

40 UNDER AND **CRUSHING** IT

Because age is nothing but a number...

Compiled By Elise Hacking Carr

Print+Promo is excited to reveal the honorees in this year's Under 40 spotlight. Cited by their industry peers for unmatched professionalism, visionary behavior and contagious energy, these individuals are dismantling generational labels, and, instead, using the wisdom gained from esteemed colleagues to become mentors in their own right.

They are respectfully modernizing an industry steeped in tradition, proving that we are in capable hands. Our 2019 rising stars hail from varying backgrounds and followed different paths to get where they are today. For some, their passion was inherited; others found the sector by chance—a gain for print and promo either way. Get to know them better here.

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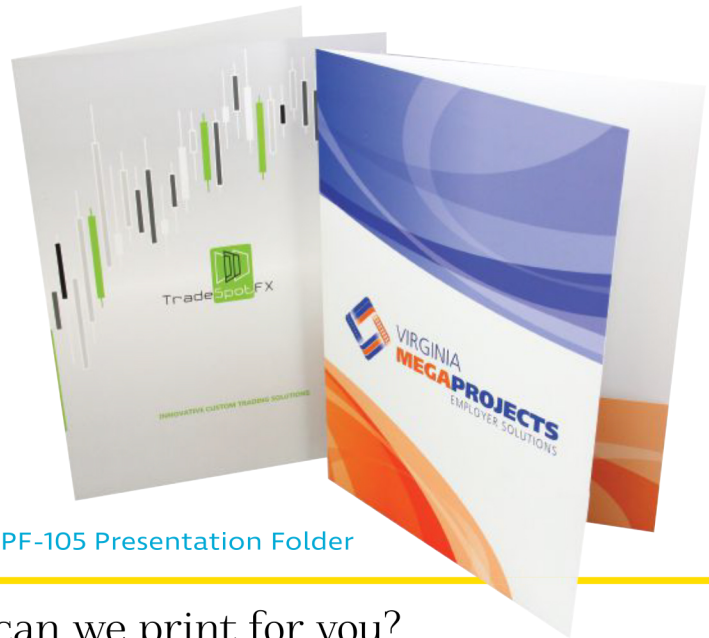
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Greg Schwartz, 34
Vice President of Sales
Hotcards, Cleveland



a small company where I could make a big impact as the leader of the new Enterprise Division. The chance to create and mold my own sales department brought out the entrepreneur in me and was intriguing enough for me to take the job opportunity.

His current role: I am currently the vice president of sales. I am responsible for making sure that the Enterprise Division at Hotcards is hitting monthly and yearly sales goals set by me and John. I am in charge of providing the necessary tools for success for our growing sales team, along with making sure that our account managers are properly supporting our staff in their day-to-day sales. I attend weekly meetings not only with my team, but also the leaders of Hotcards to make sure that

we are working as a single unit toward the same goal, which is to obsess over our clients and make sure that everything we do is focused on providing the best service possible at all levels.

His biggest career influence: Two people have been the most influential in my career: Rich Bewley, owner of Proforma Signature Solutions, and John Gadd. Rich was my mentor when I first got into the print and promo industry, and he played a major role in my early-mid development as a sales rep. Rich worked with me daily to develop my prospecting and meeting skills. This was my first commission-based sales job, so he not only had to bring me up to speed with the industry, but also had to develop my sales skills. He was willing to support me 24/7, attend meetings with me and help answer any questions I had to properly support clients. He helped me build my client base, but he also believed in me enough to allow me to manage some current clients of his to help get a jump-start in my sales.

John became my mentor from day one when I came to Hotcards. I got the opportunity to share an office with him and truly learn how he handled day-to-day business. He immediately trusted me to take over some of the biggest clients he had, so that I could provide an even greater service than they were already receiving. John is an incredible leader, and I soaked up everything he did on a daily basis, so I could take what I learned from him and add it to my sales

repertoire. John taught me that no matter how bad you think your day is going, the one thing you can always control is your attitude, and, no matter what, he always would have a smile on his face and would [turn any] negative into a positive. I am one to wear my emotions on my sleeve, and he has helped play a key role in my attitude and how I handle stress and pressure. John has developed an amazing team culture at Hotcards, and it mirrors his own personality of being positive and always working as a team to battle daily challenges.

His most meaningful business

accomplishment: My biggest accomplishment during my career was hitting the \$1 million sales mark. As I was learning under Rich at Proforma, it became such a big milestone to hit a sales goal of \$1 million. Unfortunately, I was not able to hit this milestone at Proforma, but I was able to hit this goal in my first full year at Hotcards. It was a major accomplishment and now hitting the \$2 million sales goal is the next milestone I am focused on.

His differentiating factor: I focus only on things that I can control, and that is providing the best possible service for my clients. ... I start by making myself available to them in whatever communication method they prefer (e.g., text, email, phone call). My team and I pride ourselves on having full transparency with our clients, which means that even if things are not going smoothly, we can provide them an update every step of the way. We will not come to a client with a problem without recommending a solution. We always try to maximize our client's budget, and we all know in this industry that sometimes no matter how much value you can bring to a client, it all comes down to saving on budget. We try to work within budgets from the beginning so that we don't waste the client's time with back-and-forth emails.


OFF THE CLOCK

What he does for fun: I grew up playing basketball and always loved the competitive nature of sports. I am an extremely competitive person, and I find a lot of parallels with sports and sales. It takes great teamwork and developing good daily habits that will drive results and ultimately hit yearly sales goals.

- **Last book he read:** "Leaders Eat Last" by Simon Sinek
- **His favorite movie:** "Moneyball"
- **Best concert he's attended:** Outkast

How he got his start: I got involved in this industry by unforeseen life challenges that led me to an opportunity with a national company called Proforma. [For five years,] I was the operations manager for a transportation company in Kent, Ohio, where I helped grow the company client base year after year, and became the premiere taxi company in Kent for a majority of my time there. The company began taking financial hits as Uber and Lyft came on the scene, so I looked at the writing on the wall and decided to take my skill set elsewhere. My wife was working in the print and promo industry and connected me with a top print and promo franchise—Proforma Signature Solutions. The company offered me a chance to start a new career path and build a book of business. This was the kind of opportunity that I couldn't pass up, as my passion was always focused on entrepreneurship and relationship building.

I landed my current role with Hotcards because [company CEO] John Gadd approached me through LinkedIn and wanted to see if I had any interest in hearing more about the opportunity with his company. At first, I didn't give him the time of day, and I kind of half-answered his questions to me through LinkedIn messaging. After he had reached out to me a couple more times throughout the next few months, I finally decided to see what Hotcards had to offer. I was blown away by the opportunity. Hotcards had an impressive client list that needed the "red-carpet" treatment, and I loved the fact that Hotcards was



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Jamie Hoelscher, 32
Director of Merchandising
ePromos Promotional Products Inc.,
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engaging. I also get to work with some absolutely amazing and talented people, both internally at ePromos and within our supplier network.

Age roadblocks and

advantages: Technically, I am a millennial, but I've never really identified myself as one. When I graduated, it was a tough economy, making it difficult to find any job, let alone a job in your desired field. It was a challenging environment, so being driven and proving yourself was a necessity. That really helped build a strong foundation and combined with my firm work ethic that formed who I am today.

Her biggest career

influence: Sheila Johnshoy, our chief revenue officer at ePromos

How she got her start: After spending five years in the retail industry as a jewelry buyer, I was ready for the next step in my career and a new challenge. At that time, ePromos happened to be looking for a new merchandising manager, and after several interviews and meetings with their vice president of marketing, I realized that my skill set and passion for product would be a good fit for [the company] and that I could provide a fresh perspective with my background in retail. I accepted the position, and immediately immersed myself in the promo industry. I truly did not know what I was getting myself into (in a good way!). I really believe I found my niche when I found ePromos.

Her current role: As the director of merchandising, I am responsible for all things product-related. I oversee a team that merchandises both our ePromos and Motivators websites, as well as all product marketing, including print and digital, vendor relations and setting the overall merchandising strategy. It is our goal to deliver best-in-class product with exceptional service.

What she likes best about her job: I love watching how retail trends translate into our industry, and it's been especially exciting to watch that evolution over the past few years. From my seat, it's a lot of fun because we get to focus on some cool new products, which makes our website and promotions more interesting and

Promotional Products, hired me and took me under her wing. [Having] a similar background, she knew I would succeed in this industry and gave me every opportunity to ensure that it would happen. Sheila left the company for 15 months before returning as our CRO and during that time, I would often ask myself "what would Sheila do?" when faced with a new challenge or tough decision. She allowed me to create my own path, learn from my mistakes and has always been there supporting and encouraging me along the way.

Her most meaningful business

accomplishment: By far, my most meaningful accomplishment has been my promotion to the director of merchandising. It was always a long-term goal of mine to get here, but honestly a title I never imagined holding at this point in my life and career. I get to manage an amazing team, and I could not operate the way I need to without the work they put in day-to-day. It's rewarding to reflect back on the past five years and see how far we have come as a merchandising department—from the way we think about product to the supplier relationships we have built. In addition, I feel fortunate to be a part of the tremendous growth that ePromos has experienced as a company.

Her differentiating factor: ePromos is always evolving, as is our industry, and you have to

grow along with it, embracing the change and overcoming adversity. Staying relevant is key from a product standpoint, technology enhancements, social media, content, current events, marketing tactics and sales strategies. We are always looking at all angles to better serve our customers and are coming up with creative ways to keep ePromos top of mind. Just in the last year alone, we have had to adapt to changes in tariffs and compliance laws. I'm proud to work with a team of individuals who are innovative, collaborative and can react quickly to change.

Why she believes the future is bright:

I believe online promo sales will continue to grow, especially as we see more and more people utilize mobile for their shopping experience.

OFF THE CLOCK

What she does for fun: I enjoy traveling, spending time at the lake in the summer, binge-watching Netflix, playing co-ed league softball with my husband and, most importantly, chasing after an energetic one-year-old named Easton.

- **Last book she read:** "The Girl on the Train"
- **Her favorite movie:** "The Shawshank Redemption"
- **Best concert she's attended:** Garth Brooks

"Technically, I'm a millennial, but I've never really identified myself as one. When I graduated, it was a tough economy, making it difficult to find any job, let alone a job in your desired field."

— Jamie Hoelscher

Matt Del Valle, 34
President
Stan Miller & Associates LLC
Powered by Proforma, Cleveland



How he got his start: I came from the business-to-business sales market for Staples. Stan Miller & Associates LLC powered by Proforma was actually one of my customers. I had the B2B job right out of college, started in Cincinnati and transferred to Cleveland when I moved closer to home. I was getting burned out with the position and saw that there was limited opportunity for growth. On average, we saw 60+ businesses a day, and I was trained to close on the first visit (one call close). My closing ratio was always 75 percent or better. Knowing that, one summer day in 2012 when I sat down with the owner of Stan Miller & Associates powered by Proforma, I told him "I want to work here! I will work on commission and catapult this company to multimillions." At first, I couldn't believe I blurted that out. But I was always so intrigued about the print and promo industry. I saw that there were no territory restrictions, no sales limitations and an expansive product line to offer to a diverse set of customers—everything that I felt I was being held back by. I knew I could succeed and was inspired to take a leap of faith. I took a risk that changed my life ... I bet on myself and I knew that would be enough. The owner said, "I like you, young man, let's make it work!" I started in July 2012 with no product knowledge. However, I applied my previous sales training and hit the ground running. My first year was a learning experience. I networked

and gained as much information as possible, learning from my boss and peers. By 2016, I sold \$490K+. No tricks, no fancy marketing platforms, just hard work.

His current role: In 2018, I began to transition to operations manager, handling the day-to-day operations of the business, while managing key accounts and maintaining sales growth. During this time, our company was able to increase the revenue of the company exponentially. In the spring of 2018, I sat down with the owner and discussed a buyout and exit strategy. With the help of Proforma and private counsel, we worked out an amicable deal. In April 2018, I became the official owner of Stan Miller & Associates powered by Proforma.

What he likes best about his job: I enjoy the grind. Although I'm a millennial, I don't mind getting my hands dirty and working round the clock. Work ethic is what got me here. I still go out in the field and meet with clients, still cold-call on prospects and simultaneously implement strategic marketing concepts to build our company portfolio.

Age roadblocks and advantages: First, complacency. Success breeds complacency, especially at a young age. Our team talks about "getting uncomfortable to be comfortable." Therefore, you're never comfortable—never settling for average. Second, navigating in the era of information. Technology is constantly changing and only those who adapt are the ones who are winning. We lean on Proforma and our extraordinary network of partners for innovative solutions for our clients.

His biggest career influence: I would undoubtedly say Chris Piper, vice president of business development for Proforma. Chris' knowledge and genuine approach to business are unmatched. He forged his path as a distributor, so he can relate to us. He has instilled a confidence in me not only to push the envelope, but to remain steadfast in my roots. He's a grinder, and I love the guy.

His most meaningful business

accomplishment: No amount of sales, no monetary value. The most meaningful accomplishment to me is being able to give back to the youth via multiple volunteer platforms. I'm proud to be heavily involved with both inner city and suburban community and educational organizations. Whether it's an Advisory Board Panel or a Career Day event, I take pride in meeting with the youth and letting them know that they can become business owners with hard work, focus and dedication. As a minority business owner, I feel it's my responsibility to provide motivation and opportunity—the "pay it forward" method. We've provided internships and Capstone projects for students in accordance with Proforma's Support Center. For those students to get the joy and experience for the advancement of their careers, that's what's most meaningful.

His differentiating factor: We're mixing old-school and new-school methods. [We are] outworking the competition and implementing the various technological platforms available to us. Our customers get the same great service they've been accustomed to for over 50 years combined with the most modern resources for print and promotional solutions.

Why he believes the future is bright: The trends show us that marketing as a whole is going absolutely nowhere. Businesses still need a way to promote their brand, and that's where we step in. There are so many ways to service customers (e.g., print, promo, digital, social media, etc.) that the industry will continue to thrive. If you have the work ethic and willingness to adapt, anything is possible.

OFF THE CLOCK

What he does for fun: I enjoy spending time with my family, working out and grilling.

- **Last book he read:** "All-Pro Wisdom: The 7 Choices That Lead to Greatness" by Matt Birk
- **His favorite movie:** "The Godfather Part II"
- **Best concert he's attended:** Kanye West at University of Cincinnati in '04

Danielle J. Kay, 39
Sales Executive Manager
Stylerite Label Corp., Rochester Hills,
Mich.



How she got her start: I've always had a lifelong passion for the printing industry. [Having been] born and raised in the industry—it's in my blood. My grandparents, Joe and Verna Kay, started a small print company [Kay Toledo Tag] in the mid '40s, having five sons who later took over the business in the '70s, passing on their exceptional knowledge and entrepreneurial skills before retirement. I always knew I had a strong passion for manufacturing and selling print. I've dreamed of owning my own printing business since childhood and look forward to the journey that awaits. Since childhood, I watched my father, Daniel J. Kay, and followed him diligently as a business owner and salesman. Learning from him as he spoke with customers and our employees and going on sales calls in my mid-teen years while still in high school—I absolutely loved seeing how my dad was driven to love, serve and care for [everyone].

During my senior year of high school, I was in a school release work program, and I decided to work for both the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary and my father in the printing business. After graduation, I pondered going full-time into the Coast Guard, but my heart's desire was in print. I compromised for both passions, and worked full-time at our family print business, while staying active in the evenings after work and weekends serving in the Coast Guard. I decided not to enlist, and dedicated my whole life to the print industry

and still, to this day, I don't regret the decision. I believe it was with the knowledge and support of my father coaching me that I would be able to strive in making a better carrier for not only myself, but for the printing industry as a whole, and for our customers.

Her current role: My current position is the sales executive manager for Stylerite Label Corp. in Rochester Hills, Mich. A few of my daily roles in this position are to provide our current customers the support, knowledge and guidance in growing and servicing their accounts. I help with the development of new business growth for our customers, recommending solutions and many new growth opportunities by finding leads, as well as going on sales calls with them to offer support and guidance. I look daily for new prospects while growing our Supplier Diversity program through the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC).

Age roadblocks and advantages: The biggest challenges I see with my age group would be that most are not sticking [around] and are leaving to find new corporate carriers, which, in the end, are not in the print industry. We have very few knowledgeable sales executives left in our industry due to retirement, with no children or family following in their footsteps. Most adults around my age group have had parents sell the companies or have no desire to follow into the family tradition. We need adults in my age group to stand up and keep pushing for growth in the print industry.

The biggest advantage I see with my age group would be the small support groups we have for those who are left or starting up in the print industry. Even as competitors, we support each other and want to see each other grow to be successful. [Because] not many are left, we tend to stick together [hoping to] grow our industry back to the good old days when the mom-and-pop, family-owned and -operated businesses [thrived] ... once again putting true value, trust and honesty back into our Industry.

Her biggest career influence: My father, who has since retired from the industry, has been the most influential in my print career

development. During the last 21-plus years, he has led me in a very sophisticated manner. He's allowed me to be aware of the industry's pros and cons, and has allowed for me to have a better understanding of printing that not many in our industry would be able to comprehend. His unparalleled knowledge, support and confidence in me, [helped mold me into who] I am today.

Her most meaningful business accomplishment: I would say my greatest accomplishments would be building mutual trust, respect, significant credibility and personal relationships with all my customers. This has driven me to strive daily to support and value each customer in a unique way to better service and care for them all. I never tell a customer "no"; I will do anything I can to find a greater solution if needed.

Her differentiating factor: Our industry has indeed seen many formidable opponents and with that being said, we need to find unique niches to service and help our customers go after and sell for us. I have been able to train and job-shadow many customers, giving the support and knowledge needed to keep unique printed items in our industry. Due to unforeseen cost increases and new technology, I am always looking for a cost-effective way our customers can save production time and money.

OFF THE CLOCK

What she does for fun: In my spare time, I always enjoy a good workout, spending quality time with my daughter Gracie, significant other Shawn, family and friends, and reading and cleaning. Yes, I love cleaning. I enjoy the great outdoors, visiting Amish County and helping friends grow their business as well.

■ **Last book she read:** "Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption," by Laura Hillenbrand

■ **Her favorite movie:** I have many favorite movies. This is hard, so I will have to say movies from the production company Pure Flix.

■ **Best concert she's attended:** Trans-Siberian Orchestra



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H. Zachary Ottenstein, 36
Director, Senior Living and Hospitality
The Image Group, Holland, Ohio



How he got his start: After [working in] television, I pivoted to finance. I worked as an investment analyst and then led marketing communications for an S&P 500 company that was involved in the senior living industry. We had a great relationship with The Image Group, and the company's CEO, Jon Levine, and I had gotten to know each other personally. We both saw an opportunity to help our clients help others in new ways, and we believed in it.

His current role: I lead the Senior Living Division of The Image Group. Our team helps more than 1,000 senior living communities increase occupancy, reduce employee turnover and maximize operational efficiency. We do this by designing programs with promotional and print products that impact the key levers of our clients' businesses. My primary responsibilities are coaching our team, developing our strategy and [establishing] new business development.

What he likes best about his job: The most rewarding part of my job is seeing our team grow and thrive. We are challenging new and experienced team members to think differently about their work. I am grateful for their efforts and the culture we're building.

Age roadblocks and advantages: I've never thought about my age as an advantage or disadvantage. From an intellectual perspective,

I try to remember that there are always new things to learn. From a physical perspective, I try to remind myself to eat well, sleep enough, drink water and exercise. I fail regularly.

His biggest career

influence: Jon Levine and I are having so much fun building the business. My experience stems from working at a large-cap company. Jon has offered me invaluable perspective about managing successfully a privately held company with a long-term point of view.

His most meaningful

business accomplishment:

I've made a few career pivots: journalism to senior living finance and then to promotional products. It's scary to change fields and make a bet on your-

self. But I think you have to embrace risks. I've been fortunate. Both of my career jumps were great successes. But I've taken other risks and made business investments that didn't work out, too. Learning to thrive amidst uncertainty has probably been my greatest challenge and most meaningful accomplishment. It didn't come naturally.

His differentiating factor: We are transitioning our organization from the traditional vendor model to a brand experience company. We are teaching our people to be indispensably knowledgeable about our products and our clients. In a period of market consolidation, we believe companies must adopt a value-add model to push back against the changes that will make our products more of a commodity.

Why he believes the future is bright:

I believe there will be winners and losers over the next five years. The winners will be the companies that aggressively invest in people and systems to become indispensable in a niche. The losers will be companies that do not accept the massive changes on the horizon. This will not be a cycle for the faint-hearted. For our part, we're excited to make these investments and are well-positioned to welcome new partners to The Image Group family through organic growth and acquisition.

Final thoughts: I want to see the industry invest the time, energy and resources necessary to recruit top talent from diverse backgrounds. There's a great deal of change coming. We aren't competing only with the macro factors that are well-covered. We're also competing with the things that we don't know about today. And finally, we're competing with anything interesting. Our clients will choose to work with us, because we have the ability to innovate. We need great thinkers and problem solvers with fresh perspectives. If we lack these skills, our clients will look elsewhere, and they may never look back.

OFF THE CLOCK

What he does for fun: I practice yoga four times a week. It works extraordinarily well for me. It helps me push through long days and keep calm during fire drills. It makes me better, and I'd recommend that every person looking to advance in their career make the commitment to some sort of physical activity.

■ **Last book he read:** I recently read "The Undoing Project: A Friendship That Changed Our Minds" by Michael Lewis, which has changed the way that I think about my own judgments and how I engage with others.

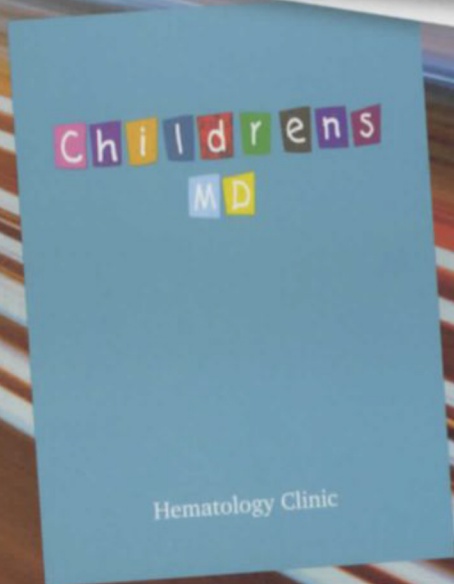
■ **His favorite movie:** How do you pick a favorite movie?

■ **Best concert he's attended:** Dave Matthews Band at Soldier Field in Chicago



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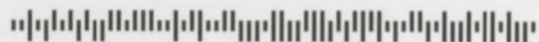
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Sam Wright, 34
Manager of Business Development
Pocket Folders Fast, Omaha, Neb.



How she got her start: I started in the industry straight out of high school [in 2003]. I began as an assistant in the customer service department [at Folder Express] and throughout college, gradually worked my way up within the department. I graduated from college in 2007, and at that point, I had started training other customer service representatives in the department. In 2008, I was promoted again to customer service manager and stayed in that role through the sale of the company. Later on, I left that company and took on a new role in a completely different line of work as the director of operations in a small, start-up call center [called Direct Voice Solutions]. I learned a ton about business operations and business growth, but in 2017 when the call came in [from Pocket Folders Fast] to come back to print and to the people I worked so closely with for many years, it was an opportunity I couldn't refuse.

Her current role: My role is manager of business development. I immerse myself in all elements of the business—short- and long-term goals, sales and operations. There are so many different elements of this business that lead to our company continuing to grow and prosper. I spread out my time not only to focus on the goal of increasing our customer base, but also to work on our internal processes and procedures to streamline and maximize our efforts.

What she likes best about her job:

I love that my day is never the same. Some days feel [like] you barely make a dent in the overwhelming pile of work that needs to be done, and other days, I look back and marvel at how far we have come as a team in bringing this company so far. It's exciting that I'm involved in the planning of moving the company forward, but sometimes I need to get down and clean out the copier when the toner decides to explode over the room. Every movement, no matter how small, is movement in the right direction.

Age roadblocks and advantages:

The biggest challenge with my age is just fighting against people's preconceptions that I don't possess any industry experience. Luckily, my age isn't a neon sign that follows me around, and it's not in my email signature, so I rarely get any push-back simply due to my age. I more often find that my age allows me to see different solutions to problems or view opportunities to enhance old processes because I'm constantly looking for that next step in how to improve. I'm rarely comfortable with the status quo; there always has to be a better way.

Her biggest career influence: There is no way to shine the light on one key individual. I'm lucky to have worked with some excellent and not-so-excellent people along the way. Some mentors, like Mardra Sikora, the CEO of Pocket Folders Fast, have coached me from day one. But each interaction I have with a coworker, a customer, a vendor or even just a barista who may be having a bad day, teaches me invaluable lessons on how to speak and properly listen to a wide range of different people. Those skills in communication are what everything I do is based upon. So, thank you, grumpy barista, for reminding me of the importance of eye contact.

Her most meaningful business accomplishment:

In the big picture, every interaction and every order are small, but important, pieces that build relationships and a career. That said, I'm also proud of the work

I'm currently doing in creating new internal systems for order entry and production workflow.

Her differentiating factor: I don't think it makes logical sense to look at technology or the economy as opponents when it comes to printing. Those who embrace these changes within the print industry will continue to succeed and grow. For example, using technology to offer more capabilities to your product line or streamline how orders are processed through your facility is an opportunity. As far as the economy, we have found that by providing a fast, quality product with responsive customer service, the product sells itself.

Why she believes the future is bright: In regard to growth in the next five years for print and promo, personalization and creativity are key. Luckily, I believe the print and promo industry is ahead of this curb. Here at Pocket Folders Fast, we've seen an increase in requests for variable data folders, so that every person in a meeting or at a conference has their own folder. In regard to creativity, we've also seen an increase in folders that combine the feel of soft touch lamination with the striking appearance of Scodix Dimensional UV. By continuing to offer something new, interactive and personalized to the intended user, the print and promo industry will continue to advance and grow with opportunity.

OFF THE CLOCK

What she does for fun: Since I'm a mom of two kids and two Great Danes, spare time is very ... spare. However, when I get a moment, I enjoy working out at our local YMCA, singing karaoke and taking on household projects that I am nowhere qualified to start.

- **Last book she read:** I just finished "The Pillars of the Earth: A Novel" by Ken Follett. I fell in love with it, and I look forward to digging into the next two books of the trilogy.
- **Her favorite movie:** "The Goonies" or "Fight Club." Can anyone really pick just one favorite movie?
- **Best concert she's attended:** Tony Bennett

Matt Gleckler, 39
Senior Account Executive
American Solutions for Business,
Glenwood, Minn.



How he got his start: This is my first job after college. In 2002, I started with Optimum System Products in Columbus, Ohio, [a company] that specialized in selling print and promo to community banks. The owners of Optimum, John and Dorothy Martin, were nice enough to hire me even though I didn't know much about banks, printing or business in general, but I was willing to learn. I did a lot of odd jobs at first, like working in the warehouse, filling work orders and samples just to get an idea of what it was we actually did for our customers. I would travel with other sales reps to see how they sold our program. After a year of training, I started working in customer service, in addition to going out on my own to visit current customers and prospects. I had a few sales successes early on, and I believe that this success was because of how I learned the job from the inside out. Knowing how the warehouse worked and understanding what it is like being in customer service made a big difference in how I sold and how my customers viewed me. After about two years of doing both customer service and part-time sales, I switched to full-time sales in 2005. In 2015, Optimum merged with American Solutions for Business.

His current role: I am responsible for maintaining my current business and gaining new business, whether it is growing my current client base or adding new clients.

What he likes best about

his job: I really enjoy the people I work with in Columbus and how we work as a team to take tremendous care of our customers.

Age roadblocks and

advantages: The biggest challenge for me right now is balancing work life with family life. My wife works full time as a marketing director for KPMG, and we have two young boys, Greyson and Connor, ages five and two. Over the years, one of the challenges of being young was getting a bank CEO to trust in me. I learned early on to study the financial industry and understand what challenges banks were facing so that I was more trustworthy to a C-level executive. One of the advantages of being young is that I

am still willing to learn, which should enhance my career moving forward.

His biggest career influence: Ken Renker was the sales director for Optimum for five years, and I learned a tremendous amount from him during that period. He was dedicated to helping our sales team and spent nearly 100 percent of his time helping us grow. Ken taught me how to listen to customers/prospects, ask the right questions to find out what their needs were and how to come up with a solution to address those needs. He helped me learn the power of conducting business reviews and how to manage a large territory. Ken would travel with me and I spent a lot of time just studying his calm technique. I am so lucky to have had him as a mentor for me in the middle of my career thus far.

His most meaningful business

accomplishment: I starting calling on a bank that was the perfect fit for our program back in 2006. I met the CEO, I met with marketing, I met with facilities and over a six-year period, I was persistent and continued to pursue this prospect. As they grew, they understood the need to partner with a company like ours, and in 2012, they decided to utilize our program for print, promo and office supplies. They are still a great customer and have been a great reference for me the last six-plus years.

His differentiating factor: Our team in Columbus is always looking for new ideas of how we can help our customers increase revenues and lower expenses not only in print and promo, but through partnerships with a wide variety of companies outside of the print and promo arena. Over the years, helping our customers in different areas within their business has strengthened our relationships.

Why he believes the future is bright: My customers continue to want to get their messages out into their market places, and they do this through the utilization of brochures/flyers and a wide variety of promotional products. Technology will continue to be a huge factor as well. Over the past five years, the enhancements in digital printing and print-on-demand [have made] me believe that the future is bright. I am amazed at the new products we keep seeing in the promo world, and the demand for these products by the consumers means we are ready to grow over the next five years.

Final thoughts: I would like to thank all of the employees at American Solutions for Business for the help over the years, not only the people in Glenwood, Minn., but all of my support in Columbus, Ohio. Without all of you, my career would not be where it is today. Thank you, all!

OFF THE CLOCK

What he does for fun: I really enjoy playing with my two young boys and my wife, and I love movies and bingeing on TV series. I am a big fan of The Ohio State Buckeyes and all of the Cleveland sports teams. I enjoy playing lacrosse, basketball and golf. Traveling with my wife is amazing. We have been all over the U.S. and Europe. I plan on coaching my boys in all sports, starting with soccer and lacrosse.

- **Last book he read:** "Goodnight Moon" (to my two-year-old).
- **His favorite movie:** "Braveheart"
- **Best concert he's attended:** Pearl Jam opening for The Rolling Stones

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Sarah Whitaker, 32
Owner, Client Success Manager
Williams Advertising LLC, Hopkinsville, Ky.



of experience, yet I'm still of the mindset that anything is possible, which I hope doesn't change. I also have clients that are specifically looking to market to millennials, and fitting squarely in that group, I am in a good position to give advice about purchasing or marketing as it relates to that group. I think the biggest challenge in this season of my life right now is balance. I'm growing a family and a business, all at the same time, as we are raising a two-year-old daughter. So, some days, it's a combination of "Moana" and marketing. She already pretends she's "doing an order," so there are definitely times it all blends together.

Her biggest career influence:

Certainly, my grandfather has been the single biggest influence on me in the promo industry. I

How she got her start: In 2015, I lived in Evansville, Ind. My husband and I are from Hopkinsville, Ky., and we decided we would like to move back home. My background is in marketing—I had worked in marketing at a textbook company in Murray, then in marketing and customer service for corporate relocations at the Atlas Van Lines/Atlas World Group headquarters in Evansville. My grandfather, Doug Williams, started with ad specialties in the 1980s. When we made the decision to move home, I approached him about expanding what his company offered. I wanted to grow the promo side of the business, but I also wanted to begin offering marketing services. Fast forward to today, and I co-own Williams Advertising LLC with him.

Her current role: We're a diverse company in that we offer promo products as half of our business, and marketing services as the other half. In my current role as co-owner of our boutique agency, I do a little bit of everything. In my role as owner, I evaluate our strategy and am always trying to improve the customer experience, adapt our business to what we can do well and what customers need. I am also customer service, sales, order fulfillment, designer, social media manager, web strategist and all things as they relate to print, promo and marketing.

Age roadblocks and advantages: I think an advantage of my age is that I've got a good mix

remember as a kid coming to his office or flipping through his catalogs, no way knowing that one day I'd be doing the very same thing as him. He definitely has a way in sales that I'm not sure I can ever replicate. And he remembers everything. He's 87 years old, and he can tell you what pen you ordered, what supplier it was from, how much it cost when you last ordered it, the quantity you did and why you did it—even if it was years ago. Without his start in the industry, and his willingness to let me come in and help evolve the business, I'd not have the opportunity I do today.

Her most meaningful business

accomplishment: My most meaningful accomplishment in my business career has been growing our business. I think something that doesn't occur to most people who don't own their own (especially small) business is that if you don't make sales, if you don't get that order or that business—you don't get a paycheck. When I look back and think about [how] I completely abandoned a very promising career at a great company to go out on my own ... establish my own customers and start a whole other division offering new services no one else was offering, I'm really proud that I had the guts to do that.

Her differentiating factor: We're really focusing on improving the customer experience, especially on the promo side this year, so that we can continue to grow and be nimble to customer

expectations. Technology is huge. I completely understand someone wanting to shop at midnight in their PJs and just be done with an order rather than calling me. On the other hand, some customers want my expertise, they like to have me recommend things, and then they come visit to see all of our samples and past work. So for me, it's striking a good balance between those who prefer the brick-and-mortar experience and those who just want to do everything online. I'm working on our online store (shop.williamsadco.com) right now to make sure online checkout is streamlined and the site is a better experience for our users. We take orders through text, Facebook message—whatever the customer needs that experience to be. ... I used to be on the corporate side of this industry, so I know what it's like to be a buyer. I also bring the marketing experience to make a promo purchase a business driver for my clients, in many cases.

OFF THE CLOCK

What she does for fun: I love spending time with my husband and my two-year-old daughter, Ellery. Two years old is such a fun time. I do serve with several community organizations: I am the president of the local Junior Auxiliary, member of the executive board for the Pennyroyal Arts Council, member of Hopkinsville Young Professionals Engage, member of the Leadership Hopkinsville class of 2018-2019, and I am a member of the Board for the Hopkinsville-Christian County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

- **Last book she read:** The last book I read was "Girl, Wash Your Face" by Rachel Hollis. The most impactful book I have read lately is by Emily Ley, called "Grace, Not Perfection: Embracing Simplicity, Celebrating Joy." I believe both of these authors may have written these books directly to me.
- **Her favorite movie:** I am more of a Netflix binger than a movie watcher, at least lately, and my favorite show of all time is "Friends." I can watch it any time, and I can give you a summary of most any episode's plot.
- **Best concert she's attended:** Kings of Leon, both times. Taylor Swift is also an amazing entertainer, and we did get to meet her at her concert once.

Chris Hickman, 39
Vice President of Direct Sales
Regency360, Raleigh N.C.



more inclined to work with people who have experience, which is often associated with age. One thing that has made Regency360 so successful is that we have people within our organization who bring that level of experience to the table. We strongly leverage team selling and have found tremendous success in utilizing the great resources we have.

His biggest career

influence: If I had to choose only one, I'd have to say our president, Eric Beguelin. Eric has been the driving force of Regency360 since day one. In working closely with Eric over the past 10 years, I witnessed and learned first-hand the relentless hours and sweat that it's taken for us to be

successful. He has put us in a position to be successful for years to come.

His most meaningful business

accomplishment: I've sold some big deals in my time, but my most meaningful accomplishment is helping our younger sales reps find success. In our industry, success doesn't happen overnight and there are always challenges lurking. I've had the pleasure to witness others find success and learn the industry, and that's a feeling that gets me out of bed in the morning the most.

His differentiating factor: Regency360 has always embraced technology, so I feel that we have always been a step or two ahead of the game. When we build a custom online store for our clients, we are enabling them to leverage an entire network of suppliers that fit their needs and streamline their internal processes for purchasing and distributing their branded material. With that said, we also acknowledge that the human element is still a key ingredient to our customers. By combining these two ingredients, I believe we will always be successful as we evolve.

Why he believes the future is bright: As our industry continues to evolve, I believe our ability to embrace and leverage technology will be the key to continued success.

In addition, the ability to leverage suppliers and products that are relevant and easy to purchase in smaller, more strategic quantities is also key to our success.

OFF THE CLOCK

What he does for fun: I spend time with my wife and our two dogs, play hockey and play guitar.

- **Last book he read:** "Into the Wild"
- **His favorite movie:** "Step Brothers"
- **Best concert he's attended:** Pearl Jam. I've seen them live over 30 times.

How he got his start: Regency360 was my second job out of college. At the time, my primary goal was to find a career in sales and less about what I would actually be selling. In my 11 years with Regency, I have progressed through the different sales roles with the organization: sales, account management to sales management. I attribute my success to the experience of these different roles that prepared me for where I am today.

His current role: As vice president of sales, my primary role is to lead our sales force and ensure that we continue to grow and develop. We have an incredible sales and support staff here, and I love working for them to continue to improve our sales processes and make their jobs easier and more effective.

What he likes best about his job: The people, for sure. The Regency360 family is our "secret sauce." Over the years, there have been countless people who provided me with unprecedented mentorship and support throughout my career, and I love to pass the same level of support to the newer generation of our sales team.

Age roadblocks and advantages: When it comes to helping companies manage their branded materials, I think that most marketing directors and managers are definitely

"I've sold some big deals in my time, but my most meaningful accomplishment is helping our younger sales reps find success. In our industry, success doesn't happen overnight and there are always challenges lurking. I've had the pleasure to witness others find success and learn the industry, and that's a feeling that gets me out of bed in the morning the most."

– Chris Hickman

Caitlin L. Martin, 30
Vice President, Sales and Marketing
Safeguard of the Hudson Valley,
Poughkeepsie, N.Y.



How she got her start: Truth is, I never imagined I would be in the sales world, and certainly never imagined I would be in the family business. After I graduated college, I moved to California for some time and was a personal trainer and a ski instructor. To follow, I came back to New York and continued personal training while going back to school to get my Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) degree. Once I completed my certification, I switched industries and got a job as a Mental and Behavioral counselor. A couple years later, I decided that industry was more of a passion than a career. My father, Jerry Martin, has owned his Safeguard distributorship for over 41 years, and I knew sales was always something I was interested in. When I joined him, that made me third generation in our business. I crossed my fingers and hoped it would work out and I would enjoy the field as much as my father did. I jumped in head first and haven't looked back since.

Her current role: My role in my company is to assist my customers with their branding needs, start to finish. Whether they have needs for graphic design, printing, promotional/marketing products or branded apparel, it is my goal to be a single resource and to make my customers stand out from their competition.

What she likes best about her job: I love that I can work with anyone and everyone.

Whether they are a small business or a large business, I have the same mission with all of my customers and that's to find the most cost-effective and efficient way for them to brand and market their business. Every day I get to meet new people, learn about their business, see new products and get face-to-face time with my customers.

Age roadblocks and advantages: There are pros and cons to being a young professional for sure. A challenge being that some professionals might not take me as seriously because I am younger and they automatically assume that I am not as knowledgeable in the industry. A true [pro] being that I embrace the "youth" part of my career and I make sure I am always up-to-date with all of

the latest and greatest brands and products, and I stay on top of the benefits that social media marketing has to offer, which I get a lot of good feedback and referrals from.

Her biggest career influence: Easy answer. My father. He has taught me everything I know on a personal and professional level, and has never given up on me. He took a risk and gave me the benefit of the doubt, letting me join his company when I was at a point in my life where I wasn't sure what direction I wanted to move into with my career. He's always been my biggest fan, and has always supported me in anything and everything I do in my life. He's passionate, patient and consistent in the work that we do, which is an inspiration to me every day.

Her most meaningful business accomplishment: Two years in the business, I was a recipient for our Chamber of Commerce Forty Under 40 Mover & Shaker Award in recognition for career achievements within a short time frame, as well as community contributions.

Her differentiating factor: There is a ton of competition with online vendors and larger companies doing the same type of work that I do, but what differentiates me from the competition, in my opinion, is my customer service and follow-up. It's my priority to provide the

highest level of knowledge and customer service to my clients because working with some of the bigger companies, that's a quality that they lack. I believe I will ensure my place in the industry by continuing to do what I have been doing and keeping up with all of the changes that our industry throws our way.

Why she believes the future is bright: Print and promo will definitely thrive over the next few years because it's an industry that continues to develop and expand as new companies are formed and other companies expand. The type of work that we do is an essential part of business growth and development because without brand recognition and visibility, a company can only go so far.

Final thoughts: I am a very involved and a proud ambassador for The Herren Project, which is a nonprofit organization founded by former professional basketball player and recovery advocate Chris Herren to serve individuals and families impacted by substance use disorder and the disease of addiction throughout the United States.

OFF THE CLOCK

What she does for fun: When I am not working, I'm usually training. I race full distance Ironman events, so I spend a lot of my time swimming, biking and running. Outside of work and training, I ski, hike, travel and spend a lot of time with my family and friends.

■ **Last book she read:** The last book I read was "Basketball Junkie: A Memoir" by Chris Herren and Bill Reynolds—a very blunt, self-deprecating memoir with Chris Herren (former player on the Boston Celtics) telling his story on his battle against substance abuse disorder.

■ **Her favorite movie:** My favorite movie is anything that Melissa McCarthy is in.

■ **Best concert she's attended:** Third Eye Blind

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Sadie Kikkert, 21
Sales Coordinator
PromoPlace, Ancaster, Ontario

How she got her start: My boss saw my work efforts at a yard clean-up one Saturday, and noticed how much effort I put into things. So, I got told from someone else to hand in a résumé at PromoPlace. I did and got the job.

Her current role: I currently am a sales representative for promotional products and I help clients look for products with a purpose.

What she likes best about her job: I love watching clients' reactions when they receive promotional products with their logo on them.



Age roadblocks and challenges: [The advantage is I'm] energetic.

Her biggest career influence: My dad has been really helpful with advice. He has done sales for many years and we love giving each other advice.

Her most meaningful business accomplishment: [I enjoy] finding connections with each individual client that I never thought I had. I also feel I'm more confident and independent.

Her differentiating factor: I just try to be myself and sell my service in a good, positive manner.

OFF THE CLOCK

What she does for fun: I sew and play the piano.

- **Last book she read:** I don't remember. I don't read much.
- **Favorite movie:** "Divergent"
- **Best concert she's attended:** High Valley at the Burlington Music Festival

Corey Lewis, 29
Senior Print Producer
AbelsonTaylor, Chicago

How he got his start: There was never a time when my life wasn't affected by the transformative power of print and design. My grandfather, a first-generation immigrant from Germany, was able to start and provide for his family by working at a paper mill. My grandmother broke down barriers as an art director in the 1960s. Throughout my childhood, my father worked as a production manager at many of the best printers in the country. I remember job-shadowing my dad for a day and thinking his work was the coolest—being able to take that creative vision and make it come to life in print.

Looking back on my career development, I see how print has always been calling out to me. I went to college to study Latin. I'm incredibly grateful for my academic background and feel like it made me a more well-rounded and interesting individual. But after college with a background in a dead language, I was wondering "now what?"

My dad asked the owners of Color Image, a printer in Chicago's West Loop neighborhood, to take a chance on me and give me a full-time job. After working at printers for four years, learning everything I could, I made the switch to the agency side.

His current role: I'm a senior print producer at AbelsonTaylor, an independently owned health- and wellness-focused advertising agency based in Chicago. Whenever our clients need



something printed, I work with our talented creative team to ensure the job is designed for the appropriate production method. Then, I work with external suppliers to ensure the job is produced on time and exceeding expectations.

What he likes best about his job: I love the variety. ... One day I can be working on large-format trade show panels for an upcoming exhibit, the next day I could be working with an offset printer for a run of brochures, another day I could be working on custom-printed phone chargers with a promotional company.

His biggest career influence: My father, Charles Lewis, who's now the vice president of business development and sales at Palmer Digital Group, for helping me get my start in the industry. The owners of Color Image, Gil Semmen and Tom O'Donnell, for taking a chance on a young kid with no experience. ... Vince Campofiore, the owner of Centermark Graphics, for being my constant mentor and friend, and certainly Mitch Apley, the vice president of print production and broadcast at AbelsonTaylor, for overseeing our group of producers and providing an awesome culture where we can execute world-class creative.

His most meaningful business accomplishment: I've worked on more than seven new product launches within my last five years of working at AbelsonTaylor, bringing

new products and medications to the world. This includes everything from rare diseases, oncology and migraine prevention.

Launches are hectic. We're trying to print all the promotional materials for the brand within a short period of time as soon as the FDA says "go." That means a lot of late nights and crazy deadlines. But it's worth it, because when everything is said and done, we're helping to promote a new treatment for patients who really need it. The chance to impact lives so positively while doing what I love is certainly my most meaningful accomplishment.

Why he believes the future is bright: The level of innovation coming from the print industry continues to be astonishing. New digital presses with greater quality and capability, rivaling offset; lighter-weight fabric tension and SEG graphics in both the exhibit and OOH industries to save on drayage expense; greater and more widespread adherence to color quality and consistency with G7 color standards—the industry is rising to meet significant demands from the market and improving quality along the way.

OFF THE CLOCK

What he does for fun: I love to draw, read and go to the movies. I could really spend all day at the movies.

- **Last book he read:** I'm a history buff. I recently finished Eri Hotta's "Japan 1941: Countdown to Infamy," which examines the state of Japan immediately preceding Pearl Harbor.
- **His favorite movie:** " Fargo "



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Greta Mantell, 31
Senior Account Executive
Image Source, Kirkland, Wash.



How she got her start: A family friend recommended the industry and specifically the company to me. I was in a sales role at another company (Cintas) for two-and-a-half years right out of college, and was looking to make an industry and company change. The promo industry sounded exciting and creative, and it would allow me the opportunity to provide a reoccurring service and relationship to my clients, which appealed to me. My prior role was only geared toward “new” business, and didn’t allow me to continue building the relationships I had built. I started as an account executive and then was promoted to senior account executive, so I have always been in a sales role here at Image Source.

Her current role: My role at Image Source is to establish new prospective clients, as well as to maintain and grow existing business and market share within existing clients. I am the primary point of contact for the clients I develop, and manage and respond to their branded merchandise and apparel needs. The process first starts with better understanding my clients’ needs for an upcoming event or project, sourcing and quoting products that I believe will be a great fit, and then making sure the process from order to delivery is as seamless as possible. My teammate and account coordinator, Ashley Lindsey, is also an integral part of this process, as she works closely with me and my clients on a daily basis, helping to manage the back-end details

with the factories, such as purchase orders, proofs, order updates and shipping to ensure customer satisfaction.

Age roadblocks and

advantages: Thirty-one is definitely an age that can bring both challenges, as well as advantages. The challenges I’ve faced have been more so leading up to 31. Being a young salesperson can sometimes give the perception of being inexperienced and not as credible as someone who has been in the industry—or on this planet, for that matter—a little bit longer. Anyone who is in this industry knows how much there is to learn and all of the details involved with the wide array of products and services we provide and with experience and time, comes confidence and expertise, and, sometimes, the

best way to learn is from some of the mistakes you make along the way. Being young and making those mistakes can be difficult emotionally when you’re trying so hard to prove yourself to your clients and team. I didn’t have any industry background before coming to Image Source as an account executive, so that was also a bit challenging as well.

The advantages with being relatively young are I feel pretty in-tune with trends and technology, and represent the demographic in which much of the working world is (and is becoming) millennials, so I feel I can truly understand what’s going to be a well-received product for both my buyers and the end recipients of the merchandise. Understanding the influence technology has on our evolving society is also helpful, and I feel that growing up with technology for [a bigger] part of my life than later generations has been an advantage as well.

Her biggest career influence: The three executives here at Image Source have all been extremely influential in my career development in their own ways throughout the years.

Brian Haner, CEO of Image Source, has been a coach for me personally, as well as professionally. No matter what time of day it is, if I have a question, he’ll take the time to sit down with me and talk out the best solution. I really admire his customer-first mentality, as I feel it really aligns with my personal beliefs and values, and helps

keep me on this path. He is an extremely well-rounded individual who values a work-life balance, and he cares about each employee here at Image Source professionally and, even more importantly, personally.

Tom Goos, president of Image Source, is the king of rationalization and reasoning when presented the facts and the potential different outcomes. He is the “numbers guy,” which, unfortunately, is not my strong suit, so he’s a great person to help guide me through tough decisions that need to be made [by] weighing out all options. In addition to being the president at Image Source and having his own active book of business to manage, he was a board member for PPAI, which shows his devotion and passion for this industry, which is very energizing as well.

Jeff Holt, vice president of sales and marketing of Image Source, being my immediate boss I report to, has been extremely helpful on a daily basis, as well in helping me work through any challenges I face. He has an extremely creative outlook on presentation and solutions, and I appreciate his open-door mentality. He has had a very successful career as a sales and marketing professional, and I admire his ability to problem-solve and the ideas he brings to the table.

Her most meaningful business

accomplishment: Being awarded “Sales Team of the Year” in 2015. This was a year when I worked remotely from New York City because my husband had a job opportunity he took for two-and-a-half years that caused us to relocate. Image Source is located in Seattle, so managing my existing Seattle book of business from across the country, while continuing to grow my business, was challenging, but extremely rewarding.

OFF THE CLOCK

What she does for fun: I love running, biking, snowboarding, taking my dogs on walks and overall being active outdoors. I also love food and can honestly say there isn’t one food I don’t like. I love trying new restaurants with my husband and the more adventurous the food, the better.

■ **Last book she read:** “The Woman in Cabin 10” by Ruth Ware

■ **Her favorite movie:** “The Pursuit of Happyness”

■ **Best concert she’s attended:** Dave Matthews Band

James JB Kennedy, 33
President, Co-Founder
CURative, Cincinnati

How he got his start: I [was employed at] a mom-and-pop shop for almost five years, working my way from the digital black-and-white division to the office manager. I wanted to grow the business, but the owner didn't see the value of growing and scaling the business. I left and went into the recycling industry and [later] dental sales, but never felt the same passion as I did for marketing, printing and promotion. I was working a great job, making more money than I thought I ever could, but missed printing. My partner [Nick Wilmhoff, vice president of sales] and I started CURative two-and-a-half years ago, and he has found the same love I talked about. Despite all the long hours, reduced pay, and no security, we haven't looked back.

His current role: My official role is president of CURative, but, as all small business owners will



tell you, that sounds more prestigious than my daily activities are [in reality]. The culture here is based on everyone being flexible and supporting those who partner with us. Some days, I'm making calls, and working on quotes, and there's always an envelope to stuff, or something to

cut. Most days, it's a combination of all four and constant accounting.

What he likes best about his job: The impact Nick and I have on those who work with us—everything from giving younger, less experienced people opportunities to build skills to supporting those who choose to partner with us. We are not CURative, we are whomever's project that we are working on. Our goal isn't just to sell a trinket, or slap some ink/toner on paper, but to actually make

their project be the best it possibly can be, while making impossible deadlines. Most firms pay lip service to being a partner, but we take it to another level; anyone can be an order taker and, unfortunately, it has become the norm for many shops.

OFF THE CLOCK

What he does for fun: I'm currently training for the Flying Pig Marathon with my dog, Hopsin, but he is recovering from a surgery at the moment. ... I'm always down for going to a Reds' game.

■ **Last book he read:** "Principles: Life and Work" by Ray Dalio. ... This book covers everything Ray learned in building Bridgewater Associates, and has changed the way I view how we operate at CURative.

■ **His favorite movie:** "Jiro Dreams of Sushi"

■ **Best concert he's attended:** I was fortunate enough to see Muse with my brother and partner and his wife at Red Rocks.

Courtney Bruce, 24
Marketing Engagement
Manager
Real Sourcing Network
(RSN), New York

How she got her start: In college, I had a focus in print, and was grateful for amazing instructors. I learned everything from litho and Intaglio [printing] to screen printing. I fell in love with screen printing—the process the mess, everything. I ended up getting a job at a local screen printing shop in Austin called Under Pressure. Before my job at Under Pressure, print was swallowed up by big names like Rembrandt, Goya and Warhol. I only knew print in the fine art world, but it's so much more than being a first run, sitting in a glass box at the MOMA. It was commercial.

I then graduated school and thought it would be interesting to get a job in print. (Sidenote: I had a fine arts degree, so things did take a little longer than anticipated.) Nonetheless, I found a job working in a print lab in Dallas. I was a customer service representative for print jobs. It wasn't as hands-on as I [would have] liked, but I was excited to learn. In this time, I had met Sarah Scudder. I would help her with some graphic and site management stuff. I think she liked that I was young and new to everything and ready to learn. She had just branched off with her venture at RSN and she told me that she wanted to bring me along. Now, I am in a position and in a job that I never would have guessed I'd have out of school, but it honestly makes the



most sense, and it is a perfect fit for me.

Her current role: If I had to put it all in a box, I would say "marketing," but I am hands-on with so many components of RSN. I manage and design our websites,

build creative content, collaborate with the team on new ideas and ways to innovate our events, manage our quarterly magazine and, ultimately, I learn new stuff every day.

What she likes best about her job: I get to see ideas turn into projects and projects grow from the ground up. It's really awesome to be a part of and know my ideas, as well as the people I work directly with, are what is contributing to RSN's success.

Her most meaningful business

accomplishment: My biggest accomplishment is being part of such an interesting and strong team. We each have something to bring to the table. It's so cool that I get to be on calls with not only the president of the company, Sarah, but also Sandy Kane, the CEO—both of whom are incredibly knowledgeable about what they do. They are receptive to my ideas and creativity. It's a good feeling to be heard and know that your voice is important to the direct future of the company.

Her differentiating factor: Honestly, taking a deep breath and knowing everything is going to be OK. Change has happened since the beginning of time. It's how you adapt to that change that is important. We need to remember to listen to those older than us, because they know how the industry works and they know how the people work, but it's also important to listen to those younger than us. They might have an idea to shake things up or knowledge of a software that could make your work more effective. ... People will tell you how they feel or what they want, but it's up to us to make sure they are heard.

OFF THE CLOCK

What she does for fun: I love to get back to my creative roots by drawing or painting. I also love to cuddle with my cat, Pru, and watch movies.

■ **Last book she read:** A graphic novel called "Paper Girls" by Brian K. Vaughan and Cliff Chiang.

■ **Her favorite movie:** It's a toss-up among "Practical Magic" (because I'm a sucker for witches and romance), "Beetlejuice" and "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" [the TV series—but a Courtney classic, nonetheless].

■ **Best concert she's attended:** Dolly Parton. I saw her live with my best friend in college. ... We laughed, we cried and everything sparkled.