

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR & PUBLISHER



On the following pages are profiles of the 200 people we consider the most influential in the Valley area.

What makes them influential? If you read just a few of the profiles, you'll quickly see. Some are hard charging business owners or operators. Others are at or near the top of organizations that strive to make our community a better place. Some are premier educators. Many are go-to professionals. But all are at the top of their game, and what's more, they are engaged and active. You tend to see them again and again in our community. They are the leaders, the most influential people throughout the Valley area.

I will conclude this note, as I always do, by saying this: I think our list of influential people is very good, but it is not perfect. Leadership is always evolving. There are 37 new names on the list this year – that's almost a 20 percent change. But there are surely some we missed. If you know anyone who's an emerging leader, or perhaps an established one we overlooked, let me know. I'd like to consider them next year. You can always reach me at ccrumpley@sfbvj.com.

Sincerely,

Charles Crumpley
Editor and Publisher

San Fernando Valley Business Journal (ISSN 1526-0712) is published biweekly with a special issue in July (26 plus 1) by San Fernando Valley Business Journal, 21550 Oxnard St., Suite 540, Woodland Hills, CA 91367. Periodicals postage paid at Los Angeles, CA and additional mailing offices. Subscription price: 26 issues, \$49.95. **To subscribe or for customer service, call (847) 559-7357 (Local) or (855) 856-4749 (Toll Free). All other inquiries (818) 676-1750.** Single copies, \$4.00. Mailed copies, \$6.00. Back issues, \$9.00. Address and subscription inquiries to: Circulation Department, San Fernando Valley Business Journal, 11150 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 350, Los Angeles, CA 90025. This newspaper is designed to inform decision making executives, investors and managers on the trends, the growth and the ideas important to commerce and industry in the San Fernando Valley. Information in San Fernando Valley Business Journal is gathered from sources considered to be reliable, but the accuracy of this information cannot be guaranteed. Neither that information nor any opinion which may be expressed here constitutes a solicitation for the purchase or sale of any securities. Opinions expressed in letters to the editor and commentaries are those of the authors and not necessarily those of San Fernando Valley Business Journal. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to San Fernando Valley Business Journal, Circulation Department, 11150 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 350, Los Angeles, CA 90025.

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ADVISORS



MARY AKPOVI

Mary O. Akpovi CPA

Mary Akpovi, Ph.D., is a principal of her accounting firm, Mary O. Akpovi CPA Inc., which she created in May. She retired in April from the accounting firm Martini Akpovi Partners in Encino, which she co-founded 30 years ago. She is known for devoting significant time to

local and foreign charities that serve women, orphans and the homeless. She has sat on the boards of Exceptional Children Foundation and Hope of the Valley Rescue Mission. She recently joined the Woodbury University School of Business Advisory Board. Akpovi received the Volunteer of the Year award from the Business Journal as well as the Business Journal's Award for Lifetime Achievement. Akpovi is a certified public accountant and holds a doctorate in business administration and master's degrees in business taxation and business administration.

BEST ADVICE: Read more books, ask more questions and listen more closely.

FAVORITE BOOK: "The Purpose Driven Life," by Rick Warren.

BUCKET LIST: Hike Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.



LEE KANON ALPERT

*Alpert, Barr & Grant
Alpert Dispute Resolution and
Consulting*

Lee Kanon Alpert is a founding member and senior of counsel of the law firm Alpert, Barr & Grant in Sherman Oaks. He is also the founder of Alpert Dispute Resolution and Consulting Inc.

He recently joined the board of trustees at Woodbury University in Burbank. He is past president of the governing board for Providence Health and Services regional hospitals, the board of commissioners for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, the board of commissioners for Los Angeles Building and Safety Department and the first President of the board of commissioners for the Los Angeles Department of Neighborhood Empowerment. He has served on many other boards, and he won the Fernando Award in 1999.

ALMA MATER: Wayne State University, University of Southern California, Loyola Law School, Harvard University

BEST ADVICE: Never, ever give up your integrity, regardless of the circumstances.



ERICK ARNDT

*SCV Startup
Retirement Partners of California*

Erick Arndt founded SCV Startup in 2011, a mentorship driven accelerator program to launch technology companies in the Santa Clarita Valley. The organization has helped grow 17 startups since its inception, with more

coming along. Arndt is a financial advisor who helps human resource directors and chief financial officers improve companies' retirement plans specifically 401(k) plans while teaching employees about financial planning and money management. Most recently, Arndt started Retirement Partners of California last July. The company focuses on delivering detailed 401(k) advice to employees. Arndt is also co-founder of Virtue Wealth Management. He is a member of the advisory board for College of the Canyons.

BEST ADVICE: The best investment you'll ever make... is you! Take the time to improve physically, mentally and emotionally.

FAVORITE BOOK: "Becoming Supernatural" by Joe Dispenza.

BUCKET LIST: Have coffee with the Dalai Lama.



SUE M. BENDAVID

*Lewitt, Hackman, Shapiro,
Marshall and Harlan*

In the year of coronavirus, employment attorney Sue Bendavid was "under the gun," in her words. As chair of the employment practice group at the Encino based Lewitt, Hackman, Shapiro, Marshall and Harlan law firm, she

published employer focused newsletters and held webinars and online presentations to help businesses navigate the changing workplace regulations relating to COVID-19. For about 30 years, she has exclusively represented employers in legal matters. Bendavid serves as co chair of the Labor and Employment Committee at the Valley Industry and Commerce Association.

BEST ADVICE: "Keep your side of the street clean." As a litigator who appears in court and who advocates and negotiates on behalf of clients, I think reputation is key.

FAVORITE BOOK: I like historical fiction, so anything in that genre.

BUCKET LIST: Getting back to traveling the world for vacation! I miss that.

**BARRY KURTZ**

Lewitt, Hackman, Shapiro, Marshall and Harlan

Barry Kurtz is chair of Lewitt Hackman's Franchise Practice Group. He represents franchisors and franchisees in national and regional restaurant, retail and service businesses. Kurtz has earned Martindale-Hubbell's highest rating (AV Preeminent

5.0) for his legal ability and ethics. The Business Journal honored him as a Trusted Advisor in 2007, 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2019. The last time he was given the Attorney of the Year - Trailblazer Award. Also, he has been named a "Super Lawyer" by the Journal of Law and Politics since 2010.

ALMA MATER: UCLA

BEST ADVICE: Think like a businessman, not like a lawyer.

FAVORITE BOOK: "Steve Jobs" by Walter Isaacson.

BUCKET LIST: Touring Italy and Spain for a month.

**STEPHEN LANDSMAN**

Baker Tilly

Stephen Landsman, certified public accountant and partner in the Encino office of Baker Tilly US, has over 25 years of experience providing tax, attestation, litigation support and business management services for privately owned businesses in the real

estate, manufacturing, wholesale, distribution, retail, professional services and entertainment industries. He was given one of the Business Journal's Trusted Advisors awards in 2019. He is on the boards of the Valley Economic Alliance and Fit 4 The Cause, and he volunteers for many organizations including Encino Little League, AYSO and Girl Scouts.

ALMA MATER: UCLA

BEST ADVICE: If you work hard to be good at anything, nothing can get in the way of success.

FAVORITE BOOK: "The Fortunate Pilgrim" by Mario Puzo.

BUCKET LIST: Continuing to enjoy our children grow and develop.

**JONATHAN FRASER LIGHT**

LightGabler

With over 30 years of experience representing employers, Jonathan Fraser Light provides legal advice, in house employer training programs, and litigation services to companies of all sizes. He also speaks before business and employer groups on such topics

as harassment avoidance, supervisor training, human resources best practices and the latest employment law issues. Light co founded the LightGabler law firm in Camarillo. He has received the highest AV rating from Martindale Hubbell and has been a peer nominated "Super

Lawyer" for more than a decade. Light is a past president of the Ventura County Bar Association and has been active in the California State University Channel Islands business school's advisory council.

ALMA MATER: UCLA.

BEST ADVICE: Never burn a bridge. You may need it later.

FAVORITE BOOK: "Les Miserables." (Well, actually, my own: "The Cultural Encyclopedia of Baseball.")

BUCKET LIST: More European travel experiences.

**GREG LIPPE**

Gregory N. Lippe Accountancy Corp.

Greg Lippe is a certified public accountant with his eponymous firm in Woodland Hills and Simi Valley. He is the president of the California Board of Pharmacy and chair of the Woodbury University Board of Trustees. He is former chair of the Valley Industry and Commerce Association. He

formerly served on the Los Angeles Fire and Police Pensions Board and the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency. The Business Journal gave him the Community Service Award in 2014 at the Trusted Advisors event; VICA gave him the Harmon Ballin Community Service Award in 2012; and Habitat for Humanity gave him its Hammer of Hope Award in 2011. In 2019, he received an honorary Doctor of Public Service degree from Woodbury University.

ALMA MATER: Woodbury University

BEST ADVICE: Listen more and speak less.

FAVORITE BOOK: "The Godfather" by Mario Puzo.

BUCKET LIST: Write a mystery novel.

**JOHN LOCKHART**

People Media

John Lockhart is president of Westlake-based ad agency People Media. The firm has done extensive work with health care brands, helping to launch Amgen's first two drugs, as well as working with clients Roche, Bristol Myers, Kaiser and Johnson & Johnson. During the safer at

home orders, the company launched People Media Live, a web broadcast service for programs and events, including performances of New West Symphony and Westlake Village Symphony. He also partnered with Whistle, a hotel guest messaging platform to form a coalition to house health care workers in local hotel rooms

ALMA MATER: Marquette University

BEST ADVICE: Find the place you want to live, the people you want to live with and build your life there.

FAVORITE BOOK: "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" by Mark Twain. I love rivers and stories on rivers.

BUCKET LIST: To attend a family reunion post COVID - after everyone is vaccinated.