

40 NEXT TOP BUSINESS LEADERS UNDER FORTY WINNERS 2024



**JAMIE
ALTMAN BUGGY**
PARTNER & GENERAL COUNSEL
HARVEST LLP



**ALEXANDER
ARMSTRONG**
MECHANICAL DEPARTMENT
LEADER
RQ CONSTRUCTION



**RAJDEEP
BAINS**
SENIOR ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY
COOLEY LLP



**NIK
BANDAK**
CEO & FOUNDER
BANDAK PROJECT
MANAGEMENT



**SHELLEY
BECHT**
MANAGING DIRECTOR, FOOD &
NUTRITION U.S.
GILLCO INGREDIENTS, AN
AZELIS COMPANY



**RADHIKA
BHAVSAR**
SENIOR TECHNICAL SPECIALIST
IN INNOVATION
GLOBAL COMMUNITIES



**REXFORD
BRABSON**
FOUNDER/PARTNER
T-REX LAW, P.C.



**JAKE
BRENNER**
CO-FOUNDER & CEO
SHIPLAB



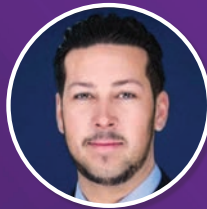
**ALLISON
BROWNLEE**
FOUNDER AND CLINICAL
DIRECTOR
STRONGER TOGETHER
COMMUNITY SERVICES



**SARAH
BUCHANAN**
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
SAN DIEGO HOUSING
FEDERATION



**KASSANDRA
CASTILLO**
PARTNER
WILSON SONSINI
GOODRICH & ROSATI



**CAMERON
CELESTE**
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS &
COMMUNITY RELATIONS
DISTRICT ATTORNEY OF
SAN DIEGO COUNTY



**THERESA
CUNNINGHAM**
DIRECTOR OF DEI & COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
SAN DIEGO TOURISM
AUTHORITY



**HEATHER
DIAMOND**
SVP, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND
COMMUNITY RELATIONS
SAN DIEGO COUNTY
CREDIT UNION (SDCCU)



**SEAN
DRAKE**
ASSOCIATE
LATITUDE 33 PLANNING &
ENGINEERING



**JASON
FISCHBEIN**
PARTNER
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**ZACH
FLECHSIG**
VICE PRESIDENT
THE MICHAELS
ORGANIZATION



**JEFF
FORBES**
PRESIDENT, CEO
THE PATRIOT GROUP



**BRYNN
GIBBS**
FOUNDER & CEO
CONSUMER FUSION



**MELANIE
HAYNES**
SENIOR DIRECTOR
CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD



**MIKE
HOWARD**
CEO
JETSETTER CHARTER JET



**SUFI
KARAIEN**
EXECUTIVE CHEF, FOOD &
BEVERAGE
SODEXO LIVE!, SAN DIEGO
CONVENTION CENTER



**MICHAEL
LENNY**
CO-FOUNDER
ZIPDEV



**NICOLE
LINCOLN**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
EARNED MEDIA
IGNITE VISIBILITY



**RICHARD
LOPEZ**
CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER
FOUNDERFUEGO



**KRISTINA
MARTZ**
EXECUTIVE OPERATIONS
OFFICER
NATIONAL MARINE
MAMMAL FOUNDATION



**SARINA
MORETTI**
DIRECTOR OF PRIVATE EVENT SALES
ASM GLOBAL / DEL MAR
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SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL COUNTIES
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PADRIQUE-HAY**
CEO
JUJU'S KITCHEN



**CAREY
REDDICK**
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HOPE LENDING



**MATTHEW
REIBERT**
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
PE MANAGEMENT GROUP



**AARON
ROCKWELL**
VICE PRESIDENT OF WEST COAST
OPERATIONS
TRIDENT MARITIME
SYSTEMS



**JUSTIN
ROSCOE**
VP, LEARNING & ORGANIZATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
NORTH ISLAND CREDIT UNION
A DIVISION OF CALIFORNIA CREDIT UNION



**EPIPHANY
RYU**
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
EPISCI (EPISYS SCIENCE,
INC.)



**PRIYANKA
SHAH**
FOUNDER AND CEO
ELEPHANT HEAD
COMMUNICATIONS, LLC



**MEGAN
SHEENA**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND
HEAD OF ACCOUNTING
SHOPCORE PROPERTIES



**KENDRA
SHERWOOD**
HEAD OF GROWTH INITIATIVES,
NORTH AMERICA
CYNCLY



**WEST
STEFANY**
CEO
WEST COAST GAMES



**YOLANDA
VELAZCO**
ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT
MANAGER
PLATT / WHITELAW
ARCHITECTS, INC.



**KATIE
WELLING**
CLPF
FOSTER THORNTON
WELLING

40 NEXT TOP BUSINESS LEADERS UNDER FORTY WINNERS 2024



JAMIE ALTMAN BUGGY
PARTNER & GENERAL COUNSEL
HARVEST LLP

Jamie Altman Buggy is an extraordinary commercial real estate litigation attorney and serves as Harvest LLP's General Counsel and head of the firm's litigation department. She seeks to help her clients avoid disputes that could disrupt their business deals and threaten their larger objectives. Yet when litigation proves necessary, she is a fierce, unrelenting advocate and has no problem taking aggressive stances to obtain fair and favorable results for her clients. In addition to being a passionate and mindful advocate for her clients and their business goals, she steered Harvest through its startup phase and is her colleagues' go-to resource on topics including risk management, navigating new laws and ethical compliance. Jamie serves her community through charitable work including tenures on the boards of Home Start, which aims to strengthen families and prevent child abuse, and the Veterans Research Alliance, which raises money to fund innovative medical research for veterans.



ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG
MECHANICAL DEPARTMENT LEADERS
RQ CONSTRUCTION

Alexander has played a pivotal role in developing two successful start-up companies. His ability to identify market opportunities and drive growth has been instrumental in the success of these ventures. One of Alexander's most recent notable achievements is the establishment and growth of RQ's mechanical self-perform division. Under his leadership, this division expanded to a team of 300 employees in just three years achieving a backlog of over \$200 million. In parallel to his corporate achievements, Alexander Armstrong also served as the 2024 AHRAE president.



RAJDEEP BAINS
SENIOR ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY
COOLEY LLP

Rajdeep Bains is a senior associate in the M&A group at Cooley LLP and advises his clients through public and private transactions, including de-SPAC acquisitions and cross-border deals, representing an aggregate value of more than \$25 billion. Throughout his career, Rajdeep has demonstrated a deep understanding for his client's businesses and negotiated their positions in strategic alternatives, establishing his reputation as a trusted advisor in complex transactions. In addition to his professional achievements at Cooley, Rajdeep, a graduate of USD School of law, is a coach for its Transactional Law Team, dedicating his time each year to teaching and preparing competing students for their competitions and future practice in transactional law. He also advises multiple pro bono clients in their corporate governance and transactional needs, assists local entrepreneurs with their startup needs, and served as a board member for the South Asian Bar Association of San Diego.



NIK BANDAK
CEO & FOUNDER
BANDAK PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Nik Bandak is the Founder and CEO of Bandak Project Management, a third-party Owner's Representative real estate project management firm based in San Diego. Bandak Project Management has become a major player in the industry, bringing a unique and sought-after people-forward approach to deliver projects that meet or exceed their client's goals. Bandak has grown its project load from 5 to 30 projects annually, managing volume from \$100M to more than \$1 billion, and has continued to hire new team members year over year as its client roster and services have expanded. Nik and his team support a myriad of clients from UCSD, Vuori, Roche, The Conrad Prebys Foundation, the YMCA, and more. Their services extend throughout the State, leading efforts on many complicated projects, including projects focused on biomanufacturing, clean room manufacturing, research and development, aquatic life safety systems, and phased projects in occupied settings.



Gillco Ingredients, an Azelis Company
is proud to congratulate

Shelley Becht

Managing Director, Food & Nutrition U.S.,
for being named a WINNER for San Diego Business
Journal's 40 Next Top Business Leaders Under 40



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40 NEXT TOP BUSINESS LEADERS UNDER FORTY WINNERS 2024



SHELLEY BECHT
MANAGING DIRECTOR, FOOD & NUTRITION US
GILCO INGREDIENTS, AN AZELIS COMPANY

Shelley Becht has worked at Gilco Ingredients, an Azelis Company, since 2015. As Managing Director, Shelley oversees the entirety of the Food and Nutrition business in the U.S. for Azelis, a \$4.3 billion global company in the specialty chemical and food ingredient business. Shelley's dedication and work ethic inspire everyone around her. She embodies both fierce determination and genuine compassion, always ready to support her team while motivating them to achieve their best. She fosters a collaborative environment with both her employees and supplier partners, actively listening and strategizing as the company navigates growth and innovation. Under her leadership, the company achieved a remarkable 31% year-over-year revenue increase from 2023-2024. A native San Diegan, Shelley is active in her community with her husband and two sons.



RADHIKA BHAVSAR
SENIOR TECHNICAL SPECIALIST IN
INNOVATION
GLOBAL COMMUNITIES

Radhika Bhavsar specializes in nonprofit innovation, driving transformative social impact and change in the public sector. Holding degrees in social science and public health, Radhika's impact includes working with the U.S. Department of Defense to establish the U.S. Military Health Systems' inaugural population health program, supporting the design of the pandemic response at Partners in Health, building new business models, and shaping product innovation at the March of Dimes, and digitizing healthcare in Rwanda's Northern Province during her Global Health Corps fellowship in 2016-2017. She is an active lecturer in global health at UCSD, and mentors students on practical project management tools in the field as well as supporting their career development. Currently, Radhika serves as a Senior Technical Specialist in Innovation at Global Communities, bringing together local ingenuity and global insights to save lives, advance equity and secure strong futures.



REXFORD BRABSON
FOUNDER & PARTNER
T-REX LAW PC

Rex Brabson, Founder & Partner of T-Rex Law, P.C., has over 10 years of experience working in the intellectual property law space. Rex attended San Diego State for undergraduate and went on to attend University of San Diego School of Law. During law school and after, Rex worked with boutique-mid size intellectual property firms. Recognizing there was a significant need in the market for an intellectual property law firm that made representation more accessible for individuals and small businesses, Rex set out in 2019 to create a law firm that operates 100% on flat fees, allowing business owners to be able to retain a lawyer and being able to plan for the costs within their budget. Since the founding of T-Rex Law, Rex and his team have helped hundreds of clients nationwide not only build but protect their intellectual property profile. Rex has also become the No. 1 most active Trademark Trial and Appeal Board attorney in the nation.



JAKE BRENNER
CO-FOUNDER & CEO
SHIPLAB

Jake Brenner is the co-founder and CEO of ShipLab, a San Diego-based eCommerce-focused order fulfillment and inventory management company with a commitment to providing its customers with simple, reliable and effective services. Under Brenner's leadership, ShipLab expanded from 800 sq. ft. to 175,000 sq. ft. of warehouse space in only six years and has serviced over 100 clients throughout that time. The company works with a wide range of clients, from small startups to large brands such as GoPro and Liquid Death. Brenner is a member of EO San Diego and serves as the CEO of MRKT, a digital marketing agency specializing in eCommerce growth. Brenner's entrepreneurial journey began at an early age. He started his first job painting parking curbs at age 11 and at 14, he built his first website selling bodyboards to friends and family. He has since founded and sold multiple eCommerce businesses including Boo Diapers.



SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

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WINNER

THANK YOU

for inspiring us with your unwavering commitment to our region by empowering students to reach their academic and career goals.

CONGRATULATIONS

On being selected a 40 Next Top Business Leader Under 40!

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Dr. Tina Ngo Bartel, Ed.D., PMP

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West Coast Games is a game development company founded by West Stefany. At West Coast Games, we believe that gaming is more than just entertainment — it's a platform for creativity, connection, and exploration.

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CONGRATULATIONS

WEST STEFANY

Founder and CEO of



For being a 2024
40 Under 40 WINNER!

Welcome to the Future of Gaming

West Coast Games is revolutionizing the future of gaming. Utilizing the power of play to educate and inspire, West Coast Games is dedicated to bringing a curated selection of educational games with elements of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). The company's mission is to provide gamers of all ages with immersive experiences that entertain, challenge, and educate. Join them as they redefine the boundaries of gaming and unlock the potential of interactive learning.

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ALLISON BROWNLEE
FOUNDER AND CLINICAL DIRECTOR
STRONGER TOGETHER COMMUNITY SERVICES

Dr. Allison Brownlee is a dedicated mental health advocate and founder of the San Diego nonprofit organization, Stronger Together Community Services (STCS). Dr. Brownlee is committed to making a profound impact in the community by offering low or no-cost, trauma-informed, inclusive therapy services. She has taken a keen interest in empowering and mentoring the next generation of women leaders in the field of psychotherapy. STCS is a training and education facility for clinicians in master's and doctoral programs across the state of California and is well known for their commitment to quality education in a supportive environment. What sets Dr. Brownlee apart are her professional achievements, building a thriving organization through the pandemic and her unwavering commitment to social responsibility and DEIB-related projects.



SARAH BUCHANAN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
SAN DIEGO HOUSING FEDERATION

Sarah Buchanan, originally from a small Oklahoma town, embodies a lifetime commitment to community service and empathy. With over two decades of nonprofit experience, Sarah serves as Executive Vice President for the San Diego Housing Federation, where she fosters a culture of authenticity & kindness. Known for her dedication to community service, Sarah volunteers extensively, organizes fundraisers, and mentors foster youth in music. An active Board Member for Volunteer with Cheli, Vice Chair of Circulate San Diego, & Chair of ICON National Cares Foundation, she's deeply committed to making a difference. Sarah's dedication and passion for service, creativity and connection shines through her work and into her personal life. Outside of her community service endeavors, Sarah finds joy in exploring the world, expressing creativity in different forms, and building meaningful connections with others.



KASSANDRA CASTILLO
PARTNER
WILSON SONSINI GOODRICH & ROSATI

Kassandra Castillo is a corporate partner in Wilson Sonsini's San Diego office, where she advises emerging life sciences companies and investment funds as they bring cutting-edge therapeutics to market. Kassandra joined Wilson Sonsini after graduating from USD Law School and was elevated to partner within eight years of practice. With expertise in private company venture financing transactions, Kassandra has advised: Asset manager Novo Holdings as lead investor in 15-plus multimillion-dollar transactions, including a \$103 million financing of Reunion Neuroscience; SR One, Norwest Venture Partners, and Delos Capital on their investment in Zenas BioPharma's \$200 million financing; and emerging San Diego company Tempo Therapeutics on its \$12 million series A financing. An engaged leader within the 1,000-plus-lawyer firm, Kassandra spent two years as co-chair of Wilson Sonsini's associates committee and serves as a San Diego hiring partner on the firm's law school recruiting committee.



CAMERON CELESTE
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS & COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
DISTRICT ATTORNEY OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Cameron is a young executive who leads DA Summer Stephan's National, Statewide & Local business affairs. He represents the District Attorney at public events, builds and manages local partnerships that help further the DA's mission to keep our communities safe and serves as a liaison to the diverse communities throughout San Diego County. He focuses on creating a more peaceful & prosperous society by partnering with business and community leaders to build safer communities and a thriving local economy. He leads the office's diplomatic efforts with the U.S. State Department's Global Ties Program via the Diplomacy Council serving as a program Ambassador and spearheads the national/statewide outreach efforts to combat crimes such as Organized Retail Theft. He manages external affairs and public relations with business associations, corporations, refugee/newcomer nonprofits and community groups countywide.





Bandak
PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Congratulations
to **Nik Bandak**,
CEO & Founder, for being selected
as a winner for the San Diego
Business Journal's
40 Next Top Business
Leaders Under 40 for
2024. This well-
deserved recognition
is a testament to your
outstanding leader-
ship, dedication
and community
involvement,
thank you!

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL
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WINNER

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SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL
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WINNER

Fisher Phillips is proud of our trailblazer winner and

**Congratulates all of the 2024
40 Under 40 winners.**



Jason A. Fischbein
Partner
San Diego
858.666.3307
jfischbein@fisherphillips.com

With almost 600 attorneys in 41 offices across the United States and Mexico, Fisher Phillips is an international labor and employment firm providing practical business solutions for employers' workplace legal problems. We regularly advise and counsel clients on issues surrounding wage and hour, employment discrimination and harassment, litigation, workplace safety, immigration, trade secrets and non-competes, and more.

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THERESA CUNNINGHAM
DIRECTOR OF DEI & COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
SAN DIEGO TOURISM AUTHORITY

Theresa Cunningham is the inaugural Director of DEI & Community Engagement at the San Diego Tourism Authority. In this role, Theresa creates organizational KPIs, manages the award-winning Tourism Accelerator program, partners with HR, Sales, Marketing, and Membership on various initiatives, and represents SDTA on local community boards. Previously, she was Vice President for Reality Changers, leading strategic planning and community partnerships. Her experience spans organizational development, research, and consulting for organizations like Teach For All and UNESCO. Theresa holds an MA from Columbia University and a BA from the University of Southern California, with certifications in Diversity Equity & Inclusion, HR, and Change Management. She serves on the advisory board for the San Diego Perinatal Equity Initiative and has been a board member for YNP San Diego and the University of San Diego. She has received numerous community awards and is a 2023 graduate of LEAD Advance.



HEATHER DIAMOND
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY RELATIONS
SAN DIEGO COUNTY CREDIT UNION

Heather Diamond is Senior Vice President, Business Development and Community Relations at SDCCU, one of the nation's top credit unions and ranked a top five credit union in California by Forbes. Diamond is responsible for defining the organization's overall community relations, public relations and business development strategy. Diamond's leadership and influence in San Diego is affecting positive change in the community. SDCCU is a proud community partner, supporting dozens of non-profit organizations and participating in hundreds of community events each year throughout Southern California. The partnerships with these philanthropies allow SDCCU to help positively shape the lives of those in our communities through volunteerism, financial support and creating public awareness. Diamond has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Colorado Mesa University and an MBA from San Diego State University.



SEAN DRAKE
ASSOCIATE
LATITUDE 33 PLANNING
& ENGINEERING

Sean Drake is an Associate with Latitude 33 Planning & Engineering and is at the forefront of the next generation of civil engineering leaders who are shaping our region's physical spaces. With 18 years of experience, Sean contributes his knowledge, energetic work ethic, and creativity to Latitude 33, its projects, and its culture. His recent work may be found at Oceanside Fire Station #1, Naval Base Coronado, Torrey Pines Fire Station, many K-12 campuses, Palomar Health projects in Escondido, and more. Sean is a California Registered Professional Civil Engineer, and a California Qualified Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan Developer/Practitioner. Outside of the office, Sean is an accomplished musician and has been studying music for more than 20 years. He plays in a local band and has been nominated for a San Diego Music Award. Sean is happily married and an attentive father to two young children.



JASON FISCHBEIN
PARTNER
FISHER PHILLIPS

Jason is an experienced trial attorney who represents and counsels employers in all aspects of labor and employment law, including employment discrimination, wrongful termination, harassment, retaliation, and wage-hour class action lawsuits. Jason is an advocate and collaborator for his clients, and enjoys advising them regarding all areas of their daily employment practices and other developments in the legal landscape. He speaks Spanish fluently and particularly enjoys utilizing his Spanish language abilities in his legal practice. He is also an adjunct professor in the Extended Learning program at California State University San Marcos, where he teaches a course titled Legal Issues for HR Professionals. Jason is a proud member of Lawyers Club of San Diego. Jason is a native San Diegan who relishes staying involved with – and giving back to – his home community. Most recently, Jason has participated in local food bank initiatives and has volunteered as a high school baseball coach.



LEADERS WHO
CULTIVATE

Congratulations to
Jamie Altman Buggy
on her selection as a Winner
for the 40 Next Top Business
Leaders Under Forty 2024!



Jamie Altman Buggy,
Partner & General Counsel

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL



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Congratulations 40 Under 40 Finalist,
Sam McGovern!

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ZACH FLECHSIG
VICE PRESIDENT
THE MICHAELS ORGNIZATION

Zach Flechsig is a Vice President of Investment Management at The Michaels Organization. He oversees approximately 1,200 privatized Navy barracks in San Diego. In addition to his asset management responsibilities, he sources and underwrites ground-up development, acquisition, and re-syndication opportunities for market-rate and affordable housing opportunities. Most recently, he participated in the acquisition of more than 10,000 affordable housing units valued at \$1.2B through a joint venture between The Michaels Organization and Urban Investment Group within Goldman Sachs. He is also intimately involved in the public-private partnership redevelopment of two state-owned blocks in downtown San Diego which proposes more than 1,000 residential units and 400,000 square feet of office space at 1350 Front Street. Prior to this role he served as a Surface Warfare Officer in the United States Navy.



JEFF FORBES
PRESIDENT & CEO
THE PATRIOT GROUP

Jeff Forbes, is President and CEO of The Patriot Group, headquartered in San Diego. In 2007, Jeff joined the United States Marine Corps. Despite facing challenges and sustaining injuries that eventually led to his Honorable Discharge, Jeff's commitment to service did not waver. Post-military, he assumed the role of Section Leader at the Wounded Warrior Battalion at Naval Medical Center San Diego which laid the groundwork for the unique culture at The Patriot Group. Under Jeff's visionary leadership, The Patriot Group has earned numerous accolades, being named Veterans in Business Network, Teaming Partner of the Year, for their outstanding work as a subcontractor on SDGE Projects and was recently awarded the John K. Lopez Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise award for business excellence by the California Department of Veterans Affairs. Furthermore, Jeff was recognized as one of San Diego's Top 50 most influential Veterans by the SDBJ.



BRYNN GIBBS
FOUNDER & CEO
CONSUMER FUSION

Brynn Gibbs is the founder and CEO of Consumer Fusion, an AI-powered reputation management, local listing, and social media platform trusted by over ten thousand businesses, including some of the country's most well-known brands. At Consumer Fusion, Brynn has developed proprietary AI-powered software that helps companies maintain exceptional online reputations. Their platform enables businesses to monitor their online presence, enhance customer service, and improve visibility to attract new customers. Under her leadership, Consumer Fusion has been recognized as a top marketing partner in franchising by Entrepreneur magazine and has twice been featured on the Inc 5000 list of fastest-growing companies. Personally, Brynn has been honored as one of the top 50 women of influence in technology, LA Times Women of Influence, and Leaders of Influence in Marketing and PR.



MELANIE HAYNES
SENIOR DIRECTOR
CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD

Melanie was recently promoted to Senior Director with Cushman & Wakefield in San Diego. Beginning her commercial real estate career in San Diego in late 2017, Melanie has brokered over 200 transactions totaling over 1.3 MSF and over 30,000 land acres totaling more than \$260 million in consideration—most of her career has come against the backdrop of a challenging pandemic environment. She's a former C&W Rookie of the Year for San Diego and has also won other NextGen and Leadership industry accolades. One of few women CRE brokers in all San Diego, Melanie's committed to paving a path for other young women as an active member of NAIOP and Board Member of NAIOP-Foundation, a member of C&W's Women's Integrated Network and Future Leader's. She also works with local universities to mentor young professionals. Melanie serves on the board for San Diego ChildHelp Chapter and supports other community organizations.



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Congratulations

Justin Roscoe, CPTM

VP, Learning & Organizational Development at North Island Credit Union

A Division of California Credit Union

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CONGRATULATIONS

MEGAN SHEENA!

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, HEAD OF ACCOUNTING

SHOPCORE PROPERTIES

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MIKE HOWARD
CEO
JETSETTER CHARTER JET SERVICE

Mike Howard is the owner and CEO of Jetsetter Charter Jet Service. At 36 years old, he is a dedicated husband and father to son Elijah Howard and daughter Sofia Howard. Under his leadership, Jetsetter has grown to eight figures in just five years. Beyond his professional success, Mike enjoys coaching his son's sports teams and is passionate about mentoring other entrepreneurs as they embark on their entrepreneurial journeys.



SUFI KARAIEN
EXECUTIVE CHEF, FOOD & BEVERAGE
SODEXO LIVE! SAN DIEGO CONVENTION CENTER

As the Executive Chef at the San Diego Convention Center, Sufi Karaïen believes sustainability and locality should be practiced daily and with great enthusiasm. Whether cooking backstage at a concert, on a yacht, in the infield during a Formula One race, or at the Convention Center for thousands of convention attendees, Chef Sufi's concept is always the same: carefully written menus, a strong team, and a comprehensive knowledge of logistics are the ingredients of a successful event. Since joining the San Diego Convention Center team in 2017, Chef Sufi has supported the success of countless receptions, plated dinners, community events, and high-profile events such as Comic-Con. His leadership is evident in the rapport he has developed with his team and clientele. In addition to keeping clients happy with his attention to detail, he partners with small businesses and charitable organizations throughout San Diego, reinforcing his commitment to the local community.



MICHAEL LENNY
CO-FOUNDER
ZIPDEV

Michael Lenny is a graduate from San Diego State University and is currently one of the Co-Founders of Zipdev. Zipdev is a remote technical staffing firm that identifies software engineers from LatAm, who speak fluent English, have the correct technical aptitude, and can work in US timezones. Prior to starting Zipdev, Michael lived in Lima, Peru where he built Summit Education. Summit Education is a professional english learning business for professionals in Peru to enhance their fluency with the English language. Michael Lenny is very detail-oriented, and process driven.



NICOLE LINCOLN
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, EARNED MEDIA
IGNITE VISIBILITY

Nicole Lincoln embodies the epitome of leadership and innovation, boasting a stellar career trajectory in digital marketing and operations. As the Senior Vice President of Earned Media at Ignite Visibility, Nicole has orchestrated transformative initiatives to drive operational efficiency, revenue growth, and departmental excellence. With a keen eye for financial analysis, she crafted comprehensive department growth plans, spearheaded the reengineering of processes to incorporate AI, and automated a revenue forecast for the company. Nicole's professional journey began as a Project Manager at Ignite, where she ascended to executive leadership, overseeing a team of 60 employees. With a Marketing Management degree from Virginia Tech and a master's in public health from George Mason University, Nicole's combined her academic expertise to be published in Journal of Public Health Research.



Congratulations

DR. ALLISON BROWNLEE

LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST

#89484

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WINNER

Dr. Brownlee is the Founder and Clinical Director of Stronger Together Community Services (STCS), a nonprofit mental health agency in San Diego. STCS is a well recognized training site for students in masters and doctoral programs in the field of psychology . Dr. Brownlee is known for her ability to create a supportive environment that prepares the next generation of clinicians to become quality mental health practitioners.

Dr. Brownlee and her team at Stronger Together Community Services offer therapy for individuals, couples, and families throughout San Diego County. Sessions are held via telehealth or in person at their Mission Bay office. STCS provides affordable counseling using a sliding fee scale with scholarship opportunities for those in financial need. The therapists at STCS are well trained and provide evidence based practices that are shown to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety and decrease relationship conflicts. At STCS clients are supported to reach their full potential through empowerment, connection, and community.

www.strongertogethersd.org | 858.215.2248

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

UPCOMING LISTS

AUGUST 19

MBA PROGRAMS

AUGUST 19

OFFICE / RETAIL / INDUSTRIAL PARKS

SEPTEMBER 2

RESTAURANTS

SEPTEMBER 2

CATERING COMPANIES

SEPTEMBER 2

HOTELS

If you have any questions, or if you would like to be on one of our lists, please contact sdbjlists@sdbj.com

40 NEXT TOP BUSINESS LEADERS UNDER FORTY WINNERS 2024



RICHARD LOPEZ
CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER
FOUNDERFUEGO

Richard Lopez is the Chief Learning Officer for FounderFuego, creating inclusive learning opportunities for diverse founders and their teams. As a bilingual Cuban-American, he leverages his MBA and multicultural skills in talent development, drawing on over 15 years of hospitality experience with Food Network, Pepsi, and Norwegian Cruise Line. His expertise includes team building and training for mega events such as the South Beach Wine and Food Festival, training 6,000 hospitality workers for resorts, creating courses for 30,000 cruise line employees, and advocating for tech equity. During the pandemic, he led public health recovery efforts to upskill 3,000 frontline workers locally in San Diego, statewide throughout California, and Arizona. This unique combination allows him to deliver effective, inclusive learning opportunities in English and Spanish. He offers training, workforce development, recruiting, and global leadership programs for public, private, and government sectors.



KRISTINA MARTZ
EXECUTIVE OPERATIONS OFFICER
NATIONAL MARINE MAMMAL
FOUNDATION

Kristina Martz is the Executive Operations Officer at the National Marine Mammal Foundation in San Diego, a global leader in marine mammal science, medicine, and conservation. With over a decade of marine mammal care experience, Kristina has supported vital conservation efforts, including VaquitaCPR, an unprecedented international effort to rescue the endangered vaquita porpoise from extinction. She was instrumental in launching NMMF's endangered species program, Operation GRACE, and oversees communications, strategic development, and community engagement, notably partnering with Girl Scouts of San Diego for ocean-based STEM education. A lifelong Girl Scout and community volunteer, Kristina also contributes to the Carlsbad School District. She holds a B.S. in Aquatic Biology from UC Santa Barbara and a M.A. in Nonprofit Leadership & Management from the University of San Diego. She strives to inspire future generations, including her children, to care for our planet and communities.



SARINA MORETTI
DIRECTOR OF PRIVATE EVENT SALES
ASM GLOBAL / DEL MAR FAIRGROUNDS
& RACETRACK

Making her mark in the live events industry by age 31, Sarina earned distinction as the youngest Director of Private Event Sales nationally at both Live Nation and ASM Global. Her expertise in launching and expanding private event sales programs across Southern California has a proven track record of success, most notably Live Nation's concert venues. Now at the iconic Del Mar Fairgrounds & Racetrack, she has revived the Private Events program, as a cherished endeavor for the region and a vibrant testament to Sarina's vision and leadership. Her career journey began as an event planner. Yet beyond her impressive professional accomplishments, Sarina's heart beats to the rhythm of dance, live music, and the San Diego sunshine. All of which has led to the growth of local charity Church of Music while serving as their Event Director for two years.



TINA NGO BARTEL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR SAN DIEGO
AND IMPERIAL COUNTIES COMMUNITY

Dr. Tina Ngo Bartel has dedicated her career to helping people achieve their academic and career goals. As Executive Director of the Center of Excellence (COE) for the San Diego & Imperial Counties Community Colleges, Tina leads research that responds to community needs and helps advance students' economic and social mobility. During the past two years, regional organizations used Tina's research to raise over \$20M in grants for education and workforce development. Tina spearheaded the largest-ever regional community college professional development program for over 700 employees. In 2024, her work on Black student equity was featured on CBS 8 San Diego, highlighting critical findings to foster a more inclusive community. Recognized with the 2023 Community, Economic, and Workforce Research Award, Tina's efforts have catalyzed strategic investments benefiting students and businesses. Tina earned her doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of California San Diego.



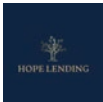
STEPHEN PADRIQUE-HAY
CEO
JUJU'S KITCHEN

Stephen is a visionary business owner who made a bold transition from the solar/electric industry to follow his passion for helping others lead a healthy lifestyle. Taking a leap of faith, he established a unique kitchen that specializes in handcrafted, healthy alternatives tailored specifically to individual physical needs and goals. His innovative menu spans a diverse array of cultures, each meal accompanied by professional caloric intake information and as of recent a program that works directly with individuals' bloodwork and nutritional requirements. Dedicated to sustainability, Juju's Kitchen ready-made meals come with his unwavering commitment to promoting health and well-being, coupled with his drive to inspire others to live better and longer lives.



CAREY REDDICK
BROKER
HOPE LENDING

I have known Carey for years. As a young leader of a lending firm, I have been given the opportunity to work with this amazing leader who is a voice. And does so much in the community. Carey was able to launch vouchers to low-income families and help change lives. Our work in the community educating low-income families, LGBTQ members on finance, housing, and home ownership has been my driving force to growing and enriching our communities all around us here in the Carey has been awarded a WINNER by the National Mortgage Brokers in DC as the TOP NEW-BROKER SHOP for the Southwest in the Nation. This was such an honor to show our work with the community is helping. Here at HOPE lending we take a portion of proceeds and give back to a nonprofit called Uniforms for HOPE. Over the year HOPE Lending has been able to fun over 20 million in loans for local low-end families here in San Diego. From Blk Forbs 40 under 40, Business Leader 40 under 40. - Matthew Van Court



MATTHEW REIBERT
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
PE MANAGEMENT GROUP

Matthew started his career in real estate in 2010 overseeing the Real Estate sales department for Pacifica Real Estate Services. During his time with Pacifica, he held several roles in sales and finance eventually settling in as Director of Finance. He briefly stepped away from the company as Director of FP&A at CommonGrounds Workplace helping them grow their footprint to 1M square feet nationally. Matthew returned to Pacifica in early 2020 to spin off PE Management Group, a multifaceted Real Estate hospitality management company. PEMG has grown to manage \$1 billion of residential and commercial real estate along with iconic San Diego assets such as Belmont Park, Lake San Marcos and Orfila Vineyards.



AARON ROCKWELL
VICE PRESIDENT OF WEST COAST OPERATIONS
TRIDENT MARITIME SYSTEMS

Aaron has been a pillar of the San Diego ship construction and repair industry for the last 17 years, apart from two years helping to launch a new shipyard in Vancouver, BC. He joined Trident Maritime Systems and grew the San Diego operation from 100 employees and ~\$50M annual revenue in 2017, to 220 employees and ~\$150M in revenue in 2024. Aaron was promoted to Vice President of West Coast Operations in January 2023 and added operations in Portland, Seattle and Vancouver BC with more than 250 tradespeople, engineers, managers, planners and supply chain professionals dedicated to Safety, Quality, Cost and Schedule adherence in Maritime Projects. Aaron is passionate about helping people achieve their full potential and believes that empowerment builds successful teams. He promotes diversity in the maritime industry, believing that a team with varied experience finds more creative solutions to complex problems.



40 NEXT TOP BUSINESS LEADERS UNDER FORTY WINNERS 2024



JUSTIN ROSCOE
VICE PRESIDENT - LEARNING &
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
NORTH ISLAND CREDIT UNION

Justin Roscoe is the Vice President of Learning & Organizational Development at North Island Credit Union. He oversees the efforts for employee growth & development, including developing employee technical skills, interpersonal skills, leadership skills, business acumen, and substantiated career growth. He recently spearheaded a 6-month leadership training program, which was recognized as a finalist for the CLN's 2024 Trailblazer Award. Justin serves on several committees within the credit union and in the broader financial services industry - all with an emphasis centered around improving employee culture and work life. Justin has been enhancing enterprise employee training programs for more than a dozen years. Justin received his bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of San Diego, is a Certified Professional in Training Management (CPTM), is a published author and speaker, and is currently pursuing a professional certification in Human Resources Management.



EPIPHANY RYU
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
EPISCI- EPISYS SCIENCE INC.

Epihany Ryu is Chief Operating Officer for EpiSci, a software company that develops next generation, Tactical AI autonomy solutions for national security problems. She is responsible for scaling business operations, spearheading cross-functional collaboration, streamlining processes and turning strategy into reality. Her operational expertise plays a pivotal role in EpiSci's success, positioning the company at the forefront of innovation in the dynamic landscape of autonomy and AI for defense. EpiSci's software has operated on over 18 unique military platforms with land, sea and air applications. Ryu also spearheaded negotiations for a future acquisition deal which will enable the company to maintain autonomy while scaling operations. She graduated from the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley with a B.S. in Business Administration and has a Certificate in Technology Entrepreneurship from the UC Berkeley Sutardja Center for Entrepreneurship & Technology.



PRIYANKA SHAH
FOUNDER & CEO
ELEPHANT HEAD COMMUNICATIONS LLC

As the founder and CEO of Elephant Head Communications, Priyanka leverages over 17 years of healthcare communications expertise to guide life sciences and biopharma companies from R&D to commercial success. Her deep industry knowledge, underpinned by values of hard work, grit, empathy, and humility, has been pivotal in crafting influential strategies for precision oncology firms like Kinnate Biopharma and Mirati Therapeutics. She's also played a key role in managing high-profile corporate communications and crisis management during her tenure at Bristol Myers Squibb, especially during the acquisitions of Celgene and Myokardia, and throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Priyanka's dedication to her craft and her ability to handle complex business challenges have been recognized with honors such as the San Diego Business Journal's leader of influence and PRWeek's "40 under 40." Complementing her professional pursuits, she actively contributes to health nonprofits, enriching the SD community.



MEGAN SHEENA
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT & HEAD OF
ACCOUNTING
SHOPCORE PROPERTIES

Megan Sheena was recently promoted to Senior Vice President and Head of Accounting at ShopCore Property, a leadership position she earned after nearly a decade of service with the Blackstone Real Estate Portfolio Company. Megan oversees ShopCore's corporate, development and property accounting, treasury, lease administration, tenant recoveries and collection operations. Her leadership advances the firm's mission of bringing value to tenants and local communities through its portfolio spanning 10 million SF of community and grocery-anchored centers across the U.S. Megan leads ShopCore's Culture Crew initiative aimed at team engagement and mentorship. She's also been involved with the company's Core Giving program since its inception, contributing to the donation of 20 million+ meals to fight childhood hunger. Megan also actively mentors rising professionals and participates in The Women's Network at her alma mater San Diego State University and is an active member of CREW San Diego.



KENDRA SHERWOOD
HEAD OF GROWTH INITIATIVES,
NORTH AMERICA
CYNCLY

Kendra Sherwood is the newly appointed Head of Growth Initiatives for Cynclly. Over the past decade, she has progressed from a mid-market sales executive, most recently running a Channel Partnership Program at a top HCM software company. In her current role, Kendra focuses on removing roadblocks for Sales & Leadership teams, allowing them to prioritize revenue-generating activities. In her efforts, Kendra consistently uncovers and capitalizes on opportunities for expansion, partnership and revenue growth. Kendra is also committed to her professional development, aspiring to evolve into a Chief Strategy Officer. Kendra's extensive experience and unwavering dedication position her as a pivotal force within the organization.



WEST STEFANY
CEO
WEST COAST GAMES

Meet West Stefany, a 13-year-old trailblazer in the tech world, who is redefining what it means to be a young entrepreneur. As founder and CEO of West Coast Games, a growing software and game development company, West is making waves in the industry with his innovative creations. From a young age, West demonstrated an insatiable talent for science, technology, and problem solving. His passion led him to found CoderKamp, a company dedicated to teaching kids coding in an engaging way, sparking a passion for technology in the next generation. With a drive to innovate and educate, West founded his company, West Coast Games, where he brings educational and imaginative video games to life. His featured game, Rollercoaster Builder, incorporates physics with gameplay. As a young tech executive on the rise, West opens possibilities, inspiring others with his entrepreneurial spirit to make a difference in the world of technology and beyond.



YOLANDA VELAZCO
ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT MANAGER
PLATT/WHITELAW ARCHITECTS

Yolanda Velazco is a rising star at Platt/Whitelaw Architects, Inc., one of San Diego's oldest architecture firms. An architectural project manager with extensive experience in construction management, she serves as a vital link between design and construction teams shaping San Diego's public spaces. Her impressive portfolio includes working on the firm's restoration of Balboa Park's iconic Botanical Building, the North Coast Crisis Stabilization Unit in Oceanside, Casa Casillas, a public art space in Chula Vista, and the recently approved East Region Crisis Stabilization Unit that will offer urgent mental health services. She studied at the Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey and National Technical University in Athens before earning her degree at Cal Poly Pomona. Today, Yolanda shares her knowledge of architecture by teaching introductory classes at Southwestern College. Her passion for architecture inspires others, mainly her students, to follow their dreams.



KATIE WELLING
CLPF
FOSTER THORNTON WELLING

Katie is a working mother of three and a licensed fiduciary at Foster Thornton Welling. Her career began in 2012 as an Administrative Assistant and in 2016 she received her fiduciary license and began practicing alongside her mentor, Nancy Thornton. She is now managing more than \$180 million of assets under administration serving as trustee, administrator, executor, conservator, agent for healthcare, and agent under financial power of attorney. Katie received her bachelor's degree in public administration from San Diego State University, graduating on the Dean's Honor Roll and has completed courses at California State University Fullerton, receiving certificates in both Professional Fiduciary Management for Trustees and Conservators. Katie currently serves on the Rady Children's Hospital Foundation's Estates and Trusts Council, which focuses on educating professionals on the importance of philanthropy in estate plans.



SDBJ Honors 40 Next Top Business Leaders Under Forty Winners

The **San Diego Business Journal's** 2024 "40 Next Business Leaders Under Forty" gathered at **Julep Venue** in downtown San Diego on July 24. The annual event recognizes the region's most promising future leaders from across a variety of industries. The packed event was sponsored by **Alaska Airlines**, **Julep**, **withum** and **Fox 5**.

This year's honorees, in addition to complimentary cocktails and hors d'oeuvres from **Snake Oil Cocktail Co.**, were surprised with Alaska Airlines MVP Gold tickets that unlock upgrades on the airlines mileage plan, valued at \$7,000. Attendees were also treated to the entertaining emcee for the evening: Alaska Airlines' Public Affairs/External Relations – Community and Engagement Manager for California and **Golden State Warriors** official Hype Man **Franco Finn**.

Congratulations honorees!



SDBJ's 2024 40 Next Top Business Leaders Under Forty Winners.



Anne Pachl, Dan Baillie, Andrew Hills (Withum), and Kevin Leap (SDBJ).



Franco Finn (Alaska Air).



Phil Blauer (Fox 5 News).



Options for All team.



Lauren and Sean Drake (Latitude 33 Planning & Engineering), Beth Binger (BCI PR) and Chris Reid (SDBJ).



Withum team.



Jennifer Vigil, Allison Brownlee and Merylee Robbins (Stronger Together Community Services).



Bill Howe Plumbing, Heating & Air, Restoration & Flood Services team.



Alaina Hardy (Sotheby's Concierge Auctions), Tana Lorah (The Julep) and Marcella Garofalo (Lusardi Construction).



Bradley Ringer and Casey Kuelto (Cymbiotika).

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BOB HOFFMAN VIDEO & PHOTOGRAPHY — EVENT PHOTOS: [HOFFMANPHOTOVIDEO.COM/P655014725](https://hoffmanphotovideo.com/P655014725)



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- Ted Eldredge (CEO of Manchester Financial Group)