

KANSAS CITY'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE

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**THE MOST POWERFUL
BUSINESS LEADERS
IN GREATER KANSAS CITY**

SPECIAL EDITION | TWENTY DOLLARS



Rob Adams

PARTNER, **SHOOK, HARDY & BACON**

Rob Adams is a Rainmaker in the truest sense. Serving clients in the insurance, medical and construction sectors, he drives top-line revenues for the firm with more lawyers in this region than any other. This son of a trial lawyer has won numerous accolades: Lawdragon 500 Leading Litigators in America, the Legal 500 in the U.S., Best Lawyers in America, Dean of the Trial Bar and Missouri Lawyer of the Year—it's a long list.

COLLEGE: B.A., University of Kansas; J.D., University of Missouri-Columbia

BEST ADVICE: "If you work hard and play nice, you will do well."

MOST-ADMIRE CEO: "Jim Schwartz of NPC International. Jim is smart, personable and successful in his professional and family life. He is a great role model and shows that "nice guys can and do finish first."

BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT: "Teaching young lawyers how to be great trial lawyers."

BUCKET LIST NO. 1: "Sailing across the Atlantic."

PASSION/HOBBY: "Fly fishing, scuba, and sailing."

ONE FOOD YOU WOULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT: "Chicken!"



Don Ahnger

CEO/CHAIRMAN, **MIDWAY FORD TRUCK CENTER**

Fleet and commercial trucks are key to moving the U.S. economy, and many of them roll out of Midway Ford Truck Center. Founded in 1961, Midway has never had a loss year, a trend reinforced since the early 1980s by the switch to employee ownership. Under Ahnger's leadership, it has achieved an average annual growth rate of 22.67 percent and has been on on Ingram's Corporate Report 100 list of fastest-growing companies eight years running.

COLLEGE: B.A., Business Administration, University of Texas-Austin

BEST ADVICE: "Focus on worthwhile goals, work hard, live by the Golden Rule."

MOST-ADMIRE CEO: "Ronald Reagan, for his accomplishments and delegation skills as president."

TOP ACHIEVEMENT: "Developing and implementing the first Employee Stock Ownership Plan ever approved for a Ford Motor Co. dealership."

BUCKET LIST NO. 1: "None. My life has been very full. I only want to continue doing what I am doing for as long as God is willing."

ONE FOOD YOU WOULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT: "Cabernet Sauvignon."



Gary Alexander

FOUNDER/CHAIRMAN/CEO, **ALEXANDER OPEN SYSTEMS**

Over a quarter century that started with IBM and then continued with Sperry Corp. and the merger that created Unisys, this veteran of the 101st Airborne Division rose from sales representative to division president. Today, Gary Alexander runs his own company, with revenues above \$100 million, matching businesses with technology solutions, earning a 99:100 customer referral ratio and 4.8 out of 5.0 rating in customer satisfaction.

COLLEGE: B.A., University of Kansas; Master of Divinity, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT: "Building a company that I am proud to have carry my last name."

MOST-ADMIRE CEO: "Joe Kroger, President at Sperry Corporation. He was a completely magnetic person. I would have followed him anywhere."

BUCKET LIST NO. 1: "Marrying my wife, Betty. Best thing I ever did."



Don Armacost

CEO, **PETERSON MANUFACTURING**

Think we don't build things in America anymore? Don Armacost might disagree. He's the man directing Peterson Manufacturing, a company with multiple divisions cranking out all manner of safety accessories for trucks, boats and almost anything motorized—lighting components, reflectors, mounting fixtures, mirrors, antennas and more. And they make things at a high level, with certified quality standards that exceed industry requirements.

COLLEGE: B.A., Business Administration, University of Missouri-Kansas City

FAMILY AFFAIR: Don Armacost Sr. bought the company in 1956, and Don Jr. has plenty of family help: his brother, Dave, is president, and each has a daughter on staff. Don's daughter, Kristen Goodson, is vice president of product management; Dave's daughter, Erica, is in the HR office of a Peterson subsidiary.

DIVERSE INTERESTS: The company's client roster includes names like Harley-Davidson, Caterpillar and John Deere.

EMPLOYMENT MUSCLE: More than 650 people work for the company, most of them in the 670,000-square-foot manufacturing center in Grandview.

PHILANTHROPIC RESOURCE: The Armacost Car Museum is a unique venue for many non-profit organization's fund-raising events.



Adam Aron

CEO, **AMC ENTERTAINMENT**

This Philadelphia native is also a co-owner (and former CEO) of the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers. He came to KC this year to lead a company with nearly \$3 billion in annual revenues. After a distinguished career in travel and tourism, With decades of customer-engagement expertise, he's now focused on pleasing 200 million moviegoers a year at AMC, already an industry leader in guest satisfaction. We can't wait to see what he has in store.

COLLEGE: B.S., Government, M.B.A., Harvard University

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: Aron knows a good time when he sees one: He's been CEO of Vail Resorts, the world's second-largest ski-resort operator, and Norwegian Cruise Line, then the world's fourth-largest pleasure-cruise operator. He's also worked for United Airlines and Hyatt Hotels.

RECOGNITIONS: Aron has twice been recognized by Ad Age as one of the nation's top 100 marketing executives, and he's been included in Travel Weekly's Club 33, an exclusive club made up of just 33 travel and tourism executives worldwide.

SUCCEEDED: Gerry Lopez, who had been CEO since 2009.



Ken Bacon

CEO, **SHAWNEE MISSION HEALTH**

Ken Bacon washes nurses' cars in honor of National Nurses' Week, scoops ice cream at events and enjoys a few laughs with the third shift during midnight meals because he feels it's important for CEOs to serve employees and interact at all levels. Fostering an upbeat atmosphere is all part of his desire to grow the impact of Shawnee Mission Health, the second-busiest medical center in the region last year, by admissions.

COLLEGE: B.A., Accounting & Business Management, Union College; M.B.A., Texas State University

MOST-ADMIRE CEO: "Pete Weber, CEO of the hospital where I got my first job as CFO. He was always respectful of others and understood the emotional side of this business."

TOP ACHIEVEMENT: "To see people who have worked for me move on to bigger and better things. I am very proud that some of those people are now CEOs as well."

PASSION/HOBBY: "Riding motorcycles."

BUCKET LIST NO. 1: "To see my three kids graduate from college."



Peter Mallouk

PRESIDENT, **CREATIVE PLANNING**

He might be the best-educated executive in Kansas City: quadruple majors in economics, business, political science and psychology, and he's been tagged multiple times by Barron's as the nation's No. 1 wealth-management adviser. Small wonder. Under the guidance of Peter Mallouk, Creative Planning has soared from roughly 4,700 accounts and \$1 billion in assets under management in 2008 to more than \$21 billion today.

BEST ADVICE: "Find a career that interests you and a company you can respect and get excited about working for, then make yourself indispensable by finding out the ways you can contribute that will have the highest impact and exceeding expectations."

MOST-ADMIRE CEO: "I have never really looked at CEOs as role models or emulated any of them. For me it's more about finding people who impact change and are kind. I tend to most admire those that have had a business and social impact. The Hall and Kauffman families fit the bill there."

BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT: "I hope it hasn't happened yet!"

PASSION/HOBBY: "Travel with family with an emphasis on new environments and new experiences."



Madeleine McDonough

CHAIR-ELECT, **SHOOK, HARDY & BACON**

On Jan. 1, Madeleine McDonough—a clinical pharmacist-turned-lawyer—will succeed John Murphy as chair at Shook, Hardy & Bacon, which has more lawyers in Kansas City than any other firm. Her practice concentrations dovetail with some of the business sectors that are driving an evolving economy in Kansas City: pharmaceutical, medical devices, agribusiness, food safety, life sciences and biotechnology.

COLLEGE: J.D., University of Kansas School of Law

MOST-ADMIRE CEO: "I think Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks, has done well both in business and in corporate social responsibility efforts. He invests in employees in meaningful ways, including offering comprehensive health coverage and equity stock ownership for Starbucks employees."

PASSION/HOBBY: "Attending arguments and opinion days at the Supreme Court. I also love documentaries, music, reading, cooking, and art of all kinds. I love driving (relaxing and meditative), and Kansas City is great for that—almost no traffic!"

ONE FOOD YOU WOULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT: "Vegetable soup. I make a different kind almost every week while I listen to the podcast of Fresh Air with Terry Gross, or This American Life."



Michael Merriman

CHAIRMAN, **AMERICO**

While he maintains a low public profile, Michael Merriman casts quite the economic shadow. His family-controlled business is the lead company in one of the largest independent, privately held insurance groups in the United States. It boasts \$6.1 billion in assets, 640,000 insurance policies under administration and more than \$31 billion of life insurance in force.

COLLEGE: B.B.A., Southern Methodist University

STUNNING GROWTH: Americo's total assets have grown 8,980% since 1988. Insurance in force has grown 39% over the past 10 years.

RECOGNITION: Includes a Distinguished Alumni award from his alma mater, Southern Methodist University.

PHILANTHROPY: Among the organizations that have acknowledged Merriman and his generosity are the Boy Scouts of America Heart of America Council and Children's Mercy Hospital.



Charlie Miller

CHAIRMAN, REAL ESTATE, **LEWIS RICE**

Sales, purchases, leasing, financing, joint ventures, development, redevelopment, government approvals, development incentives—Charlie Miller's job gives him hands-on perspective on a wide range of real estate projects. In dealing with the issues they present, he draws on experience obtained from working with attorneys, developers, lenders, investment bankers, city officials, and other professionals throughout the country.

COLLEGE: A.B., University of Missouri; J.D., University of Missouri-Columbia,

BEST ADVICE: "Work hard, have broad interests and use all of your vacation days."

MOST-ADMIRE CEO: "Tom McDonnell. In addition to his many accomplishments at DST, he was significantly instrumental in the rejuvenation of downtown Kansas City. He advocated for the regional importance of a vibrant downtown, and facilitated many projects for the city and others."

BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT: "Earning the confidence of my clients."

BUCKET LIST NO. 1: "Save someone's life."

PASSION/HOBBY: "Anything recreational that I can do outside."

ONE FOOD YOU WOULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT: "Chocolate."



Jonathan Mize

CEO, **BLISH-MIZE**

Jonathan Mize arrives at work each morning carrying something few other executives can fully appreciate: The weight of four preceding generations of his family's ownership with Blish-Mize. The wholesale hardware distributor covers a 13-state market, serving more than 800 hardware stores, home centers and lumberyards, some of whom have been customers for more than a century.

COLLEGE: University of Kansas

BEST ADVICE: "Start at the bottom of the ladder, and work your way up. Ask questions, share your thoughts and ideas. Work hard, be valuable."

MOST-ADMIRE CEO: "Jeff Bezos, Amazon.com. The vision of just starting to sell books online, to becoming a full line distributor with more than 180 distribution centers in the U.S. alone, to offering over 200 million products to consumers."

BUCKET LIST NO. 1: "Going to Paris and Italy with my wife."

PASSION/HOBBY: "KU basketball, exercising, and playing basketball."

ONE FOOD YOU WOULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT: "Pizza."



Dayton Moore

SENIOR VP/GENERAL MANAGER, **KANSAS CITY ROYALS**

From day one on the job in 2006, Dayton Moore's goal was bringing a world championship back to Kansas City, a goal he achieved in 2015 against the New York Mets. His tenure as manager is one of the most successful in team history. In his first 10 seasons with the Royals, the team racked up 12 Rawlings Gold Glove Awards, 20 All-Star Game selections, two Louisville Silver Sluggers and a Cy Young Award winner.

COLLEGE: George Mason University, Physical Education

PERSONAL: Moore was born in Wichita, Kan., and grew up a Royals fan.

RECOGNITION: Kansan of the Year (Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas), Kansas Baseball Hall of Fame, Executive of the Year (Kansas City Sports Commission).

PHILANTHROPY: Started the "C" You In the Major Leagues Foundation to support youth baseball, education, families in crisis and faith-based programs and organizations.

PREVIOUSLY: Assistant general manager, Atlanta Braves.



John Meara

PARTNER, **MEARA WELCH BROWNE**

For four decades, John Meara has been a fixture on the regional financial-services scene, one dominated today by large national and global firms with often transient leadership. Not Meara: He spent eight years with larger firms and founded his own. It's one of the five biggest locally based accounting/consulting firms in the region. He's a CPA specializing in business valuation, and is a certified fraud examiner and financial-forensics specialist.

COLLEGE: B.S., Accountancy, University of Illinois; Law school classes at UMKC
BEST ADVICE: "Invest in yourself, get all the education you can, take vacations and make time for family and friends."

BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT: "Founding and leading my firm for 40 years."

BUCKET LIST NO. 1: "Seeing my 12 kids grow up, get married and succeed in life."

PASSION/HOBBY: "I love the water and boating with friends and family."

ONE FOOD YOU WOULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT: "A great big steak!"



John Mitchell, Jr.

CEO, **TREAT AMERICA FOOD SERVICES/COMPANY KITCHEN**

John Mitchell tried commercial lending after law school, but soon joined his father at Treat America in 1994 as one of just seven employees at a food-services company with annual revenues below \$2 million. That move was a win-win: Under Mitchell's direction, Treat America became one of the region's 100 largest private companies, taking in more than \$111 million in 2015.

COLLEGE: B.A., English, Philosophy, University of Kansas; J.D., KU School of Law

FAMILY AFFAIR: Mitchell succeeded his father, who founded the company in 1987.

GROWTH FACTORS: Mitchell has cited the company's entrepreneurial culture as a key to success—more than 10 percent of the associates there have direct or individual P&L accountability, and many are paid on a pure commission basis to encourage a customer-satisfaction mind set.

NEW IMAGE: Earlier this year, Treat America announced a rebranding as Company Kitchen, incorporating that into its corporate cafeterias (CK Café), its micro markets (CK Markets), and vending, coffee and catering operations.

PHILANTHROPIC-MINDED: The company supports dozens of causes each year.



Todd Muenstermann

PRESIDENT/CEO, **DURVET**

Kansas City's place in the center of an animal-health corridor with global reach is assured in part by the presence of Durvet, which makes products for pets, horses and livestock, farming management—and even a few consumer products for two-legged customers. After working his way up through the marketing side, Todd Muenstermann took the reins last year, when it notched \$171 million in sales.

COLLEGE: B.S.B.A., Central Missouri

BEST ADVICE: "Three things: 1) Never stop learning. 2) Treat people the way you want to be treated. 3) You become the 5 people that you spend the most time with, so choose your friends and business associates wisely."

MOST-ADMIRE CEO: "I admire CEO's like Joel Manby of Herschend Family Entertainment and Dave Ramsey for their caring leadership style."

BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT: "Becoming President of Durvet."

BUCKET LIST NO. 1: "A vacation with my wife and daughters to some beautiful, remote place where there's no cell service, no internet and no shopping malls!"



Kevin Mullane

PARTNER, **AAVIN PRIVATE EQUITY**

Kevin Mullane started his journey into private equity investment more than three decades ago at MorAmerica Capital Corp., one of the oldest and most successful SBICs (small business investment company). In 1985 he co-founded InvestAmerica, providing late-stage expansion and buyout financing to small, profitable middle market companies. Mullane joined AAVIN in 2015. Currently, he heads up AAVIN's Kansas City office.

COLLEGE: B.S.B.A., M.B.A., Rockhurst University

AFFILIATIONS: Has served on the board of governors of the NASBIC and has been president of the Midwest RASBIC.

REGIONAL LOYALTY: While it has investment experience throughout the country, AAVIN prides itself on staying true to its Midwestern roots by focusing on small, regionally-based opportunities.

INVESTMENT DIVERSITY: The companies in AAVIN's portfolio represent the health-care, retail trade, manufacturing and professional services industries.

FINANCIAL STRENGTH: AAVIN currently manages \$87 million in capital with which it makes investments generally ranging in size from \$1 million to \$5 million.



John Murphy

CHAIR, **SHOOK, HARDY & BACON**

For the past 15 years, Kansas City's largest law firm has been guided by the steady hand of John Murphy, who is winding down three terms as chairman at the end of 2016. His laser-focus on providing unmatched legal services made Shook, Hardy & Bacon the International Who's Who of Business Lawyers' first-ever pick—and multiple-year honoree—as Global Products Liability Law Firm of the Year.

COLLEGE: B.A., Political Science, University of Connecticut; J.D., Washington & Lee University School of Law

BEST ADVICE: "Be passionate in whatever you do. If you don't believe in what you are trying to accomplish, no one else will either."

MOST-ADMIRE CEO: "I hesitate to pick out any one CEO. I have learned something from every executive I have ever encountered."

BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT: "Leading Shook, Hardy & Bacon through 15 years that included a major recession and significant, permanent changes in the legal industry."

PASSION/HOBBY: "Spectator sports. As I have gotten older, I have to watch the sports I used to play."



Rex Newcomer

PRESIDENT/CEO, **D.H. PACE**

Rex Newcomer has spent 37 years at family-owned D.H. Pace, more than half of that time as its chief executive. The Olathe-based maker of overhead doors—perhaps best known for that "Overhead Door" red ribbon adorning a fleet of service vehicles, makes many other construction-sector products, and it is one of the 100 largest privately-owned companies in the region, with \$314 million in 2015 revenues.

COLLEGE: University of Kansas

FAMILY AFFAIR: Rex is joined by three other members of the family in leadership or management roles, and two more are currently or are former board members, and a fourth generation of the family is coming on board.

EMPLOYMENT MUSCLE: The company increased its work force by more than 10 percent in 2015, adding 172 employees to finish the year at 1,457.

GROWING REACH: Acquisitions and new-market initiatives have put D.H. Pace on track to be a national company—it has offices from Las Vegas to Orlando, Fla.