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The Hyde Collection 2024 GALA

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Photos courtesy of Jim McLaughlin,
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**PUBLISHED BY
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Veterans Business Network of the ARCC

hosting 4th Annual Walk for Veteran Suicide Awareness & Prevention



Pictured above: Veterans Derek Lloyd & Sean Dion hold sign, preparing to lead the walk around downtown Glens Falls. Pictured right: The Southern Adirondack Independent Living (SAIL) team provided information on adaptive living at their resource table during the 2023 walk.



by **Amanda Blanton**,
ARCC Vice President,
Marketing & Communications

Photos courtesy of the ARCC.



The Veterans Business Network of the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is once again planning a walk for Veteran suicide awareness and prevention.

The 4th annual walk will take place, rain or shine, on Thursday, September 12th starting at 3:30 p.m. in Glens Falls City Park. After brief remarks, a 22-minute walk will commence to recognize the approximately 22 Veterans that are lost to suicide every day.

“As we prepare for this walk, just remember that what we perceive in others is just the surface. Unless they share their feelings, we don’t really know their true emotional wellbeing,” said Veterans Business Network Chair Sean Dion, also President at Mr. Electric of Queensbury.

“Within the ranks of our Veterans and First Responders, we owe it to them to be their sixth sense, to be there before a crisis; and get them to proper care.

Please come and support not only Veteran suicide awareness, but the vast resource network that took time from their day to do the same. We have grown each year due to your continued support of our mission!”

The Veterans Business Network (VBN), of the ARCC, was established in 2021 to create a safe space for Veteran business owners, and Veterans in the workforce, to connect, collaborate, and share resources. Regular meetings were held, and annual food & necessities drives to benefit organizations helping Veterans were planned, but the annual walk had its own story.

In 2021, the VBN partnered with the VFW Post 2475 to organize what was then known as the “Stop 22 Walk.” Stop 22 was an initiative, started in 2018, between the Department of NY Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and one of the nation’s leading health and well-being companies HUMANA, to increase awareness of Veterans committing suicide; 22 Veterans are lost each day.

“As a veteran, I know firsthand that one life lost to suicide is too many. Events like the ARCC Veteran Suicide Awareness & Prevention Walk are crucial in raising awareness and fostering open conversations about mental health. Together, we can identify those in need and ensure they receive the care necessary to heal and thrive before it’s too late,” said Christopher Thomas, MPA, RBLP-T & founder of Elite 9 Talent Solutions.

In addition to raising awareness, the event will raise money for Kee to Independent Growth, LLC (KIGI) to help support their Veteran programs. Last year's beneficiary organization was Alliance180.

"The team at Alliance180 is honored to once again participate in this important event. Our mission at A180 is to prevent suicide and reduce the effects of trauma for Veterans, first responders, and front-line healthcare workers. We thank the ARCC Veterans Business Network for bringing attention to this issue through this annual walk," said Bob Nevins, Founder.

As the event grew, the addition of resource booths really began adding value. This year, multiple agencies will be on site to share resource materials and information specifically for Veterans.



Resource booths setup around Glens Falls City Park, offering information to Veterans, friends & family.

Some of these agencies include: ASCEND Mental Wellness, Southern Adirondack Independent Living (SAIL), NY State Department of Veterans Services, Alliance180, the SUNY Adirondack Joseph P. Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Program, and many more.

"Communities are at their best when those capable of helping show up. This suicide and prevention walk highlights our cause for Veterans, but it's also for every member of this community impacted by the tragedy of suicide; from our first responders to our family, friends, and neighbors. Join us and walk side-by-side as we strive to strengthen communication and coordination on suicide awareness and prevention," said Amie & Juan Gonzales, President & Chief Financial Officer of Hunt Companies, Inc., and members of the ARCC Veterans Business Network.

This event is open to the public and generally draws about 150 people, including elected officials and community leaders. Please consider coming out to show your support on Thursday, September 12th, starting at 3:30 p.m. in Glens Falls City Park. Donations are appreciated and will go to benefit the Veterans programs provided by Kee to Independent Growth, LLC (KIGI).

About the ARCC:

Founded in 1914, the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is a membership organization representing businesses in New York State's Washington, Warren, Essex, and Northern Saratoga Counties. The ARCC is a 501c6 not-for-profit corporation, governed by volunteer Board of Directors, and does not receive any funding from local, county or state governments. Our mission is to support our business community through advocacy, education, connection, and collaboration.



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THE BUSINESS VALUATION OF *the Cannabis Industry*



by David E. Consigli,
partner at FAZ Forensics

Cannabis companies can be valued differently for a variety of reasons, similar to companies in any other industry.

Here are some factors that can influence the valuation of cannabis companies:

1. Market Position & Branding

Companies with a strong market position and well-established brands tend to have higher valuations. Brand recognition, customer loyalty, and a positive reputation can contribute significantly to a company's value.

2. Revenue & Earnings

Financial performance is a crucial factor in determining a company's value. Cannabis companies that demonstrate consistent revenue growth, profitability, and strong financial management are often valued more highly.

3. Regulatory Environment

The regulatory landscape for cannabis varies widely across regions and countries. Companies operating in areas with favorable and stable regulations may be more highly valued due to reduced risks and obstacles.

4. Product Diversity & Innovation

Companies with a diverse product portfolio and a focus on innovation may be valued higher. The ability to adapt to changing consumer preferences and introduce new and unique products can set a company apart in the competitive cannabis market.

5. Geographic Presence

The geographic scope of operations can impact valuation. Companies with a widespread presence in markets with high demand for cannabis products may be valued more than those confined to smaller or less lucrative regions.

6. Production Capacity & Supply Chain Management

Companies with efficient production capabilities and a well-managed supply chain may be valued higher. This is especially important in the cannabis industry, where cultivation, processing, and distribution efficiency can significantly affect costs and profits.

7. Partnerships & Mergers:

Strategic partnerships, collaborations, or mergers can influence a company's valuation. Aligning with established industry players, securing distribution agreements, or engaging in mergers and acquisitions can boost a company's perceived value.

8. Market Sentiment

Public perception and investor sentiment play a role in the valuation of cannabis companies. Positive media coverage, public support, and a favorable industry outlook can contribute to higher valuations.

9. Legal & Compliance Factors

Companies that adhere to legal and regulatory requirements are likely to be more valued. A strong commitment to compliance and risk management can reduce legal uncertainties and contribute to a positive valuation.

10. Management Team

The expertise and experience of a company's management team can influence its valuation. A strong leadership team with a successful track record can instill confidence in investors and stakeholders.

It's important to note that the cannabis industry is still evolving, and factors influencing valuations can change rapidly as the regulatory environment, consumer preferences, and market dynamics evolve. Additionally, investor perceptions and market trends can also impact how cannabis companies are valued.

Section 280E is a provision in the United States Internal Revenue Code that specifically deals with the taxation of income derived from the trafficking of controlled substances. It was added to the tax code in 1982 as a response to a case involving a drug dealer who attempted to deduct ordinary business expenses on their federal income tax return.

Under Section 280E, businesses engaged in the illegal trafficking of controlled substances, as defined by the Controlled Substances Act, are not allowed to deduct normal business expenses, except for the cost of goods sold (COGS), when calculating their federal taxable income. This means that such businesses cannot take deductions for expenses like rent, utilities, wages, and other typical operating costs that are deductible for legal businesses.

While the provision was initially intended for illegal drug trafficking, it has had a significant impact on state-legalized marijuana businesses in recent years. Even though marijuana is legal for recreational or medicinal use in some states, it remains illegal at the federal level.

As a result, marijuana businesses are subject to Section 280E, facing limitations on the deductions they can claim, which can significantly impact their overall tax liability. ■

David is a Certified Public Accountant and Partner at Ferraro, Amodio and Zarecki, CPAs. David has an Accreditation in Business Valuation and is a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst. David practices a philosophy built around providing clients with outstanding creative and personalized quality services.

David's experience and expertise help him provide clients with the tools and resources they need to understand the valuation of closely-held businesses, especially when it comes to divorce. His strengths in communicating the results of his valuation conclusion to clients are qualities that make him a leader in the industry.



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BUILDING **CULTURE** IN YOUR BUSINESS



by **Thomas Schin**,
Founder of Building
Better Culture

is a *Journey*

When you talk to business owners who are proud of where their businesses are at, they often talk about the market, helping their customers achieve their goals, and their employees. They point to the people, their actions, and how they rise above during crucial moments. Sometimes they'll refer to this as having a great culture where everyone is willing to go above and beyond (i.e. giving 110%), fill in for others who are out of the office for various reasons (being team players), and having fun doing what they do best.

The question for everyone else is, *how did they get there?*

Here's the reality - it wasn't blind luck. These companies did many things the right way to get here. Some may have even been in a situation where things were bad, but they didn't give up; they pivoted, planned, executed, and stayed true to the path they needed to be on to improve.

Why? Somewhere along the line, they realized the issues weren't because:

- People didn't want to work
- There weren't good candidates out there
- They were the greatest things since sliced bread (can you imagine the days when there WASN'T sliced bread? – oh, the horror)

Instead, they figured out that for every finger they were pointing, there were *three fingers pointing back at themselves*.



RECOGNIZE

Building (or rebuilding) company culture is a lot like planning a vacation or a trip. First you have to recognize you need that vacation. Frankly, who doesn't need a great vacation?

Recognizing that you may have some challenges in fixing a problem (sales, service, quality manufacturing, engineering, process, etc.) within your work environment has to come first. Without identifying a challenge, how can you fix or improve it?

That's not to say that there's a glaring problem in every organization. Rather, it's pointing out that your organization has room to grow and improve – to get better than you were yesterday.

MEASURE

Once the challenge is identified and acknowledged, you need to determine where you're at – your benchmark. Like traveling from your closest airport, you need to know where you're starting in order to figure out where you can go. This identification includes measuring and evaluating – not just “trusting your instincts.” Ask any seasoned sales leader and they'll tell you that if you're not going to measure it, there's no point in doing it at all. Determining where you're at will help you have a compass – where you start, where you're heading, and how you'll know you've been successful.

PLAN

Next comes the itinerary. On your journey, you need to plan for stops along the way. What things will you entertain or visit? What elements do you want to include to achieve those lofty goals? Are they tied to your company values?



INVITE

Who's coming on the journey? Some will challenge, some will oppose, but ultimately you've made the decision as the leader of the 'family,' that this trip is happening. Now, decide who are your strongest focus group participants. It's not the people who are burying their heads in the sand – pretending issues will magically go away, or that potential problems don't exist. It's the people who see that a positive culture creates greater engagement and inclusivity. Culture helps people know how to act, especially when things are tough. When your engagement is on the rise, so are productivity and employee retention rates. Higher rates here make the business more profitable – less time retraining new people, less people taking on additional workload due to turnover, etc.

ACT

Now it's time to get on the bus. Start executing the things your focus group planned on. Pivot, when necessary, but stay on the path – even if not everything goes as planned. You're sure to have a 'flat tire' or delays. Remain calm and vigilant about staying on track to achieve those goals you set forth.

OBSERVE

Enjoy the ride. If you've planned well, this should be a great journey for you, your leaders, and your employees. Building an inclusive culture tied to your company values can be awe inspiring to watch. Learn from missteps, take notes, gather intel from the front lines, and continue to tweak and massage.

REPEAT

You're not done. As with strategic planning, budgeting, goal setting, project management etc., you have to continue to plan for tomorrow. What's the next trip you're going on? How could you have made this one better?

It takes some imagination of what's possible. Sometimes, it takes some external perspective to help you see what you've accomplished, what opportunities you might be overlooking, and how you can continually improve this ongoing trip.

Building a sustainable culture is a challenge. You can't win a great culture by playing the lottery or entering a contest. You have to invest the time, energy, and consistency in all phases. Company culture has a life of its own, and with each new employee you add something to that culture – their interests, ideas, perspectives, and connection to your mission, vision, and values.

How you and your leadership team carry these things out, especially when no one is looking, will determine how good your compass is on your journey to building a better culture.

Tom Schin is an engagement engineer, HR anthropologist, and workplace culture leader. He's owner of Build Better Culture, and strives to help businesses thrive and grow culture, engagement, and leadership skills targeted to strengthen employee retention.

Visit his website at buildbetterculture.com or scan the QR code to learn more!



Rivers Risk CONSULTING



by **Amanda Graves**

Six years ago, Marilyn Rivers' birthday dinner was interrupted by a crisis—a lightning strike had hit Saratoga Town Hall, setting off a chain of events that would help shape her career. In the midst of the celebration, Marilyn—then the Director of Risk and Safety for the City of Saratoga Springs—was called into action. As town officials began to assess the immediate aftermath, all eyes turned to her for guidance.

Thanks to her meticulous planning and expert strategies, the damages were minimized, avoiding a potential catastrophe. Today, Marilyn channels that same expertise into her own venture, Rivers Risk Consulting, where she helps businesses navigate the unpredictable waters of risk management.

Despite her impressive achievements, Marilyn never thought she would go into the risk management industry. Initially, she set out to be a science teacher, earning her bachelor's degree in chemistry from Clarkson University and her master's degree in secondary education from Tufts University. She then began working at a local insurance company where she had an experience that motivated her to begin a career in risk management.

"An individual made the mistake of telling me that I did not know what I was talking about relative to an insurance issue," Marilyn explained, "I decided then and there to undertake the very long road of obtaining my globally recognized credentials in Insurance and Risk Management."

Over the next few years, Marilyn spent hours working towards expanding her credentials and building an impressive resume in the risk management field. She earned her Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU) from the American Institute of CPCU. She also received her associate's in risk management (ARM) and in claims (AIC) from Insurance Institute of America as well.



*Marilyn Rivers, Founder of Rivers Risk Consulting.
Photo provided.*

"Those designations, coupled with my Bachelors in Chemistry and my Masters in Secondary Education, enable me to triage analytically - kind of like Columbo in risk," Marilyn said.

In addition to her educational development, Marilyn also has years of work experience adding to her credibility and expertise in the field. She worked for the City of Saratoga Springs for 20 years, during which she managed the city's operations relationships with local, state, and federal regulatory agencies. She also helped create and implement employee health and safety programs and much more. Throughout her career, Marilyn's passion for risk management has continued to grow.

“Risk management is a tremendously rewarding profession. No one day is ever the same,” she shared, “Risk management is a wonderful four-dimensional spinning ball full of energy, ideas, and opportunity. Learning how to effectively practice, mitigate, and manage risk enables us to seize opportunities as they present themselves, maintain a healthy and safe working environment, and cost-effectively conduct our businesses.”

As her career progressed, Marilyn achieved success at the national level. In 2007, she was nominated and chosen by the Public Risk Management Association (PRIMA) as the Public Risk Manager of the Year. That same year, her son was graduating from Virginia Tech— a campus that was recovering from the recent tragic shooting.

Affected by the emotion from her son’s experience, Marilyn was able to channel those feelings in a positive way as she gave her acceptance speech to a full room of people in Boston. To this day, she reflects on that moment as a defining point in her career.

“I asked for our profession to do better, reach higher and unite in the common goal of excellence in understanding and appreciating that our differences make us stronger. I received a very lengthy standing ovation and many new friends. My national journey began that day and has expanded across ‘the pond,’ as they say. To this day, I teach webinars, produce podcasts and provide education for public risk managers across the country. My PRIMA Family keeps me grounded and teaches me new risk ideas every day,” Marilyn shared.

Her reputation and expertise led many people to call on her for help, even after a brief retirement in April, 2023. She realized that because she was still helping so many people, it made sense to start her own business. In July, 2023, Rivers Risk Consulting began, and Marilyn has loved continuing her work.

“Folks don't understand what risk is and often don't find any value in its practice. That in itself is what makes risk management an amazing career.”

“Each business interaction is an opportunity to change the course of business and governance in a positive way,” she said.

When Marilyn helps any business, she always takes the time to learn about where they are currently and makes the most out of the resources they already have. She recognizes that every situation and business is different, and develops her plans accordingly. Going forward, she hopes to continue educating and helping people.

“I hope to expand risk management educational opportunities nationally and internationally. I use LinkedIn as a teaching tool and get quite a lot of positive feedback when I take an issue and break it down for discussion so folks can begin to understand risk, how it’s mitigated, and the opportunities that present themselves in the most difficult of circumstances,” she shared.

When Marilyn is not working, she spends a lot of her time volunteering, as she has a passion for helping others. She serves as the President of the Glens Falls Lions Club.

“We are embarking on a new vision program for the underserved, working with the United Way on the ‘Kids with Packs Program’ and Family Services ‘Feet First Program,’” she shared.

In addition to the Lions Club, Marilyn spends every Wednesday morning feeding and caring for the cats rescued by the North Shore Animal League. She also loves seeing her grandchildren and is very proud of her son.

“He’s a super smart gent with a wonderful family. He now practices strategic risk management as the Chief Functional Engineer for Rolls Royce in Indianapolis. That in itself makes my risk journey the most rewarding of all,” she said.

For more information about Rivers Risk Consulting, please visit: RiversRiskConsulting.com.

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The Hyde Collection 2024 GALA



by Amanda Graves

Photos courtesy of Jim McLaughlin, McLaughlin Photography

The Hyde is thrilled to be hosting their annual gala on Saturday, September 14, honoring Dr. John Rugge and Victoria Palermo. This year's theme is "Celebrating the Healing Impact of Art." Throughout the past few years, the number of visitors have increased, showing the impact and importance that the Hyde Collection has had on the community. The gala celebrates all that the Hyde Collection has to offer and looks to the future of the museum as well.

Each year, the Hyde Collection hosts a fundraising gala to support and expand the museum's operations. This year, the focus is on building support for The Reimagine Project, particularly its first phase: the renovation of the Hoopes House, the first building on the campus. Completing this project will transform the Hyde Center for Arts Education by expanding its programming space from 800 square feet to over 7,000 square feet.

"As our programs continue to grow and our service to the community continues to grow, that space I have no doubt will be an incredible resource for The Hyde and our community at large," said Kate Wilkins, Chief Advancement Officer.

This year, The Hyde Gala will revolve around the theme "Celebrating the Healing Impact of Art." The gala is honoring Dr. John Rugge, founder of Hudson Headwaters Health Network and Victoria Palermo, a leading visual artist in the region. Both John and Victoria are leaders within their fields and they embody this year's theme.

"We believe that creativity is the core of wellness and is really truly required for a holistically enriching life for folks in our community," shared Kate.

The event will be led by co-chairs Francine and Robert Nemer. Francine serves on The Hyde’s board of trustees, and is the lead education sponsor for 2024 along with Robert.

“We’re really excited to be celebrating with this group of people in our community who have made such an impact on the lives of residents across Glens Falls, Warren County and beyond,” Kate said.

In addition to its fundraising efforts and celebration of John and Victoria, the gala will also be visitors’ last opportunity to see The Hyde’s summer exhibitions, which close on Sunday, September 15.

This season’s exhibits include a surrealism show that celebrates the 100 year anniversary of the Surrealism Manifesto. There is also a show celebrating Richard Estes, one of the best-known photorealist artists, and works by rising contemporary star Daniel Giordano.

“Those are an incredible set of exhibitions which leverage and celebrate The Hyde as a space for contemporary and modern art,” Kate shared. Guests will be able to see all these, plus many more wonderful exhibits during the gala.

In addition to the exhibitions, there will also be a cocktail hour, followed by a dinner, and concluding with a live auction.

Originally founded by Charlotte and Louis Hyde, the museum opened its doors to the public in 1963. Since its opening, The Hyde has continued to serve its surrounding community through numerous exhibitions and excellent programming. In recent years, the number of people visiting the museum have grown, highlighting the influence and impact of The Hyde.

Last year, The Hyde hosted nearly 14,000 visitors and of those people almost 2,600 engaged in programming.



“Those numbers continue to climb and I have no doubt will continue to trend upward as folks in our community come forward and join us in support during the gala and in other ways throughout the year,” explained Kate.

For more information about the gala, or get your ticket, visit the website www.hydecollection.org/fundraising-events/annual-gala or scan the QR code below!

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MARKET SHARE:

Yours for The Taking



by **Michael Nelson**,
Partner & Co-Founder
of Five Towers Media

For many businesses locally (and nationally), the climate being created by inflationary pressures, housing prices, interest rates, and available labor market, is creating a large and sudden decline in their company's revenue; a decline that could create opportunities for competitors to scoop up Market Share.

Why:

As conditions move from boom to doom for many businesses, they will begin to experience the inevitable panic that these types of swings bring. They'll be asking: Are we going to be okay? What happens if revenue does not continue to increase? Are we going to have to let anyone go?

As these questions surface, management teams will inevitably start looking for costs to cut, line items to delete, and ways to save their salaries.

This contradiction— looking for ways to just simply survive rather than explore ways to continue growth through a rough business climate— almost always starts with cutting Sales and Marketing departments. The decision to cut marketing costs and downsize sales forces will inevitably shrink the exact thing businesses need: Revenue.

As revenues decline, businesses are forced to take another hard look at cuts. With the low hanging fruit already gone, companies will need to make harder decisions.

How:

The opportunity for an upcoming competitor lies in the space created for them by the shrinking brand awareness and lack of lead-generating activities of the company making cuts. To grow your own market share, you can essentially move into the gap created by their absence. I say "essentially" as there is a little extra work needed to get there.

To take advantage of this opportunity and ensure its success, we recommend you do 3 things before looking to fill the void.

1 Strengthen Your Brand

Moving buyers to your camp relies on having a very strong brand that resonates with them. It's not enough to say who you are and have your company values on your website. Your brand is much, much more than just a logo and a slogan. You need to walk the walk you talk. Then, focus on the marketing and sales activities that reinforce who you are as a company and what's important to you.

2 Double down on your Target Market

Many businesses make the mistake of trying to market to "everyone," but the real power lies in zeroing in on your target market. By becoming hyper-focused, you not only save money on advertising but also attract the right prospects who are more likely to self-qualify before they even reach out to you (we know this reaction as, "Hey, it sounds like they're talking about me!").

Take the time to dive deep into demographic details like the geographic location, age and income of your audience, and don't overlook psychographic information. Understanding the psychological reasons why clients choose you—often rooted in the emotional challenges you help solve—can make your marketing efforts far more effective.

3 Get Creative

Lastly, you need to get creative. Stepping into a Brand Awareness and Lead Generation void left by a competitor does not mean you do exactly what they did. Spend some time considering what you do better and how to give voice to that. Identify your advantage in the market and really press that advantage. Look for ways to be visually different. Use highly emotional content to get attention and make sure that the problem you are solving is somehow important to the viewers' survival.

This is not a short-term play, although it may have some immediate gain. You should be planning an overall marketing and sales strategy to garner your competitor's market share that spans 12 to 18 months.

As always, it's important to set clear milestones and metrics, and to define your goals up front. Monitor your channels and campaigns at least monthly, and if any activities aren't delivering results within 90-120 days, it's time to move on.

As a newcomer, smaller company, or rising star, you only get so many opportunities to take large pieces of market share away from the established 20-year hometown competitor. Don't miss this one.

-M

2024 HYDE GALA

6 PM, SATURDAY, SEPT 14

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TOP 5 THINGS TO PROTECT YOUR *Physical & Mental Health* WHILE RUNNING A SMALL BUSINESS

by **Tandi Orluk, LCSW**
Set Free Counseling, PLLC
www.setfreecounselingllc.com

As a small business owner, one thing we understand is the importance of time management.

Even with meticulous planning of our days, we can quickly find our lists of “To Do’s” pile up faster than we can blink, and we can find ourselves stressed out in the moment. What does stress do to our physical and mental health? When we experience stress in prolonged periods of time our physical and mental health suffers. We start to feel the effects of stress in not being able to concentrate, experiencing digestive issues, our heartbeat may rise along with other tightness and tension in various areas of our body. These symptoms indicate a dysregulation in our nervous system and our body needs a reset.

When stress happens here are five things you can do to help with all the emotions and overwhelming thoughts you may experience.

1. Sleep

Adults should strive for 7-9 hours of sleep a night. Studies show anything less than 6 hours a night can cause mental distress. The first question I ask when beginning an initial therapy session with someone is how their sleep is. Did you know that REM sleep is what restores and heals our mind and body? So without adequate sleep our body and mind cannot function at full capacity.

2. Sunlight

Improves our physical and mental health. Research shows that the sun provides our mind and body with Vitamin D for bone health, increases serotonin for a calm mood, and melatonin for adequate sleep. We need 15-20 minutes of sunlight a day for optimal health. Living in the northeast we experience long, gloomy winters. To help make sure we get adequate sunlight, buying a Light Therapy Lamp is highly effective to supplement the dark, frigid days. I use this lamp in my office daily to ensure I am getting what I need in vital nutrients.

3. Unplug and Get Moving

Put your phone and other electronic devices on “do not disturb,” and take a 20 minute walk. Unplugging from technology for 20 minutes and walking is a terrific way to reset our nervous system.

4. Grounding Techniques

Help people become aware of the present moment, by doing so an immediate reduction of the intensity of our emotions decreases. Our bodies react well before our brains catch up. When we engage in grounding techniques, we get our brain and nervous system communicating with one another. An example is utilizing your senses to get your mind and body communicating with one another in the present moment. For example, identifying three things you see, three things you hear, and three things you feel as in physical touch. Other grounding techniques that I teach are listening to music, breathing exercises, and guided imagery.

5. Hobbies

Doing things that bring us joy. To keep our peace in mind and body it is necessary for us to not lose sight of what energizes and rejuvenates us, so that we can keep moving forward to our next goals. So read for pleasure, engage in some art, do your favorite exercise or sport. Anything that brings peace and joy to your day is what enhances your nervous system to recognize these positive emotions.

In conclusion, as entrepreneurs we have had to master the art of time management. By incorporating these five tips into our daily lives, we can build a solid routine that nourishes our physical and mental wellbeing. When we are our best version of ourselves, we can put all our creative drive and passion into the small businesses we love.

Disclaimer: This article is a whole health approach and not meant to treat any specific diagnosis.

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by Neal Stimler, President
of Stimler Advantage
www.stimleradvantage.com

WHAT A.I. DOES NOT KNOW YET

& What It Needs To Know Better

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is among the most talked-about business and technology trends.

Users interact with AI in a variety of use cases. Organizations across industries, services, and sizes can use AI to their potential benefit. Benefits of AI include process optimization, improved operations, increased productivity, reprioritized costs, and enhanced products and services.

Digital transformation has made information more widely available; however, due to its format, organization, or structure, not all of this information can be effectively utilized by AI. Understanding what AI knows and does not know is crucial when considering its application in your business. It is the difference between simply "knowing" about AI and effectively "doing" with AI. By acknowledging what information AI can and cannot yet access, businesses can make informed decisions about leveraging AI for practical applications. Furthermore, as AI technology advances, its "knowability" will continue to evolve. Staying informed about what remains outside and inside AI's capabilities is critical for users to make the most valuable and informed decisions possible.

What A.I. Knows

AI draws upon born digital and digitized information, including public data, private data, the Internet, human-created data, and labels for a specific application or purpose. Notably, there are important considerations for the sourcing of information to build and train AI applications and the use of those outputs in a publication or for products and services.

Among them concerns about a data source's quality, structure, and verifiability as well as potential bias, copyright, or other regulatory matters. The AI we have today knows practical and applicable amounts of information. Still, organizations and AI users need to ask and evaluate what information might be incomplete, missing, or needing improvement before further embedding and integrating the technology into core business operations and critical technologies.

What AI Does Not Know (Yet)

Organizations may not recognize the total value of their information assets. While digital transformation has made strides, significant informational value remains obscure within "unknown unknowns" (e.g., information we do not know exists and in what condition or format), analog physical materials, and localized content.

To unlock the full potential of these information resources and drive innovation, organizations must prioritize a comprehensive information management strategy. This strategy involves uncovering undiscovered information, digitizing analog assets, and managing localized content to channel it into actionable resources and tools that can be integrated considerably into AI-powered systems.

UNDISCOVERED INFORMATION

Despite advancements in digital transformation, many organizations harbor untapped reservoirs of information - these are the unknown unknowns. Critical information often remains obscure, limiting insights and hindering strategic decision-making.

AI, while powerful, is constrained by the data it is trained on, unable to unlock the full potential of these hidden assets. To maximize the value of AI and drive business growth, organizations must prioritize the discovery, documentation, digitization, and accessibility of information assets. By breaking down silos and empowering data-informed practices, organizations can uncover new opportunities, enhance operational efficiency, foster partnerships, and improve their products and services.

UNDIGITIZED ANALOG ASSETS

Untapped potential lies within the analog archives of many organizations. Analog means not computerized or digital and is a physical asset. Historical documents, reports, and media, often containing invaluable insights into brand evolution, market trends, and research, are frequently stored only in physical storage.

Neglect, resource constraints, and a lack of understanding of their strategic value often hinder their digitization. This digitization delay creates a growing resource debt as the cost and complexity of converting analog materials can increase over time. Moreover, the inability to harness these assets limits organizations' capacity to leverage AI for product development, customer service, and broader business objectives. By investing in digitization now, companies can unlock the hidden value within their analog archives and position themselves for future success.

LOCALIZED DIGITAL CONTENT

Organizations often struggle to harness the full potential of their digital assets. While data may exist in digital form, challenges abound such as: poor organization, outdated formats, proprietary restrictions, and integration difficulties. Local digital content, especially on in-house servers or legacy systems, is often inaccessible to AI tools due to unstructured formats and compatibility issues. However, this issue is improving and new AI applications are coming to browsers and desktops that can assist with these matters.

Although AI can assist in specific tasks, its effectiveness is limited by the quality of training data and the specific nature of organizational content. Successfully implementing AI requires substantial investment, careful planning, and expert guidance. As organizations migrate to the cloud, these challenges may persist, amplified by complex storage and security considerations. Despite these obstacles, the future of AI in managing digital content has potential, and proactive steps are essential to unlock its full potential.

What AI Needs To Know (Better)

Organizations must bridge the gaps between often overlooked, undigitized, local, and structured, well-managed information to leverage AI fully. This requires a strategic approach to information management including: robust curation, digitization, preservation, and accessibility initiatives. By fostering collaboration between IT, organization units, and informational management professionals, organizations can develop innovative methods to generate more value from their information assets. A holistic approach will create a more comprehensive and reliable information base to empower AI-informed insights and improve business decisions.

Conclusion

Organizations must understand the importance of their data, digital assets, and intellectual property to fully harness AI's potential. While AI has made strides, it is constrained by the quality, accessibility, diversity, and specificity of the information it utilizes. By investing in comprehensive information management, organizations can unlock hidden value, drive innovation, and advance their goals. As AI evolves, a proactive approach to information management will be essential for an organization's progress and sustainability. Organizations will have to weigh the benefits, costs, and risks of AI along with a constantly shifting landscape around energy impact, copyright, security and threats to be determined.



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– Amie Gonzales, President of HCI



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Changing Lives through lenses

by Amanda Graves
Photos provided.

Vision is a privilege that can easily be taken for granted, but for many, clear sight depends on the expertise of dedicated opticians. Yet, not everyone has the luxury of easy access to an optometrist or the means to afford a new pair of glasses.

Recognizing this, Lions Club member Josh McIntyre is on a mission to make vision care more accessible. By providing eyeglasses to those in need, he's helping people see the world with newfound clarity and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to experience life through a clearer lens.

As a New York State registered optician, Josh has a passion for helping people see by providing them the right prescription. He was inspired by his grandfather-in-law Lion John Banach PDG (past district governor) to join the Lions Club. The Lions Club is the world's largest service organization, with more than 1.4 million members. They have several global causes with vision being one of them.

Because of his occupation, Josh saw the Lions Club as the perfect way to help serve his community. "I saw it as a great opportunity to bring some of the knowledge and services that I can provide to the Lions Club," shared Josh.

He found inspiration when the non-profit organization Remote Area Medical (RAM) visited the Hudson Falls area.



Josh McIntyre of the Glens Falls Lions Club

This organization provides similar health services and Josh thought, “If they can do this nationally, why can’t we do this locally?”

He then began researching and reached out to another Lions Club in Niagara Falls. They invited him to one of their clinics where they were able to provide people with a no-questions-asked eye exam. The exam provides people with a new or updated prescription which they can use to order the needed glasses.

From there they are given the choice of a frame and then a date when their glasses will be ready. This is an incredible resource for people who need an updated prescription or can’t afford to replace old frames. “It gives them the opportunity to pick out new frames versus using the old ones that may not be well fit or ruined and glued together,” explained Josh.

The clinic was a huge success and had an impact on hundreds of people. “This is something that is very rewarding seeing the amount of people that needed the glasses. We ordered 90 pairs of glasses within 6 hours,” Josh shared.

He went on to say, “That’s about 90 people that couldn’t or didn’t have eyeglasses, [their] most recent prescription, and/or any prescription, are now going to be able to have that vision again.”

In order to meet the needs of the mass amounts of people that need new glasses, Josh also participates in another program that reuses old frames. As people get new prescriptions and need to change their glasses, they often end up with older pairs that are still in excellent condition.

Collection boxes for these old frames are located all throughout Glens Falls such as at optometrist and ophthalmologist offices, Crandall Library’s park entrance, banks, and Walmart.

After the glasses are collected, Josh removes the old lenses and fits them with new prescriptions tailored to the needs of each individual. He can create both single vision lenses, used for either distance or reading, and bifocal lenses, which are convenient for people who need correction for both near and far vision.

Currently, he has 300 pairs of frames that people can pick from. This not only provides people with something they need, but allows them to have a say in their appearance which is a huge confidence booster. They are able to see clearly and feel good about the way they look at the same time.

The success he’s seen through these programs has inspired Josh to begin working on bringing a clinic to the Glens Falls area.

“It’s inspiring me to bring that to the East side of New York, mostly in Glens Falls but not limited to Glens Falls,” Josh said.

He wants to help even more people locally and even expand in the future to the Schroon Lake and Salem, New York region. If you’re interested in helping community members gain access to better vision care, consider dropping off your old frames in one of the donation boxes.

This program is just one of the many ways the Lions Club helps the community and serves those in the area. **For more information, please contact Josh at gflionjosh@gmail.com**



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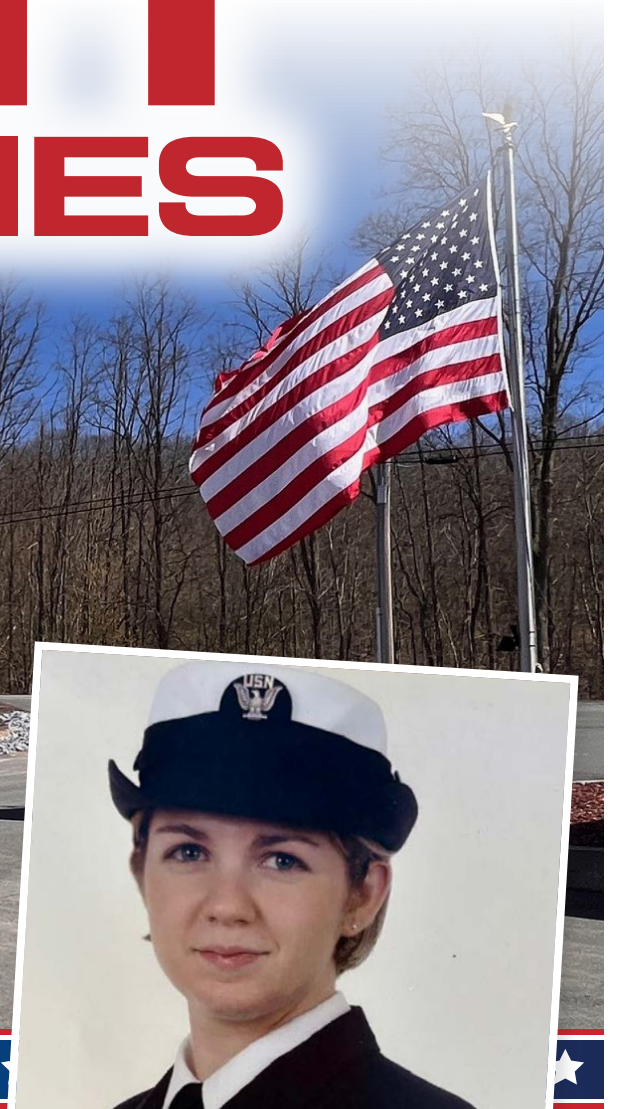
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HUNT COMPANIES



by **Amanda Graves**
Photos Provided.

From the hardships of military life, challenges of navigating parenthood, and unpredictable economic changes, Juan and Amie Gonzales have overcome a lot in their lives. Through every obstacle however, they remained committed to their community and each other.

As the President of Hunt Companies, Inc. Amie views her team as a family and is dedicated to leading them to success. Juan supports her as the Chief Financial Officer for the company, creating plans to ensure they make it through every obstacle. While their success with Hunt Companies is impressive, it is their continued dedication to serving their community that makes Juan and Amie such admirable leaders.

In 1986, Amie's father, Dennis Hunt, began a construction business known as Hunt Construction Services. The name was later changed in 1992 to Hunt Companies, Inc.

Growing up, Amie always enjoyed learning about her father's business and thought about the possibility of taking over for him. When she graduated high school, Amie earned an associate's degree from Herkimer Community College. She then continued working with her father, until an army recruiter tracked her down in the parking lot. Dennis was a Navy veteran and Amie had always wondered if she could make it in the military. She decided to take the leap and enlisted in the Navy.

Like Amie, Juan's father was also a veteran having served in the Army. For him, enlisting in the military was a way out of the neighborhood, and provided more opportunities for his life. He participated in a buddy program with three of his friends and joined the Navy following high school.



Pictured left: Juan's Boot Camp photo from Great Lakes, IL (1994)

Pictured right: Amie's Service School Graduation Photo (2003)

While in the Navy, Amie was a journalist writing stories that would be distributed worldwide. She also did some videography work and photography. Eventually, they combined the photographers, journalists, and lithographers to create mass communication specialists. Amie continued producing stories, photos, and videos for various media outlets. She spent most of her time on the east coast, but was deployed several times. Juan was in the yeoman rating, where he managed a lot of different administration and finance functions.

"They sent me to Hawaii for three years as an 18 year old kid, and everybody asks why I stayed in the Navy for that long? It's because they sent me to Hawaii for three years," Juan shared.

At about his 10 year mark in the Navy, Juan joined the flag writer program. While in this program, he managed the offices of senior Navy leaders.



Pictured left: Juan & Amie; Admiral and Mrs. Giambastiani, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Denny & Cindy Hunt at our dual reenlistment ceremony in the Pentagon (2007)

Pictured right: Juan and Amie at Juan's Chief Petty Officer pinning ceremony in Norfolk, VA (2004)

He shared that this role was, “Where I honed all of my office manager skills, executive assistant skills, financing, budgeting... All that really was a great pathway walking into Hunt Companies.”

Juan and Amie met in Millington, Tennessee — the home of Navy personnel commands. This was Amie’s first active duty station following her schooling and also where the two began their relationship. However, the military lifestyle meant that being together consisted of quite a bit of time apart. They spent hours driving to see each other on weekends and communicated as often as they could.

“Because we were both active duty, we both understood the lifestyle, we understood what sacrifices had to be made on both sides and we were willing to do that. We had trust in each other and faith in each other,” said Amie.

Eventually the two were married and welcomed their son Ethan into the world. This made being long distance even more difficult, and there was a period of time while Amie was deployed that Juan had to care for Ethan himself. Juan shared that, through the challenges, he and Amie often referred back to the quote by Green Bay Packers coach Vince Lombardi, who said, “Once you agree upon the price you and your family must pay for success, it enables you to ignore the minor hurts, the opponent’s pressure, and the temporary failures.” Having served an eight year long career in the military, Amie decided that she would leave in order to be with her son.

Once she left the Navy, she began working remotely and focused on getting her master’s degree from Strayer University. She then returned to her father’s business and found that the skills she had acquired in the military helped her be successful at the job. “The experiences from the service, the leadership that we learned— the accountability, determination, all those things that the service teaches you— directly applied to what we were doing here at Hunt Companies and really helped us refine what my father had started,” Amie shared.

Juan continued in the Navy for 20 years before retiring. “When we came up here, I was happy to be retired and didn’t have any plans. I wanted to be the first confirmed Washington county sasquatch and started growing out my beard and my hair,” he joked. However, the plan changed in 2015 when Amie brought him on as the Chief Financial Officer for Hunt Companies.

While the two had many successes, they experienced a major loss when their biggest customer stopped construction. “In one phone call, 8 million dollars worth of work disappeared for the year with us not knowing where the work was going to come from,” explained Juan. Luckily, they were able to resolve the conflict and not suffer a complete loss, but they realized the importance of having a backup plan and not relying on one customer for too much of their income. As a result, when the pandemic hit in 2020, Juan and Amie were prepared, and refined the plan they had created.

“When Covid hit in 2020 we were actually ready for it, we just dusted off the book, made some tweaks to it and actually kept our plan on how to survive a tough year,” said Juan. They were able to get through the difficult time without letting go of anyone on their team. Today, the company continues to thrive and Juan and Amie are working on continuing to build a strong foundation for the future of Hunt Companies. “My main goal is just continuing to strengthen the foundation,” said Amie.

While the two are extremely proud of how far Hunt Companies has come, their biggest achievement has been the impact they’ve had on their community. “When you find that level of success, you have to give back to the community that you’re in. America has survived 240-plus years because you’ve always given some to the next generation,” said Juan. Amie feels the same way saying, “Our businesses and our communities will thrive when they invest in each other.” Currently, Amie took over as the Chair for the Adirondack Board of Trustees and Juan is a Chairman for the Warren/Washington County Industrial Development Agency.

“To be able to run two chairs in one family on vital community boards here is special to us personally and shows people you have to stay involved even sometimes when you do get a little tired,” shared Juan.

When they are not busy giving back to their community or running Hunt Companies, Juan and Amie love traveling. They still keep in touch with friends from the military and enjoy visiting them when they can. “With military buddies, you pickup where you last left off, it doesn’t matter if it’s one day or ten years,” Juan shared. The two also have bees that they care for and spend time outside gardening. In the future, they are looking forward to retiring and preparing to see how Hunt Companies grows under the next generation.



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EPISODE 56

Second-Generation Advances at Cerrone Plumbing & HVAC

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Joe Cerrone of Cerrone Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning! Joe is the second person to head the operations of Cerrone, after his father... What advances did he bring to the business? What's stayed the same? What did he learn along the way? Listen to this episode to hear the answers, plus much more!



SCAN TO LISTEN!



EPISODE 55

Cracking Open Cold Ones at Cornell's

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster talk with Mike Colvett and Casey Cornell of Cornell's Auto Parts! Cornell's is doing something very special... They boast the claim that their auto operation is heavily recycling-based, reusing car oil, parts, metal, carpeting, and more from their cars! How is this possible? How did they get started doing this? Hear the answers to those questions and many more by listening to this episode!



SCAN TO LISTEN!



EPISODE 54

Taking the "Side" out of "Side Hustle"

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Josh Brown and Zach Moore of Brown Design & Construction! Both of them have other full-time jobs that they still take part in... And yet, the side hustle they started up out of curiosity has taken off like wildfire! What's their secret to success? How do they balance work responsibilities? What's their training? Find out the answers by tuning in to this episode!



SCAN TO LISTEN!



EPISODE 53

One Man, One Plan – Zay Gets it Done

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Zay DuPree, the one-man mastermind behind DuPree Heating & Cooling! When people think of a one-man operation, they typically picture an old dude with a beat up truck and a couple fans in the truck bed... But Zay couldn't be further from that vision. Fully insured and thoroughly professional, Zay proudly stands by the quality of his process and results. If you need HVAC work done, Zay is the best one-man band in town!



SCAN TO LISTEN!

Local **BUYING**

Saratoga, Warren, and Washington County have no shortage of fantastic goods & services to offer! In this podcast, our host Mike Nelson will clue you in on the gems hidden **in your very own community!**



SEASON 2, EPISODE 15

Four Incredible Shows at The Adirondack Theatre Festival

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Miriam Weisfeld, the Producing Artistic Director of the Adirondack Theatre Festival! The ATF has been producing fantastic original shows for 30 years, and 2024's season will be no exception – whether it's a one-man musical recreating the sinking of the Titanic, an introspective look at perception of an actress throughout her evolving career, or a modern recreation of a classic Hitchcock thriller, this season's shows are some that you won't want to miss!



SCAN TO LISTEN!



SEASON 2, EPISODE 14

The Secrets of Influencer Marketing

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Stephanie Poulin, the owner and founder of The Happy Brands Company! Marketing has so many facets, it can be difficult to know which route... Stephanie gives us the basics on a new style that's been taking off lately: influencer marketing. What is it exactly? How does it work? Is it right for your business? Listen to this episode, and you might just find out!



SCAN TO LISTEN!



SEASON 2, EPISODE 13

Grow Your Business with The ARCC

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson meets with Tricia Rogers, President of the ARCC! Tricia's been the President of the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce for two years now, and the offerings it has for local businesses just keep getting better – between ribbon-cuttings, mixers, educational services, and other resources, the value of the ARCC is just incredible! Listen to this episode to hear more about how they can help you, and your business!



SCAN TO LISTEN!



SEASON 2, EPISODE 11

KJ's Barbershop – with Kris Jordan

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Kris Jordan, the master barber and owner of KJ's Barbershop! Both his grandfather and father were barbers, but Kris wasn't so sure he wanted to do it himself... All of that changed after a significant event in 2020. What happened? Why did it motivate him to reenter the family trade? You'll have to listen to this episode to find out!



SCAN TO LISTEN!

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