

SPECIAL AWARDS SUPPLEMENT :: SRQ MAGAZINE :: FEBRUARY 2018

# LOCALPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

2018

PURPOSE

PASSION

CORPORATE  
ACUMEN

INNOVATION

PHILANTHROPY

COMMUNITY  
IMPACT

LEADERSHIP



HONOREE

## TOM FRAScone

BOLD | live, work, play



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BRANDING &amp; MANAGEMENT BY VIT-TURE

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**YOUR PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY** "Just Figure It Out." **WHO HAD A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON YOU AS A LEADER?** I would say Jesse Biter. When I moved down here from New York, I was working in finance investment and hated it, and Jesse encouraged me to leave that and to pursue a more entrepreneurial path. So, I helped him grow a couple of his businesses and, from that, I then approached him and said, "hey, I want to partner up with you. Lets make that happen. "How can we do that?" And from that, we co-launched the Bold brand. **WHAT MAKES A GREAT LOCALPRENEUR?** People tend to think, with the internet these days, that entrepreneurs are always looking for global solutions—the next Facebook or the next Uber. That's great, but I think that if we don't build strong communities, we are not going to have these environments for the next generation of entrepreneurs to foster and grow. So, that's part of the reason we created this Bold | Live, Work Play brand, because we want to create an environment for people who want to dream big, but who first need to develop and have those resources, have those tools, have that place to work and have those people around them. We foster the localpreneur so that the localpreneur can then shoot higher. **SHARE ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE STORIES?** When the hurricane came through a few months ago, I think everyone is familiar with the massive power outages we had. The first thing we thought of was how are people going to get work done? So, we opened the doors to the building and said, "hey, we don't care if you're not a member, a tenant. We don't care if you're a small business or a freelancer. You're welcome to come here, use our power and our Internet because this building stayed online." We had every single chair in the house filled up. We had people sitting on the floor, even some of the private offices, people would open the door and say, "hey, I have a spare desk." It was pretty cool. **WHERE DO GREAT IDEAS COME FROM?** Great ideas

are solutions to unforeseen problems. A lot of people like to brag that they have foresight for every issue that comes up but I think that's unrealistic. Going back to my personal philosophy of "just figure it out," on a day-to-day basis we have issues come up, not all are big issues, but maybe a tenant that needs specific accommodations or maybe a dispute between members. Usually some of our best ideas come out of those problems. **WHAT BUSINESS BOOK DO YOU RECOMMEND?** I am kind of the opposite of Jesse, he is very big on business books. I prefer to not read business literature. I tend to read about current events, new technologies, industry news and there isn't a real specific source I would point to. **HOW COULD OUR REGION DO BETTER FOR ENTREPRENEURS?** I've been in Sarasota for a little over five years now and I've always been involved with entrepreneurial pursuits myself or around people that are starting businesses, or freelancers looking for investment, trying to promote their ideas. The number one thing this community could do for other localpreneurs is to actually open the purse strings and start investing locally. I found that the community loves to be pitched but doesn't like to make investment. At the end of the day, a lot of people in town like the excitement of startups, they like the idea of saying that they are looking at local businesses to invest in, but they end up putting it into more predicable securities or investing in more established businesses. That's one of the reasons we brought the Angel Group in here, because I saw we have a lot of great startups in this building and everyone needs capital to grow. Time and time again, I heard "I can't find investment locally," so we brought in the Angel Group and said, "Hey, we would love to host you guys. Look at our members,. Look at our tenants. Consider them for investment." One of our tenants here is a medium-sized startup currently going through the due-diligence phase on investment from the Angel Group. So, it worked out.



**YOUR PERSONAL TAGLINE: MIKE QUILLEN** American pub food with a gourmet twist. **MIKE GOWAN** The staff are our heroes and the guests are our bosses. **WHAT MAKES A GREAT LOCALPRENEUR?** **MQ** Someone that really cares about the community, that wants to give back. Mike and I both grew up here and the Sarasota/Bradenton area community has been so good to us; and we feel it's an obligation to give back to them. We also really feel a lot of obligation to help all the young folks that have worked for us, the thousands of young folks over the years. **SHARE ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE STORIES?** **MQ** The first day we opened the Landings back in 1992 in June, Mike and I built the bar so we both just fit perfectly behind it. We were the two bartenders and I think we had three other employees. We finished putting the last nail in the wall at about 2 or 3am in the morning and it was the same morning we opened. **MG** We started in the bar business—I worked at Marina Jack behind the bar and he worked at Patrick's downtown behind the bar as bartenders. It developed from a 30-seat bar at the Landings to a 300-seat restaurant that we have on Fruitville and Stickney. The whole change and transition has been phenomenal. As Mike said, we built our first Gecko's with our contractor. I remember going home at the end of the night feeling the sledgehammer from the concrete floors and putting up PVC pipes to run our beer lines. We knew where every nail was in the place, so it was really cool to see it from the beginning to what it is now. **WHERE DO GREAT IDEAS COME FROM?** **MG** I love the young input we get from our staff. The team is just huge on the input they give. We are actually doing these one-on-ones where

we are letting them review and we get a lot out of them. A lot of input comes from our younger management team, so I enjoy that part of learning from them. We learn every day, and that's what is interesting about this business—it changes daily and it's a lot of fun. I just love coming to work every day, I thrive on it. I also get a lot out of the National Restaurant Show every year. We get a lot of input from that. Travel is a good way to see other things as well. **WHAT BUSINESS BOOK WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?** **MG** *Setting the Table* is mine. Danny Meyer is a very creative guy in NYC who started Shake Shack and has some great restaurants. I still read his book. I always pick it up while traveling. He has a really nice high-end restaurant in NYC and has been a speaker at the National Restaurant Show. He's a great guy for the industry and has a passion for the business. **HOW COULD OUR REGION DO BETTER FOR ENTREPRENEURS?** **MQ** One thing that Mike and I are really both interested in is the affordable housing issue and the comprehensive plans. We have a good education system but we need to make it better, and we need to get the folks who we educate to stay here in Florida, particularly stay in this community. It's a great community, it wins best beaches, best place to retire and I think it just won a good award for best place for young folks to do business in the last month or so. We need to have things to keep young people here and we need to have places for them to live. **OUR COMPANY IS SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE WE DON'T . . .** **MQ** Take anything for granted. **MG** We don't give up. Below left to right: Mike Gowan and Mike Quillen



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**CHRISTOPHER LEEDOM**

LEEDOM GROUP

**YOUR PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY:** Proceed as if our success is inevitable. **WHAT MAKES A GREAT LOCALPRENEUR?** I think the more you can keep your business and its investment local, serves the community at large. We do a tremendous job of keeping everything we can local. We try to use local vendors and suppliers where possible. We are almost always in "hire" mode, looking for talented people to join our team. Finally, we really try to give back to the community that has been so good to us. It is interesting in that most of our revenue comes from all across the country, but we feel really good that we are able to invest in and concentrate on our community and its growth. **SHARE ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE STORIES?** Since 1995, I have had many large corporate decision makers and groups tell us it is too difficult to succeed in our niche. This has been across several business and product offerings, both nationwide and locally. Our approach is to avoid the naysayers and simply keep going until you succeed. When we were raising money for one of our early business units, I probably had in excess of 300 no's before I got a yes. I have learned that if you persist and believe in your plan and ideas, the rest will come to fruition. Never give up if you believe in something with all your heart. **WHAT BUSINESS BOOK WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?** I would say *Up Your Business* by my good friend, Dave Anderson. He is always pushing business owners and entrepreneurs to "do better" and avoid resting on your laurels. He has offered me some great advice over the years that's helped us assess our success and push harder. I like his message and often think about the challenges he issues to business owners. **HOW COULD OUR REGION DO BETTER FOR ENTREPRENEURS?** I have worked with clients from all across the country and, I must say, I think Florida—and in particular the Gulf Coast—has a lot to offer entrepreneurs. I think if we did a better job of marketing our community to businesses, we would attract new entrepreneurial talent that would continue to drive growth and success in our area. **OUR COMPANY IS SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE WE DON'T . . .** Our company is successful because we don't accept mediocrity and we are extremely nimble. We correct lackluster behavior when we see it, and renew our commitment to peak performance.





**MUSIC COMPOUND**  
Inspire Collaborate Educate

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**YOUR BRAND TAGLINE:** Inspire. Collaborate. Educate. **WHO HAD A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON YOU AS A LEADER?** My parents and Victoria Finley. My parents were hungry and driven entrepreneurs along with 4-H leaders. My 4-H experience taught me about leadership, team work and work ethic. Victoria Finley was one of my first bosses, and took me under her wing. She mentored and professionally polished me. **WHAT MAKES A GREAT LOCALPRENEUR?** A focused go-getter willing to risk it all. **WHAT BUSINESS BOOK WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?** *The Back of the Napkin*. I work with musicians and educators. I am neither. **HOW COULD OUR REGION DO BETTER FOR ENTREPRENEURS?** I feel fortunate to have my business within our region. I wish local arts and culture activists would partner more with Music Compound. Yes, we are a for-profit entity, but

#### HONOREE

## JENNY TOWNSEND

### MUSIC COMPOUND

we cater to students that live and attend local public and private schools and higher level music programs within our community. Music Compound complements many local programs by offering beginner or additional training. We also support several local nonprofit organizations with in-kind and monetary donations. **OUR COMPANY IS SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE WE DON'T . . .** Offer just one approach/curriculum to music education.





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## HONOREE

# ALAN MCKEE

## NETWURX TECHNOLOGY GROUP

**YOUR BRAND TAGLINE:** We do that. **WHO HAD A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON YOU AS A LEADER?** This is going to sound corny, but my high school football coach believe it or not. One thing he told me that has stuck with me for 40 years now. He told me he needed me to play with emotion because when I played with emotion, everyone around me played with emotion. That's one of the things I've taken with me in business. If I'm excited and can cast a vision of where I see the business going, that creates an environment where other people get excited about that. I just got chills when I said that, I still remember him telling me that 40 years ago. A really big impact and I still talk to him today. **SHARE ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE STORIES?** Our company is 13 years old now, and it started out with two of us. We were in an office so small, that his desk was on one side, mine was on the other and we were back to back. We couldn't put our chairs out at the same time. Otherwise, we couldn't get out of our seats. I often think of that. That little 8x8 office is how we started. I was at our Christmas party this past year at a table with 25 people there—employees, and spouses. We have nine employees and you think about supporting a family and each employee represents at least one other person. They're all married or have a girlfriend and some have a kid or several kids, so you think about how many people count on this company to make a living. It's almost a little daunting but I often think of that little office and how far we've come. **WHAT BUSINESS BOOK WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?** I'm a big John Maxwell fan. John Maxwell is an author who writes about leadership. He is probably the one guy I've read most of. Brian Tracy, believe it or not I just read one of his articles, which probably is the most recent leadership thing I've read. But I'd say John Maxwell is probably my biggest influence from an author's standpoint. **HOW COULD OUR REGION DO BETTER FOR ENTREPRENEURS?** Good question. I'm going to go out on a limb here and say I think the region and the county do a pretty good job. Our company is proof of that. We started from zero and we've been able to build a business here. There are things that can change from a legislation standpoint and I would point more to the state probably than the city or county, but I think it's a business-friendly environment, I really do. The fact that taxes are fairly low, I have no complaints. I'm sure I am probably in the minority here, but I have no complaints about the region's attitude towards business. **OUR COMPANY IS SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE WE DON'T . . .** We don't take our customers or each other for granted.





**YOUR BRAND TAGLINE:** A place for wellness, community and spirituality. **WHO HAD A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON YOU AS A LEADER?** I'm most inspired by the change that regular people bring to the world. Every year I look to CNN Heroes for inspiration. Last year I was struck by the story of Stan Hays, co-founder of Operation BBQ, who brings meals to victims and first responders of disasters across the country. He recently responded to Hurricane Irma here in Florida by offering meals and comfort to those that lost everything. What Stan represents to me as a leader is the amazing impact one person can make by offering what she/he does to the community to heal from suffering. I offer yoga in the same way by focusing on underserved communities that have not had a yoga studio to call home. **WHAT MAKES A GREAT LOCALPRENEUR?** A great Localpreneur is one that makes community involvement a priority. These leaders are able to identify a need for improvement or change and then apply their problem solving skills and resourcefulness to find a creative solution. A Localpreneur feels a heartfelt responsibility to give back to their community to help others in whatever way they can. Whether it's offering support to organizations in achieving their missions or offering yoga to juveniles incarcerated in Bradenton, the goal is to serve. **SHARE ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE STORIES?** One story that stands out for me is that of a female yoga practitioner that opened up about her struggles

with alcohol. She shared with me that during meditation and the final resting pose known as "shivasana" she was able to face that challenge with self-forgiveness and courage for the first time. This was a major turning point in her life which gave her hope for changing the habits that had become habitual and difficult to change. She's been practicing at our studio for over a year and I am so happy to share that she continues to use yoga constructively in her life to bring mindfulness to the decisions she makes regarding her consumption of alcohol. She has found balance and control. **WHAT BUSINESS BOOK WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?** The books that interest me relate to ethics, yoga philosophy and wellness. The latest book I read was *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* translated by Alistair Shearer. Even though the *Yoga Sutras* date back to the third century B.C., I find purpose, spiritual alignment and direction from these ancient texts. Yoga in this context is applicable to all facets of life: personal, professional and spiritual. By finding stillness of the mind, we create a path to self-knowledge and enlightenment. These ancient texts are vital today more than ever. **HOW COULD OUR REGION DO BETTER FOR ENTREPRENEURS?** I believe that our region can be better or do better by: (i) incentivizing entrepreneurs to open businesses in our community, (ii) creating programs where entrepreneurs can meet to ideate and collaborate and (iii) creating mentorship programs to support women business leaders.



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HONOREE

**CLAUDIA BAEZA**

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HONOREE

**R. CHARLES MURRAY**

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**YOUR PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY:** Everything we produce should be natural, wellness and not harm the way you look. **WHO HAD A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON YOU AS A LEADER?** I believe the guy that influenced me the most was the head packaging manager at South African Brewery, a gentleman named David Crosby whose favorite saying was "Let's Do It Once." He was the guy running the breweries. That's why I know about being clean, because their beer only has four ingredients and not all the junk others put in. He liked to do everything once. He said do it slowly, but do it once. **WHAT MAKES A GREAT LOCALPRENEUR?** In today's social world, everything you do is left behind. So to be different, to be an entrepreneur, to be a manager, you have to be able to look around the corner and see what's coming. Because if you don't react, people are going to see what you're leaving, and it might not be perfect. **SHARE ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE STORIES?** I believe winning the Ernst & Young US Entrepreneur Of The Year in 2013 against all these huge companies has been the most exciting in my life for a long time. It represented all the things that our employees have done. We were able to show people that a small company can make it. I was really surprised. We went to the dinner in Orlando and I had no idea. The look on my face. We had 5-6 people at our table and Coke was there, big companies, and they said a Sarasota company. It was the first time Sarasota was

a winner. It represented what we're doing here. **WHERE DO GREAT IDEAS COME FROM?** Most ideas come from a need. People come in here and ask, can you solve mosquitos biting, can you help me with sugar diabetes, can you help me with a skin problem or just simply I'm not sleeping at night. So we tend to look at what's aggravating the person, and see if we can find a natural solution. **WHAT BUSINESS BOOK WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?** My book of all time is by Dr. Philip Kotler, the marketing guy, who actually lives in Sarasota. I've read the book on and off over 30 years and it never gets out of date. It reacts to marketing as it is today; give the customer what they want. This marketing handbook is called *Marketing Management*. He lives on Longboat Key now and is retired, but still busy teaching. **HOW COULD OUR REGION DO BETTER FOR ENTREPRENEURS?** The banking world here has to really understand the difference between a traditional company and a company that wants to produce products that are geared for sale on Amazon and these new outlets. This is a totally different business philosophy. The banks are geared to every day x amount of money in, and the social world is geared to every transaction money in, and the two don't necessarily go together. So unless we start changing our banking philosophy, we are going to restrict a lot of entrepreneurs.