Scale Award, worth \$25,000 in services from food marketing agency JT Mega, which will help the company with packaging, sales materials, and social media—aspects of brand building that Hoyo didn't have the budget to invest in. Glover says both startup competitions garnered exposure and mentorship for the company.

NETWORK WITH THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

"One of the things that really kept us alive [in 2020] was Minnesota's robust food ecosystem," Glover says. Grow North, a hub for food and ag entrepreneurs introduced Glover to You Betcha! Box, which featured Hoyo's sauce, creating a new avenue for exposure and growth.

TREAT YOUR TEAM WELL. "We give rides to employees; we pick up their children from school," Mohamed says. "If you give a small amount of kindness to people, they stick with you."

NParallel

NOTEWORTHY: Experiential marketing agency

FOUNDED: 2003

HEADQUARTERS: Minneapolis

EMPLOYEES: 32 (down from 49 pre-pandemic)

As an experiential marketing agency, NParallel was known for designing and building trade shows, pop-up businesses, retail experiences, and brand environments. That is, until the pandemic hit, bringing business to a screeching halt. To survive, the firm started making and marketing gear it could sell during a global pandemic: acrylic barriers, desk protectors, personal protective equipment, communication signage, and business and school reopening toolkits.

In less than a month, NParallel launched a fully operational e-commerce site featuring its new products. The agency ended 2020 with revenue down 30 to 40 percent, but had it not been for the company's quick switch, NParallel wouldn't have made it through the year at all, says president and co-founder Megan Diamond.

"In order to support our team, keep our business afloat, and come alongside our community, we knew we needed to come up with a product that would be beneficial during a pandemic," says Diamond, whose

business is approaching its 20th year. Her team thought about new applications for the firm's manufacturing equipment. "Our 100,000-square-foot warehouse is home to endless manufacturing machines that typically create brand experiences," she says. "We knew we could utilize our facility to fabricate custom PPE and graphics to help organizations through the pandemic."

■ THE INNOVATING CONTINUES: NParallel is rolling out "vaccine administration structures"—custom-built stalls, similar in appearance to voting booths, that provide separated spaces for patients to receive shots. Demand remains high for PPE as schools and corporate offices prepare to welcome back students and employees.



TCB PEOPLE & CO

TCB People & Co. is the place to showcase your people and company news with the Minnesota business community. To place your listing, visit tcbmag.com/TCBpc or call Traci at 612-336-9214.

NEW HIRE | CONSTRUCTION/DEVELOPMENT **Cathy Schmidt**

CEO | FULLERTON COMPANIES



Marna Fullerton and the Board of Directors are pleased to announce that Cathy Schmidt has **FULLERTON** assumed the role of

BUILDING SYSTEMS Chief Executive Officer of Fullerton Companies. Cathy brings to the company deep and wide-ranging executive leadership skills in leading companies in



developing and implementing strategies to drive growth and profitability, strengthen organizational performance and foster team based accomplishment. Cathy was formerly Director of Business Development for PCL Construction Services.

BOARD APPOINTMENT | FINANCE Ryan Antkowiak, CFP®

FINANCIAL PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA



PLANNING

The Financial Planning ASSOCIATION Association of Minnesota has named Ryan Antkowiak,

CFP®, its 2021 Board President. Antkowiak is a financial planner at Baird and is passionate about educating clients through the wealth management process and helping them make an impact with their money. Bringing



more than 15 years of industry experience to his new role, Antkowiak will lead the chapter that provides professional development, continuing education and networking opportunities to its more than 750 members.

PROMOTION | HEALTH CARE + MED TECH Amy Hilsgen

ACCRA



Accra, Minnesota's largest provider of Champions of Homecare homecare services,

has promoted Amy Hilsgen to Chief Human Resources Officer. Hilsgen will continue to lead Accra's HR department while encouraging a philosophy of strong business partnerships throughout the organization. Hilsgen joined Accra in 2012 and has led the



organization's HR department for the past seven years, overseeing the expansion of the department's capabilities and responding to the agency's changing needs as it grew to serve 9,000 clients.

PROMOTION | MANUFACTURING **Jeff Bazal**

ERGODYNE



Ergodyne, the St. Paulheadquartered company behind the pioneering Tenacious Work Gear® line, recently announced the

promotion of Jeff Bazal to Vice President of Sales. Bazal succeeds Mark Lindstrom, whose retirement comes after 23 years with Ergodyne and 42 years of dedicated



service in the health and safety industry. In Bazal's 8 years with the company, he has held responsibilities including Director of National Accounts, Associate VP of Strategic Accounts and Associate VP of Channel Sales.

NEW HIRE | NONPROFITS + PHILANTHROPY Ellen Brownell

SAINT PAUL & MINNESOTA FOUNDATION



Ellen Brownell joins as Associate

Vice President, Director of Investments. responsible for assisting in all aspects of portfolio management. She was Senior Investment Advisor at Pohlad Investment Management, and Managing Director at San Francisco Employees' Retirement System.



A member of the CFA, Minnesota State Board Investment Advisory Council, Private Equity Women Investment Network, and the Girls Who Invest Advisory Board and its Diversity, Equity & Inclusion committee.

ACQUISITION | TECHNOLOGY Accessible360

Accessible360 (A360), a leading digital accessibility provider, has been acquired by T-Base Communications (T-Base), a leader in accessible communications. Combining T-Base's highly automated and secure document accessibility



capabilities with A360's web and digital accessibility expertise creates a comprehensive accessibility solution for enterprise customers. T-Base is a portfolio company of growth-oriented private equity firm, Thompson Street Capital Partners.

Mark Lacek, Chairman and Co-Founder of A360 said, "We are so excited because now companies can work with a single entity to ensure their disabled customers can easily and effectively interact with them. I know the A360 staff has found a great home as part of the T-Base family." Michele Landis, Co-Founder and CRO, A360 added, "This combination has created the most diverse and capable full-service accessibility provider in the marketplace. I am so enthusiastic about the future."



SHERI AHL
Executive vice
president,
deputy general
counsel,
assistant
secretary, TCF
National Bank

Sheri Ahl, who worked as a CPA before becoming an attorney,

has been a legal advisor at TCF since 2001. Last year, she helped resolve numerous legal issues so TCF could process more than 16,000 PPP applications.

Ahl volunteers for Outpatient Outfitters, which provides clothing to homeless people discharged from area hospitals. She has also served as a board member for the Theresa Living Center in St. Paul, which provides services for homeless women and children. Last fall, she co-chaired the Banking Law Institute of the Minnesota State Bar Association.

| MORE ON NEXT PAGE >

Best-in-class executives

TCB's 22 Notable Women in Commercial Banking were already responsible for managing trillions of dollars at some of Minnesota's largest commercial banks and institutions. Add in a global pandemic and they were also responsible for steering clients through the complexities of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and other Covid-19 assistance programs, helping to keep Minnesota companies afloat in an especially difficult year. | See methodology on page 60.



Julie Stewart delivers tireless service and reassuring calm to our clients and the greater community. In early 2020, Julie knew many businesses would need assistance to survive a historic pandemic, and she worked day and night to secure more approved Paycheck Protection Program applications than any other Alerus advisor. Our clients are lucky to have her in their corner, and we are grateful to have her on our team. Congratulations, Julie, on being recognized as one of Twin Cities Business's 2021 Notable Women in Commercial Banking.

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NOTABLE WOMEN IN COMMERCIAL BANKING



SUSAN "SUE" **ANDERSON** Senior vice president, VisionBank

At St. Louis Park-based VisionBank Sue Anderson advises smallbusiness owners, real estate inves-

tors, and individuals to help make their entrepreneurial dreams come true. In late 2019, she began working with a startup that was selling primarily online. Anderson helped the fledgling firm review upfront costs, debt, and forbearance options, all of which allowed it to build business even when Covid-19 hit. The new company is now thriving.

Anderson also shares her insights with Twin Cities-area women business owners. She is a member of The Business Women's Circle, the Women Presidents' Organization, and Minnesota Commercial Real Estate Women.



LAURA GEVIK Senior vice president, chief operations officer, Drake Bank

Laura Gevik has played a crucial role in leading St. Paul-based Drake Bank to create and

adopt repeatable systems of operation and control to enhance its services. The numerous projects she has led and implemented include financial reporting remodeling, migration to a modernized HR platform, streamlining new products, establishing an IT committee and a cybersecurity plan, and remodeling the bank's compliance and audit functions. Initiatives like these have enhanced Drake Bank's onboarding and open enrollment experiences, saved more than one-third of projected expansion costs, and increased the bank's core deposits by double digits.



SHANNON HILLESHEIM Senior vice president, Bank Midwest

Shannon Hillesheim took the helm at Bank Midwest's New Ulm location in 2015. Under her leadership,

the location has posted year-over-year asset growth of 31.2 percent. Commercial and agricultural loan portfolios have grown significantly under her watch, as have Bank Midwest's insurance agency and wealth management businesses. In 2016, she oversaw the bank's move to a new, larger facility, a \$4.6 million project that opened the following year.

Outside of her work at Bank Midwest, Hillesheim has served on the Public Utilities Commission and on the boards of the New Ulm Area Foundation and New Ulm Area Catholic Schools.





KRISTI JACOBSON Senior vice president, commercial banking, Old National Bank

In 2020, while continuing to serve her clients at Old National Bank in St. Paul.

Kristi Jacobson spent several weeks processing 280 PPP applications totaling \$168 million. She also continued volunteering for Feed My Starving Children, BestPrep, and other organizations. In addition, Jacobson recruited Old National colleagues to work at a pop-up food shelf organized by refugee-support nonprofit CAPI USA at its East Lake Street location in Minneapolis after last summer's social unrest.

Last year, Jacobson was named the bank's "culture champion." In this role, she serves as Old National's values ambassador, as well as a reliable source of help for colleagues.



SUSAN JOHNSON Senior vice president, mortgage warehouse funding, Fidelity Bank

Susan Johnson joined Fidelity Bank in 1989, becoming a mem-

ber of the bank's warehouse team in 2002. In her current role, she oversees the Edina-based bank's efforts to provide warehouse funding to a wide range of clients, from emerging mortgage bankers to midsize correspondent lenders. Under her guidance, this relatively niche offering has grown into a nationwide program. Johnson's ongoing efforts to increase awareness of the bank's warehouse funding program have helped it add more new clients in the past year than in the previous five years combined.

Johnson also serves as a board member and the treasurer of WomenVenture and recently served at the Ridgedale YMCA.



MELISSA JOHNSTON Senior vice president, Highland Bank

Melissa Johnston has expertise in a wide range of lending sectors, including commercial and industrial, tax-

increment financing, real estate, nonprofit, and mergers and acquisitions. In 2020, in addition to processing PPP loans, Johnston helped make St. Paul-based Highland Bank eligible for the Federal Reserve Bank's Main Street Lending Program, which has provided clients with continued cash flow and working capital needs throughout the pandemic.

Johnston also serves as vice chair of Minnetonka's Economic Development Advisory Commission and is a member of the Philanthropy Committee for the Crescent Cove Respite & Hospice Home for Kids.



drake-bank.com



NOTABLE WOMEN IN COMMERCIAL BANKING



ANDREA MURPHY Vice president, commercial Ioans, Northeast Bank

With a nearly two-decade career at Minneapolisbased Northeast Bank, Andrea

Murphy has developed a knack for finding loan solutions for her clients. She has partnered with the City of Minneapolis' Two Percent Loan Program, WomenVenture loan program, and the Small Business Administration.

One example: In 2018, Murphy suggested a loan product to a nonprofit client. Other banks had told the organization it didn't qualify for the product, but Murphy dug deeper and found that the nonprofit was indeed eligible. She went on to win approval on a tax-exempt, bankqualified loan with an interest rate significantly below the market rate.



NALIPINSKI Vice president and relationship manager, commercial banking, U.S.

LARISSA

Bank

Larissa Nalipinski leads a team of specialists who provide custom-

ized banking solutions for midsize companies, both private and public. The companies she supports account for trillions of dollars annually in U.S. private-sector gross receipts, as well as millions of jobs. When the pandemic begins to lift, she believes these companies will be particularly crucial to rebuilding the

Nalipinski is also passionate about developing women leaders and advocating for individuals with disabilities and their families. She is involved in the Women of Twin Cities Business Resource Group, as well as the U.S. Bank Disability Resource Group.



LAURIE NORDQUIST

Upper and Mountain Midwest lead region president/ Minnesota CEO, community banking, Wells Fargo & Co.

A 30-year Wells

Fargo veteran, Laurie Nordquist assumed her current role in 2018, where she is responsible for more than 700 bank branches.

In addition, Nordquist has been an advocate for the Twin Cities within Wells Fargo, pushing for programming that addresses community needs. Programs she has championed include the Wells Fargo Open for Business Fund, which reinvests processing fees from PPP loans in community-development financial institutions, and the NeighborhoodLIFT Program, which offers \$15,000 in down-payment assistance to low- and middle-income homebuyers.





Congratulations, Kristi!

Old National is proud to recognize Kristi Jacobson for being named one of Twin Cities Business's Notable Women in Commercial Banking 2021. We're so glad to have you on our team.

Kristi Jacobson

Commercial Relationship Manager, Deposit, SVP





Executive vice president, head of the Central Region for commercial banking, Wells Fargo & Co.

Laura Oberst's team provides industry expertise and a com-

prehensive suite of products focused on the financial needs of middle-market companies in 20 states. Over the last year, she has supported her team's transition to working from home and providing digital solutions for employees and customers.

Oberst has been deeply involved in women's leadership programs, including the Minnesota Women's Economic Roundtable, Habitat for Humanity's Women Build program, and Deloitte's 100 Wise Women initiative. She serves on the boards of HealthPartners, the Greater MSP Economic Development Partnership, and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.



SARAH OQUIST Board chair, Woodlands National Bank

Sarah Oquist is the first woman and first Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe (MLBO) tribal member to serve as board chair of Onamia-

based Woodlands National Bank, which MLBO owns via a holding company it operates. Before joining the board in 2015, Oquist was a commercial banking lawyer at Faegre Baker Daniels. She is now a practicing attorney, national speaker, and corporate director.

In 2020, Oquist's operational, strategic, and relationship-building insights helped the bank and the communities it serves navigate the pandemic and civil unrest. In this regard, she has been a leader both on the board and in the community. Oquist also won the Distinguished Alumna Award from Lyon College this year for her professional success.



KAEL
PETERSON
Senior vice
president,
commercial
banking
relationship
manager, Wells
Fargo & Co.

At Wells Fargo, Kael Peterson handles all as-

pects of client management, including originating, structuring, and executing transactions related to commercial lending, investment banking, debt capital markets, and loan syndications.

Peterson has also co-chaired the Wells Fargo Community Leadership Academy, a state-wide program that educates and equips the next generation of Wells Fargo leaders to serve their communities. The academy made individual grants available to local nonprofits that provide programs and services that reflect some of Wells Fargo's funding priorities: workforce development, minority-owned small businesses, and financial education.



FAMILY-BUILT COMMUNITY STRONG

VILLAGE BANK | #FBCS

Village Bank is proud to congratulate **Aleesha Webb** as a **2021 Notable Woman in Commercial Banking**.

Thank you for all of your hard work, leading our Village,

And from our Village to yours, congratulations to all the women in banking who continue to innovate and drive the industry forward. It truly takes a village to accomplish great things and we are grateful to be a part of the banking community with you. We celebrate the women who have come before us to make our accomplishments possible and lift up those following behind us to give them more



|tTakesaVillage| www.villagebankonline.bank



NOTABLE WOMEN IN COMMERCIAL BANKING



RUTH **PETERSON** Executive vice president, head of banking, Union Bank & Trust

Early in her banking career, Ruth Peterson learned that she particularly en-

joyed working with small-business clients. At Minneapolis-based Union Bank, she has ample opportunities to serve that market. In 2015, she was tapped to lead the full-service community bank's banking group. Three years later, she became the first woman in the bank's history to serve on its board.

In 2020, Peterson provided financially stressed clients with clear application guidance for Small Business Administration loans and PPP. She also helped those clients determine how to best make use of PPP funds in order to qualify for loan forgiveness.



STACY QUICK Vice president and relationship manager, commercial banking, U.S. Bank

Stacy Quick's banking career spans 17 years. At U.S. Bank, she has built a

diverse, complex portfolio of regional midsize businesses, including private and public companies, nonprofits, hedge funds, and alternative investment firms.

In addition, Quick has been a mentor in the financial industry, particularly for women. Since the early days of her banking career, she has actively recruited women into the profession from a variety of Minnesota colleges. Her work as a mentor continues through her membership in the U.S. Bank Women's Business Resource Group.

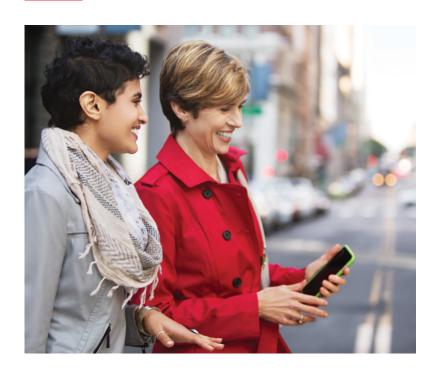


KATIE SIMPSON Senior vice president and global commercial banking market executive, Bank of America

Katie Simpson leads a team of commercial

bankers who provide midsize companies with a variety of financial solutions, including treasury, credit, investment banking, and risk and wealth management across Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. She is also Bank of America's Minneapolis-St. Paul market president. In her territory, Simpson directs Bank of America's deployment of resources to address social and economic concerns. These efforts include funding local nonprofits to provide critical resources to vulnerable and underserved populations. Nationally, the bank is investing \$1 billion to drive economic opportunity and equity in communities of color, and Simpson will spearhead the deployment of funds locally.

WELLS FARGO



Celebrating leaders in the community

In every community, there are leaders who set the course for positive change through their vision and guidance. Their work not only supports local needs, but inspires others to do the same.

Notable Women in Commercial Banking, we celebrate your achievements.

wellsfargo.com

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KELLI STARKEY Senior vice president, warehouse and specialty lending, Fidelity Bank

Kelli Starkey joined Edinabased Fidelity Bank in 2003

as a commercial credit analyst. In her current position, she manages 15 percent of the bank's employees and has led the team to improved customer offerings and experiences. Her efforts helped double the division's volume in 2019, funding \$4 billion in mortgage loans.

Starkey's efforts to implement lean principles and improve operational efficiencies in the mortgage warehouse lending program have reduced the bank's loan processing time by 75 percent. Thanks to initiatives like these, Fidelity Bank doubled its client base and quadrupled its loan volume in 2020.



JULIE STEWART Senior business advisor, Alerus

Julie Stewart delivers comprehensive financial advice to business clients. With more than 30 years of experience in the

financial industry, she has developed extensive expertise in commercial credit underwriting and administration.

When the pandemic struck, Stewart helped long-term clients as well as business owners she hadn't worked with before to secure federal PPP assistance. Her efforts produced the most approved PPP applications of any Alerus advisor: 84, with total proceeds of nearly \$16 million. Stewart's dedication helped save hundreds of jobs and keep dozens of Minnesota businesses operating.



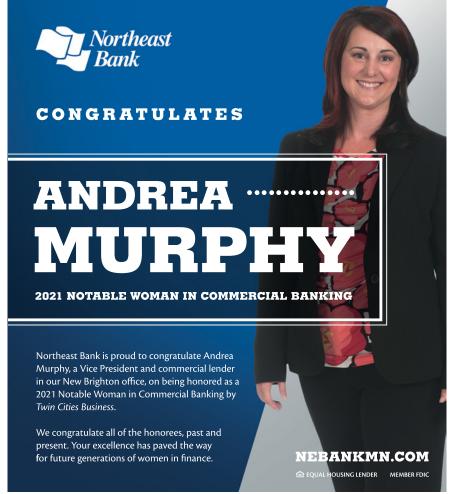
MARY STOICK Vice president, New Markets Tax Credits, Sunrise Banks

Mary Stoick joined St. Paulbased Sunrise Banks in 2017 after more than 12 years in commercial

banking in the Twin Cities metro. Through her work with the federal New Markets Tax Credit program, she is helping increase the flow of capital to low-income communities.

Most recently, Stoick led deployment of a roughly \$18 million loan pool that supports commercial development in low-income communities in the Twin Cities region. The loan pool's investments are projected to create or retain 138 construction jobs and 435 permanent jobs, helping develop or renovate approximately 154,000 square feet of commercial property.





NOTABLE WOMEN IN COMMERCIAL BANKING



JACKI TEMPLIN
Vice president
of business
banking,
Deerwood Bank

A business banker since 1996, Jacki Templin is based in Deerwood Bank's Waite Park location.

She has received many industry awards during her career, including the Wells Fargo National Sales and Service Award, which she won in three consecutive years. More recently, she co-founded the Deerwood Bank morale committee, which develops strategies for boosting employee and client engagement.

Templin's community service roles include treasurer of the St. Cloud Morning Optimist Club, representative on the Sartell All-Sport Booster Club, volunteer for Junior Achievement, active member of the Sartell Chamber, and organizer and leader for local United Way events.



WEBB
President and
vice chairwoman
of the board,
Village Bank

ALFESHA

Aleesha Webb's banking career began more than 25 years ago as a teller at Village Bank. Af-

ter holding executive positions at other banks, she returned to St. Francis-based Village Bank in 2018 as its president.

While many other community banks are being purchased by national banks, Webb is committed to Village Bank's independence and its mission to serve its communities. That commitment is borne out by more than \$65 million in loans to 500 businesses through the federal Paycheck Protection Program between March and the end of 2020. More than 300 of those recipients came to Village Bank because they couldn't get help from the banks they usually worked with.



LISA ODOM WINCZEWSKI

Vice president and relationship manager, commercial banking, U.S. Bank

Lisa Odom Winczewski leads a team of specialists

focused on providing customized banking solutions to midsize companies. She is also deeply engaged in addressing the pandemic's extraordinary financial, economic, and community challenges, mobilizing her team to help Twin Cities companies navigate federal financial aid programs.

Winczewski is also committed to mentorship. In her work with Minneapolis-based BestPrep's e-mentor program, she helps connect students and classroom learning to the business world. She also provides mentoring through the U.S. Bank MentorConnect program and the Association for Financial Professionals.





Celebrating leaders who give back

U.S. Bank proudly recognizes three leaders who were honored with Twin Cities Business magazine's 2021 Notable Women in Commercial Banking award.

Thank you for your commitment to your clients, fellow employees and the communities you serve.



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Lisa Odom Winczewski Vice President & Relationship Manager



Stacy Quick Vice President & Relationship Manager



Larissa Nalipinski Vice President & Relationship Manager

Congratulations, Laurie!



Greater Twin Cities
United Way congratulates
our dedicated champion,
Laurie Nordquist on
being selected as one of
the Twin Cities Business
2021 Notable Women
in Commercial Banking.
Your leadership and
commitment to ensuring
all thrive regardless of
race, place or income is
inspiring. Thank you for
being a changemaker
in our community!



Greater Twin Cities United Way

gtcuw.org







Best-in-class executives

In a year that presented complex legal challenges like never before, many of Minnesota's best-known companies leaned heavily on their general counsel. In 2021's Notable General Counsel, *TCB* recognizes 10 individuals who excel at steering and advising companies like 3M, Land O'Lakes, CenterPoint Energy, and Hormel Foods.

See methodology on page 60.



BRENDA BJORKLUND Associate general counsel, CenterPoint Energy Resources Corp.

Since Brenda Bjorklund joined Minneapolisbased Center-Point Energy

in 1984, she has practiced in numerous and diverse legal specialties, with a current focus on regulatory law.

In addition to chairing the City of Richfield's Planning and Zoning Commission to help with eminent domain issues, Bjorklund has served on several nonprofit boards, including The Bridge for Youth and the Better Business Bureau of Minnesota and North Dakota.

Bjorklund is a past president of the Minnesota Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel and remains active in Minnesota State Bar Association activities.



IVAN FONG
Senior vice
president,
general counsel,
and secretary,
3M Co.

Since joining Maplewoodbased 3M in 2012, Ivan Fong has overseen all company legal, legal

policy, compliance, and global security matters.

His work during the pandemic has included negotiations with senior federal officials on complex trade issues, as well as efforts against fraud, counterfeiting, and price gouging. Fong's commitment to promoting well-being and mental health in the legal profession has helped mitigate stresses and isolation among his legal team members as they learned to work remotely in the pandemic.

Last summer, he also led his team to identify ways 3M could promote racial equity and social justice in the Twin Cities.

Congratulations to Lori Marco

Senior Vice President, External Affairs and General Counsel on her designation as a Twin Cities Business 2021 Notable General Counsel.



Inspired People. Inspired Food.







HORMEL FOODS, A GLOBAL BRANDED FOOD COMPANY.



CONGRATULATIONS! JOEY VOSSEN

Larkin Hoffman is delighted to congratulate Joey Vossen, Vice President and General Counsel at **Westwood Professional Services** on her selection in *Twin Cities Business*

Notable General Counsel

Larkin Hoffman



NOTABLE GENERAL COUNSEL



BRENDA FURLOW Senior vice president, general counsel, and chief compliance officer, Bio-Techne Corp.

Since joining Bio-Techne in 2014, Brenda

Furlow has supported the publicly traded global life sciences company's rapid growth while also building its legal and compliance functions. During the pandemic, she has navigated the Minneapolis-based company through numerous legal risks and opportunities, including Bio-Techne's partnership with Mount Sinai Health System's commercial affiliate to manufacture and distribute millions of Covid-19 serology test kits.

Furlow has also helped create a network of women general counsel, and she serves as a director for The Medical Memory, an Arizonabased health care IT company.



MARY GIESLER Senior vice president, general counsel, Minnesota Twins Baseball Club

Mary Giesler joined the Twins in 2014 as its first general counsel. She provides legal

counsel and oversight on all business-related matters and serves as the team's liaison with Major League Baseball's legal department.

Giesler led the Twins' legal efforts in the public-private development of Target Field Station and the establishment of a new player-development academy in the Dominican Republic. With Covid-19 truncating the 2020 season, Giesler reworked agreements, resulting in mutually beneficial modifications and sustained relationships. In the past year, she has also negotiated significant affiliate transactions between Major League Baseball and Minor League Baseball.

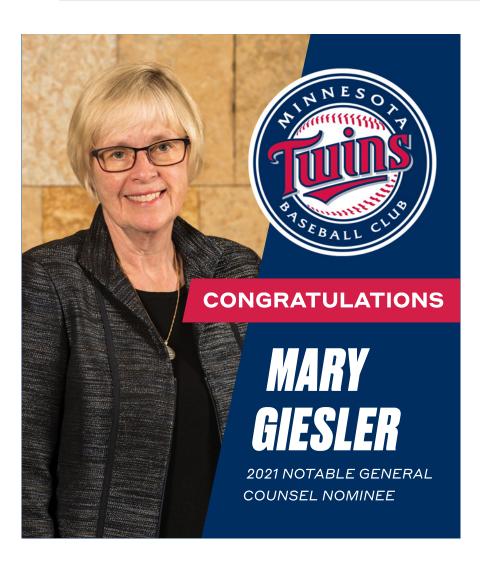


JENNIFER
LOHSE
Vice president,
general counsel,
and chief
compliance
officer, Hazelden
Betty Ford
Foundation

In 2014, Jennifer Lohse was recruited

to lead Hazelden's in-house legal department. In her first week on the job, she steered the merger of Hazelden and the Betty Ford Center, securing the regulatory and governance approvals to integrate the two entities into the nation's leading nonprofit addiction treatment provider. More recently, she spearheaded industry reforms aimed at protecting consumers from unscrupulous practices.

At the pandemic's onset, Lohse led the Center City-based foundation in national care system initiatives to protect patient and staff safety, tackle supply-chain interruptions, and prepare for potential surges in infection.







LORI MARCO Senior vice president of external affairs, general counsel, Hormel Foods Corp.

Lori Marco leads Austinbased Hormel's external affairs function, which

includes the law department, legislative affairs, and corporate brand design services. She also oversees the company's complex regulatory relationships.

During the pandemic, Marco's team has helped plant managers establish relationships, have meaningful discussions, and share best practices with local and federal public health officials on prevention methods and slowing the spread of coronavirus outside of the workplace.

Marco is involved in numerous professional and nonprofit organizations, including the Minnesota Zoo Foundation.



SUSAN SNYDER Senior vice president and general counsel, Daikin Applied Americas Inc.

Susan Snyder joined Plymouth-based Daikin in January 2019 after

serving in general counsel roles at several other manufacturing companies. At Daikin, she has spearheaded the legal department's shift from paper to digital technology. Electronic contract management, invoicing and matter management, and legal hold systems have saved countless hours and boosted the bottom line.

Snyder has advanced diversity and inclusion efforts at the company, recruiting female talent in the predominantly male industry. She has also helped Daikin's Covid-19 response team navigate the requirements of executive orders in the states in which it operates.



SHEILAH STEWART Senior vice president and general counsel, Land O'Lakes, Inc.

Sheilah Stewart has served Arden Hills-based Land O'Lakes since 2012 and

is responsible for achieving the farmer-owned cooperative's strategic goals in every legal matter. Stewart taps her legal and mediating experience in the labor and employment sector to support her colleagues. When Covid-19 shut down Land O'Lakes' offices, she nimbly transitioned her legal staff to working remotely. She has kept them motivated and focused on the many crucial projects and matters facing Land O'Lakes during the pandemic.

Stewart also serves on the board of directors of Second Harvest Heartland and was a director for the Boy Scouts of America's Northern Star Council.

cheers for peers

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE 2021 NOTABLE GENERAL COUNSELS.

Dorsey congratulates all the Twin Cities Business Notable General Counsels:

- · Brenda Bjorklund
- · Ivan Fong
- · Brenda Furlow
- · Mary Giesler
- Jennifer Lohse
- Lori Marco
- · Susan Snyder
- · Sheilah Stewart
- · Lee Thoresen
- Joanna "Joey" Vossen

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LEE THORESEN Senior counsel. head of regulatory and transactional practice. RBC Wealth Management-U.S.

Lee Thoresen provides counsel to the leaders of

the sixth-largest broker-dealer in the U.S. on a wide range of legal issues, risk mitigation, and corporate governance. She has also been a key player in the design and implementation of multiple business initiatives under complex regulatory environments that have been essential to the Minneapolis-based firm's success.

Thoresen also chairs the Multicultural Employee Alliance, an employee resource group at RBC Wealth Management-U.S. In this role, she works to create mentoring, networking, and professional development opportunities for all employees and assists the firm in developing relationships with diverse communities.



JOANNA "JOEY" VOSSEN Vice president, general counsel, Westwood Professional Services

Minnetonkabased engineering firm Westwood has

grown fivefold since Joey Vossen joined in 2010, thanks to her direction integrating new services, locations, and markets. Recently, she led the legal integration of three critical acquisitions that established new energybased services in the Northeast and supported the diversification of core business platforms.

Vossen also chairs the nonprofit Environmental Initiative, which works with community, business, government, and nonprofit leaders to address complex environmental and systemic issues. She focuses specifically on fostering relationships in communities disproportionately impacted by environmental challenges.

METHODOLOGY:

The individuals featured in Notable Women in Commercial Banking and Notable General Counsel did not pay to be included. Their profiles were drawn from nomination materials. These lists are not comprehensive. They include only people who were nominated and accepted after editorial review. To qualify for these lists, individuals must be serving in a senior-level role at their company or institution in Minnesota. have at least five years of experience in the field, and have shown the ability to create significant, positive, and measurable results in their field.



As senior counsel and head of regulatory and transactional practice, Lee Thoresen is responsible for helping RBC Wealth Management navigate an ever-changing regulatory environment. Known for speaking her mind, Lee is a valued source of truth at the firm on whom leaders rely.

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SUSAN SNYDER

NOTABLE GENERAL COUNSEL

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As a champion of safety, quality and principled leadership across the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation and throughout the field of behavioral health care, Jennifer Lohse brings both legal expertise and extraordinary empathy to ensuring access to the very best care for individuals and families who struggle with the disease of addiction and mental health disorders.

Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation

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and General Counsel
Jennifer Lohse on leading
with extraordinary heart and
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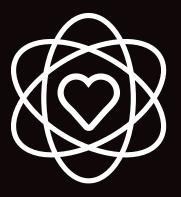


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When Covid-19 hit, companies needed to quickly alter their messages, and some are changing the way they communicate with customers over the long haul. **By Gene Rebeck**

indows and doors are built to be durable products that are long-term investments for homeowners. Campaigns that market these products should not be ephemeral.

Annie Zipfel, chief marketing of-

ficer and senior vice president of Bayport-based Andersen Corp., wanted a company slogan that would resonate with customers and be memorable. She and her colleagues spent most of 2019 working on a brand refresh for Andersen's windows and doors. Zipfel was planning for a big day on Feb. 12, 2020, when she would help unveil a new marketing approach to Andersen's sales team that was meeting in the Twin Cities. Andersen's updated branding included a refreshed logo, the tagline "Love the Life You See," and a national marketing campaign.

"Then two weeks later, the world shut down," Zipfel recalls. Suddenly, the campaign's upbeat messages of how its products enhance homeowner self-expression no longer seemed to fit the nation's dour mood. People were anxious about staying healthy and employed.

How Andersen's marketing pivoted when the Covid-19 pandemic hit reflects changes in the ways businesses of all kinds responded. Companies and their marketing agencies had to act quickly—even if their moves were simply to pull the plug on campaigns for two or three months.

They needed time to understand what customers were going through emotionally, their fears and their hopes. They also recognized they had to offer messages that spoke to what people were feeling, messages that were more direct and less rote than variations on the "We're all in this together" theme.

The pandemic has driven marketing agencies to move quickly on client work and change their internal business operations. They've ramped up use of technologies such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to share campaign components, make pitches, and remotely manage video shoots. Many agencies have indicated that some of these changes could become permanent after the pandemic lifts.

For businesses and their marketing agencies, the pandemic has spawned a critical lesson: Listen more closely to your customers and nimbly adapt your marketing strategies to meet their needs.

New visions

After the coronavirus surfaced, Andersen hit the pause button, Zipfel says. The company spent several weeks

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TRENDING MARKETING

"thinking carefully about our messaging and making sure we weren't showing up tone-deaf to our employees, our customers, and our community."

Andersen had hired Rise and Shine and Partners, a Minneapolis-based brand and creative agency, to develop its brand refresh. The agency's clients all took a two- to three-month "serious pause, where media dollars put into the market were either put on hold or cancelled," says Kevin DiLorenzo, the agency's president and CEO. Campaigns and budgets needed to be re-evaluated. The agency's job was making sure its clients didn't appear out of sync with the grave mood of the country, he adds.

Andersen and its agency observed that as people were forced to stay home, they were "being cut off from neighbors and community, from work and from school," DiLorenzo says. "So windows naturally became a vehicle by which communities and neighborhoods started to communicate with each other. We recognized that this was a very authentic way for Andersen to participate in what's happening."

Zipfel notes the scenes across the world in which people leaned out of their windows. They were banging pots and pans, singing to each other, greeting mail carriers and first responders as they went about their work, and simply waving to each other from behind glass. "People were spreading joy any way they could spread joy without getting together physically," she notes. In the U.S., children covered their homes' windows with finger-painting and images of butterflies and teddy bears.

"We had put out a call to [Andersen] employees asking them to send us their pictures of their families in front of windows and doors," Zipfel says. These images were used in four social media marketing pieces. "They're really not about Andersen," she adds. "They're about connecting and love." And they did help keep the Andersen brand fresh in consumers' minds.

Keeping pandemic changes

Since Rise and Shine is a relatively small, independent shop, it could

shift gears easily. In 2020, larger agencies found they needed to be just as nimble.

"The need for us to be agile and change quickly—change programs quickly, change media buys quickly, come up with new ideas on behalf of our clients—really accelerated," says Cari Bucci-Hulings, president of Minneapolis-based agency Periscope. "We had to come up with totally new solutions, either because a client's distribution had changed in some way or, more often, because consumers' mindset had shifted suddenly and dramatically."

Periscope responded to this mindset in work it did early in the pandemic for Hefty Party Cups. "As soon as Covid hit, we obviously couldn't encourage parties," Bucci-Hulings notes. "So we quickly shifted the strategy and execution to a different theme: 'Let us do the dishes.' Early on, everyone was feeling so overwhelmed, so this message made a lot of sense."

As time went on, the client and the agency realized that consumer mindsets were shifting as social distancing lasted longer than they'd anticipated. So Hefty and Periscope returned to the Hefty Party Cups campaign and messages about "small moments of celebration" while still not encouraging people to gather.

While remaining focused on current marketing challenges, Periscope and its clientele also are looking ahead to the post-pandemic period. As

Bucci-Hulings notes, there are "uncertainties about how much we'll go back to the old normal or whether patterns instilled during the pandemic will be permanent to some extent." Something she expects to continue: the pandemic-driven boom in online shopping and home delivery. "I'll be interested to see what happens in the world of delivery," Bucci-Hulings says. "That feels like a media channel to me. When consumers open a box that's been delivered to them, that's also a brand experience."

The big shift to online shopping has been a major component of what's often been termed "the new normal." But with so much shifting and reshifting in the pandemic period, "we like to call it 'next normal' because it's changing so fast," says Julie Batliner, president and managing partner of Minneapolis-based Carmichael Lynch.

As Covid-19 began to spread across the landscape, Batliner and her colleagues thought through all of the stages that consumers and customers were going through. "We also helped our clients be authentically helpful in those stages, rather than offering cookie-cutter 'We're here for you' messages," Batliner says. "Of course, we wanted all of our clients to let their audiences know that. But what ways were we really going to help them from a business standpoint?" The agency and its clients needed to respond with "authentic, helpful information—not just marketing messages," she says, "but how can we

truly help during this seismic shift in the way consumers can shop for products?"

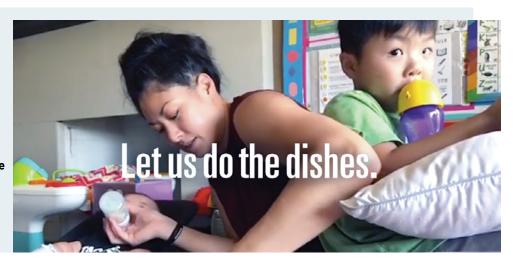
Covid-19 has pushed agencies to expand the use of technology tools. In March, Carmichael trained its employees on digital platforms for working remotely, including video conferencing and digital documentsharing platforms. And like many other agencies, Carmichael Lynch has adjusted how it shoots TV commercials and other video productions. Instead of sending an entire team of five or six staffers to the location, the agency keeps at least half of them at home. Those not out in the field can watch and critique the shoot from their home offices in real time. When Covid-19 dissipates, "we're going to continue using the things that are working really well," Batliner says.

Early in 2020, another large Minneapolis-based agency, Colle McVoy, strategically realigned its operations into four "nimble teams." The goal, CEO Christine Fruechte says, was to be able to move faster for its clients.

The reorganization's timing turned out to be fortuitous; it allowed Colle McVoy to shift gears on numerous campaigns and projects in the face of the pandemic. For instance, the agency paused the rambunctious "Stay Wild" theme it had developed for Wyoming ski and outdoor destination Jackson Hole, instead moving to encourage visitors to "be outside responsibly," Fruechte says. "We came up with a

HOME FRONT

After Covid hit,
Hefty Party Cups
shifted its message
from gathering at
parties to taking
care of children
and chores in
American homes.



framework called 'Clean, Careful, Connected.' We wanted to invite people back, but we wanted them to come back safely."

For another client, Texas-based pediatric health care provider Children's Health, Colle McVoy had a new campaign ready to launch in 2020. "But we had to press pause and reset," Fruechte says. "What families really needed was reassurance that seeking much-needed care would be safe." Colle McVoy's "Tougher Together" campaign was "one that was needed in that moment."

Technology allows agencies to shift messages and campaigns more quickly. Colle McVoy has increased the use of email and social media as marketing platforms. "That's not saying that we've walked away from some of the traditional channels," Fruechte says, but agencies are positioning themselves to respond rapidly to changes in their clients' marketing needs—which reflect how their customers' needs are changing.

That ability to pivot may well become a permanent part of how most businesses do business as they come out of the pandemic. As Fruechte observes, "very few companies are going back to how they were operating in 2019."

Messages of trust

Advertising and marketing agencies with niche practices also helped their clients adjust their messaging.

"With the circumstances we're in, we feel very fortunate that we're a B2B agency," says Chris Schermer, president of Minneapolis-based Schermer. By and large, companies in the business-to-business space are still operating. "There are still the same types of longer-term sales cycles, complex sales processes, longer buying cycles," Schermer says. Many of his clients have been "steady as she goes" and already had revenue locked up for the pandemic period.

Even so, "every organization we work with has had to shift and

adjust not only their marketing mix but also their marketing strategy," Schermer adds. There's been a shift during the pandemic to "a mentality of 'How do we support the customer and what they're going through?' And for us, it's 'How do we demonstrate good partnership to our clients?'"

Partnerships have taken different forms for different clients. In some cases, the agency has helped its clients keep their names in front of current and potential customers through emails, social media posts, and other messaging that puts less emphasis on selling a product and more on providing product-related information. For other clients, Schermer helped position them to create longer-term demand.

Schermer developed a new website for North Carolina-based Dude Solutions, a facility management software company. It uses the site to maintain and grow business. With customers' facilities mostly closed, Dude Solutions could have hunkered down. Instead, Schermer says, the company saw the website as a way to ultimately capture market share.

Health care is another sector that has confronted a challenging market during the pandemic.

"When Covid hit, I thought, 'OK, we're well positioned to help our clients to remain vibrant. They're going to need to direct patients to the right kind of care,'" recalls Mike Seyfer, CEO of Duluth-based marketing firm Hailey Sault. The agency's client base is primarily hospitals and health systems.

"As it turned out, along with retail, restaurants, and other highly impacted businesses, health care was significantly adversely affected," he says. That's because patients deferred elective surgeries and nonurgent appointments with their physicians. When the pandemic eased in early summer, patients cautiously returned for care. "We expected third and fourth quarters to continue on an upward trend," Seyfer adds. But with coronavirus

cases skyrocketing in the fall, the agency has seen clients put marketing efforts off until the first quarter of 2021, he says.

So Hailey Sault has responded by putting together research studies and other information that clients can use to make management decisions. It also has worked with its clients to develop "Covid communications" that can position health care systems as trusted coronavirus-information resources for patients. These approaches don't have a strong call to action, Seyfer notes. But they are expressing empathy while keeping the health care provider's name in front of potential patients.

What's next?

Last summer, Andersen Windows & Doors retuned its messaging. "As the early summer hit, we saw a strong rebound in business," Andersen CMO Zipfel notes. With many of its customers working from home and unable to take big vacations, they were willing to spend money on home improvements. Consumer confidence stabilized in late summer and into the fall, Zipfel adds.

And Andersen felt confident enough to reactivate the campaign it had planned to launch before the pandemic hit. In the fall, it test-marketed "Love the Life You See" commercials and print ads in Denver and Boston to make sure the messaging was accepted and appropriate. The campaign work, she adds, "is filled with real customers." The campaign will continue to run in those markets through the spring. Andersen will assess what it learns before taking the campaign into other markets later this year.

As 2021 unfolds, marketing leaders are optimistic that many business sectors will benefit from an economic recovery in late 2021 and early 2022.

Gene Rebeck is TCB's northern Minnesota correspondent.

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Time to Smash the Rear-View Mirror

by Matt Kucharski President, Padilla

How leaders performed in 2020 most definitely had an impact on their brand and reputation. Some built trust and strengthened relationships with key stakeholders, and those that stumbled, well...

But that was SO last year...

Yes, we're still facing a pandemic, divisive politics and social inequity challenges. But, we can't approach 2021 in the same manner as 2020 and expect to succeed.

It's time to embrace the "new normal" (and yes, I hate that phrase as much as you do) by taking a fresh look at your company's foundations:

Affirming Purpose. Make sure what you do is still relevant and compelling – and if it isn't, it's time to reinvent.

Evolving Workplace and CX.

Have you adjusted in ways that help your employees do their best work to deliver on your brand promise? Have you changed your approach and positioning to meet customers where they are today?

Communicating with Candor and Clarity. Making bold predictions may garner some attention, but communicating with candor, clarity and transparency will earn more trust and credibility with those critical to your success.

If 2020 was about pivoting, 2021 should be about resetting and reinventing your company's brand and reputation.



The Long Road to Stability

The new year offers some new hope for bankers and small business clients.

By Burl Gilyard

hile some degrees of uncertainty remain in 2021, there are several solid signs of stability that affect the economy. The presidential election is over, vaccines for Covid-19 are being distributed nationally, and another \$900 billion is being injected into the economy from a major federal stimulus package passed late in 2020.

There's a general consensus that life—and business—will get closer to normal at some point in 2021. The second wave of stimulus programs provides \$284 billion in Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans to small businesses. Under the new program, businesses that meet certain criteria could take out a second PPP loan. It also will allow PPP funds to be used for a wider range of business expenses.

Moving past the election takes "a big hurdle out of the way," says Jon Dolphin, president of Minneapolis-based 21st Century Bank. "I also see that people, I think, have been waiting for what this second stimulus package looks like to make their decisions as far as what their future moves will be." The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) opened the latest PPP round in mid-January.

Still, economic forecasts remain partly cloudy.

Dolphin says that once some of these uncertainties become more certain, it will start to show us what the true market will be.

The pandemic forced many businesses to put lots of big decisions on hold, and that remains the case in early 2021.

"I think we'll know more in 60



to 90 days—as I probably said six months ago," says Dolphin with a wry laugh. "It's tough to look out too far."

While 21st Century Bank made about 700 PPP loans for approximately \$76 million in 2020, its traditional commercial loan business was down for the year.

"We were at 85 percent of the origination levels that we were at the previous year," says Dolphin, the rough equivalent of losing two-and-a-half months' worth of business.

But based on the latest federal stimulus package, Dolphin is encouraged. "There are some good items in there that can potentially push some businesses to make certain decisions."

Beyond the apocalyptic pandemic-year headlines, business was not an across-the-board disaster. "We actually had, outside of PPP, a record SBA production year," says Bryan Toft, chief sales officer with St. Paul-based Sunrise Banks. On the consumer side, Sunrise also had a record year

for mortgage loans in a climate of historically low interest rates.

"On the business side I would say we grew about 6 percent when you take out PPP," Toft says of Sunrise's commercial loan portfolio. That's partly explained by Sunrise ramping up its communications with customers in the wake of the pandemic.

Outreach to customers

"We had a renewed focus on our existing customers. Part of our

process here was just to make sure that they're OK," Toft says. In some cases, those conversations led to talk of what's next for a business, which translated into the company taking out a new loan to help fund an expansion or other project.

During 2020, bankers quickly saw that the pandemic was not hitting all small business customers equally. While some battled steep drops in sales, others saw more business specifically because the life of lockdowns and quarantines was changing business.

"Technology-related companies have experienced increases in business as people have gone remote and need additional technology across the board," Toft says.

Beyond adding another round of PPP loans, the stimulus package approved in December also includes provisions to make standard SBA

Community Banks Play Key Role in Small Business Lending

ommunity banks may not be a big deal on Wall Street, but they're vitally important to the economy of Main Street. A new report from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. noted that community banks have lending strength in the categories of commercial real estate (CRE), small business, and agriculture loans.

The FDIC Community Banking Study published in December underscored the importance of community banks in those sectors. Per the report:

• "Despite holding only 15 percent of total industry

loans in 2019, community banks held **36 percent** of the banking industry's small business loans. Community banks focus on building relationships with small business owners and tend to make loans that require more interaction with the borrower.

- The share of CRE loans community banks hold
 (30 percent of the banking industry's CRE loans)
 is large relative to the banks' representation in the
 banking industry.
- Community banks are an important source of financing for U.S. agriculture, funding roughly 31 percent of farm-sector debt in 2019."

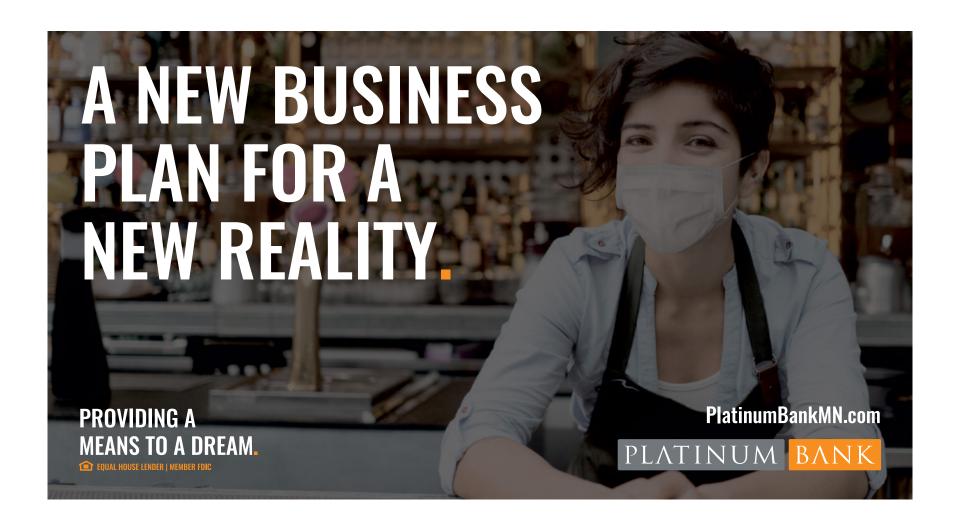
loans even more inviting. For some loans, the SBA will guarantee a larger percentage of the loan.

"I think these guarantee increases will encourage banks to lend more," Toft says.

The newest round of PPP loans came with some changes. Businesses can get a second loan if they meet certain criteria: The company must have fewer than 300 employees and have experienced a revenue reduction

of at least 25 percent in one quarter of 2020.

Hotels and restaurants, both hit particularly hard during the pandemic, are eligible for larger loans. Businesses can use new PPP money



The Big Picture for Banking

hile the pandemic has brought economic consequences for banks, they are not as severe as those felt during the Great Recession.

The 2021 banking and capital markets outlook report from London-based Deloitte takes a global look at the industry and notes that the "drastic contraction in the global economy has already meaningfully diminished loan growth and payment transaction volumes."

Another factor that complicates life for bankers is growing provisions for loan losses for deals that don't work out or fall apart in the wake of the pandemic.

Per the report, "The Deloitte Center for Financial Services estimates that the U.S. banking industry may have to provision for a total of \$318 billion in net loan losses from 2020 to 2022, representing 3.2 percent of loans. While losses can be expected in every loan category, they may be most acute within credit cards, commercial real estate, and small business loans."

to cover a wider range of expenses.

Publicly traded companies are not eligible for the latest round of PPP loans.

If there's one thing that most people aren't worried about, it's interest rates. In mid-December, the Federal Reserve again left interest rates unchanged at the near-zero rates where they've been since March 2020. The historically low rates are serving as one tool to help boost the financial conditions of businesses and house-holds riding out the pandemic.

Unequal pandemic effects

"Some of our customers are actually doing pretty well; obviously, restaurants and bars are struggling," says Tom Beck, president and CEO of Minneapolis-based Northeast Bank. "They're hanging on and they might need another round of direct stimulus, PPP, whatever it might be."

As with other bankers, Beck says that pandemic business performance varies greatly. "It still breaks down by industry segment," Beck says. "The housing market's going gangbusters. And all of those ancillary businesses [are] doing well also."

Beck is encouraged by signs of stability but acknowledges that no one knows exactly what 2021 will mean for the economy. "We are, I think like a lot of people, kind of holding our breath a little," Beck says. "I do think it feels like there's a dedication in Washington where they do want to get things done, they want to work together, and I think that will be cause for optimism, I'm hoping. But a lot of things we just don't know."

One veteran banker notes that the pandemic has lasted long enough to get a better sense of which businesses can survive the crisis.

"Clearly, we have a better understanding of which businesses were negatively impacted," says Troy Rosenbrook, president of Highland Bank. "We've seen which ones have been able to more easily modify their business model to adapt."

Exercising caution

But overall, Rosenbrook says that many small business owners remain cautious.

"We see the [credit] line usage for businesses being less than it would have been typically. I think a number of businesses have postponed any kind of big capital expenditures," Rosenbrook says. "Where we did see [recent] activity was in the [mergers and acquisitions] space."

Rosenbrook maintains that's the case because both business buyers and sellers have gotten more comfortable about values and valuations than they were last spring.

But in the big picture, commercial lending is down.

"If you look across the industry, banks are way down in loans outstanding," Rosenbrook says. "It's not a supply issue. Banks have tons of liquidity to lend out."

That's due to a range of factors—businesses reining in capital expenditures, companies choosing not to tap into their credit lines, and mergers and acquisitions on hold in the early months of the pandemic.

The local banking landscape is always shifting with ongoing merg-

ers and consolidation, as well as the periodic entrance of new players. In December, news broke that TCF Bank, a long-standing presence in Twin Cities financial circles, was being acquired by Columbus, Ohiobased Huntington Bancshares Inc. TCF's headquarters already had moved to Detroit in a previous deal. Because of the recent transaction, the TCF name will eventually disappear.

Huntington touts itself as the top SBA lender in its region and will look to flex that muscle in new markets. What does that mean for local SBA lenders?

"Any time there's a change in the market it tends to create both opportunities and challenges," Rosenbrook says. "I have to deliver my service in a way that's competitive."

The arrival of Covid-19 vaccines is a bright spot, but that development's short-term effect on businesses remains to be seen. "Clearly it's a positive," Rosenbrook says. "Maybe the speed with which it impacts the economy is as yet a little unknown."

And the federal government will continue to play a big role.

"This new stimulus plan is important," Rosenbrook says. "The more targeted and the more directed it can be, I think the more successful it can be."

Burl Gilyard is TCB's senior writer.

Small Business, Big Loans

mall business owners had to learn a new acronym in 2020: PPP. The new Paycheck Protection Program was created under the CARES Act, the first federal relief effort to

address economic challenges of Covid-19.

The Minnesota District of the SBA administered approximately \$11.3 billion in PPP loans to 102,340 businesses. While some larger businesses landed loans in the millions, the average PPP loan in Minnesota was about \$110,000. Nationally there were more than 5.2 million PPP loans totaling more than \$525 billion. The

loans had an interest rate of just 1 percent but could be forgiven if the businesses met certain conditions.

To put that in perspective, the PPP loans issued in Minnesota amounted to nearly

15 times the amount of traditional SBA-backed loans in the state for federal fiscal year 2020, which ended Sept. 30. Traditional SBA loans in Minnesota totaled \$768.1 million.

Beyond PPP, many businesses also received Economic Injury Disaster Loans. A total of 113,780 businesses received nearly \$2.6 billion in EIDL loans.





Battling Cyberthieves from Home

With employees working remotely, how do companies keep their IT networks safe?

By Gene Rebeck

he number of closed sales for homes in the Duluth area hit a 15-year high this past summer, according to the Lake Superior Realtors Association. Fall temperatures didn't cool demand: The median home sale price in October reached \$210,000—an all-time high.

Extremely low interest rates certainly have been a factor in driving home sales. But an even bigger reason seems to be that people from the Twin Cities and elsewhere can

now relocate to northern Minnesota without quitting their jobs.

That's because some of their employers are making pandemic-driven work-from-home arrangements permanent. For companies, work from home (WFH) has meant greater employee productivity and lower overhead costs. For employees, it means that "home" can be just about anywhere they can access a strong broadband connection.

But there's a risky downside to

TRENDING TECHNOLOGY

a remote workforce: Cybersecurity, already a big worry for companies of all sizes, has become even more of a headache.

"We've seen a real rash of security incidents as fallout from a migrating workforce," says John Marinac, president and CTO of Compudyne, a Duluth-based IT services company with other offices in northern Minnesota, St. Paul, Michigan, and

Because workspaces are dispersed, he says, "it's easier for bad actors to get involved." When employees use their own machines for work, that opens up even more vulnerabilities. "A), now you're accessing things remotely that aren't as secure as they should be," Marinac says. "And B), you're doing it from a device that is substantially less secure than [those in] the corporate environment."

Remote employees shoulder a greater burden to keep company data safe than they would in an office. Company IT staff don't only have to protect the network from cyberattacks, they also have to worry about what cybersecurity experts call "securing the endpoint"—safeguarding the devices their workers are using.

But there are measures companies can take and one simple guideline employees at all levels should follow.

Blunting ransomware risk

"There are over 300 million digital messages sent daily, and around 55 percent of those messages are malicious," says Michael Kennedy, CTO and COO of Ostra, a Minnetonkabased cybersecurity company he founded in 2018 after a decade and a half as an IT leader for United-Health Group. "It's an onslaught, and the bad guys are getting more and more sophisticated."

Too many people with computers and digital devices haven't kept pace with that sophistication. "A lot of the attacks we're seeing are simple things like this: An employee is using his or her corporate email address and password on an e-commerce site, that site gets hacked, and the hacker thinks, 'Lo and behold,

let's try logging into the corporate environment with the same email address and password, and wow, look at that, it works," Marinac says.

Though they've gotten somewhat less media attention, corporate network breaches that allow hackers to access data of customers and vendors remain a danger. During the pandemic, a new threat has company IT people on edge. Here, the direct target isn't the company network. It's the workforce.

Ransomware "is one of the biggest threats that's out there," says Todd Carpenter, co-owner of Adventium Labs, a Minneapolis-based firm that develops cybersecurity technologies (he also serves as the firm's chief engineer). "It's a great way for organized crime to quickly monetize attacks." Once a piece of malware finds its way onto a computer, it encrypts everything, effectively locking you out of your own device. Then the user gets a message: Send us money, and we'll give you the key to unlock your data. And if you refuse? "They can spray your information all over the internet," Carpenter says.

Even if you pay, the attackers "can still leave their hooks in there," he adds. "If you get this on your home computer, it might lie dormant waiting for a high-value target," he says. "And as soon as you connect to the office, it will try to get into the corporate system. After all, you can make more money from a corporation than from an individual."

The number of ransomware attacks has exploded in recent months. In October, researchers at American

and Israeli cybersecurity firm Check Point reported that the number of daily ransomware attacks in the U.S. nearly doubled in the third quarter of 2020 from the second quarter. Check Point cited WFH vulnerabilities as one of the chief reasons.

IBM's cybersecurity response team reported that the ransomware attacks in the second quarter of this year tripled from the first quarter, before WFH became established. The IBM team also noted that data-nappers, or cyberthieves, are increasing ransom demands from their victims' companies, with some demands as high as \$40 million.

Don't try to reason with these guys, because most likely they're not guys at all. One of the particularly unnerving aspects of today's cybercrime is that the malware and emails are being created by highly programmed bots that can generate hundreds of attacks at once. "These are robots running on the computers," Carpenter says. "It's not a person behind that attack."

What's just as remarkable, and unnerving, is that even with their digital sophistication, these attackers are using strategies that have been around for years. They're all too familiar to IT people. Phishing and spearphishing—emails from falsified "trusted" sources that contain links that unleash malware—are still the most common wavs that ransomware infiltrates a computer.

"We're not seeing anything new," Compudyne's Marinac says. "But they're getting better at their attacks. Back in the day, you'd see [a phishing

email] and say, 'This is clearly a scam. It's in broken English. It looks like something a first-year graphic design student would put together."

These days, scam artists "will go so far as to put the CEO's photo on the email," he adds. "They'll register a Gmail account that has the same first and last names. Then they'll send an email to the CFO saying, 'Hey, I'm tied up in an important meeting. You have to wire money right now, I need it, no questions asked, get it done."

In September, the FBI announced that it was investigating a global business email compromise campaign that has netted cybercriminals at least \$15 million in illicit proceeds. The attacks, which impersonate senior executives via Microsoft Office 365 email services, have hit more than 150 companies in numerous sectors, including law, retail, and construction.

"Those types of things—they work," Marinac says. "And they're easy. A third party could send out a hundred of those a day just by farming LinkedIn."

When it comes to spearphishing, the bots are very good at it, Carpenter says. Company IT departments can filter out "a good chunk of the bad stuff" that comes through the email system. "But if you're at home and you're reading email and corporate information on the same machine, vou've increased vour vulnerability."

Part of WFH vulnerability, Carpenter maintains, happens because "we're getting tons of email, because instead of talking office to office, we're now communicating



Someone can target an email to you that looks exactly like your email. You'll click on a link to check your account. You'll log into your account. And now they've got your username and password.

-Daren Klum, Secured2 Corp.

online. We want to get the work done, and we're overloaded. So it's harder to spend time looking at all those email addresses and doublechecking." (Employees who have to care for children while working are all too familiar with being overwhelmed)

In malware attacks, "the name of the game is to get you to click on something," says Daren Klum, CEO and chairman of Secured2 Corp., a Minneapolis-based cybersecurity firm. "Someone can target an email to you that looks exactly like your email. You'll click on a link to check your account. You'll log into your account. And now they've got your username and password. A lot of these guys are so good that they'll actually pass you on to your bank and it will log you in, because they automate it." The victim often suspects nothing until it's too late.

Cybercriminals, whether human or robot, also exploit the sharing mentality engendered by social media. "There's so much private information about people available publicly that it's very easy to draw these roadmaps between [executives] and sometimes even sprinkle in some personal data," Marinac says.

"'Hey, I'm out of town on a hunting trip.' It's easy to find out the guy is hunting because he has it posted all over his Facebook page." These kinds of details can make a fake email "more personal and more targeted than the old Nigerian prince scam."

Ostra's Kennedy argues that many email-based hack attacks succeed because bad actors try to evoke an emotion so people will click on something. "We've seen an increase in the variety of those attacks," he says. A new hire might be sent what appears to be an email from HR that provides a link to the company's payroll schedule. During the federal Paycheck Protection Program application period, many businesses received emails promising to "expedite your PPP loan" by simply clicking on a handy link.

Every business is vulnerable To protect their valuable data and



Even if employees can use companyprovided laptops, they're susceptible to the same risks they would face if they were still working at the office—phishing attacks, clicking on malevolent links.

-Joe Payne, Code42

block malware attacks, numerous companies have provided WFH employees with work-dedicated computers that can be linked to the corporate IT network via a virtual private network (VPN).

"This is your basic, fastest way to get at least a modicum of cyber-security in place," Adventium Labs' Carpenter says. "Basically, it won't talk to anything else outside of that company network. If you get to the internet, it goes through the company IT-managed network out to the rest of the world. It looks as though the employee's laptop is on the company network."

Carpenter acknowledges that many small businesses can't afford to do that. But they also should keep in mind that they're targets nonetheless. Cybercriminals are "hitting the small businesses because they generally don't spend money on cybersecurity," he adds. Infiltrating small businesses can provide crooks access to the networks of larger companies that are vendors and customers of smaller companies. And there have been instances where small businesses have had to fold because they couldn't access their IT systems after a ransomware attack.

Even if employees can use company-provided laptops, "they're susceptible to the same risks they would face if they were still working at the office—phishing attacks, clicking on malevolent links," says Joe Payne, president and CEO of Minneapolisbased software company Code42, which specializes in cybersecurity solutions. Remote workers could

still be exfiltrating data out of the company's control, he says. According to Code42's research, employees were involved in about two-thirds of the breaches in 2019—even though hackers, nation-states, and cybercriminal gangs get most of the attention.

This "insider risk" isn't necessarily due to an employee's bad intentions. One reason for data exfiltration, Payne says, is that "companies have opened up their information, and rightly so, so that their employees can work from home. We're seeing more employees taking advantage of that by copying that information to their Dropbox account or mailing it to their own Gmail account or putting it on a thumb drive."

In addition, Payne says, companies are trying to increase collaboration within their teams to get them to work together. Technologies such as OneDrive, Slack, and Box "let us all collaborate on documents, presentations, and all kinds of important information. It's made our workforce much more productive." However, he says, that same technology makes stealing data even easier. Many cybersecurity solutions, Payne says, are designed to block that kind of sharing, which can frustrate employees. In September, Code42 introduced Incydr, a software-as-a-service offering designed to protect company data across email as well as data-sharing collaboration platforms.

Twin Cities companies are offering other types of cyber-security solutions. Secured2, for instance, incorporates its Shrink>Shred>Secure>Restore data

security technology into a suite of remote or hybrid work solutions designed to protect company data over the wire or at rest in the cloud. And the company's Secured2 Toolkit provides secure cloud storage, team collaboration, and data backup; it also includes a security API (application programming interface) that can be integrated into existing applications.

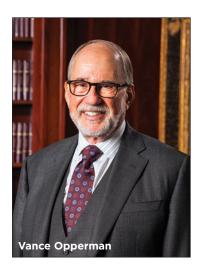
Ostra provides what founder Kennedy describes as multilayered managed security, which comprises email protection, antivirus software, VPN, firewalls, and cloud security. This multilayer approach has been available to the Fortune 100s, Kennedy says, but it hasn't been easily scalable to a small or midsize business. Ostra offers this technology to smaller companies via a monthly "cybersecurity as a service" subscription.

These types of solutions and strategies can help protect company IT networks from attacks.

So can a Compudyne offering called SAT. The acronym stands for "security awareness training," and it focuses solely on end-user education. "We run false phishing campaigns," Compudyne's Marinac says. "We then get metrics on how many people clicked on the link, how many people entered their credentials into the link." The goal isn't for employers to shame their employees, he says, but rather "to get a sense of what they're falling for and to teach staff how to identify and avoid email phishing attacks."

Gene Rebeck is TCB's northern Minnesota correspondent. To:

Ms. Suzanne Scott CEO Fox News 1211 Avenue of the Americas New York, New York 10036 Ms. Rashida Jones President MSNBC 30 Rockefeller Plaza New York, New York 10112





As I discovered as a small boy in the shadow of the Mitchell Corn Palace, at some time the circus leaves town.

Dear Ms. Scott and Ms. Jones:

Time to move on! After four years of chaos and conspiracies, it's time to move forward. Oh sure, the Trump years were good to you—and the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*—with viewership increases over 50 percent, but like a miracle, that's now gone. As I discovered as a small boy in the shadow of the Mitchell Corn Palace, at some time the circus leaves town.

You are not alone in facing a looming vacuum of vacuous entertainment masquerading as news. Think of the problem facing *Saturday Night Live*: It was easy to pillory Hillary and thump Trump. Sarah Palin was a special gift who came to *SNL* with her own word-for-word interview script.

But Joe Biden? In 1991, SNL satirized his chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee hearing on Clarence Thomas and especially the treatment of Anita Hill. That was 30 years ago. It's been bland old Joe ever since. Besides, making fun of a 78-year-old does not seem fair. Unless, of course, you mock all of our government leaders who are older than 70: the House Speaker, the House majority leader, the Senate majority leader, and the Senate president pro tem. This pre-baby boomer arthritic stiff-arm to political power by the boomer generation just is not funny. SNL viewers will have to move on also. So what should occupy our attention now that the calliope has faded?

Here are two ideas:

Going back to work. Many of us have been virtual workers from home—convenient non-commuters in sweatpants. That will change when

we switch from interacting on *Hollywood Squares*-like screens to actual, live, in-your-face fellow co-workers. The 9-to-5, five-day workweek downtown will never be the same. Basecamp, hoteling, and virtual social interactions will become commonplace. But there will be other things that will seem more "normal."

Sports. Arenas will replace cutout fans with real ones. Crowd reaction will be real and not piped in (although some Minnesota teams will suffer for that). The Stanley Cup will be played in mid-July, but maybe with more than just the teams in attendance. Minnesota Wild fans will see a much different team than last season, with different goalies and exciting young forwards.

Baseball has often mirrored our seasons; just when snow and cold retreat, opening day arrives. The sounds of runners advancing and home runs soaring provide the sonic wallpaper of our summers. This year—thank the gods!—will start to sound normal again. A special treat awaits.



In December it was announced that the Twins would make the St. Paul Saints their AAA affiliate, officially ending the historic Twin Cities baseball rivalry between the St. Paul Saints and the Minneapolis Millers. In the mid-1950s, both cities built stadia and bid on a Major League

Baseball expansion/relocation team. A business group headed by Wheelock Whitney, George Pillsbury, Bob Short, and members of the Dayton family were successful in getting the Washington Senators to relocate to Met Stadium in Bloomington. The St. Paul Saints, after several reincarnations, played in the league now called the American Association in Midway Stadium and later in the new CHS Field in the Lowertown district of St. Paul.

You should attend a game at CHS Field—it is an absolute gem of an intimate ballpark. I-94 between the Cities may soon be called "Pitchers' Alley" because the Twins will be able to shuttle pitchers between the big-league team and their Triple-A affiliate only 10 miles away. Wild fans may recall something similar when Highway I-35 to Des Moines was called "Zucker Highway." Soon, fans will be able to see promising young baseball players in either stadium—even better than pre-Covid!

So, we will gladly move on. There will be a better time to confront the real problems that face us: pandemic protection, budget deficits, economic competitiveness, global climate change, police reform, and immigration, to name a few. But for now, let us return to our offices and enjoy our common sports.

Sincerely, Vance K. Opperman All for moving on

Vance K. Opperman (vopperman@keyinvestment.com) is owner and CEO of MSP Communications, which publishes Twin Cities Business.





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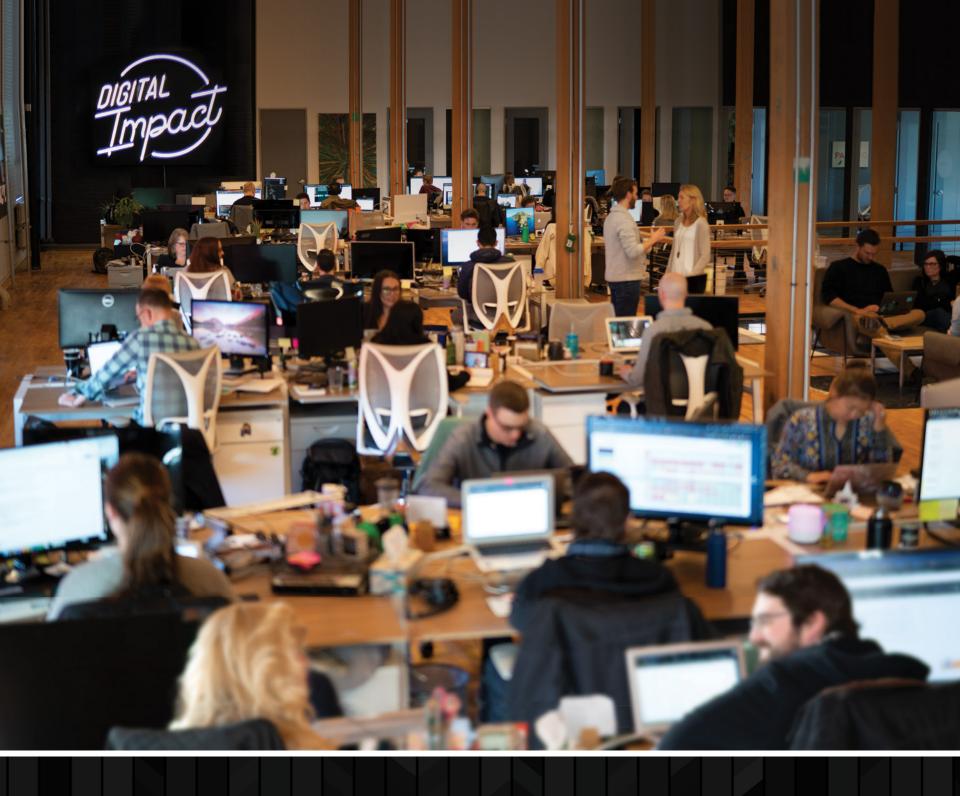








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