

Commerce

CIANJ

The Business of New Jersey

March 2025 • \$4.99

Mentorship: Empowering the Next Generation



Caring for the Community is at Our Core

COUNT ON IT!



Supporting Our Communities Through:

- Over 65 convenient locations
- Non-Profit Checking
- Public Funds Accounts
- Access to Financial Literacy Seminars
- Business Lines of Credit^[1]
- Small Business Loans^[1]
- Treasury Management solutions that enhance efficiency and cash management^[2]



How We Care:

- Nationally recognized customer service
- Nearly 100% of our employees volunteer each year
- Over 150 community events supported by Team Columbia



Relationship banking you can **Count On**



Contact a business banker today and get started!

Amy Krysienski
Nonprofit & Government Banking Officer
(201) 421-3548
akrysienski@columbiabankonline.com

Leonard Van Dam
1st SVP, Commercial & Industrial,
Middle Market & Specialized Industries
(201) 599-7075
lvandam@columbiabankonline.com

Andrew Zalescik
SVP, Commercial Market Manager
(856) 772-3380
azalescik@columbiabankonline.com

[1] Subject to credit approval. [2] Additional Fees may apply. Certain Treasury Management solutions may require you to have a specific checking account type such as Business Analysis, Everyday Business or Columbia Cares Non-Profit checking account. For more details, please contact your local branch.



Happy, healthy, and productive employees are key for the success of any business.

Delta Dental has plans for dental and vision benefits that fit your needs.

DeltaDentalNJ.com



DeltaVision®

In partnership with VSP®

CONTENTS

ENTERPRISING WOMEN IN COMMERCE

Mentorship: Empowering the Next Generation
Leaders Share Their Techniques, Goals, and Tactics 6

ACCOUNTING

Hiring a New CPA Firm?
Why Relationships Fail and What To Do 10

HEALTHCARE CHECKUP

Updates From Saint Peter's, Bergen,
Valley and CDID 14

MEMBER MOVES

Appointments, Promotions and
Mergers Across NJ 17

MEMBER NOTES

2025 Outlook for Middle Market
Mergers and Acquisitions 20

COLUMNS

Advertisers' Directory 2
CIANJ Officers & Board of Directors 3
President's View 4
Lessons in Leadership 19

Advertisers' Directory

Bayshore Family of Companies 3
Bergen New Bridge Medical Center 2
Columbia Bank IFC
Delta Dental of New Jersey 1
Forvis Mazars 13
New Jersey Land Improvement
Contractors of America (NJLICA) IBC
Saint Peter's Healthcare System 15
Schenck, Price, Smith, & King LLP 4
Smolin, Lupin & Co, LLC 11
Stand and Deliver 19
TapInto 4
Valley Health Systems 9
World Insurance Associates BC

COMMERCE (SSN 0745-077X) is published 11 times a year for a subscription price of \$35.00 per year by the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey, 365 West Passaic Street, Suite 490, Rochelle Park, New Jersey 07662, (201) 368-2100, Web site: www.commercemagnj.com. Postage Paid at South Hackensack, New Jersey and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to above address.

Cover Photo: Natasha Hemmings, CEO, Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey, seen here with Girl Scouts (left to right) Lilah S., Bella F., Keira K., and Olivia A.
Photo: Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey (GSHNJ)



The Bottom Line Get Screened

If you're 45 or older, colorectal cancer screening can detect issues early — when treatment is most effective.

Take charge of your health today.



Sufian Sorathia, MD
Medical Director for Endoscopy,
Ast. Medical Director of Ambulatory Care

Schedule your Appointment
By Calling 201.225.7130



Bergen New Bridge Medical Center
NewBridgeHealth.org/Gastroenterology





CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

DAX STROHMEYER

*President,
Triangle Manufacturing*

VICE CHAIRWOMAN

KIM VIERHEILIG

*President of Buildings and Facilities,
STV*

TREASURER

KATHLEEN ALEXANDER

*Partner,
Sax, LLP*

SECRETARY

JOSEPH IMPERATO, JR.

*Partner,
XSolutions Consulting Services, LLC*

COUNSEL

LANNY S. KURZWEIL

*Partner,
McCarter & English, LLP*

PRESIDENT

ANTHONY RUSSO

AT LARGE MEMBERS

PAIGE DWORAK

*President & CEO,
CareWell Health Medical Center*

PAUL HARENCAK

*Vice President, Operations
LPS Industries*

JAMES A. KOSCH

*Partner
McCarter & English, LLP*

DREW R. MALDONADO

*Managing Director,
Private Client Advisor
Bank of America Private Bank*

DEL MCLENNON

*Director of Business Development/Sales
Safari Solutions*

PAST CHAIRMEN

RICHARD W. ABRAMSON

*Member,
Cole Schotz P.C.*

NORMAN ALWORTH

*Chief Operating Officer,
Perfect Snax, LLC*

JAMES R. BEATTIE (in memoriam)

*Counsel to the Firm
Beattie Padovano LLC*

JAMES D'AGOSTINO

*President,
JD Companies*

WILLIAM C. HANSON

*President
NAI James E. Hanson Inc.*

WILLIAM J. HELLER

*Senior VP And General Counsel,
New York Football Giants*

MARTIN W. KAFAFIAN, ESQ.

*Managing Partner,
Beattie Padovano, LLC*

THOMAS MCNABOLA

*Senior Advisor,
Sax LLP*

AUDREY C. MURPHY, ESQ, MSN, RN

*Executive Vice President/
Chief Legal Officer
Hackensack Meridian Health*

B. FRANKLIN REINAUER III

*President,
Reinauer Realty Corporation*

ANDREW SILVERSTEIN (HONORARY)

Dorfman Abrams Music

TRACY STRAKA

*Executive Vice President,
Creamer Environmental, Inc.*

LOUIS WEISS

*CEO,
WFM Project & Construction, Inc.*

Mission

"The mission of the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey is to be the leader in free enterprise advocacy for the purpose of providing, through education, legislative vigilance, and membership interaction, an economic climate that enhances business potential and makes New Jersey a better state in which to live, work and conduct business."

Directors

RICHARD W. ABRAMSON

*Member
Cole Schotz P.C.*

RON ANDERSEN

*Senior Managing Director,
Commercial Private Banker
Peapack-Gladstone Bank*

AGNES ANTONIAN

*Chair of Environmental Law Practice Group
Connell Foley*

ROBERT "TOBY" BABEUF

*Regional Manager, Commercial Banking
Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.*

WENDY BLACHER

*Market Executive, Northern NJ Middle Market
J P Morgan Chase*

DR. KELLY BLUNDY, DC

*Co-owner
The Spine & Health Center of New Jersey*

JOHN BRENNAN

*Senior Vice President
J.H. Held LLC*

PHILIP I. BRILLIANT

*Founder and Owner
Brilliant Environmental Services*

DONALD F. BUCKLEY

*Market President
TD Bank North Jersey*

DAVID CAPODANNO

*Member of the Firm
CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen LLP)*

BRIAN JOHN CLARK

*Administrative VP, Group Manager
Commercial Banking Division
M&T Bank*

CONRAD COLON

*Vice President, Sales & Marketing
Goya Foods, Inc.*

JOHN J. CORCORAN

*Managing Director
Merritt Walsh Associates, LLC*

DALE CREAMER

*Director
River Bank Management*

JAMES D'AGOSTINO

*President
JD Companies*

GUILLERMO DE VEYGA

*Vice President
William Paterson University*

PATRICIA DIAZ

*CPA, Partner
Dorfman, Abrams, Music LLC*

ULISES DIAZ

*Director, Government Affairs
Horizon Blue Cross/Blue Shield of NJ*

JACQUELINE ESPINOZA

*Vice President
Jersey Central Power & Light*

ROBERT P. EVANS *Honorary*

DANIEL FOWLER

*Vice President of Corporate Services
and Special Projects
J. Fletcher Creamer & Sons, Inc.*

ERIC M. FRIEDMAN

*President
Bergen Community College*

TODD GALANTE

*Principal/Partner
Piro, Zinna, Cifelli, Paris & Genitempo, LLC*

SARABETH GAVER

*Partner
White and Williams LLP*

SALLY GLICK *Honorary*

BOB GORDON

*Vice President
Stevens & Lee Public Affairs*

RICHARD M. GOLDBERG

*President & CEO
Ultra Artists LLC.*

WILLIAM C. HANSON

*President,
NAI James E. Hanson*

TODD HAY

*Regional VP, Office Director
Pennoni Associates, Inc.*

ROBERT IACULLO *Honorary*

LAWRENCE INSERRA, JR.

*President
Inserra Supermarkets, Inc.*

AIYSHA (AJ) JOHNSON

*CEO & Executive Director
New Jersey Society of CPAs*

KEVIN JOYCE

*VP, Insurance Networks
Atlantic Health System*

MARTIN W. KAFAFIAN, ESQ.

*Managing Partner
Beattie Padovano, LLC*

ALADAR G. KOMJATHY

*Owner
Komjathy & Kean, LLC*

PAUL KRIEGER

*Managing Partner
Deloitte LLP*

RICHARD J. LAMBERT

*Founding Partner
Dunn Lambert LLC*

ANTHONY J. LEE

*President
The Cardinal Hill Group, Inc.*

DANIEL M. LESKO, SVP,

*Business Banking Sales Manager
PNC Bank, N.A.*

KEVIN LUING

*Chairman of the Board
Berkeley College*

PAUL B. MAIDE

*Senior Executive
Pace Analytical*

JOHN MARCHIONI

*President and COO
Selective Insurance Company of America*

PAUL MARDEN

*CEO
UnitedHealthcare of New Jersey*

MICHAEL A. MARON

*President & CEO
Holy Name Medical Center*

BOB MARTIN

*Managing Director
Christie 55 Solutions*

MILDRED MIHLON

*President
Felician University*

DENNIS MIKULA, JR.

*President
Mikula Contracting, Inc.*

MICHAEL MURPHY

*Vice President of Sales
AmeriHealth*

WILLIAM MURRAY

*Executive Vice President, Public Affairs
MWWPR*

CINDY MYER

*President
Ridgewood Moving Services*

STEVEN NAPOLITANO

*Principal
SNS Architects & Engineers*

CORETHIA V.E. OATES

*VP, Portfolio Manager
Morgan Stanley*

KEVIN O'CONNOR

*VP External Affairs
Veolia North America*

TERRIE O'CONNOR

*President/Broker
Terrie O'Connor Realtors*

BRENDAN O'DONNELL

*GM, Newark Brewery
Anheuser-Busch*

GIANFRANCO A. PIETRAFESA

*Partner
Archer & Greiner P.C.*

ROBERT M. PIGNATELLO

*Senior Vice President, Government Affairs,
Community Engagement &
Strategic Initiatives
Fairleigh Dickinson University*

BARRY PETRUZZI

*Vice President
Delta Dental*

JASON POURAKIS

*Partner,
Mazars USA LLP*

B. FRANKLIN REINAUER III

*President,
Reinauer Realty Corporation*

DAVID REPETTO

*Co-Managing Partner
Harwood Lloyd, LLC*

STEVEN C. SCHINELLA, CPA

*Roseland Office Managing Partner
CohnReznick, LLP*

THOMAS J. SHARA

*Vice Chairman
Provident Bank*

NISHA M. SIKDER

*VP of Payer Strategies
Valley Health System*

MICHAEL SMILOVITCH

*SVP, Market President
Commercial Banking
Valley National Bank*

AUGUST SODORA

*President
Swift Electrical Supply Co., Inc.*

JENNIFER SOLEWSKI

*VP Business & Technical Development
Bayshore Family of Companies*

TRACY STRAKA

*Executive Vice President
Creamer Environmental, Inc.*

JIM TROUWBORST

*SVP, Senior Credit Officer
ConnectOne Bank*

LEONARD VAN DAM

*First Senior Vice President
Columbia Bank*

DEBORAH D. VISCONI

*President & CEO
Bergen New Bridge Medical Center*

PETER WEBSTER

*Resident Managing Director
AON Insurance*

LOUIS WEISS

*CEO
WFM Project & Construction, Inc.*

Information gathered and presented in this publication is presumed to be accurate. However, because of the extensive number of sources used, Commerce Enterprises, Inc. and the CIANJ cannot guarantee accuracy or be responsible for any omissions in fact or credit.

Recognizing Women Making History

By Anthony Russo
President, CIANJ

After a snowy winter in New Jersey, I'm sure we're all ready for spring to begin, but March marks something else as well.

It's Women's History Month, a celebration of women's contributions to American history.

Observed throughout March since 1987, the monthlong observation grew out of a weeklong celebration of women's contributions to culture, history and society organized by the school district of Sonoma, California, in 1978, according to [History](#).

This month, we honor the often-overlooked contributions of women with a focus on mentoring New Jersey's future female leaders. COMMERCE's cover story, "Mentorship: Empowering the Next Generation," touches on leaders sharing their techniques, goals, and tactics. We also commemorate the work being done by the Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey on this month's cover.

Printed copies of this issue will appear at The Commerce and Industry Association's March 22nd gathering: "[Women In Commerce Event: Empowering & Mentoring Women Leaders of Tomorrow](#)." The networking breakfast will explore the importance of support systems, how to measure the impact of mentoring programs, and strategies for success.

The next Women in Commerce event happens in August and we will once again ask you to nominate extraordinary women in business and academia to be recognized for their achievements. To nominate someone for the fifth annual "Enterprising Women in Commerce" awards, please contact editor Jamie Grill-Goodman at JGoodman@cianj.org.

Additionally, in this month's Member Moves column, COMMERCE recognizes several female achievements from CIANJ members and CIANJ's own staff. We'd also like to thank CIANJ's Vice Chairwoman, Kim Vierheilg, President of Buildings and Facilities, STV; Treasurer Kathleen Alexander, Partner, Sax, LLP; and At Large Member Paige Dworak, President & CEO, CareWell Health Medical Center. Your efforts help the CIANJ and Magazine keep making history!

COMMERCE MAGAZINE

PUBLISHER/CEO
ANTHONY RUSSO
arusso@cianj.org

EDITOR
JAMIE GRILL-GOODMAN
jgoodman@cianj.org

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
JULIA PANGBURN
LARRY FELD

ADVERTISING SALES
JEREMY SULIT (201) 368-2100
jsulit@cianj.org

RICH WALTMAN (646) 808-5114
rwaltman@cianj.org

TOM WORLEY (917)-733-5135
tworley@cianj.org

LAYOUT AND DESIGN
MARJORIE CAMPOLONGO
Art Director,
mjcampolongo@gmail.com

Local news is more important **than ever**



TAPINTO PROVIDES ORIGINAL LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE
EVERY DAY IN MORE THAN 125 NJ TOWNS

Proud Partner of Commerce Magazine

Find Commerce online at www.commercemagazine.nj.com

Objective Local News
Coverage

No Editorial
Page

No Comments/
Anonymous Comments

No Paywall

To Advertise:
TAPintoMarketing.net

Franchising
Information:
StartTAP.net

Sign Up for Our
Free Newsletter:



Schenck Price

— SCHENCK PRICE SMITH & KING, LLP —

Great People Focused on Great Results

Schenck, Price, Smith & King is a full-service multi-jurisdictional law firm with offices in Northern New Jersey and Manhattan, representing clients from Fortune 100 major corporations to small businesses, individuals, public institutions and charitable organizations. For more than 110 years, Schenck Price has provided legal services with excellence and integrity.

Florham Park
220 Park Avenue
Florham Park, NJ 07932
973-539-1000

Paramus
115 West Century Road
Suite 100
Paramus, NJ 07652
201-262-1600

Sparta
351 Sparta Avenue
Sparta, NJ 07871
973-295-3670

New York
9 East 40th Street
New York, NY 10016
646-652-7775

www.spsk.com

BAYSHORE

Family of Companies



"THE ONE STOP SHOP" FOR ALL YOUR RECYCLING NEEDS

**58-ACRE ECO-COMPLEX AND ENERGY CAMPUS
UTILIZING THE LATEST RECYCLING TECHNOLOGY**

Class B Recycling - Supplier of Recycled Aggregates

Impacted Soil - Construction & Demolition Debris

Scrap Metal Recycling - Curbside Recycling

Transportation & Containers - Women's Business Enterprise

**www.bayshorerecycling.com
732.738.6000**

Mentorship: Empowering the Next Generation

Leaders Share Their Techniques, Goals, and Tactics

By Larry Feld

Today, mentorship is unquestionably one of the most valuable tools for helping new generations gain the experiences and knowledge needed to become successful professionals, especially for women.

And some mentees are starting young.

"Mentoring is at the core of our mission to build Girl Scouts of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place," notes Natasha Hemmings, CEO of Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey. Her organization serves a large portion of Northern/Central New Jersey.

"Through the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), we help young people develop leadership skills, resilience, and a strong sense of purpose. This experience is built on collaboration, creativity, and hands-on learning, ensuring participants are prepared to make a meaningful impact," Hemmings says.

Hemmings explains that ensuring inclusivity and diversity requires intentionality, accessibility, and a commitment to meeting participants where they are. "We create mentoring opportunities that reflect the backgrounds and experiences of the young people we serve," she notes.

Expanding access to mentorship beyond traditional troop settings is a key strategy. While troop leaders and volunteers provide invaluable

guidance, the organization also offers opportunities for peer mentoring and access to role models. "Through initiatives like the Girl Scout Leadership Center in Newark and our Girl Scouts on the Go! Mobile Classroom, powered by Kean University, these programs bring hands-on learning directly into communities that have historically had fewer opportunities," Hemmings explains.

Girl Scouts is often a young girl's first leadership training. Many of New Jersey's top women business leaders have participated in the program.

"I was a Daisy and a Brownie," recalls Jennifer Solewski, Vice President at Bayshore Family of Companies. "I enjoyed the collaboration with the girls and the troop leaders. They taught us things and gave us a sense of independence. It was wonderful," she says.

"The Girl Scouts make an impact. And the cookie sales are a big deal. I was very shy as a child. People who know me today might find that hard to believe, but the cookie sales helped get me out of my shell." Solewski also credits the Scouts for helping young girls foster entrepreneurial thinking. "It's a great program," she says.

Mentorships In Business

Like a Baskin-Robbins menu, mentorships exist in many flavors. From one-on-one coaching

to group programs, mentoring styles abound. For example, there is peer mentoring, situational mentorships, and reverse mentoring, team mentoring, career mentoring, and something called flash mentoring, (quick, one-off mentoring, usually on a single topic) to name a few. Situations can be formal and structured, or informal and short-term. Each form suits the individualized needs that exist in companies and with individuals.

Mentoring is not a one-way learning experience. Reverse mentoring, for example, happens when a younger employee helps an older employee gain knowledge and skills.

Cindy Meyer, President of Ridgewood Moving, explains how her mentoring of a younger salesperson has surprisingly morphed into a reverse mentoring experience.

"We learn from each other. I'm enjoying his tech savvy and how he's engaging social media," she notes. As a result, the two are blending old-school tactics with new technologies. Their mentoring discussions include sharing new ideas like starting a podcast, while Meyer is teaching her mentee the powerful value of handwritten personal communication touches.

"We have emails and we text, however, with every completed job, I handwrite a personal note to welcome the client to their home. Now, he's

Continued



Natasha Hemmings, CEO of Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey



Jennifer Solewski, Vice President at Bayshore Family



Cindy Meyer, President of Ridgewood Moving

■ Enterprising Women in Commerce



Terrie O'Connor, President of Terrie O'Connor Realtors



Kim Vierheilg, President of the National Buildings Operating Group at STV



Michele Zolezi, General Manager with Pure Soil

doing that, too. He's proud that he's written so many notes over the last year that we need to reorder our welcome note cards," she chuckles.

Key Components of Successful Mentoring

While there are nuances to every company's mentoring process, common threads exist that inspire success. Commitment to the effort is important, but open communication is most important. A positive culture is also necessary. Formality, as it turns out, is optional.

"I always try to reinforce our culture and values," notes Terrie O'Connor, President of Terrie O'Connor Realtors. Her closely-held real estate company utilizes a blend of formal and informal mentoring.

"Sales associates have a formal mentoring program available to them, however, most choose not to participate," she notes. Instead, O'Connor explains that the sales associates rely upon a manager employed at each office who acts as their hands-on mentor. Office managers field questions and help sales associates work through ongoing dealmaking issues. "The office manager acts as a sort of deal doctor," she says.

"A strong mentoring program is built on clear expectations, structured opportunities for engagement, and a culture that values both formal and informal mentorship," adds Kim Vierheilg, President of the National Buildings Operating Group at STV, Inc.

Her multinational architectural and engineering firm has embedded mentorship into its professional development initiatives, including an early career professionals' program and leadership training efforts. "These initiatives provide both formalized mentorship opportunities and more organic ways for employees to seek guidance, ensuring a well-rounded approach to professional growth," she explains.

"A well-designed mentoring program should guide someone to be able to understand every

aspect of all the jobs that go on," adds Meyer, who created a company process manual to help everyone understand how the company operates. "We have a playbook, and it's constantly being worked on," she explains. "Every meeting we might add a new task or something, but that playbook coincides with the onboarding that each team member goes through."

"Mentoring requires commitment, trust, time, and open communication," adds Solewski. "Your business needs to have experienced professionals willing to share their guidance. It requires active listeners with the ability to share time, be available, and ultimately set up the next generation with their contacts and experiences. There has to be a willingness on both sides," she says.

"Mentors must have availability, be transparent and authentic," agrees Michele Zolezi, General Manager with Pure Soil, a leading New Jersey soil recycling company.

Best Practices for Good Communication

While everyone agrees about the need for good communication, strategies vary.

"Mentoring relationships thrive on consistency, but they don't need to be rigid," explains Vierheilg. "Sometimes, the best check-ins are casual conversations that happen organically rather than through scheduled meetings. Transparency is also key. Mentees should feel comfortable being open about their challenges, and mentors should be willing to share successes and setbacks," she says.

To help foster a positive culture, her firm created a Women's Network with regular discussions on relevant topics like imposter syndrome and work-life balance. These open discussions are helping employees at all levels feel supported and heard, according to Vierheilg.

"Communication is a two-way street, isn't it?" adds Meyer. "We make a point of having regular

team meetings as well as structured debriefs," she explains. The company also runs RMS University, an ongoing training program that teaches best practices and underscores the need for clear communication in everyday activities.

Qualities of a Good Mentor

Successful mentors tend to be experienced people with great attitudes and a willingness to share wisdom.

"You must have good business acumen, especially in a technical industry," adds Michele Zolezi. "It takes a strong individual, a strong leader. Someone able to answer difficult questions and have difficult conversations. They take on tasks that many individuals might not be comfortable doing. Above all, mentors are good leaders who are authentic and have

Continued



Creating networking opportunities centered around relevant topics can help foster a positive and supportive workplace culture.

Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto/Koto

■ Enterprising Women in Commerce

integrity. They are someone people look up to,” she notes.

Vulnerability, empathy, and accessibility are other important traits. “Ultimately, our goal is to develop mentees into better employees and more fulfilled people,” Zolezi adds.

“A good mentor listens more than they speak. It’s about understanding where your mentee wants to go, not just telling them what to do,” notes Vierheilig. “Honesty and vulnerability also make mentorship meaningful. I’ve always valued mentors who shared not just their successes but also their challenges. A great mentor is also a connector; someone who helps open doors and expands a mentee’s professional network.”

How Do You Match Mentors and Mentees?

“Matching mentors and mentees requires a thoughtful approach that prioritizes shared interests, goals, and accessibility,” explains Hemmings. “We focus on creating mentorship opportunities that feel organic and meaningful, ensuring that young people connect with opportunities and mentors who can inspire and guide them based on their interests and aspirations.”

What are the Potential Challenges

“One common challenge is mismatched expectations,” explains Vierheilig. “Setting clear goals at the outset helps avoid frustration. Time constraints can also be an issue, so it’s important to prioritize quality over quantity when it comes to check-ins. And if a mentoring relationship isn’t working, it’s okay to pivot; mentorship should always be a positive and productive experience for both parties.”

“Having an open dialogue is important,” adds Zolezi. “It is not only about verbal communication, it is about comprehension. We need to make sure the mentees are understanding what they are hearing. They need to be

engaged and listening, particularly in remote settings. Zoom meetings are great, but it is important that mentors use verbal keys and speak to the mentees and not the materials. They must make a connection, and we must have an open-door policy when things aren’t connecting,” Zolezi explains.

“You have to have time management in a mentoring relationship,” adds Meyer.

“Making sure that mentorship is not just available, but relevant and engaging is an important challenge,” notes Hemmings. “The way young people connect, learn, and find inspiration has evolved, and mentorship must evolve with it. We address this by ensuring that our programs remain hands-on, interactive, and reflective of real-world leadership experiences,” she offers.

Biggest Lessons Learned as a Mentor?

“It’s very humbling to have someone look up to you for guidance and advice,” explains Solewski. “To be able to find ways to take setbacks and mistakes and turn them into learning milestones has been a very good experience.”

“Every mentor-mentee relationship is different. There’s no one-size-fits-all approach,” notes Vierheilig. “I’ve also learned that mentoring is a two-way street; I’ve learned just as much from my mentees as they have from me.”

Best Advice a Mentor Ever Gave You?

“Don’t eat the coffee cake,” Michele Zolezi jokes, adding that the best advice she received was to surround yourself with the people that you aspire to be. “Don’t play small. Push yourself outside that comfort zone. Envision yourself at the highest level you want to be and do everything in your ability to get there. And don’t be afraid of failure.”

The best advice Vierheilig ever received was to never to lose sight of who you are and what

you believe in. “Never let external pressures change that,” she says, adding “Careers come with challenges. There will be tough days and difficult decisions.”

“I used to work at Alexanders Department Store as a buyer,” recalls Meyer. “My boss, Mr. Greenwald used to say to me, Cindy, where’s Felix? And I’m like, I don’t know. I was 20 years old. He told me, I don’t ever want to hear that answer out of your mouth again. When I ask a question you don’t know, tell me you will find the answer.”

Who Made a Big Impact on You...and Why?

“I had two beautiful mentors,” recalls O’Connor. “One was the late Jim Beattie (co-founder of law firm Beattie Padovano and former CIANJ Chairman) and Jim Napolitano (past President of Commerce Bank and later TD Bank) who was also my first landlord. They were my banker, my lawyer, and my landlord early on. They encouraged me and helped me. For the first years of my business career, those two gentlemen probably had more of a positive influence, providing encouragement, and including me in things that I wouldn’t have ordinarily been invited to the table for as a young upstart. Both of them have passed away, But I will never forget either one of them. I love them dearly,” she recalls.

“One of the most influential people in my career has been Violet Apple, former CEO of Girl Scouts of Central Maryland,” relates Hemmings. “She is not only a mentor, sorority sister, and friend, but also a role model with more than 40 years of experience in the Girl Scouts. She exemplifies bold, purpose-driven leadership and has shown me what it means to lead with strength and empathy.”

“Violet taught me how to navigate the complexities of nonprofit leadership. More importantly, she has been an unwavering champion for equity and inclusion,” Hemmings relates.

Vierheilig reveals that she has had several incredible mentors. “The ones who made the biggest impact weren’t just advisors, they advocated for me behind the scenes; recommending me for roles and opportunities. Providing that kind of behind-the-scenes support is one of the most valuable things a mentor can do, and it’s something I now strive to do for others,” she concludes. 🍷



Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto/istockphoto

“Matching mentors and mentees requires a thoughtful approach that prioritizes shared interests, goals, and accessibility,” explains Natasha Hemmings, CEO, Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey.

Editor’s Note: CIANJ celebrates Women’s History Month with a special networking breakfast event on March 13, 2025, at the Glen Ridge Country Club. In addition to a panel discussion themed “Mentoring the Next Generation,” the morning will include a Keynote by Natasha Hemmings, Chief Executive Officer, Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey, and an exposition where women entrepreneurs will showcase their products and services. [Find tickets on the CIANJ.org website.](https://www.cianj.org)



Among America's Best Hospitals

For the third year in a row, The Valley Hospital has been named one of America's 100 Best Hospitals by Healthgrades.

Valley is one of only four hospitals in New Jersey to achieve this distinction, and the only hospital in Bergen County to be recognized.

To make an appointment or for a second opinion,
call 1-800-VALLEY 1 (1-800-825-5391).

Care Like No Other®
ValleyHealth.com/100



Hiring a New CPA Firm? Why Relationships Fail and What To Do

Compiled by Larry Feld

A good Certified Public Accountant (CPA) relationship means having a trusted advisor to handle compliance issues like tax filings and financial audits. But sometimes, things break down. When service and pricing cause a business owner to make the hard decision to change vendors, what are the important questions to consider in order to avoid making a similar mistake again?

To gain insight, we asked leading New Jersey CPA firms (large and small) to offer their candid response to the following question:

A business owner explains how this tax season exposed insurmountable performance weaknesses with their current CPA firm relationship. If a change is inevitable, what are some key considerations when shopping for a new accounting firm relationship?



Bederson LLP
Paul Reyes, CPA
Partner

Mergers, acquisitions, and private equity investments in the accounting industry have increased client turnover at CPA firms. Consolidations have resulted in less personalized service and weaker client communication.

Even long-existing client relationships might require reassessment. The right fit is crucial to clients to ensure that their needs are addressed. If a firm is too large, it might delay the delivery of timely and personalized service to the client. Too small, and the client can suffer from a lack of adequate resources, expertise, and capacity to deliver what the client requires to flourish.

Timely and concise information is essential to making the right decisions. Poor communication and service, as well as unsuitably sized firms that do not meet a client's needs, impede the client's ability to do so. It is the CPA's role as a trusted adviser to be in step with their client's needs.

When searching for a new accounting firm, businesses should consider the same things that we strive for at Bederson. To prioritize strong client relationships by maintaining clear and consistent communication, ensuring service remains personalized even as clients grow. Additionally, we always consider our capabilities to align with client needs in an attempt to balance personalized attention with the necessary expertise and resources. Striking this balance helps us to retain clients and build long-term trust.



Citrin Cooperman
Robert Sloomaker
Assistant Office
Managing Partner

The accounting firm you engage with should have specific industry knowledge pertinent to your company. With ever-changing regulations and robust tax law, the success of your engagement will rely on whether the accounting firm you choose specializes in the areas relevant to your company.

Ask detailed questions of the engagement team to ensure that the accounting firm has clients of similar profiles, in-depth knowledge that will apply to your company, and doesn't rely on "generalist" knowledge. In addition, guaranteeing that there is a full engagement team that will interact with and service your account is paramount to a successful relationship with your accounting firm. Be sure to meet with the team supporting the engagement to get comfortable with the working relationship. You'll need to ensure the team is filled with individuals with knowledge specific to your company's needs.

Lastly, speak with the engagement team to confirm they have the capacity to take on your company's engagement. Discuss the expected timing of all deliverables, including when the

accounting firm will need information from your company to stay on target for the timely completion of all deliverables. Clear and proactive communication leads to a successful and rewarding relationship between a company and its accounting firm.



CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen LLP)
Nicola Bain
Managing Principal of
New Jersey & New York

An accounting firm is not just a vendor, they are a trusted partner invested in your success. It's important that there is a cultural alignment, and that their values and approach align with your vision. Client testimonials can uncover the level of service provided, team responsiveness, whether the firm has experience with businesses and situations similar to yours, and also how a firm manages conflict.

A firm that has deep industry specialization can offer you insights and strategies beyond compliance to help you stay competitive. A full-service firm can scale with you, providing resources and expertise as and when you need it. These are all matters to consider as your business and individual needs evolve.

Continued



"An accounting firm is not just a vendor, they are a trusted partner invested in your success," says CLA's Nicola Bain.



Since 1947, **Smolin** has been dedicated to helping you achieve your financial goals with **expertise, commitment, and a personal touch.**

Our comprehensive **advisory, tax, accounting, forensic and valuation services** empower individuals and businesses to thrive.

Discover the possibilities of financial success that await you!

CONTACT US



973-439-7200



www.smolin.com

NEW JERSEY • FLORIDA



Accounting

Finally, you should consider how an accounting firm invests in its own business; both in technology and in people. By weighing these factors thoughtfully, you can transition to a firm that not only meets your current needs but becomes a long-term ally in achieving your financial goals.



Forvis Mazars
Paula Ferreira, CPA
Partner and New Jersey
Market Leader

Some accounting firms are focused only on financial statements and compliance needs and do not suggest ways a business can overcome pain points in the next month, quarter, or year. To remedy this, a company needs an accounting firm that truly understands its business and the industry in which it operates. Accounting firms bring more value when we partner with clients and work strategically alongside them. We do much more than deliver a product; we bring our experience in the industry to help companies make proactive and strategic business decisions.

Some accounting firms and their clients are not responsive to each other's needs. Deadlines and business move too fast to be waiting for answers from either side. Listening to understand and being responsive to one another are imperative for ongoing success. Setting up clear lines of responsibility – and specific people or committees to execute those duties – is a best practice. When this happens, the results are truly strategic in nature and customized to a company's evolving needs.



HBK CPA
Tom Angelo
Chief Executive Officer

Today's business landscape demands more from CPA and advisory firms than ever before. When relationships with CPA firms deteriorate, it's rarely about technical competence alone; it's often about communication, proactivity, and strategic alignment.

One common breaking point is the tax season surprise; finding out about significant tax implications when it's too late to implement strategic solutions. Business leaders should seek firms that provide year-round planning, not just compliance work. Our firm believes in continuous engagement, helping clients anticipate and address challenges before they become problems.

Another frequent issue is the loss of senior-level attention after the honeymoon period ends. When evaluating potential firms, ask about their partner-to-staff ratios and their specific commitment to your account. Understand how they maintain consistency while developing the next generation of leaders who will serve your business.

Technology integration is also crucial. Many firms struggle to keep pace with digital transformation, leading to inefficient processes and

delayed reporting. Look for firms investing in advanced platforms that provide real-time insights and seamless collaboration.

Most importantly, assess whether potential firms truly understand your industry and growth trajectory. The right accounting partners should offer insights extending beyond the numbers; including introductions to potential strategic partners, guidance on succession planning, and perspectives on industry trends.

The best relationships aren't built on promises of perfection but on transparent communication, shared values, and a genuine commitment to your success. When these elements align, you create a partnership that grows stronger with each challenge overcome.



SKC & Co. CPAs, LLC
Sarah Krom, CPA, MST
Managing Partner

One of the most important questions you can ask a CPA firm is their policy on turnaround time responding to phone calls and emails. The biggest reason I hear business owners give when looking for another CPA firm is a lack of responsiveness and feeling as if they are not a priority. Our firm only takes on a set number of clients per year, allowing us to grow as a firm in a measured way that doesn't impact client service.

Often, there isn't a team assigned to clients, so there is no continuity year to year and a relationship is almost impossible. Ensure that you meet the team and that there will be consistency in that team year-over-year. Finally, ask about a succession plan for the firm. Our industry is deep with consolidation and CPA firms that merge up can quickly outgrow their small to medium-sized business-owner clients. Your financial world demands trust and confidence and every business owner, regardless of size deserves this right, do not settle for less.



Smolin, Lupin & Co., LLC
Paul Fried, CPA
Chief Executive Officer

When selecting a new accounting firm, business leadership must carefully evaluate several key factors to ensure the partnership aligns with their organizational goals and needs. Proactive excellence is crucial, as businesses benefit from a firm that anticipates issues, stays updated on tax law changes, and offers insights to minimize risks and capitalize on opportunities. A firm that demonstrates initiative can provide valuable guidance, helping businesses remain competitive and compliant.

Equally important is the delivery of timely professional services. Businesses rely on accurate, on-time financial reporting and tax filings to make informed decisions and avoid penalties. A firm that prioritizes meeting deadlines and maintains strong communication practices

ensures that leadership always has access to critical financial data when needed.

Last, firms offering superior advisory services can significantly enhance business performance. Beyond routine accounting, firms that provide strategic advice on growth strategies, financial planning, and market trends empower leadership to make confident, forward-thinking decisions. Advisory expertise adds immense value by tailoring solutions to the unique challenges and opportunities of the business.

Business leaders should prioritize accounting firms that excel in proactive service, ensure timely and accurate deliverables, and offer strategic advisory expertise. These qualities contribute to long-term financial health and sustained growth.



Traphagen CPAs & Wealth Advisors
Robert J. Traphagen, CPA
CGMA Managing Partner

This tax season has revealed what the industry has been experiencing over the past few years with a consolidating market and private equity inclusion, there has been a significant gap in client relationships.

Some of the clients we have onboarded recently shared the following reasons for their change of firms:

- Communication. There is a lack of consistent, proactive communication throughout the year to be an integral partner in the growth and wellbeing of the entity.
- Strategic Guidance. Lack of guidance during critical periods prior to the company's year-end to implement timely tax-efficient strategies.
- Limited Resources. Inability to provide holistic solutions for the business, its shareholders, key personnel, and family members including estate planning, retirement planning, financing, financial planning & wealth management services.

What differentiates our firm? Everyone in our firm understands and embraces our vision and our culture. Our purpose, our "why" (Simon Sinek) is to make our clients successful. We minimize their respective tax burden, build wealth, and provide financial security for our clients, their families, and now, in many cases, their extended families.

We maintain a Jim Collins "Good to Great" consistency of rigor and discipline that permeates our organization and creates a flywheel of holistic life cycle services for our firm's clients. We are trusted business advisors, client-centric, and thought leaders.

With a high demand for financial advisory services, firms need to highlight their expertise, leverage technology, and embrace a client-focused approach to providing valuable advisory services as active strategic decision-makers. 📌



**Global to see
the big picture.
Local to understand it.**

Providing clarity. Building confidence.

forvismazars.us

Assurance | Tax | Consulting

**forv/s
mazars**

Updates From Saint Peter's, Bergen, Valley and CDID

By Jamie Grill-Goodman

New Pediatric Surgeons at Saint Peter's

The Children's Hospital at Saint Peter's University Hospital has added board certified pediatric surgeon Yi-Horng Lee, MD, and board certified pediatric surgeon Michael LaQuaglia, MD.

Prior to joining Saint Peter's, Dr. Lee served as the surgeon-in-chief at Bristol-Myers Squibb Children's Hospital at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, NJ, where he previously held the position of chief of Pediatric Surgery and director of Pediatric Trauma.

Dr. Lee's expertise is in neonatal surgery, thoracic surgery, hepatobiliary and GI surgery, and minimally invasive surgery. He specializes in treating children with solid tumors, short gut syndrome, feeding difficulties and pectus excavatum.

"Dr. Lee's arrival to Saint Peter's expands our pediatric surgical capabilities, allowing more families and their children greater access to complex surgical care close to home," said Leslie D. Hirsch, FACHE, president and CEO of Saint Peter's Healthcare System.

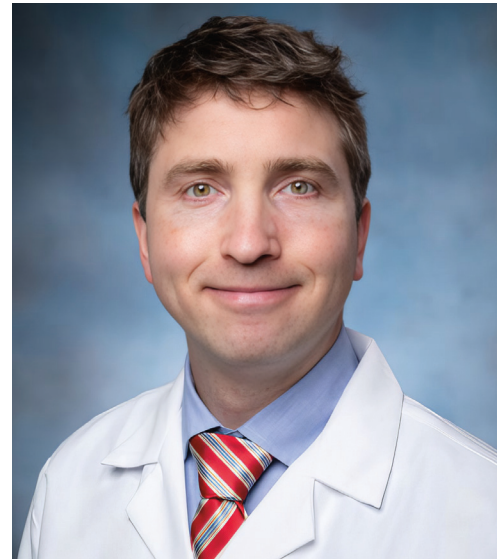
Dr. LaQuaglia specializes in pediatric cancer surgery and is the author of multiple peer-reviewed journals especially on the topic of neuroblastoma. He received his undergraduate degree at the University of Pennsylvania, followed by his



The Children's Hospital at Saint Peter's University Hospital has added board certified pediatric surgeons Dr. Lee and Dr. LaQuaglia.

medical degree from the University of Medicine and Dentistry (UMDNJ)-New Jersey Medical School and later a Master of Science in Population Health Sciences, with a track in biostatistics and data science from Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences in New York.

His training includes a general surgery residency at Montefiore Medical Center/Albert



Einstein University in New York and three fellowships, one in pediatric surgical critical care at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, followed by another in pediatric surgical oncology at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, and most recently a pediatric surgery fellowship at Saint Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Bergen New Bridge's new Teen T.H.R.I.V.E. Acute Partial Hospitalization Program helps teens facing substance use disorders.

Bergen New Bridge Opens Substance Use Disorder Program for Teens

Bergen New Bridge Medical Center cut the ribbon for its new Teen T.H.R.I.V.E. Acute Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP), for teens ages 13-17 who need more acute care.

The PHP program serves adolescents with a primary diagnosis of substance use disorder and a secondary co-occurring mental health diagnosis. The program offers more structure for teens without requiring them to participate in inpatient or other residential treatment settings. It allows adolescents to remain at home while receiving the treatment and support they need.

"In recent years, teens have faced increasingly complex challenges and as a result many have turned to substance use which has led to an alarming rise in teen overdoses," said Deborah Visconi, President & CEO, Bergen New Bridge Medical Center.

The PHP program includes support groups, individual therapy, family therapy, medication management, academic support, and aftercare planning. The team addresses every adolescent's

Photo: Tiffany Sanders for Bergen New Bridge Medical Center

You're expecting.
This award proves we deliver exceptional
maternity services.



Saint Peter's University Hospital is proud to be named one of the best hospitals for maternity care by *U.S. News & World Report*. That means you can count on us for premier birthing options, from our Labor and Delivery Unit to the Mary V. O'Shea Birth Center.

To learn more, call 732.745.8600 or visit saintpetershcs.com/maternity



That's treating you better...for life.

Sponsored by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Metuchen
Saint Peter's University Hospital has advanced certification in perinatal care and verification as a Level IV Maternal Care Facility from The Joint Commission.
The Mary V. O'Shea Birth Center is accredited by the Commission for the Accreditation of Birth Centers.

Healthcare Checkup

well-being through a holistic approach. The program is also the only one in Bergen County that accepts Medicaid and Charity Care patients, removing financial barriers to care.

Transportation is provided to and from the program and teens in the program attend Monday through Friday for 20 hours of treatment weekly. PHP includes an educational program that teens participate in during the school day.

Audrey Meyers of Valley Health System Retires

Audrey Meyers, FACHE, CEO Emeritus of Valley Health System, retired in January 2025, and Valley Health System has dedicated the Audrey Meyers Family Care Pavilion in her honor.

During Meyers' 45-year career with Valley, she held virtually every key executive leadership position in strategic planning, management, operations, and governance. She served as both the President and CEO of The Valley Hospital and Valley Health System for more than two decades.

Capping her long and distinguished career, Audrey led Valley through the successful planning, design, financing, and building of Valley's new campus and hospital in Paramus, which opened in 2024.

A dedication ceremony for the Audrey Meyers Family Care Pavilion was held in December and dedication of the pavilion was made possible by a gift from an anonymous donor in support of The Valley Hospital Foundation's \$125 million Serve. Care. Transform. campaign to

support construction of The Valley Hospital in Paramus. To commemorate the dedication, a portrait of Meyers was unveiled at the celebration, which now hangs in the first-floor lobby of the Paramus hospital and was a gift from Valley Health System's Board of Trustees.

The Family Care Pavilion is home to the Labor and Delivery, Neonatal Intensive Care (NICU), Postpartum, and Pediatric units at The Valley Hospital.

"I am so thankful for this amazing honor," said Meyers. "To know that my name will be on the building where so many families in our community will receive care, is a lasting tribute for which I am profoundly grateful. I thank Valley's anonymous donor for making this possible and want all to know that I am humbled by this incredible gesture."

"Audrey's extraordinary contributions to Valley are well known, but what truly defines her legacy is her unwavering commitment to the community and, especially, to families," said Robert Brenner, MD, MMM, FACHE, President and CEO of Valley Health System, at the dedication event.

Children's Specialized Hospital Partners With BILLY Footwear

The Center for Discovery, Innovation and Development (CDID) at Children's Specialized Hospital, a part of the Children's Health network at RWJBarnabas Health, has partnered with BILLY Footwear to create a new shoe.

The new shoe, BILLY Limitless, was designed with input from Children's Specialized Hospital



Left to right: Vincent Forlenza, Chair Emeritus, VHS Board of Trustees; Kevin Lobo, Chair, VHS Board of Trustees; Audrey Meyers, CEO Emeritus, Valley Health System; and Robert Brenner, MD, MMM, FACHE, President and CEO, Valley Health System.

clinicians, patients and families in addition to the BILLY Footwear team, representing a shared commitment to inclusivity.

While BILLY Limitless is for anyone looking for a comfortable and supportive shoe, it will specifically benefit children and adults with autism, diabetes, gout, arthritis, cerebral palsy, brace wearers, or those with other sensory needs.

"I was thrilled to be included in the design of BILLY Limitless," said Katherine Bentley, MD, Section Chief of Pediatric Physiatry and Director of the Chronic Pain Management Program, Children's Specialized Hospital. "Many of my patients wear BILLY shoes in addition to my son Elliot who has a rare form of epilepsy that causes him to have some trouble with balance, developmental delays, low muscle tone and he also wears ankle braces. BILLY shoes are great because he can put them on himself and since they're so stylish he doesn't feel different from other kids. Bringing BILLY Limitless to market as another inclusive and fashionable option for the patients and families we serve has been an incredible accomplishment, both personally and professionally."

Some features of BILLY Limitless include a contoured premium insole and removable stackable inserts, a full wrap zipper for easy on-and-off access, and a durable clove sole.


Ninety-five percent of initial sales of BILLY Limitless will be given to Children's Specialized Hospital to support programs and services for children living with unique healthcare challenges across New Jersey and beyond. Adult and children's sizes are currently available. 



Photo Caption: BILLY Limitless benefits children and adults with autism, diabetes, gout, arthritis, cerebral palsy, brace wearers, or those with other sensory needs.

Photo: MMW/CDID

Appointments, Promotions and Mergers Across NJ

By Jamie Grill-Goodman

COMMERCE and CIANJ

The Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey (CIANJ) and COMMERCE Magazine have appointed Jeremy Sulit the new Sales Manager.

Sulit majored in advertising at Syracuse University and his experience includes interning in the media department of Philadelphia-based advertising agency Tierney, working as an assistant media buyer at NYC-based radio advertising agency Direct Results Radio, working as a client services analyst for Comcast Advanced Advertising, and running his own media planning/buying agency JS Media. Please welcome Sulit at jsulit@cianj.org.

Additionally, Torene Valerio has been promoted to Senior Events Manager, CIANJ, and Julia Pangburn has been promoted to Senior Marketing & Communications Manager, CIANJ. Through her time at CIANJ, Valerio has consistently demonstrated exceptional organizational, time management, and problem-solving skills. Pangburn has been at CIANJ for 2.5 years and has showcased her creativity, communications skills, and attention to details.

Delta Dental of New Jersey and Connecticut

Delta Dental of New Jersey and Connecticut (DDNJCT) has appointed John Rosero as Senior

Vice President and General Counsel. Rosero will oversee the organization's legal and compliance functions and Delta Dental's government affairs operations.

Rosero joins DDNJCT from Prudential Financial, where he held several senior leadership positions, including Vice President and Chief Compliance Officer for U.S. Businesses, Chief Legal Officer, and Chief Counsel. At Prudential, he provided expert counsel on matters ranging from regulatory compliance to corporate governance, distribution, and strategic initiatives.

Rosero's appointment follows Paul J. Di Maio, who succeeded Dennis G. Wilson as President and CEO of DDNJCT, after serving as Senior Vice President, General Counsel, and Chief Administrative Officer.

Spencer Savings Bank

Spencer Savings Bank has promoted Dana Berlin to Senior Vice President and Director of Commercial Real Estate Lending, and Ronna Marchello has assumed the role of Vice President and Business Development Officer.

With over 21 years of commercial lending experience, Berlin has built a strong history of success in the industry. She joined the bank in 2011 as a Commercial Real Estate Underwriter and most recently served as Vice President and Commercial Real Estate Loan Officer. In her new role, Berlin will oversee



John Rosero, SVP and General Counsel, Delta Dental of New Jersey and Connecticut

the bank's Commercial Real Estate division, focusing on expanding the lending portfolio, ensuring credit quality and fostering long-term client relationships.

Marchello joined the bank in 2018 and previously held the role of Vice President and Retail Market Manager. In her new position, she will be responsible for acquiring new



Jeremy Sulit, Sales Manager, CIANJ & COMMERCE



Torene Valerio, Senior Events Manager, CIANJ



Julia Pangburn, Senior Marketing & Communications Manager, CIANJ

■ Member Moves



Dana Berlin, SVP and Director of Commercial Real Estate Lending, Spencer Savings Bank

business/commercial customer relationships in Northern and Southeastern Bergen County and the surrounding market areas. She will help her customers with their financing, deposit account and cash management needs.

CSG Law

Chiesa Shahanian & Giantomasi PC (CSG Law) announces that attorneys Michelle Bergeron Spell and Steven A. Loeb have each been named Chair of CSG Law's Trusts & Estates Group.

Michelle Bergeron Spell, who is also the Practice Group Leader of the Trusts & Estates Group, has extensive experience in multi-generational estate planning and asset protection for high-net-worth individuals, families and business owners as well as the administration of complex estates and trusts.

Loeb, who is also Chair of the Tax Group, has more than 20 years of experience serving as an advisor in the areas of estate planning, estate administration, estate litigation, charitable planning, marital planning, and nonprofit formation and counseling.

Schenck, Price, Smith & King LLP

Schenck, Price, Smith & King LLP welcomes a new Partner to the law firm as it continues to expand.

Frank J. Kontely III, Partner, is now part of the Commercial Litigation and Construction Law Practice Groups. He will focus his practice on construction, premises liability, personal injury, environmental and toxic tort, and contractual/insurance coverage issues. He has significant experience in risk transfer, contractual indemnification, additional insurance, and excess insurance issues.

Kontely has over 30 years of experience as a trial attorney and was recognized in The Best Lawyers



Ronna Marchello, Vice President and Business Development Officer, Spencer Savings Bank

in America® in 2024 and 2025. He earned his J.D. at University of Florida and his Bachelor of Arts in Politics at Princeton University.

Cole Schotz P.C.

Cole Schotz P.C. has elevated four attorneys to members across the firm's New York, New Jersey and Florida offices. The new members are Aaron S. Brotman, Inga C. Caldwell, Reuben G. Muller and Jaime A. Quick.

Inga C. Caldwell is a member in the Environmental Practice, based in the firm's New Jersey office. She counsels buyers, sellers, and lenders on environmental liability risks in



Frank J. Kontely III, Partner, Schenck, Price, Smith & King LLP

complex corporate and real estate transactions. Caldwell also represents clients in multiparty Superfund sites and related litigation.

Reuben G. Muller is a member in the Tax, Trusts & Estates Practice, based in the firm's New Jersey office. Muller represents clients at all stages of disputes with the Internal Revenue Service, the New Jersey Division of Taxation and the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance including audits, administrative appeals, and litigation. His practice also focuses on advising individuals, businesses, and estates on international tax and state residency/allocation issues.



Michelle Bergeron Spell, CGS Law, and Steven A. Loeb, CGS Law, have each been named Chair of CSG Law's Trusts & Estates Group.



■ Member Moves



Phillip E. Goldstein, CEO, Goldstein Lieberman & Company

Aaron S. Brotman is a member of the firm's Construction and Real Estate Practices, guiding clients through every aspect of a construction project, and is based in the firm's New York office. Jaime A. Quick is a member in both the Litigation and Tax, Trusts & Estates Practices, based in the firm's Florida office.



Inga C. Caldwell and Reuben G. Muller are members based in Cole Schotz P.C.'s New Jersey office.



Goldstein Lieberman & Company

The 50-year-old firm Teich, Beim & Moro, PC, headquartered in Rockland County, NY, merged with Goldstein Lieberman as of February 1, 2025.

Phillip E. Goldstein, CEO of Goldstein Lieberman & Company, announces that the

merger puts it in the top 1% of the nation's 43,000 CPA firms, according to Inside Public Accounting.

"We are certain that this move will be seamless and provide even greater capabilities to our new and long-standing client list," remarked Michael Beim, President of Teich, Beim & Moro, PC. 📌

LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

Leading Business Development



By Steve Adubato, PhD

Freelance Contributor

A lot has changed when it comes to leading business development, especially more than five years after the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether you are the CEO of a large firm or an entrepreneur launching a small startup, we have all had to pivot as we have navigated these uncharted waters. With this in mind, consider the following tips to leading business development in this ever-changing world:

- Technology is great, but don't let it get in the way of the personal touch. Too many things in our world have become automated. We tend to send an e-mail, text, or other electronic message too quickly. Nothing can replace having a personal interaction, even if just by phone or a virtual meeting. It makes people feel special.

- Foster a culture of collaboration and transparency. Effective business development relies on internal teamwork. Encourage a culture of collaboration within your organization, where communication flows freely, and team members are aligned on common goals.
- The customer is always right. When a client has an issue, see it as an opportunity to make things right. Sometimes this means that you must assume some responsibility and apologize for any misunderstanding. By taking on some of the blame, it often softens the other person, and you can more quickly come to a resolution.
- Stay agile and embrace change. Post-pandemic business development requires adaptability and flexibility more than ever. Be ready to pivot your strategies. Stay open to feedback, whether from your team or clients, and use it to refine your approach.
- Always remember... It's about THEM. Get prospects talking about their world. Too often, we go into an interaction

with a list of items we want to "sell," when instead we should start by asking open-ended questions and then listening to the prospect's needs. 📌



Steve Adubato, PhD, is the author of six books, including his newest, **"Lessons in Leadership 2.0: The Tough Stuff."** He is an Emmy Award-winning anchor with programs airing on **Thirteen/WNET (PBS)** and **NJ PBS**. He has appeared on **NBC's TODAY Show**, **NPR**, **CNN**, **MSNBC**, and **FOX 5 NY**. **"Steve Adubato's Lessons in Leadership"** airs **Saturdays at 5 pm & Sundays at 10 am on News 12+**. For more information, visit Stand-Deliver.com

2025 Outlook for Middle Market Mergers and Acquisitions

By Mike Simon

Principal, The DAK Group

Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) in the middle market has been strong and active in 2024, following a relatively subdued 2023. Since the middle market is primarily made up of privately held companies, the ebb and flow of M&A has always been fairly consistent, unlike M&A in large publicly traded businesses which see large swings in M&A activity.

With the Presidential Election behind us and a number of positive economic indicators, we see 2025 as a great time to buy or sell a business. The M&A business cycle is cyclical, driven by many factors, but lower interest rates and high stock market valuations are two key drivers that give us a positive tailwind going into 2025.

Factors at play now: the possibility of high tariffs on imports and a strong U.S. dollar. The potential for high tariffs is already driving demand for U.S. production facilities. At DAK we were recently approached by an Indian company seeking to acquire a precision machining company based in the U.S. They need a U.S. production base to supply their customers currently supplied from India and want to be proactive before tariffs go into effect. A strong U.S. dollar gives Americans traveling abroad strong purchasing power, but it also makes U.S. company earnings more attractive to foreign investors.

With a new administration in Washington and the global pandemic behind us it is a good time to reflect on American exceptionalism, why our markets are the most vibrant in the world and why the American middle-market businesses remain a desirable place to invest for both domestic and international buyers.

DAK has been providing business owners with strategic advice for over 40 years. We've seen many business cycles and actively track business valuations. For some owners now may be the time they should invest in their company's growth with acquisitions to broaden their reach or stay competitive. For others, in certain industries, their companies may be in high demand with the value near its peak, and now is the best opportunity to sell at a maximum value.

While interest rates and markets fluctuate, America has several things in our favor that set us apart from the rest of the world. I call these things "factor endowments" – key resources and characteristics that give the U.S. a comparative advantage and keep our businesses attractive to domestic and foreign investors. These advantages are:

1. Largest Economy:

The U.S. boasts the largest GDP globally, with per capita income levels far exceeding those of most developed nations. At \$76,000 per person, the U.S. outpaces countries like China, whose per capita GDP stands at just \$12,500. This economic strength is reflected in higher market valuations, robust corporate earnings, and a business-friendly environment free from excessive government intervention.

2. Abundant Natural Resources:

America's vast natural resource base supports a diverse range of industries. The U.S. is a leader in agricultural exports, mineral production, and energy output. With advancements in recovery technologies like fracking, the U.S. has become the world's largest producer of crude oil and natural gas. This energy independence has allowed the country to maintain low energy costs, a stark contrast to nations like Germany, which has faced significant economic challenges due to energy disruptions.

3. Skilled Workforce:

The U.S. workforce is one of the most educated and productive in the world. American workers generate an average annual economic output of \$171,000 per person – far higher than in Europe, Japan, or other developed regions. Historically, immigration has been a key driver of this productivity, with the economy continuing to absorb new talent.

4. Geography and Market Access:

Geographically, the U.S. benefits from its vast, integrated market. The North American continent, regulated by NAFTA, provides seamless trade access to over 500 million consumers. This combination of developed and developing markets ensures strong demand for goods and services.

5. Financial Capital and Investment:

America's stock market accounts for 61% of global market capitalization, underscoring its dominance in financial markets. The U.S. offers unmatched ease of access to capital, whether through public markets or private equity. Contrast this with regions like Europe or China, where regulatory hurdles and restricted capital flows limit investment opportunities.

6. Productivity and Output:

On a per-person basis, U.S. economic output is 40–60% higher than that of other developed economies, including Western Europe,



Mike Simon, Principal, The DAK Group, is reachable at msimon@dakgroup.com.

Canada, and Japan. This productivity advantage has widened over the past three decades, supported by innovation, technology, and efficient capital deployment.

America is the leading economy in the world. America's growth has been best-in-class for over a century, and our strengths today give us grounds for optimism about our country's economic power and potential. Middle market businesses are ripe for both Buy Side M&A for owners to grow and Sell Side M&A for them to cash out, or a partial sale which provides other options. International businesses are clamoring to buy American companies, Private Equity has record amounts of "dry powder" cash ready to invest and strategic buyers are looking to expand their operations.

Private American businesses are in a good position relative to their counterparties abroad. Now is a great time to take advantage of the strong dollar and active M&A market. Business owners should take some time and learn what their options are. Often, owners are unaware that there are many M&A options available to them, not just buy or sell. 📌

NJLICA is looking for **LABORER, OPERATOR, & TRUCK DRIVER APPRENTICES**



How Can Apprenticeship Training Help Your Company?

- Instill your company's culture and retain workers
- Recruit and develop a diverse and highly skilled workforce
- Improve productivity, profitability, and your bottom line
- Reduce turnover, improve loyalty, and retain top talent
- Demonstrate investment in your community

The NJLICA Apprenticeship Training Program is open to both new hires and existing employees.

This Education Has Two Facets:
On The Job Training and Classroom Instruction

Your Apprentice will Learn and Produce Better Quality Work, Moving You Forward at No Additional Cost to the Employer!

For Questions Or To Enroll Your Apprentice Today Simply Contact:
Tracy Carver, Apprenticeship Coordinator At tcarver@tlc4prevailingwage.com
Buddy Freund, Executive Director At Buddy@govisionstrong.com
973-630-7600





EMPOWERING WOMEN, SHAPING HISTORY, THROUGH MENTORSHIP

We help our clients manage and protect their most valuable assets—their people and their business.

World Insurance Associates offers our clients top products and services from the best providers that span all of your personal and commercial needs. Plus, you continue to get the white-glove service and personal touch of your local World agent.

INSURANCE PRODUCTS

- Commercial Insurance
- Employee Benefits
- Payroll & HR Solutions
- Financial & Retirement Planning
- Surety & Bonding
- Personal Insurance

INSURANCE EXPERTISE

- Professional Liability
- Law Firms and CPA Firms
- Medical Malpractice
- Restaurants and Hospitality
- Offices and Retail
- Transportation
- Contractors / Construction

WORLD INSURANCE ASSOCIATES

100 Wood Avenue South, Iselin, NJ • 08830732-380-0900 • yourteam@worldinsurance.com

www.worldinsurance.com/product/real-estate-insurance