Valley Business

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE BUSINESS JOURNAL ROANOKE/NEW RIVER VALLEYS & REGION FREE • ISSUE 113 • FEBRUARY 2018

vbFRONT.com

Positive Outlook for *Commercial Real Estate*

John Nielsen, Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer



Sure. You could say that.

Nimble. Responsive. First. Heck you could just say Frank and Jim are fast. When you're among the leaders in commercial real estate in Roanoke and Virginia's Blue Ridge, there's no dilly. No dally. Just the utmost competency and professionalism. With a little extra heat on the street.

Buying or selling, leasing or just scouting, let us serve your next move with our motivation, market knowledge, and experience in the field. Call Frank or Jim—we'll be there in a jiffy. Martin | Deyerle Team



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W E L C O M E to the FRONT

I was driving just outside of Los Angeles when a California Highway Patrolman pulled me over. He gets off his bike and walks up to my window.

"I need to see your real estate license," he says.

"Don't you mean my driver's license?" I respond.

"No," says the patrolman. "Not everyone in California has one of those."

We are hardly that saturated with realtors in our market here in Virginia's Blue Ridge. But the market is good—and especially considering we're just now hitting the decade mark from that miserable collapse in 2008, we're not just improving—that Magic 8 Ball would say "Without a doubt. Outlook good. It is decidedly so." if you turned it over three times in a row.

The commercial real estate outlook is especially positive.

Get on over to our FRONTcover story fast. No speeding though.

thomas F. Fill

Tom Field

I had this subtle, nagging sense that something needed to change - Page 60



BO SAT April 7th * Bam - 4pm (Rain Date is SAT April 14th) @ 16 West Marketplace. Church Ave. SW Spring Craft Fair downtown. Roanoke. VA and Gardening Primer unununununun
Kover 50 Vendors [Indie Crafts, Wearables, Jeweiny, Edibles and More]
★ Over 50 Vendors [Indie Crafts, Wearables, Jeweiny, Edibles and More] ★Free Admission and Family Friendly vvor ov vorumo unano orano, revenuence, concouragedi
Little Critters Petting 200 Bam-pm (photos encouraged) ★Granpa Ike's Mini Donuts . Locavore Food . Craft Beyerages *Local Farms, Seed Exchange and Seedlings ★ Indoor/Dutdoor ★ Plus-Buy, Sell or Trade at our Used Garden Gear 11able ct Asron at Garlas all (540) 632-2482 for bella MERCH BOOKNOFURTHER THAL MASSAGE

CONTENTS

Valley Business FRONT



Driving technology 20 Movin' on up 26

Power-full 36

Micro-influence; 58 macro results

PERSPECTIVES

Business Dress 18 Etiquette & Protocol 19 Business Operations 30 Legal 31 Workplace Wisdom 34

REVIEWS & OPINIONS

On Tap from the Pub 40 Letters 41 Reviews 42

FRONTLINES

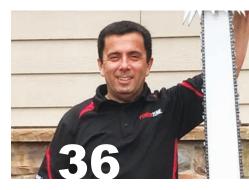
FRONT'n About 44 Career FRONT 50 FRONT Notes 54

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F E B R U A R Y





Dan Dowdy





Mike Leigh

Nanette Levin





Kathy Surace

Editorial Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of diverse business professionals, who will serve as a sounding board throughout the rotational term.

This board has been given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. "Members essentially have a red telephone at their hand," says publisher Tom Field. "They can inform us best on what is important, what is new, what impacts the greater community. Of course, our red phone reaches right back to them as well, for assignments and insight on our coverage. Although the members are encouraged to keep FRONT updated on their own industries and the key players, they aren't limited to their area of specialty, as all commercial enterprises ultimately collaborate to impact our quality of life here in this part of Virginia." An additional contribution by the Editorial Advisory Board involves direct input on the various FRONTLists we present throughout the year.

C O N T R I B U T O R S



Keith Finch



Rachael Garrity



Kathleen Harshberger



Christine Liana



Carissa Mulahn



Theresa Passeretti



Nicholas Vaassen

Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 52.

2018 Members

Nancy Agee Carilion (Wellness) Laura Bradford Claire V (Retail) Nicholas C. Conte Carilion (Legal) Warner Dalhouse Retired (Finance) John Garland Garland Properties (Development) Nancy Gray Hollins University (Education) Nanci Hardwick Aeroprobe (Tech/Industry) George Kegley Retired (Seniors) John D. Long National D-Day Memorial (Culture) Nancy May LewisGale Regional Health System (Wellness) Stuart Mease Virginia Tech (Education) Mary Miller ACI (Tech/Industry) Ed Walker Regeneration Partners (Development)

You will note that the Board is comprised of experts in many different business / industry "fronts." This is intentional, as we are reporting on all the areas that affect our regional economy and are important to you. In keeping with our policy of being "the voice of business in the valleys" we ask each reader to join us as an editorial partner by calling or e-mailing us your ideas. You know more than we know about your business—or you certainly should—and that inside knowledge shared with our readers will make us all better at what we do.

We manage sight, sound, and smell in our retail environment

— Page 37

Guilder facebook

Website: www.vbfront.com Facebook: vb front Twitter: @vbfront Blog: morefront.blogspot.com John Nielsen

ALL SIGNS POINT TO YES

The State of Regional Commercial Real Estate

Commercial Real Estate Report >

Executive Summary:

Commercial real estate outlook for Roanoke MSA (and region) is looking positive—and substantially so, according to insiders.

By Nanette Levin

Commercial real estate professionals in the Greater Roanoke Area are optimistic coming into 2018. Whether it's retail, office space, restaurants, warehouse or industrial, those who staff firms that drive this industry see signs of future growth on all fronts.

"We've had a number of wins in the past 12 months with Eldor going into Botetourt County – this will be their first facility in the U.S.," says Bill Poe, Managing Broker of Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer. He also cites the Humm Kombucha decision to build a 100,000 square-foot facility in the Roanoke Centre for Industry & Technology, the Korona choice, as one of the world's largest candle manufacturers, to locate their first American plant in New River Valley (Dublin) and Franklin County's launch of the 550-acre Summit View business park as recent signs of economic prosperity in the region moving into 2018.

John Nielsen of Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer adds that one of the largest blocks of empty space going on the market at one time in recent years was the old Allstate building "which sold this year to a user who is taking

COVER STORY



two-thirds of the building – I've been told the other spaces have been leased," he says. Metis Holdings, an insurance provider, bought the building in April.

"A former sleepy railroad town that was very blue collar in orientation is being transformed into a much higheroctane brain center," says Frank Martin, Sales Associate for Hall Associates. "We who sell Roanoke are terrifically excited with what we see happening in Roanoke right now. This is a great time to be here," he says.

"I think that everybody – the pundits, the talking heads and people like myself in the industry – think that this year's holiday season will be the strongest we've seen in years," says Nielsen. "Job growth and unemployment near record lows, wage growth improving, consumer confidence at its highest level in 17 years (nationally). I think that all points to 2018 being a strong year in general for commercial real estate but also speaks to retail specifically," he says. Nielsen also predicts there will be another wave of national retail store closings during the first quarter of 2018.

Reorienting the City

Those in the commercial real estate business note the "vibe" of downtown as a positive factor driving interest and occupancy.

"We've gone from having ten residents (in Roanoke City) ten years ago to almost 3,000 now, (having) revitalized the downtown market and given it a hip vibe that I like to see," says Martin. Norfolk Southern building contributes to Roanoke's aesthetic cityscape and is attracting tenants with its prime office space.

> SIGNS POINT TO YES

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From a segment standpoint, offices will continue to do well. I don't know if there will be any new buildings, but the vacancies we see will go down as the year goes on *— Bill Poe*



Bill Poe

"I think the stuff we are working on in the office market Downtown will start to be shown in the next 6-12 months, which I think will greatly help downtown," says Poe. "The downtown has a vibe to it that is appealing." He cites the AEP (Appalachian Power) decision to bring an additional 100 engineers into the 401 Walnut Avenue SE building as a great sign. "They could have put those people anywhere," he says, noting they're one of the larger utility companies in the country. "They didn't have to be in Roanoke. I think that says something about the attractiveness of our market, and in this case, the downtown market," Poe states.

> "For a while, we were seeing the number of square feet per office occupant shrinking but we're not seeing that anymore," says Martin. "We're seeing some absorption downtown, especially for desirable space. We're seeing businesses move in from the outskirts," he says.

"From a segment standpoint, offices will continue to do well," says Poe. "I don't know if there will be

8



S T O R Y

With its practical, functional architecture, downtown Roanoke's SunTrust building sits in the city's business center.

any new buildings, but the vacancies we see will go down as the year goes on," he predicts. "On the industrial side, there's not a lot of space available," he notes.

Predicting the future

"One of the things that people in the commercial real estate business are going to be asking themselves is: we've been coming off a strong three to four years or so – how long is this going to last? Will it continue?," says Martin. "I think the answer is yes," he concludes, referring to growth continuing in the Roanoke area that includes Roanoke City and County, Blacksburg IT IS DECIDEDLY SO



A popular landmark, the former Allstate building at 1819 Electric Road in Roanoke County makes a good headquarters or operations center for the right corporation.



Branch Management's latest build-to-suit project on Orange Avenue in Roanoke.

and Christiansburg as well as Montgomery County and New River Valley.

"Overall, in our understanding, Roanoke, Lynchburg, Christiansburg were showing good growth in the past and are continuing to grow more," says Tom Branch, president & CEO of Branch Management. "(It's) not dramatic in roller coaster ride (fashion)," he notes, stating that during his 25 years in the industry, steady growth rather than big highs and lows is the norm for Roanoke.

"We're seeing a lot move in from out of the area, but also a lot of shuffling within the area too, which is usually a sign of a good economy," says Martin. "People are looking for bigger space or smaller space or different space or better



COVER STORY



Frank Martin

space," which Martin indicates signals good cash flow and likely corresponding prosperity.

"For retail, the vacancy rate for Roanoke MSA is still quite low at under 5 percent," says Nielsen. "We're going to see a lower amount of new construction. That's been a trend for a number of years. That's going to be an opportunity for landlords who can increase their lease rates," he says.

The Roanoke MSA, or Metropolitan Statistical Area, is comprised of four counties, namely Botetourt, Craig, Franklin and Roanoke plus the cities of Roanoke and Salem. The Roanoke Region of Virginia also includes Alleghany County (source: Wikipedia).

Nielsen indicates new construction involves some of what we're already seeing, including the area around Valley View Mall "with the new development of currently vacant but already leased retail boxes." He also notes plans for building along the 419 Corridor at Tanglewood. "For the rest of the market, for any new construction starts you're going to see not necessarily new construction, but

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A former sleepy railroad town that was very blue collar in orientation is being transformed into a much higher-octane brain center

— Frank Martin

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construction involving the adaptive reuse of certain buildings," he explains.

This will include bank branches developed into more general retail, small footprint retail buildings with two to three tenants and great opportunities for retailers already in the marketplace with the former JC Penney and Kmart space vacancies – and grocery, Nielsen predicts. "While we're seeing some market saturation from traditional grocers like the Krogers and Food Lions of the world, I think we'll see some new construction, or at least store announcements," he says, citing Aldi's, Lidl and "additional growth from the fresh or organic side of the grocer industry."

"There's that tax bill that passed, now what will be interesting with that tax reforms is, how much will these

Tom Branch



Roanoke, Lynchburg, Christiansburg were showing good growth in the past and are continuing

8

to grow more —*Tom Branch*

COVER STORY



627

Job growth and unemployment near record lows, wage growth improving, consumer confidence at its highest level in 17 years ... all points to 2018 being a strong year in general for commercial real estate — John Nielsen

John Nielsen

retailers, these brands, how much are they going to let that flow through to their consumers?" questions Nielsen.

What about Those vacancies?

Poe and Nielsen contend the vacancy rate of about 7 percent for most types of buildings in the Roanoke area is low by industry standards. "The large majority of that today (office space vacancies in the Roanoke MSA) is downtown, which may not be OK for our owners, but it's OK for the market because it has the opportunity to bring in new people," says Poe. "You'll see some growth in the occupancy of downtown in the next 12 months," he asserts.

"We see vacant office space with certain types of buildings," explains Martin. "This includes older structures and second floor locations," he says. "The question is, what kind of vacant office space is it?" Martin asks. "The desirable office space has leased up or is leasing quickly," he explains. "It's the second tier that we're seeing vacant," he says, noting that last year, 200,000 square-feet of space changed hands downtown. He particularly notes the success of the team filling space at 110 Franklin Plaza. MOST LIKELY "Downtown first floor space has traditionally been difficult to lease for a number of reasons, but just because the first floor is vacant doesn't mean the upper floors are," says Poe. "A sign goes up and the building could be half vacant, but that sign stays up even if there's only 500 square-feet left," he explains.

ASK AGAIN LATER

How can local companies help themselves?

Poe underscores the importance of industrial companies embracing a quick delivery strategy and e-commerce. He explains that while Roanoke is a smaller market, so a bit behind major urban centers, distribution is going to become increasingly important for all companies. He sees this as an opportunity for Roanoke as regional centers are eclipsed by state and local facilities forming out of necessity to handle demands for increasingly rapid responses.

"Retailers need to change their models to bring the customer into the store," says Nielsen. "The retailers that are winning are omni-channel (meaning) brick-andmortar, how that experience is on the internet, and it's also how that experience ends up on mobile – what sort of app are they using if at all," he explains. "The companies that are going to win next year and beyond are going to have to win in all three categories," he says.



C O V E R

"Those retailers understand how critical that customer engagement is."

Who's who

Hall Associates was founded in 1975. Martin says it's the oldest commercial real estate brokerage firm in the City and adds "Almost anybody who is anybody in local real estate trained under Ed Hall (the company founder)." Martin notes the good balance between property management and sales and leasing as a critical factor in positioning the company to do well in the marketplace.

Branch Management was founded 25 years ago by Tom Branch and his father Bill, who turns 90 this month. Bill still comes into the office every day to consult with Tom. The company owns all the buildings they manage, which is currently 44 spread fairly evenly between warehouse, retail, restaurant, shopping center and office space. "We're pretty much dedicated within a two-hour radius of Roanoke," says Tom. The firm operates lean with only three full time staffers including a maintenance manager who sub-contracts whatever he can't handle and two employees dedicated to office work including bookkeeping, administrative tasks and marketing. The company prides itself in quick response times.

According to Poe, Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer holds the number one market share according to CoStar Group. "We're finishing a good year and look for '18 to be as good or better," he says. The company represents landlords and tenants throughout Virginia and in South Carolina.

S T O R Y

WITHOUT A DOUBT







By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:

Most of us know what you wear can be environmentallyfriendly or not—but the newest movement kicks the attention up a big notch.

Sustainable fashion >

Increasingly, the phrase "sustainable fashion" is being used to describe new trends in the fashion world. But exactly what is sustainable fashion and is it practical for business attire?

Sustainable fashion, also known as eco fashion, is an effort to avoid negatively impacting our environment and workers by using manufacturing processes that use natural resources wisely, reduce greenhouse emissions, avoid animal cruelty, pay fair wages, and provide safe work environments.

Sustainable fashion has risen in opposition to fast fashion, which is created quickly and inexpensively to capture current trends for the masses. Fast fashion inevitably becomes disposable because the garments are cheaply made, wear out quickly, and the consumer can justify replacing them after a short time because of their low cost.

Fast fashion is blamed for pollution in production, excessive deposits in trash dumps, poor garment workmanship, and poor workplace conditions.

Sustainable fashion is becoming a favorite of millennials and social media. Celebrities are exerting their influence on companies to make their brands and manufacturing more environmentally friendly.

In its early days sustainable fashion was seen as "crunchy" and hippie-like, but it has come a long way.

According to McKinsey & Company, a global consulting firm, more companies are trying to reduce their social and environmental costs—making them more appealing to consumers—and their sustainable textiles and designs are immensely improved, too.

As for whether sustainable brands are practical for a work wardrobe, that is a whole column by itself. However, here are a few tips to start with:

- Many companies are dedicated to sustainable practices and products. Research them for business attire made in an environmentally friendly way.
- Be willing to try new textiles, as long as they won't wrinkle or otherwise ruin your professional image.
- If newer styles and fabrics don't work for you, try vintage stores for suits. Repurposing existing clothing also supports sustainable practices.
- New business models like "Rent the Runway" allow a customer to rent clothing for a monthly fee. Then you return it or purchase it. This eliminates wardrobe purchases that become expensive mistakes while occupying precious closet space.
- When shopping for wardrobe pieces, make a list of what you need and avoid impulse purchases, which are more likely to go unworn and end up being donated or recycled.

PERSPECTIVES

Cell phones at the office >

During a meeting I attended recently a participant's cell phone rang. It had a silly, annoying ring tone, and to make matters worse, she couldn't find the offending object in her large handbag. The person giving the report stopped talking, and the rest of us sat in awkward silence, while our embarrassed colleague rummaged. I'm not unsympathetic here because, honestly, that has happened to most of us.

The Director of the Information Center at the Society for Human Resource Management, Rebecca Hastings said, "Right now, cell phones are the cigarettes of this decade," adding "It's an addiction." Well, let's face it. She is right.

Here are some generally accepted rules of cell phone etiquette in the office:

- At your desk, turn off your cell phone or set it to "vibrate." Unless your cell phone is company-issued for business use, set your unit to vibrate. Even if you've selected a tasteful ring tone, repetitive incoming calls will be noticed (negatively) by co-workers and management.
- Let personal calls go to voicemail. Frequent personal calls during your workday can reflect adversely on your professional reputation.
- When you must use your cell phone, find a private, quiet place to make your calls. Observe the "ten foot rule." Make every effort to respect co-workers spaces.
- Don't bring your cell phone to meetings. I know these are fighting words to some, but neglecting this one rule can hurt your career. If an important call is expected, either for business or a family emergency, and you absolutely have to have your cell phone, use the "vibrate" mode.
- Don't use your cell phone in restrooms. Why? You may not know who else may be using the facilities who could overhear private or sensitive issues. There are welldocumented stories of confidential information falling into the wrong hands just from violating this seemingly innocent rule.
- Eliminate unprofessional ring tones. Either keep your cell phone on vibrate at all times at work or change to a more professional ring tone during your work day.
- Please, no loud conversations! Sometimes called "holding court," it is just plain annoying to others.
- Use text messages instead of voice calls to maintain professionalism. If you have to have a personal communication, send a text message. It's quick and, more important, silent.

Remember, you are in charge of your professional image. Don't let poor cell phone etiquette impair your career.



& Etiquette Protocol

By Kathleen Harvey Harshberger

Executive Summary:

It seems we haven't really progressed very far in our cell phone etiquette; a lot of rules continue to be broken.



Driving technology >

Executive Summary:

Torc Robotics is quickly climbing to the top of the mountain in the rush to perfect self-driving vehicle technologies.

By Christine Liana

If you're old enough to remember Adam West as Batman in the 1960's television show, then you'll remember the iconic Batmobile, which began as a 1955 Lincoln Futura concept car, customized for the show. In 1985, Marty McFly and Doc Brown zipped Back to Future in the DeLorean DMC-12 outfitted with the flux capacitor. And if you visited Walt Disney World's EPCOT Center in the 1980's and 1990's, you would have seen



General Motors' World of Motion fascinating prototype cars of the future. Visualizing actual driverless cars in our society took some imagination, though. Now we're living in that reality.

How it Began

It's 2005. A group of Virginia Tech students with Dr. Charlie Reinholtz designed and

built three autonomous vehicles for the AUVSI Intelligent Ground Vehicle Competition. They won first, second, and third places in the competition.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's (DARPA) Grand Challenge followed. According to DARPA, the Department of Defenses' central research and development organization, the Grand Challenge "was initiated to mobilize the



technical community to accelerate research and development in critical national security technology areas."

After completing approximately 100 miles of autonomous driving over rocky desert terrain, the team placed eighth and ninth. With these successful competitive wins, interest grew for commercial software of the team's technology. It was the beginning of Torc Robotics, a company that would influence and supply technology for the nation's military, automotive, and mining industries.

The Torc students wanted to keep their team intact, so they decided to start a company. In 2005, CEO Michael Fleming co-founded Torc Robotics as a 27 year-old graduate student at Virginia Tech. According to Fleming, most of those students are still with the company today, and the company is not big on oldschool hierarchy. "We like to have a team mindset; our core value is winning teams," commented Fleming. Torc's name is a creative play on the word "torque," implying that their technology controls the steering wheel that drives an autonomous vehicle.

While Torc was operating in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, DARPA announced the 2007 DARPA Urban Challenge. Torc and Virginia Tech formed the team Victor Tango and entered the competition, in which manned and autonomous vehicles competed in California traffic. Their team finished third out of 89 other teams, earning a \$1 million grant and the opportunity to return for the main competition.

Expanding Market Reach

Three primary markets use Torc's technology:

The automotive industry: Within the industry are Tier 3 companies that provide raw materials like steel and glass. Tier 2 companies, such as chip manufacturers, are the suppliers to Tier 1 companies. Tier 1 companies are direct parts suppliers to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), providing things like steering, braking systems, and engineering systems for vehicles. And OEMs make the final product for the consumer market. OEM's, and Tier 1 and 2 companies work with Torc.

The mining industry: Caterpillar uses Torc's technology for autonomous hauling trucks in dangerous environments.

National defense: Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. Torc's autonomous military vehicles can detect explosives, allowing troops to remain at a safe distance.

"For the last 10 years, Torc has successfully applied its technology across multiple industries, including defense and mining, with the U.S. Armed Forces and Caterpillar being two of our biggest customers. More recently, Torc has been working with customers in the automotive industry,

TECHNFR884

including technology companies, OEMs, and Tier 1 and 2 suppliers," said Fleming.

The Human Factor

Whether you're driving around the corner to the grocery store or traveling on the highway, driving is serious business. The problem is, many people don't take their driving seriously. Playing with their cell phones, putting on makeup, eating, and drinking beverages all divert the drivers' attention from where is should be — on the road. The results of their inattention and negligence are accidents, higher insurance premiums, property damage, injuries, and sometimes death.

According to Fleming, "Statistically, 1.2 million people die world-wide due to traffic

accidents. [Of] the sources of the crashes, over 80% are due to human error. There are two approaches: one is incremental: divergent warning systems and cruise control, [and] people are still in the loop. The other is self-driving. We believe reducing the 80% human error can be done by self-driving cars."

Torc's self-driving automotive capabilities include:

- adjusting speed
- braking
- changing lanes
- merging
- performing U-turns
- navigating intersections
- responding to traffic lights and turn arrows
- obeying access restrictions (one way, no turn, etc.)

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- responding to unexpected maneuvers by other vehicles
- avoiding animal collisions

Autonomous vehicles can likely decrease the number of road accidents. But since the human brain designed self-driving technology, it makes sense that nothing should replace human intelligence – and responsibility – behind the wheel.

Looking to the Future

Torc currently operates out of its facility in the Blacksburg Industrial Park where they

develop, test, and implement advanced autonomous systems. Currently Torc has around 80 employees, and expects to hire 20 to 30 engineers in 2018. As we approach the next decade of this millennium, Torc's future looks bright. "I believe we'll continue to deliver self-driving products; [with] partnerships with the automotive market," says Fleming.

With the strides being made in today's automotive technology, maybe the reality of time travel with a flux capacitor is on the horizon. And who knows? It might even be designed by Torc. Great Scott! Doc would be proud.



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vbfront / february 2018 > 25

You want your clients to see you as helping them walk into a life they want, not one they accept.

Lesa Wynn

Movin' on up >

Executive Summary:

Relocating always involves stress and anxiety; making that transition process smoother is the singular mission of Lesa Wynn's Project Move Up.

By Rachael Garrity

Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change. —Stephen Hawkin

The 21st century business culture in America all too often typecasts individuals much like Hollywood does. Tough guys are tough guys—geeks are geeks. Every now and again, though, there is someone who sees opportunity outside his or her comfort zone and takes the plunge.

S E R V I C E F R O N T

Lesa Wynn, founder and president—in fact, single employee—of ProjectMoveUp is such a person. Though she was born in Virginia, she spent her early years in West Virginia. Never content to just "settle in," she selected mechanical engineering as her career focus. Early on, though, the idea of sitting at a desk and executing drawings seemed a little too "flat." Instead she chose to work with the owner of a tech start-up now well-known as Advanced Logic Industries Inc. For the next two decades, she enjoyed her work as part of the growth cycle of the company. Then, as many community-focused executives do, she began to look toward creating a company that was(is) about giving back. Long a committed believer in making conscientious choices in her personal life — "reduce, reuse, and recycle"—she searched for ways to extend that ethic to her professional world by "giving back."



Dining after brightness altered

At about that same time, Wynn's mother's, still living in West Virginia, began to experience serious health problems, including a worsening of her symptoms of dementia. A strong woman who had reared seven children as a single mom, she faced the kind of end of life issues that befall many in America. The experience taught Wynn that, as she put it: "Even in a town like Blacksburg that correctly defines itself as 'progressive,' there are a series of issues that can be and are daunting to those whose physical, mental and/or social skills are becoming circumscribed. There is a real need for alternative ways of living to be available at all levels of the economy."

After her mother's death that winter, Wynn realized the best way to address the needs

of the aging and their families was to work as a trained professional who knew and understood the alternatives and had an empathetic approach. She looked for a way to accomplish that goal within her work life. (Since she is mother of four and a performing musician, her personal life already was brimming.)

She knew that her experience at ALI-Inc. gave her a strong background for using technology to help businesses with moves or expansion into new geographical areas, and that her business and social connections in Blacksburg would serve as an entrée for individual customers who might simply be finding new homes as their families grew. So, she set up a business to serve those



S E R V I C E F R O N F



Kitchen after

two potential client bases as well as the aging community.

"I enjoy all three," she smiles, "but 80 percent of my business is among the aging."

That may well be because the service she offers does not end when the client is happily ensconced in a new home – be it single-family, group-oriented or residential care.

"Happily" is the operative word for Wynn. "I do everything I can to make sure that whatever my clients' situations, they see this move as exactly what my company name says it is, a move up. To me, the process as a lot like what I call 'launching' a child. Yes, it's more truncated, but you want your clients to see you as helping them walk into a life they want, not one they accept."

So, after the move, Wynn checks in to see that all goes well, a service she describes as "concierge." She has developed a list of professionals in a wide range of areas and contracts jobs to them when her clients need specific services. "I don't want to be a person who does everything," she insists. "I want to be the person who knows how to get things done."

Discover how to connect with your clients in powerful ways.





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Business Operations

By Mike Leigh

Executive Summary:

Continuous improvement isn't a process you implement at various times—it's all the time.

Improve constantly and forever >

This month we continue the series on W. Edwards Deming's 14 points for management to follow as covered in his book, Out of the Crisis. Each point will be discussed in a separate article.

Point #5 – Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service.

Continuous improvement. Sounds nice, doesn't it? I would be shocked if a business leader didn't want to get better. Unfortunately, most organizations put little effort into process improvement.

Many times in my articles, I discuss the importance of continuous improvement. Here, Deming not only makes it one of his points, but states that these efforts should be done "constantly and forever." We are not talking about "occasional" improvement, or "when we have time" improvement, but continuous improvement.

Most businesses react when something goes wrong. They investigate what happens, and take action to prevent it from happening again. But putting out fires and eliminating special causes (when something unique goes wrong) is NOT continuous process improvement. These actions simply restore a process to where it should have been in the first place.

Instead of reacting to your quality and cost challenges, focus instead on continuously improving the processes that create your products and services. Improve how you select, place, and train your employees. Improve how you select, qualify, order from, and ship from your suppliers. Improve how you plan and schedule your work. Improve the reliability of your equipment and systems.

I've recently had the pleasure to work with Lawrence Companies here in Roanoke who strive toward this principle. They employ a lot of truck drivers, and turnover is high in the industry. Despite having retention rates higher than average, their leadership team recently devoted a full day to review the entire process of recruiting, selecting, onboarding, evaluating, and communicating with truck drivers, and are working continuously to improve those processes. They are clearly striving toward continuous process improvement, and I have no doubt they will be successful.

The best part of continuous process improvement is lower costs, higher quality, greater customer satisfaction, and business growth. Isn't that the ultimate goal?

Next month: Point #6 – Institute training.



Send your questions or comments to Mike@OpXSolutionsllc.com

PERSPECTIVES

Check mate >

Our client was livid. "Do you remember that guy I fired six or seven months ago?" he said. "Well, he just cashed his last paycheck three times! And people are saying that I'm on the hook for the whole amount!"

He explained. He had fired an employee for hiding a fraud conviction on his job application. The employee's last paycheck, for \$1530, was mailed to his home address, but the employee called the accounting department a few days later to say that he had broken up with his girlfriend and moved out, and that the girlfriend had burned all of his mail. So the accounting department stopped payment on the first check and sent a new check to his new address. A couple of weeks later the employee called again to say that he'd never received the new check, and so the accounting department stopped payment on the second check and told him to come to the office to get the third check. The employee immediately cashed the third check.

Our client didn't hear anything more about it until six months later, when the employee suddenly cashed one of the "lost" paychecks. Despite the stop-payment request, the client's bank honored the check.

Then, a check-cashing company tried to deposit the other "lost" check, which it had bought from the employee. The client's bank, now alerted to the situation, refused to honor the third check and returned it. Now the check-cashing company was complaining.

"So now my bank says that I owe them \$1530 for the first paycheck, on which I had already stopped payment," our client said. "And the check-cashing company says that I owe them another \$1530 because they bought the second paycheck. Can you please write letters to each of them, to let them know how silly they're being?"



Shark Patrol

By Keith Finch

Executive Summary: Just because you've stopped payment on a check doesn't mean that you won't have to pay it.

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Most stop-payment requests are just that: requests. The bank doesn't actually guarantee that it will stop payment on any check. "Well, your bank actually may be right," I said. "I'd have to check your contract with your bank to be sure, but most stop-payment requests are just that: requests. The bank doesn't actually guarantee that it will stop payment on any check."

"You mean even though I paid the bank to stop payment, they're not going to give me what I paid for?" he said.

"Sometimes, but apparently not in this case," I said. "Because here's the other thing: most stop-payment requests only last six months. It's possible to renew a stop-payment request, but most customers don't do this, because they don't even realize that they expire. Criminals know this, and that's why they will wait just a little more than six months before depositing a superseded check."





Welcome to conclusion of Workplace Wisdom Boot Camp.

Q. I've recently graduated from college with honors and I'm looking for employment. What can I do to succeed in my first job?

A. In the real world, you'll be graded through accomplishments and character. Here's what schools often don't teach:

Nobody is Entitled ... Despite favoritism, nepotism, and cronyism (i.e "office politics.") Real talent and hard work stands out and will be noticed and rewarded by those who value it. On your way up the career ladder, "paying your dues" generally implies enduring bad treatment while waiting for your break. No one deserves that. A better definition is working productively while you wait for advancement.

But don't wait too long. Some organizations simply want worker bees to maintain their status quo. Short-sighted bosses with fragile egos are intimidated when an employee demonstrates initiative and the ability to take on more responsibility. Job-hopping typically signals instability, but if you find yourself in a dead-end job, it's probably time to look for appropriate opportunities with the right employer.

Be accountable. No one is too busy to return a phone call or e-mail. This includes six-figure salary executives. People aren't impressed with a pretentious job title; they want reliability and respect. Take ownership of your responsibilities. And remember, everyone messes up sometimes, but it's how we deal our mistakes that count. If you acknowledge it, correct it, learn from it, and move forward, chances are people will remember how you well you handled the situation more than the mistake itself.

Apply these truths, and you'll be the author of your own success story.

Got a question or an issue you're dealing with at work? Send it to businesstalk@protonmail.com

This column does not constitute legal advice. The publisher and columnist are not liable for any results of the suggestions provided. Readers are advised to use their best judgment for responding to a situation, and to consult a credible personnel or legal professional if appropriate.

PERSPECTIVES

"So it was OK for the bank to pay it?" he said.

"Yes," I said.

"What about the paycheck that he sold to the check-cashing place?" he said. "Surely I don't have to pay that one. He lied about never getting it, and he'd already been paid when he sold it."

"Yes, but that's not the fault of the check-cashing place," I said. "In order to encourage people and businesses to accept checks, there's a special rule for anyone who buys a check or takes a check in payment for something, and who honestly doesn't know that the check is bad. Someone like that is called a 'holder in due course,' and is entitled to their money, even if you've stopped payment."

"Even if the check is fake?" he said.

"No," I said, "if some unauthorized person fakes your signature on a check, then you don't have to pay it. But this was a genuine check. Making a stop-payment request doesn't turn it into a fake check."

"So what can I do?" he said.

"For this check, probably nothing," I said. "But for future checks, or at least for payroll checks you send to people who have just been fired, you can put a notice on the check that says something like 'Void After 30 Days.' Then be sure always to wait at least thirty-five days before issuing a replacement check. That way, it should be obvious to anyone who buys a 'lost' check that it is invalid, since it will be more than thirty days old."

In the end, the fired employee was never found. Our client had to pay that \$1530 check three times. But going forward, our client always will be careful to monitor and extend stop-payment requests, and to use expiration notices on its checks—especially checks sent to people or businesses that he doesn't completely trust.

Keith can be reached at keith@creekmorelaw.com

Note: facts have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Oh, and this isn't legal advice—you should consult a lawyer about interpretation of contracts with banks, defenses against parties seeking payment of stopped checks, etc.

627

Most stop-payment requests only last six months. Criminals know this, and that's why they will wait just a little more than six months before depositing a superseded check.

In order to encourage people and businesses to accept checks, there's a special rule for anyone who buys a check or takes a check in payment for something, and who honestly doesn't know that the check is bad. Someone like that is called a 'holder in due course,' and is entitled to their money, even if you've stopped payment.



R E TAIL F R ON T



Power-full >

Executive Summary:

Power Zone in Christiansburg is a popular spot for folks intent on getting the right tool or equipment for the job at hand.

By Caitlyn Scaggs

Robotic lawn mowers and interactive kiosks to support selections. These are examples of the modern and relevant offerings of Power Zone, a power equipment dealer located in Christiansburg, Virginia. This store, led by Jim Higham, offers a fresh and modern experience to the power tool purchasing and repair experience.

For an industry dedicated to messy equipment, it is striking how clean Jim

and his team keep the store. It even smells fresh as you walk through the doors. This is no happy accident, "We manage sight, sound, and smell in our retail environment using products provided and maintained by Mood Media. Conversation with our staff, videos, music, and scent are all part of the Power Zone experience that leads you to 'feeling' comfortable with the equipment," said Higham.

With original roots in Giles County, Power Zone moved to Christiansburg in 2007. In 2014, Power Zone changed locations and occupied the old Harley Davidson building located right off of the Interstate 81 and Roanoke Street junction. This new building provided the structure needed to achieve Power Zone's dream of a modern and relevant power equipment experience.

The showroom is open and spacious with high ceilings. There are also exposed



stone columns in the middle of the store, adding to the overall feel of the space. The true benefit of the building though, is found in the service department.

As the building used to be for motorcycles, the service bay came equipped with features atypical of a power equipment repair shop. These features have hugely improved the work experience for Higham's team. There is an air extraction system with hoses that allow the equipment to be run indoors, without resulting in exhaust within the space. This means it is possible to provide heat and air conditioning for the technicians as they work.

The service bay is also outfitted with lifts for the equipment, allowing technicians

the ability to inspect and repair equipment while avoiding positions that could be physically demanding or potentially harmful.

The relevance of Power Zone is also reflected in the products sold. There are options for equipment that are environmentally friendly and better for the equipment in the long run, like lithium ion battery powered chainsaws. Higham explained, "equipment powered by lithium ion batteries does not experience the problem of gas sitting and pooling within the equipment while not in use." Just as you do not want a vehicle sitting with gas in the tank, immobile, the same is true of power equipment.

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Perhaps it's happened to you — a small business owner calls a lawyer to ask a simple question, then unexpectedly receives a huge bill a few weeks later. After an experience like that, it's hard to pick up the phone the next time you have a legal question.

We want you to come to us with your problems and questions as soon as they arise, rather than allowing a problem to fester and grow into a legal disaster. That's why we've developed The Small Business Plan. So you can feel free to call us any time, and ask any question you want about your small business, without fear of excessive and unexpected legal bills.





Higham sees the technology and features within his store as a supplement to the relationships he builds, not a substitution. For example, he explained the kiosks that help compare product features and options are helpful, but he typically still interacts with the customer as they navigate the kiosk. For Jim, it's more than just the

products. Jim elaborated, "We make sure to be good at building relationships around the products that we sell."

Technology and a modern approach provide more tools for Higham, and his team at Power Zone, to foster relationships and connect with customers in relevant ways.



Things you probably shouldn't try to DIY. We can help with the last one.

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On Tap from the Pub

By Tom Field

Executive Summary: We can gain a lot from the experience of a good one-on-one interview.

The interview >

Jean: ...and when I was fourteen years old, I was the victim of a carjacking. We stopped at a light, and these two men came up on both sides of our car, one dragged my mother out by her hair and threw her to the ground. The other grabbed me by my neck, ripped the seatbelt apart and threw me out of the door. My arm was still caught inside and as I pulled it out, he slammed the door and crushed my hand, dragging me for half a block. I lost three fingers and the use of my hand. It was a defining part of my life and why I'm on this mission today.

Interviewer: Wow. That's awesome! Next question: Can you define a time in your life that helped to clarify your mission?

Some people aren't cut out to be interviewers.

I've always enjoyed a good one-on-one interview. And now that my account executive (thanks, Theresa Passeretti) has me hooked on podcasts; I've become more discriminating than ever. It's fascinating to "listen in" on someone's story. Throw in the subtle nuances of formatting and delivery mechanisms, and you can pick out the better interviewers. It begins to matter less and less how interesting (or the level of fame, success, or celebrity) your guest list is. A good story is a good story.

Not everyone is able to tell a compelling story; but a good interviewer is, in essence, an artist. How well the finished creation turns out can very much depend on the skill of that person asking the questions.

My favorite "channel" for interviews remains the printed one. With no visual to see facial expressions and body language; with no audio to hear voice inflections and pacing and level of assertiveness and emotion; the writer's task is particularly challenging.

But regardless of the delivery mechanism, I want to hear more from—or look up or read more about or perhaps even meet in person—the subject of an interview that is remarkable in what it reveals. What it teaches. What it inspires.

I tell all of our writers that what we seek is that sweet spot. That zone between the not-too-specific and nottoo-general. A place where someone who knows little about the subject can learn something; while a reader who knows all about the subject can still be entertained or served by something unique. The last thing we want, is for someone to make it to the last word only to find he has wasted his time. REVIEWS & OPINION



Strong

You wrote to the "strengths" as you said you would ("Autism in the workplace" story by Christine Liana; January 2018 FRONT); thanks so much for helping advocate for all of us to be a healthier community!

Alan Beach, PhD, LCSW, LMFT Salem

Send letters to news@vbFRONT.com or any FRONT contact of your choosing (page 6). Submissions may be edited. You can see, read, print any current or back issue online at www.vbFRONT.com

For people who conduct one-on-one interviews, there's also a sweet spot, I believe. Theirs involves mastering that fine line between the scripted (or formatting) and the unscripted. Some programs are so formatted (marketers and producers might even say "wellformatted" because it fits everybody and fits our timeframe, our channel preferences, our page count) that a bit of a misfit occurs with some of their guests. The audience can tell (or maybe they don't know exactly why they are somehow unfulfilled) that better material just wasn't presented. Like the scenario at the beginning of this column, we missed out on something more important or could have served us with deeper meaning.

The pros, the master interviewers draw us in to their interviewees. We may be interested, energized, challenged, confused, perplexed, disgusted, built up or broken down by their stories. But we are never bored.

We haven't wasted our time.

NOTE: I was going to list some of the best interviewers including some I don't even like. The ones who make you think, the ones who make you laugh, the ones who make you cry, and the ones who draw you in so close, you feel like you're part of the family or dear friends sitting on your own front porch. And I also wanted to list our own local and regional interviewers who help tell our good story here (television, radio, online video, Facebook Live, podcasts, publications, etc.). Instead, we'll carry this dialogue over to our social media platform where we have a little more space to explore all our options and get your input. Look for that discussion in February.

Books (a) the FRONT >

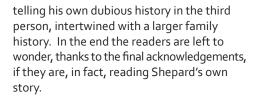
Following are book recommendations from our contributors and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit short reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to news@vbFRONT.com

Auto biographical?

This quirky novel, Spy of the First Person (Knopf; 2017) by the late Sam Shepard, actor, playwright and author, is short and tight with fast-to-read chapters. The catand-mouse nature of the story that keeps you turning pages. Told in the first person, the story follows the watched and the watcher and two stories within the story. The never-named characters illuminate themselves through their descriptions and observations of each other and through the wariness with which they view each other. As the novel picks up speed the voice changes rapidly, section to section within each chapter, finally blending: "I can't help feel similarity between him and me. Sometimes, it feels like we're the same person," one – or both – say.

The writing is colloguial and informal and would lend itself to being read aloud, preferably in Shepard's own voice. Sadly, the author died just as the book was completed, after giving his last days over to completing the book. A victim of ALS, Sheppard depicts the tension of a formerly impactful person relying on the assistance of others. Shepard typed the first draft of the novel, and when they became too difficult, wrote by hand, and eventually dictated the final edits. Shepard wrote more than fifty plays and many short stories and was nominated for an Oscar for his work in The Right Stuff. In *Spy of the First Person* he touches themes he visited previously including aging and the experience of watching others.

As the story concludes the aging man is

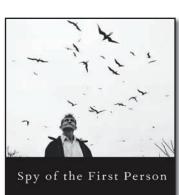


— Doloris Vest

Fortune frowns

Somewhat Kafkaesque, Andrew's Brain (Random House; 2014) is E.L. Doctorow's last novel and fictitious account of a dude who has all the bad luck. Bad luck in the most monumental way. The exchange between our narrator and "doctor" is perplexing at times (a purposeful technique to screw up our perspective), but what really drives the neurostimulator in deep is the fact that "Andrew" is a cognitive scientist who may or may not be manipulating us. "Doc, you're only hearing what I choose to tell you," he confesses.

Weaving in current affairs and politicalsocial events we're all too aware of only makes this story all the more sticky. It's not a book that I suspect would climb to the ranks of Doctorow's other notable and award winning works; but the dialog alone was enough to trip my trigger and keep me swiping. (Yes, I read the digital version—not my favorite methodology; as I often forget to watch my status bar at the bottom. It ended abruptly; and I would have been better prepared with my usual paper book.) A fascinating character nonetheless, this Andrew guy is not someone any of us would



Sam Shepard

REVIEWS & OPINION



care to hang out with for more than a moment. Something bad is bound to happen. *Girl on the Train*, but even with its flaws, I wanted to finish it.

—Tom Field

Slow flow

Into the Water by Paula Hawkins (Riverhead; 2017) is her second book following the mega-hit *The Girl on the Train*. This one also takes place in Great Britain and is narrated by multiple voices. It takes some tracking to figure out and remember who is who when the main character should have been drowning pool, a section of the river that has been collecting bodies—all women—350 years.

The latest victim is Danielle Abbott, a local author and photographer who has been obsessed with the water most of her life. She is the single mother of a spoiled and confused teenage girl, Lena and the estranged sister of equally confused Jules, who returns to her home town to identify the body and take over the care of the niece she hardly knows.

The cast of characters also include Lena's best friend, Katie (also drowned); Katie's mother (grieving); her brother, Josh, also grieving but who has a crush on Lena; Helen, headmistress of the school and wife of the police detective, Sean, who had an affair with Danielle... confused yet?

The story line is good and holds promise and there is an air of mystery, but there are too many characters talking and too many subplots that don't contribute to the overall flow of the book. It doesn't have the drive of *The* — Paula Alston

Women's journey

Michelle Turman's book is truly about sharing how extraordinary experiences can mold a woman's character at each stage in her life. It is about the challenges and trials that any young woman who aspires to be a leader should expect to face along her journeyand to overcome. This book shares real-world experiences about her own journey and offers tips, tools, and exercises to create your personal road map to live your purpose. If you have dreamed big, faltered, challenged the status quo, been the minority in a group, and have the tenacity to create your own destiny and to write your own rulebook then Jumping The Queue (Catalyst Consulting Services; 2018) is for you.

In this book you will learn to understand your moral compass, tell your story and grow your reputation wisely so you can live your true purpose.

— Cathy Hayes

The reviewers: Doloris Vest is owner/ operator of Book No Further book store in downtown Roanoke; Tom Field is a creative director and publisher of FRONT; Paula Alston is the retired director of Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library; Cathy Hayes is a print campaign manager in Westley Chapel, FL.



Botetourt businesswomen rock >

The second annual **Women Rock Botetourt** business expo, hosted by **Sunshine Services** of Troutville, was held on January 13th at Ballast Point Brewery in Daleville, Botetourt County. The event had 47 vendors and nearly 200 attendees.

FRONT'N ABOUT







Art in February >

The Market Gallery's next Art By Night is on Friday, February 2, 2018, from 5:30 - 9:00 p.m., featuring artists Valerie Alessi, Rebecca Hurt, and Cheryl Mackian. The show hangs from January 2 - February 24, 2018. The Market Gallery is a regional artists' cooperative, located on Roanoke's downtown market at 23 Salem Avenue, Roanoke. For more information, call 540-342-1177 or visit www.marketgallery.com

Bike art >

Flying High, a nine-foot sculpture of bicycles by sculptor Tom Wilkerson, was donated to Radford's public art program and was installed at the Memorial Bridge entrance to the city. The exhibition is a joint venture between the Radford Heritage Foundation and the Tourism Advisory Commission, and is made possible with a grant from the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.





Shack shop >

The Shack has opened at 114 Kirk Ave in downtown Roanoke; Caley Fry covers the floor of the new specialty store that carries craft beer, wine, cigars, and more.



Cloudy with a chance of beer >

A cold overcast and blustery Saturday hardly deters a crowd (mostly VT students) lined all the way to the door of **Rising Silo Brewery** off Glade Road in Blacksburg, a solar energy-inspired craft brewery.

FRONT'N ABOUT



On-ramp for start-up >

RAMP business accelerator is accepting applications for its next cohort of entrepreneurial startups (March 15 deadline; www.ramprb.tech).



Gate opened >

Southgate at Virginia Tech, the new US 460 / campus entrance interchange that eliminated the traffic light, has opened. Bottlenecks and backups have already been reduced substantially.



Blue Eagle flies for education >

Blue Eagle® Credit Union awarded \$2,400 teacher grants to six local schools for classroom projects: Eagle Rock Elementary, Eagle Rock, Teacher: Melissa McKinney, Project: School Garden; Bedford Hills Elementary, Lynchburg, Teacher: Adrian Holmes, Project: Building Social Skills and Social Behaviors; Buchanan Elementary, Buchanan, Teacher: Cassada Harris, Project: Chilling Out with STEAM; Fallon Park Elementary, Roanoke, Teacher: Ann McGhee, Project: Bilingual Literacy Celebration; Green Valley Elementary, Roanoke, Teacher: Robyn Shrewsbury, Project: Reading Comprehension through the use of Mentor Text; Read Mountain Middle, Cloverdale, Teacher: Sally Rondeau, Project: Cutting Up. Teachers apply in October each year, and the grants are announced November 1. For more information, visit BlueEagleCreditUnion.com/teacher-grants.

F R O N T ' N A B O U T





Throwing down the gauntlet >

Roanoke County, Botetourt County, the Alleghany Highlands, and The Advancement Foundation are supporting small business development across the region. The Advancement Foundation is hosting the fourth annual **Gauntlet Business Program & Competition**. This year it will award \$250,000 in startup capital and prizes to participants. Anyone can participate in the program, from high school students to adults. Gauntlet classes will be held on Tuesdays from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., starting February 6th at the Vinton War Memorial or Dabney S. Lancaster Community College. \$45 per month for three months. For more information, contact Kathleen@ TheAdvancementFoundation.org.



Love MLK Jr. Day >

Dr. Bettina Love, author and associate professor at the University of Georgia, delivered the keynote address for **Emory & Henry College's** annual celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in the McGlothlin Center for the Arts.

Valley Business FRONT is FRONT'n About at many events each month. Check the social media links at www.vbFRONT.com for more coverage.

Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT



Tiller



Sweeney



Russell

Dana Tiller was promoted to vice president of residential real estate, Meredith Sweeney was promoted to real estate loan processor,



Sutphin

Matthew Russell was hired as credit analyst, and Christy Sutphin was hired as commercial loan processor at the Bank of Fincastle.



Spilberg

Diane Spilberg was appointed as vice president of consumer lending at Member One Federal Credit Union.

LEGAL FRONT

Roanoke lawyers



Puvak



Sullivan

Jonathan Puvak and Daniel Sullivan were promoted to the position of partner at Gentry Locke.



Kozlowski

Attorney **Emma Kozlowski**, associate, has returned to Glenn Feldmann Darby & Goodlatte.

DEVELOPMENT FRONT



Mackey



Greg W. Mackey earned the Certified General Real Estate Appraiser license in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and M. Hanes Feldmann, associate appraiser, joined Miller, Long & Associates, Inc.

Leah Hedrick and Deba Balzano, sales associates, joined

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FRONTLINES



Hedrick



Balzano

Lichtenstein Rowan Realtors of Roanoke.



Bourne

Jeffrey M. Bourne was hired as general counsel for Branch & Associates in Richmond, a subsidiary of The Branch Group, Inc. of Roanoke.



Mason-Deese

Will Mason-Deese, geologist, was hired in the Blacksburg office of Draper Aden Associates.

EDUCATION FRONT

Melinda Miller was named assistant professor in the Department of Economics, Kate E. Langwig was named assistant professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, and Sujith Vijayan



Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to **news@vbFRONT.com**. Photos should be color, 300dpi. A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

Miller



Langwig



Vijayan was appointed as assistant professor

in the School of Neuroscience at Virginia Tech.



Gerardo

Luisa Havens Gerardo, vice provost for enrollment management at Virginia Tech, was elected president-elect for the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

Lara Anderson, assistant professor of physics, and F. Marc Michel, assistant professor of geosciences in the

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VERONT / FEBRUARY 2018 - 51

C O N T R I B U T O R S

Dan Dowdy is the business development director for Valley **Business FRONT and** owner of The Proofing Prof proofreading services (www.proofingprof.com). His background includes service in the U.S. Air Force and an extensive career in education, including teaching college-level writing competency and business courses, and working for a Fortune 100 company. [ddowdy@ vbFRONT.com]

Tom Field is a creative director, marketing executive and owner of Berryfield, Inc. in Salem, and owner of Valley Business FRONT magazine. He has written and produced programs and materials for local and international organizations for more than 30 years. [tfield@berryfield.com]

Keith Finch is an attorney with Creekmore Law Firm in Blacksburg [keith@creekmore law.com]

Rachael Garrity is the owner of Penworthy LLC, a publications services and consulting firm with operations in VA, NC and FL. [rmgarrity@gmail.com]

Kathleen Harvey Harshberger is a graduate of Radford University and the Protocol School of Washington. She conducts seminars in business etiquette, international business protocol, and dining skills She has an international clientele in business, government, and higher education. She is a certified Protocol Officer. [harshbergr@aol.com]

Mike Leigh is president

of OpX Solutions, LLC, a performance improvement company that helps organizations pursue operational excellence. A retired naval commander and former GE manufacturing manager, he has extensive experience in leadership development and process improvement. [Mike@OpXSolutions LLC.com]

Waking up with the peaceful sound of bird chatter while watching the sun rise over the mountains is one of Nanette Levin's simple pleasures. Still considered a foreigner by some local residents (she moved to Roanoke at the end of 2015), Nanette's determined to illuminate local treasures for business and pleasure through her company, Roanoke Revealed. When she's not enjoying nature and writing or creating marketing strategies for clients, she's growing

fresh vegetables & herbs, seeing the sights in the area and occasionally hopping on a horse. [nlevin@fulcrumny.com]

Christine Liana is

news editor and business writer for Valley Business FRONT. She has a 30-year business background in banking, insurance, law and local government, in which she's worked with a diverse management and client base. Christine earned a Certificate in Management from Darden Graduate School of Business, University of Virginia. [businessmail@ mailfence.com]

Carissa Mulahn

is a highly engaged networking professional who recently opened the Roanoke office of Sales Recruiters of Virginia. A graduate of Liberty University and Leadership Roanoke Valley, she has completed multiple trainings and seminars with Cortex Leadership Consulting, and considers her successful launch of her daughter, Jessica's professional career in NYC as her proudest accomplishment. [CMulahn@Sales recruitersofva.com 1

Theresa Passeretti

is an account executive for Valley Business FRONT;

a native of Roanoke, married and mother to two girls, she has an AAS degree in Environmental Studies and serves on the board of directors for Clean Valley Council. She enjoys the outdoors, has a passion for local business and superior customer service and is excited to see the positive growth and momentum in Virginia's Blue Ridge region. [tpasseretti@ vbFRONT.com]

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Please write letters... to let them know how silly they're being – Page 31

F R O N T L I N E S

Career FRONT



Anderson



Michel

College of Science at Virginia Tech, were named the Luther and Alice Hamlett

Junior Faculty Fellows by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors.



Stefan Duma, the Harry Wyatt Professor of Engineering, was named director of the Virginia Tech Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science.

Mark Cartwright, former senior director of supplier diversity at



Cartwright

Vizient Inc., will lead the program improving the availability of small, woman-owned, minority-owned, and local suppliers for Virginia Tech.

WELLNESS FRONT

Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, DO, was elected board president of the American Osteopathic Foundation for 2018.

Dr. Roiketa Strand joined the Tuck Chiropractic Clinic in Christiansburg.

Ben Higgins, LNHA, was appointed as director of healthcare operations for Friendship senior living and rehabilitation center and at Salem Terrace at Harrogate.

David Thornhill and Donnovan Young joined Richfield Living's board of directors.



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FRONT Notes

The Pinnacle of Success

According to Forbes, Pinnacle Financial Partners ranks at 26 out of 100 of the country's best largest banks. Analysts' criteria included factors such as credit quality, profitability, net interest margin, return on average assets, and revenue growth. Home BancShares ranked number one. SunTrust Bank, with Virginia operations, ranked 99. Tennessee-based Pinnacle acquired BNC Bancorp in 2017. It currently has approximately \$22.2 billion in assets as of Dec. 31, 2017, and operates in Tennessee, the Carolinas, and Virginia.

State of Emergency

Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital is undergoing a \$13 million renovation of its emergency department as the hospital continues to deal with overcrowding. Patient visits increased from 65,000 in 2010 to 85,000 in 2017. The renovation's first phase created private rooms, and plans for the second phase include reconfiguring walls for 20 treatment areas. The emergency department will have 50,000 square feet. Carilion also plans to add 16 nurses to its staff.

Pulaski Company Expects Growth

Falls Stamping and

Welding is anticipating fulfilling its 2013 expansion agreement with Pulaski County. Located in the former Renfro factory, Falls manufactures metal parts for the Volvo Trucks plant nearby. Being reliant on the truck industry, when it slowed, so did Falls' growth. Massachusetts-based Newcan Corporation, which designs, produces, and supplies perforated metal tubes and precision stampings for the automotive and industrial marketplace, is expected to move their headquarters in the same building and share management with Falls. Newcan will operate as a separate business from Falls. Falls received a \$350,000 incentive grant in 2013, split between local funding and the Governor's Opportunity Fund, which was contingent on reaching investment and hiring goals. Falls has until

December to do so. Falls employs approximately 15 people, and looks expand that number to 55.

GO Fund It

GO Virginia's Region 2 recommended five projects for state funding under the GO Virginia initiative. Proposals include building water and sewer lines on a 109-acre site at the intersection of Interstates 81 and 581 in Roanoke County, and the completion of grading for a potential new tenant at the New River Valley Commerce Park in Pulaski County. An application from the business accelerator **Regional Acceleration** and Mentoring Program (RAMP), was rejected this time by the council because of insufficient details about the program. Created by the General Assembly in 2016, GO Virginia's goal is to help Virginia's economy, which was affected by cutbacks in federal programs. GO Virginia incentives are matched by local, federal, and private funds. Region 2 includes the counties of Alleghany, Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Botetourt, Campbell, Craig, Floyd, Franklin,

Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski and Roanoke; and the cities of Covington, Lynchburg, Radford, Roanoke, and Salem. The region's council includes businesspeople, educators and community leaders.

RAMP Deadline is March 15

RAMP-in-Residence business accelerator program is taking applications to participate in this year's program. The deadline to apply is March 15. RAMP helps highpotential startups expand and create jobs in the STEM-H (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Health) fields. The RAMP-in-Residence program is located in the Gill Memorial Building at 709 S. Jefferson Street in downtown Roanoke. Participants will have networking opportunities, business education, and access to capital. Companies accepted into the program will work with mentors to build, test, improve, and market their product. Applicants must agree to locate their company, rent-free, inside the accelerator for a sixmonth residency; have



FRONTLINES

a viable product with sales; work full-time on their startup during the program; have a product or service employing workers in the STEM-H field; and consider operating their company in the region after graduation. For more information, visit www.ramprb.tech or call 540-595-7315. The program is expected to begin on May 15.

up their orders with four hours' notice, and must be picked up at ClickList designated parking spaces. Kroger stores offering ClickList are: 7223 Williamson Road, Roanoke: 5050 Rutgers Street, Roanoke: 3971 Brambleton Avenue, Roanoke: 3970 Vallev Gateway Blvd., Roanoke; 1477 W. Main Street, Salem; 161 Electric Road, Salem; and 915 Hardy Road, Vinton.

Click to Shop

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Dominion Energy, Inc. plans to buy South Carolina-based utility holding company

Have an announcement about your business?

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A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

SCANA Corp. in a

\$14.6 billion deal including debt. Dominion is offering rebates for South Carolina customers who were paying for debt on these projects, which is reported to be \$2 billion. SCANA was failing due to cost overruns for abandoned nuclear reactor projects. Customers of South Carolina Electric and Gas, SCANA's subsidiary, will get an estimated \$1,000 cash payment, approximately two-thirds of a share of Dominion stock, and a 5% rate reduction, according to Dominion. The merger, which is pending shareholder, federal, and state approval, would have SCANA operating as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Dominion Energy.



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F R O N T L I N E S

FRONT Notes

Earlier, the General Assembly prevented the State Corporation Commission from fulfilling its regulatory authority by suspending electric utility rate reviews in 2015 for seven years. Dominion Energy helped write the law that protects electric utility companies from issuing refunds or lowering their rates for years, even if regulators find their base rates are too high, and restricts the companies from raising base rates if they're insufficient to cover their costs. The SCC commissioner had estimated that allowing Dominion to keep earnings over its regulated rate of return costs customers more than \$1 billion over seven years.

Visible Changes

The currently vacant building at 433 E. Commonwealth Blvd. in Martinsville is getting a makeover. The Roanoke Valley Center for Sight was awarded a Certificate of Public Need to operate an eye surgery center, which will be the Martinsville Center for Sight. Over \$1 million is planned for remodeling the facility that will have an operating room and

provide cataract surgery. The Center is planned to open later this year. Roanoke Valley Center for Sight is the largest dedicated provider of ophthalmic surgery center services in southwest Virginia.

New Asian Restaurant Opens

Agogo recently opened at 2202 Orange Avenue in Roanoke next to Dairy Queen. Agogo specializes in modern Asian cuisine, with made-to-order rice bowls consisting of a rice; chicken, steak, or shrimp; two vegetables; and additional toppings and sauces. The restaurant seats 60.

Walmart Leaves the Neighborhood

Walmart Neighborhood

Market at 3419 Orange Avenue NE in Roanoke is closing shop. The store, which opened in 2015, is smaller than the usual Walmart stores and mainly sells groceries. Reasons for the closure including financial issues.

Go Fish

Poe & Cronk Real Estate Group announced that Cabo Fish Taco signed a lease to occupy the former Metro! restaurant location at 14 Campbell Avenue in downtown Roanoke. The restaurant will offer west coast Mexican cuisine. Cabo Fish Taco also has restaurants in Blacksburg and in Charlotte, NC. Cabo Fish Taco is expected to open this spring.

A Happy Ending?

A new owner has purchased the property at 5411 Williamson Road in Roanoke, the site of the former Happy's flea market. In a deal handled by Poe & Cronk Real Estate Group, the property sold for \$950.000 and includes the vacant, 89,000 sq. ft. building. Happy's closed in 2015 due to safety code violations. At the time of this report, the new owner's name was not disclosed.

Take a Gander at This

Camping World Holdings purchased **Gander Mountain** retail store in Roanoke County at a bankruptcy court auction last May. Plans are to rebrand the store as Gander Outdoors and reopen the store by June. The store will have separate departments including marine, hiking, camping, and sports.

Company Expansion in Downtown Roanoke

Atlantic Credit and Finance (ACF), a debt collection company, announced a \$4 million expansion of a new 50,000 sq. ft. office at 111 Franklin Road in downtown Roanoke The expansion is expected to create 115 jobs over the next two years. A \$250,000 Commonwealth's **Opportunity Fund** grant approved by the governor will help the City of Roanoke with the project. ACF can receive benefits from the Virginia Enterprise Zone Program, administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. ACF is currently located at 3353 Orange Avenue.

Radio Station Gets New Owner

Roanoke-based radio station **WVMP-FM** (101.5/102.5) The Mountain, was sold to Lynchburg Radio Group in December for \$250,000. The station will continue its adult album alternative format.



Lynchburg Radio Group also owns The Planet (97.9 FM), KHF (93.7 FM), and Oldies WHTU/WZZI (103.9/106.9 FM).

Spend Money to Save Money

Acting to reduce pollution and save approximately \$150,000 in vehicle expenses, the **City of Roanoke** officials are adding a dozen electric cars, Nissan Leafs, to their municipal fleet. Earlier, the city had 15 of their police cars converted to run on propane in addition to gasoline, and parking enforcement vehicles are electric. The City of Roanoke spent \$1,000 on charging stations for the vehicles; a total of \$92,325 for 10 of the vehicles shared by employees; and \$14,300 each for two cars for individual employees.

Bank Sells Golf Subdivision

The **Bank of Fincastle** completed the sale

of golfing subdivision Ashley Plantation Country Club and 70 adjacent acres in Daleville, Botetourt County, to Runk & Pratt Healthcare Enterprises, Inc.

College Merger

Roanoke's Jefferson College of Health Sciences plans to merge with Radford University. Owned and operated by Carilion Clinic currently, Jefferson College has approximately 1,150 students. Radford is a public university with over 9,400 students. The merger planning process is expected to take up to two years, which would result in Jefferson College becoming part of Radford's Waldron College of Health and Human Services. The merger is expected to create the secondlargest nursing program in Virginia.

Compiled by Christine Liana

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Executive Summary:

Local mom and social media warrior Sarah Krycinski has joined the ranks of top sought-out bloggers who have capitalized on corporate referral marketing.

By Carissa Mulahn

You've heard the stories of those overnight millionaire, internet sensations...one minute they're whipping up an all vegan concoction beside their kitchen sink, they post about it six times (or maybe it was 600), and BAAM—suddenly they're rolling in money! Everybody wants some! And yes, there's GOOD MONEY in well timed, well positioned social media postings. But how in the world do you go from stay-at-home mom with your hair thrown up in a baseball cap to Micro Influencer Extraordinaire, plugin brands like Lodis, J.Crew, Consolidated

C U L T U R E F R O N T

Janine Rae Photography

Shoe and a new brand GoFanFace and making a chunk of change in the meanwhile? For lifestyle blogger (boutique owner and stylist) Sarah Krycinski, turning herself into an internet sensation was more about what it meant for her treasured family than the bottom line.

Sarah's position of influence began with her rise in an international, direct sales company. She climbed the ranks in nine short years, earning the title Executive Senior Sales Director, easily bringing down a six figure paycheck more than half those years. In under a decade, she was a sneeze away from being listed in the top 20 performers (out of 50K+ reps), leading over a thousand women on her strategically built team.

"I thought I was completing my mission," Sarah says. "But then it all came to a screeching halt." Subtle signs had begun to show up in her children, and in day to day life at home. "My kids were putting up walls. My husband spent more time



shaking his head than actually giving me feedback. I had this subtle, nagging sense that something needed to change. Thank God I listened to it!"

Part of Sarah's role as a top performer with 1000+team members included a strong social media presence. One day, she posted one of the prizes earned from the direct sales company—a Lodis Clutch. Lodis contacted her almost immediately, and asked that she be part of their Micro Influencer team. "Why not?" Sarah thought. A Micro Influencer is anyone with a social media following of five to one hundred thousand. The collective, yet localized impact of micro influencers working with major and/or up-and coming brands across the country is massive, as it maximizes a brand's exposure at practically zero expense. Giving away 500 of a company's latest, greatest product to handpicked micro influencers in each state, and (in some cases) paying for a few Instagram posts from each of those micro influencers, is far cheaper than an all-out ad campaign, and significantly more impactful. Shortly after being sought out by Lodis, she was approached by J Crew, and then a brand new company out of Blacksburg GOFANFACE wanted to work with her as well. The proverbial ball was rolling.

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CULTURE FRONT

But, for Sarah, it was rolling uphill. She had to face the end of a dream, and the reality of a new, unfamiliar opportunity lifestyle blogging. Despite recognizing that her family needed her to refocus, Sarah's go-getter drive wasn't going to dissipate. The real questions for Sarah were: "Can utilizing micro influencer opportunities as a lifestyle blogger take me where I want to go?; Will it make us the money we want while offering the freedoms of time and position we—my family—need?" And, of course, the ultimate question for all true influencers—"will I still be heard?"

So Sarah did what all deeply driven, entrepreneurially-minded, heart-of-awarrior moms do-she jumped in with both feet. Blessedly, the direct sales company allowed for scaling back of her operation while still earning a sizable paycheck. She started posting regularly to her website: Captivating Timeless Beauty, and soon enough, Soul Sisters Boutique was born—an online clothing shop with the latest trends, most up to the minute, and a dab or two of retro, refurbished styles as well. Her creativity found new outlets as she took a turn at a full home renovation and dabbled in furniture restoration, as well, posting all the while. And, of course, there is her ever present focus on health and fitness. She counts her spots on the WFXR/Fox 21/27 Virginia at Work segment, hosted by Cortex Leadership's Lynda McNutt Foster, as a dream come true.

"The chance to be on live TV has always been on my bucket list. Even better, the chance to give tips to inspire professional women to find easier, kinder ways to approach fitness and health. I'm super proud to have represented that!"



Each new endeavor found new followers and an ever growing list of companies wanting her representation. Captivating Timeless Beauty is now in its second year of existence, and the money keeps rolling in. "Yes, there was a learning curve," says Sarah. "Figuring out how to get more views on Facebook—Wow! That was some research, some honest work. But it's definitely been worth every risk and every challenge." Having faced the uncertainty of change and the harsh reality of social media exposure, Sarah continues to win in this newly minted arena. Perhaps the real question is whether or not the internet ever had a chance when Sarah decided to join the game. Check out her blog and decide for yourself.



Advertiser Index

AAF / Roanoke25
Ameriprise Financial25
Anytime Fitness61
B2C
Bank of the James3
Berryfield25
Blue Mobius Marketing
Book No Further25
Citizens
Creekmore Law Firm38
Davis H. Elliot Company25
Duncan AudiBC
Entre Computer Center
Garland Properties /
16 West Marketplace4

The Glebe57
Hall Associates2
MemberOne Federal Credit Union53
Mulahn Recruiting50
The Proofing Prof25
квтс54
Richfield60
Roanoke CoLab
Roanoke Higher
Education Center55
Sir Speedy
Suggestion Mailbox56
Thalhimer
VCOM23
Virginia Business Systems63

In its early days sustainable fashion was seen as 'crusty' and hippie-like – Page 18

There is a real need for alternative ways of living to be available at all levels of the economy – Page 28

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