

A RESOURCE FOR BUSINESSES



Business Link
Media Group

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NOVEMBER:

40 UNDER FORTY RECIPIENTS, LEADERS, COSTUMER CULTURE AND MORE!

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Dear readers,

We extend a warm welcome to our November publication, an edition brimming with noteworthy content that captures the essence of our commitment to showcasing excellence and innovation.

Celebrate with us as we highlight the remarkable journey of the '40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards,' now in its 10th year as of 2023. Immerse yourself in the inspiring stories of our 2023 Class, and relive the magic of an unforgettable night filled with exceptional moments.

Dive into an enlightening article featuring Jeff Mowatt, a trusted advisor in customer service, as he imparts invaluable insights on cultivating a Customer-Focused Culture. Explore the seven keys that guide organizations in walking-the-talk of their mission statements and fostering lasting connections with their clientele.

Furthermore, gain insights into Leadership Niagara's 2023-2024 program, which commenced with a dynamic in-person retreat for a cohort of 24 participants. The program, centered on leadership principles and community projects, sets the stage for personal and collective growth as leaders in the vibrant Niagara region.

We remain committed to providing you with the latest updates and insights on the business world. Stay tuned for more exciting content in the coming weeks.

Yours in Business
Marilyn Tian, M.B.A.
President & Co-Publisher
Business Link Media Group



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Business Link Media Group: A Journey of Innovation and Impact Over Two Decades

Established in 2003, The Business Link has emerged as a trailblazer within the publication landscape, digital services, and business development. Over the past 20 years, the organization has navigated challenges, embraced innovation, and transformed into a leading expert in the ever-evolving world of modern marketing.

Pioneering Digital Transformation

The journey began with a pivotal decision to move the print publication online, a move that, after extensive research, presented its own set of challenges. However, this strategic shift not only marked a significant learning curve but also opened the doors to reaching a larger and more diverse audience. This bold move demonstrated Business Link Media Group's commitment to staying ahead of the curve and adapting to the dynamic needs of its audience.

Leaders in Modern Marketing

Business Link Media Group has been at the forefront of navigating the complex landscape of modern marketing. Over the years, the organization has elevated its reach, influence, and effectiveness in business marketing, outreach, and representation across traditional and cutting-edge Web 3.0 platforms. The mission is clear: to empower businesses through the new evolution of advertising and marketing.

As devoted community builders, Business Link Media Group has cultivated deep connections in the Hamilton region. Simultaneously, the organization is expanding its digital presence to create new and exciting opportunities, serving not only a global community but also actively collaborating with and giving back to its cherished home region of Hamilton, Canada.



A Decade of Excellence: 40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards

One shining example of this commitment to the Hamilton community is the annual '40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards.' Proudly celebrating its 10th year in 2023, this initiative highlights the outstanding achievements of young professionals and entrepreneurs, showcasing the talent that Hamilton has to offer on a national and global stage.

Diverse Media Platforms

Business Link Media Group's influence extends across various media platforms, including digital publications, live events, virtual landscapes, an AI-Chat portal service, and more. This diverse approach underscores the organization's adaptability and commitment to meeting the evolving needs of its audience in an ever-changing digital landscape.

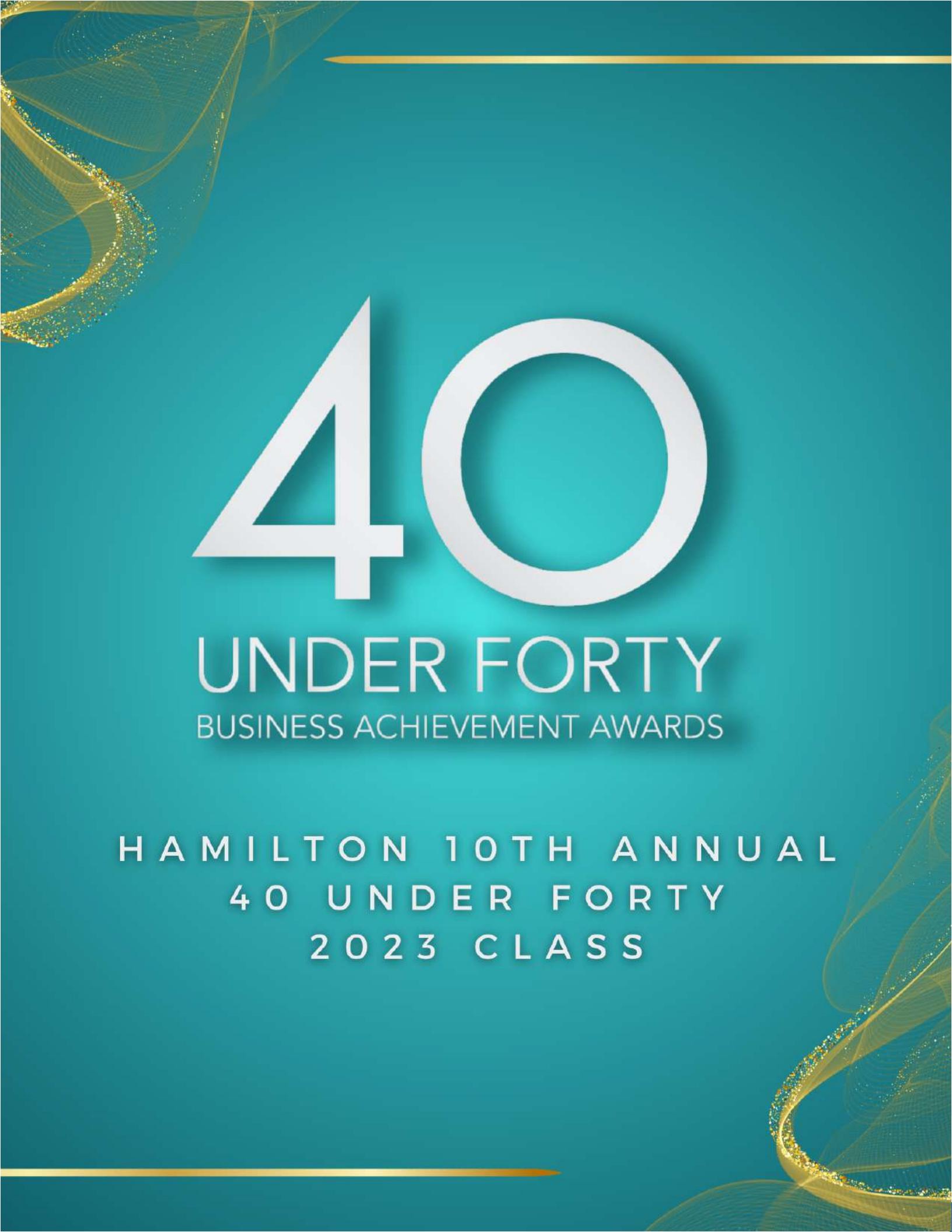
Built on Impact and Meaningful Messaging

At its core, Business Link Media Group is built upon the foundation of providing businesses and organizations with the resources, messaging, and solutions to not only reach their audience but also make a meaningful impact. The organization's journey over the past two decades reflects a continuous commitment to innovation, community building, and creating opportunities for businesses to thrive in the digital age.

As Business Link Media Group looks back on its journey, the 10th Hamilton Edition of the 40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards stands as a testament to its dedication to excellence, community collaboration, and the continual pursuit of impactful and innovative business solutions.

Hamilton 10th Annual 40 Under Forty 2023 Class





40

UNDER FORTY

BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

HAMILTON 10TH ANNUAL
40 UNDER FORTY
2023 CLASS

DANIEL ADORANTI

Daniel Adoranti is the owner of Billyard Insurance Group Ancaster. Daniel graduated from the Mohawk College insurance program and has worked in multiple roles within the insurance industry. He opened Billyard Ancaster in December 2021 after working as a broker for 5 years and became one of the youngest Managing Partners in the organization. Daniel has a focus on commercial insurance and a strong foundation in home and auto insurance. Daniel works hard to demonstrate his commitment to his clients through exceptional customer service.



KATRINA ALMEIDA

Katrina, a marketing graduate, founded Skin Master Kat & Skin Master Lounge after 8 years in the beauty industry while also obtaining her honours diploma in advanced medical aesthetics. She was also recently recognized by Readers Choice for Platinum winner for Best Medical Aesthetician 2023. With a focus on breaking down barriers and providing strategic guidance, she assists them in crafting comprehensive business and marketing plans. Sourcing manufacturing while still supporting local & Canadian businesses. Through this mentorship, they not only establish a solid clientele but also cultivate enduring relationships with loyal customers, paving the way for sustained success in their ventures.

NICOLE BANACH

Nicole has over 9 years' experience implementing behavior analytic principles, and evidence-based practices to support individuals with varying comorbidity needs of autism spectrum disorder, intellectual and developmental disorders, and mental health disorders. She graduated from Brock University with a Master of Arts in Applied Disability Studies and is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. She has a passion and provides the highest quality of individualized supports and holistic care to continue to promote inclusive and enriching environments to improve an individual quality of life. Additionally, she is passionate about promoting acceptance, inclusion, and awareness of individuals with varying needs.



TIFFANY BEVERIDGE

Tiffany is a dedicated leader in dance, female empowerment, and community service. In 2018 she founded PowerClass, a community of women passionate about dance, fostering personal growth and camaraderie. As President and co-founder of the CFL Cheer Alumni Organization (CFCAO), Tiffany connects former CFL cheerleaders to give back to local and national charities. She also owns a dance studio, nurturing over 450 young performers with life skills and confidence. Tiffany's commitment to empowerment and community impact defines her as a recognized leader and an inspirational figure in her field.

ASHLEY BORZELLINO

Ashley, 25 years of age, Mohawk College graduate with an Advanced Diploma in Civil Engineering Technology, Certified Engineering Technologist. Currently employed with the City of Brantford as a Development Inspector/Operator, she has now been a Construction Inspector for five years. She is the winner and current titleholder of Miss Canada 2023. Miss Canada has been established since 1946 and is Canada's longest running national pageant, it has a focus on personality and advocacy. As Miss Canada, she aims to represent Women in STEM and Women in Construction by attending public speaking events and sharing her story.



LISA CRAPSI

Lisa is an architect of change. With a Bachelor of Social Work, an Honours Bachelor of Social Sciences, a Graduate Diploma in Critical Leadership and a Master's in Social Work on the horizon, Lisa embodies a dedication to building inclusive communities. Her tenure is marked by her commitment to designing and implementing citywide strategies, frameworks and policies tailored to advocate for cultural inclusivity and equitable initiatives. Lisa is a true cultivator of citizen leadership and has not only demonstrated an exceptional ability to lead and inspire, but has also empowered individuals from all walks of life to become active agents of positive change within their own communities.

BIANCA D'OIDIO

Bianca, the ambitious owner of Bee Fab Lash and Med Spa, embarked on her journey at Mohawk College. Driven by her passion for the medical field, she diligently pursued a diploma in medical administration. However, destiny had more in store for her. When she completed a lash course, her true calling emerged, igniting an unwavering love for all things beauty. Fuelled by her newfound passion, she courageously decided to open her own brick and mortar business. Now, with six remarkable women working alongside her, Bianca's vision is realized. Bee Fab Lash and Med Spa is a sanctuary for beauty enthusiasts, all thanks to her determination and unwavering enthusiasm.



DOUGLAS DAWOOD

Douglas started his career working for Canadian Tire Petroleum at the age of 16 years old. After 10 years, he got an opportunity to become a partner at one of the highest volume sites in the corporation. 3 years later, he bought his second store, making him the youngest multi retailer in the history of Canadian Tire. Douglas participates in the yearly "Jumpstart for Kids" donation program, where your donations put kids into sports and activities. In 2023 alone, Doug's station raised \$8,600 in a 2-month span.

MELISSA DUBOIS

Melissa has worked with the acquired brain injured population for over 15 years, and her leadership and forward-thinking have assisted hundreds of clients and fellow health care professionals. She founded Market Therapy Group when the industry needed it most, and we are thrilled to work alongside some of the greatest health professionals in Hamilton and Niagara. She is a proud member of the board of directors for both Brain Injury Association of Niagara and the Crystal Beach Business Improvement Association, where she works with the community in a variety of ways-from education and awareness initiatives to leading fundraising events.



DR.DANIEL FORTINO

Dr. Daniel Fortino, a licensed Periodontist in the US and Canada, hails from Hamilton, Ontario. He earned his Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) Degree with distinction from McMaster University. Later, he graduated from the University of Western - Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and pursued advanced degrees in Periodontics in St. Louis, Missouri. He achieved Diplomate status from the American Board of Periodontology and completed a fellowship in Advanced Oral Surgery and Implantology at SUNY-Buffalo. He served on the faculty at SUNY-Buffalo's Graduate Periodontics and Implant Center. Not only that, but he excels in periodontics, dental implant surgery, and oral surgery, with publications in dental journals.

MICHAEL FORTINO

Michael Fortino, an enterprising culinary entrepreneur, made a significant mark on the food scene. In 2016, he founded Amo Gelato, a delightful gelato shop that captured hearts and taste buds. The following year, he ventured into fine Italian dining by launching Cima Enoteca on Locke Street, known for its exceptional cuisine. In 2020, Michael expanded his success by inaugurating a second Cima Enoteca on Brant Street in Burlington. His passion for culinary excellence and the art of creating memorable dining experiences has earned him recognition as a notable figure in the industry, leaving a flavorful legacy in the local gastronomic landscape.



VINCENT FRACASSI

From a budding interest in housing to shaping the industry's skyline, Vincent's journey started as a sales representative in 2011, where he quickly became a top producer. By 2018, Fracassi & Co. was born. The business was initially focused on providing sales and management services to the investment market, which expanded quickly into luxury, and new construction homes. Putting the customer experience first, Vincent and his team have achieved numerous accolades including top ten teams nationally for Coldwell Banker. Today, they are proud to have helped hundreds of clients achieve homeownership and have spearheaded a staggering three-hundred million in sales.

JANNA FREDERICK

A local Hamilton Realtor with Keller Williams Complete, has a deep passion about her community that led her to be the founder of "Women in Business Hamilton" a networking group dedicated to addressing the unique challenges of women in business. She is also a leading committee member of the "Be the Change in Your Own Backyard" charity, where she has spearheaded numerous events like the annual Charity Polar Bear Dip and Annual Golf Tournament to raise funds for organizations like the Boys and Girls Club of Hamilton, Neighbour2Neighbour Hamilton and the Kristen French Child Advocacy Centre. Through her efforts, they have raised over \$100,000 directly benefiting these organizations and making a profound difference



CARLIE GARBELLA

Carlie took over a well-known tanning salon in December 2022 and turned it into a high-end beauty & wellness studio now called Tuscany Studio. Carlie's goal was to own a space where she could employ others and help them further their own business' while also providing high-end services in her hometown of Hamilton. Carlie's goal is to ensure that customers have a warm and welcoming place to pamper themselves, while always providing a light & friendly atmosphere where others can leave feeling better than when they came.

VINCE GENUARDI

With a solid educational foundation in Business, Vince Genuardi has become a prominent figure in the Senior Living industry.

For the past eight years, he has held key managerial positions within the Retirement Living industry, demonstrating an unwavering dedication to improving the quality of life for seniors.

In the spring of 2022, Vince embarked on a new chapter in his career by joining Villa Italia Retirement Residents as CEO. Happily married to his beautiful wife Caroline for twelve wonderful years, and together, they are the proud parents of three remarkable daughters, who bring immeasurable happiness to their lives.



MEGAN HARPER

Megan, the owner and operator of Meg Harper Hair, has been in the hair styling industry for over 13 years and became self-employed in January. Her passion for hair styling started as a hobby during her teenage years and has since turned into a fulfilling career. While Megan offers all hair services, she specializes in balayage and blondes. Building a strong clientele base has been a top priority for her and it is a testament to the hard work she has put in over the years. Megan finds it truly gratifying to be able to express her creativity and help her clients feel their best through her work.

ALYSON HARPER

Alyson Harper graduated with Honors from Mohawk College's Insurance program in 2008. She's a Chartered Insurance Professional (CIP) and has a license in All Lines of Insurance. Alyson specializes in General and Municipal Liability, Commercial and Residential Property, and Auto Bodily Injury. She was Secretary for the Ontario Insurance Adjuster's Association - Hamilton Chapter from 2008 to 2020. Alyson joined Sedgwick in 2017 where she handles various types of losses, locally and nationally, alongside engineers, accountants, private investigators, contractors, and lawyers.



LIAM KOOYMAN

Liam Kooyman, an accomplished firefighter and visionary entrepreneur, is the driving force behind Bucket Brigade Exterior Cleaning. Committed to serving his community, Liam founded this family-run business to deliver exceptional exterior cleaning services and a 5-Star client experience. With a background in both military service and firefighting, Liam's journey is rooted in dedication and professionalism. His business ethos prioritizes humanity, evident in his 2% of all revenue being donated to Child and Youth Mental Health. In a world of entrepreneurship, Liam's story resonates as a testament to the synergy of service and business success, inspiring fellow entrepreneurs to make a positive impact.

ABDELLAH MAJD

Abdellah Majd started investing in Real Estate in 2013, which naturally progressed to a career in Real Estate sales in 2016. Over the past 8 years, Abdellah has helped copious like-minded investors build their portfolios. He is passionate in teaching his clients the power of owning multiple assets. In April 2020, Abdellah ventured into creating his own team of experts in the industry, known as the Majd Realty Group. In early 2022, Revel Hamilton Central (brokerage franchise) was created housing 20+ agents & counting with multiple offices coming to market in 2024 including locations in Ancaster, Binbrook & Barrie



VICTORIA MANCINELLI

Victoria's creative vision translates into progressive action with results to achieve social impact and industry advancement, with the respect of unionized labor at the forefront of all communication. Through the establishment of strategic partnerships, her role is extended to outreach, including community building and empowering opportunities for youth and underrepresented communities. As chair of the LiUNA Women's Department in Canada, she is a passionate leader for women across the construction industry and our community. She has received the YWCA Hamilton Halton Woman of Distinction Award and the CIPBA Woman of the Year Award, and sits as an advisory board member for various organizations.

RYAN MCHUGH

As Manager of Tourism & Events at Tourism Hamilton, Ryan has been pivotal in revitalizing the city's tourism sector post-COVID-19. He assisted in securing major events like the 2021 and 2023 Grey Cups and the NHL Heritage Classic, boosting Hamilton's stature as a premier destination. He was also the City of Hamilton's lead on the Downtown Entertainment Precinct, where he facilitated a transformative \$300 million investment in the FirstOntario Centre. This visionary initiative promises an enduring legacy, shaping Hamilton's culture for generations. Beyond his professional achievements, he is also a passionate advocate for his hometown's success, demonstrated his deep-rooted pride in Hamilton.



ADRIANO MERCANTI

Adriano Mercanti, a 23-year-old native of Hamilton, attended Mohawk College for Business. Having worked in his family business, CARSTAR Rymal Rd & Gage Ave, for most of his life, Adriano founded Mercanti Capital with his father and now holds the title of President of the company. The Mercanti family owns a group of collision and glass stores in Southern Ontario, known as Mercanti Automotive, and an online real estate platform called Haggle. Adriano also serves on the board for the Mohawk Business School and Festitalia.

LENNY MONTOUR

Lenny Montour, Hamiltonian and CEO and founder of Wolf Energy in Muskoka, seamlessly fuses Indigenous values with innovative entrepreneurship. As Wolf Energy rises as a benchmark in its industry, its core remains rooted in community enrichment. Lenny has evolved Wolf Energy from a simple gas station to a trailblazer in its sector, fostering strategic corporate partnerships and expanding its business lines. Recognized for his leadership and vision, Lenny's dedication also extends to his philanthropic efforts, particularly his significant support for the Every Child Matters campaign. As a Top 40 Under 40 awardee, he embodies passion, progress, and purpose.



DAVID MOROSIN

David Morosin, a driven entrepreneur, founded Morosin Renovations Inc. His unwavering dedication to his craft is a true testament to his work ethic. Starting as a plumbing apprentice, he honed his skills to become a residential renovator. Along with his passion for transforming spaces, he also has a great devotion to his family. He cherishes moments with his wife Victoria and their two children, Rome and Amara. He supports many community initiatives and is a proud member of the Venetian Club. Not only that, but he embodies the perfect blend of professional excellence and a fulfilling community and personal life.

NATASHA MOUSSEAU

Hamilton raised Natasha Mousseau is a dynamic and driven account manager with Tripemco Insurance Group. Natasha joined the firm in 2015, coming to the brokerage with drive and sales expertise. She assisted in the development, significant growth, and management of a specialized complex commercial insurance program across Canada. She now manages a substantial portfolio and assists with program development and expansion at Tripemco. Natasha is a proud member of the Hamilton community and is excited to be part of the growth of the city



ANGELO NASSO

Angelo founded We Care Respite Services in 2021 after noticing a vital need for in home respite support for families that have children with disabilities. It is a compassionate company dedicated to supporting families with children with disabilities. Our specialized services focus on providing care and respite for these families, allowing them to take a much-needed break. We understand the challenges they face and strive to create a safe and nurturing environment for their children. Our experienced caregivers are trained to provide personalized care and take children into the community for engaging activities. We are committed to making a positive impact on the lives of these families by offering them the support and relief they deserve.

CHLOE NYITRAY

At the Hamilton Police, Chloe Nyitray serves as the Analytics Manager, dedicating her career to advancing public sector transformation initiatives with analytics. Chloe excels at turning data into actionable insights and working with peers to reimagine people, processes, and technology. Her recent strategic data-driven initiatives include operationalizing a strategic plan, leading a team to establish analytics within HPS, and co-creating a Race and Identity-Based Data Strategy. Chloe is passionate about leadership and supporting those around her. She is also a proud GEM Mentor, a program that offers research-based mentorship to high school students.



NATASHA PAIKIN

In Natasha's five-plus years with New Horizon Development Group, she has contributed to her team's successful design, marketing, sale, occupancy, closing and service of over 1,500 new condos and townhomes, providing extraordinary support and delivering an unparalleled experience to her clients. This experience has been recognized by the West End Homebuilders' Association (WE HBA)'s Consumer Choice Award for a high-volume builder, via an independent customer survey, for two consecutive years. Natasha has served on the WE HBA Board of Directors for two years, and counting, and was appointed to the Tarion Industry Advisory Council this year.

ANGELO PILLA

Angelo Pilla holds dual degrees in Geography and Religious Studies from McMaster University and a Bachelor of Professional Studies in Education from Niagara University. He is currently a teacher at St. Thomas More Catholic Secondary School. In under five years with Royal LePage State Realty, Angelo has achieved notable success, earning the President's Gold and Director's Platinum awards, as well as the prestigious Red Diamond Award. In 2022, he ranked among the top 10% nationally for units sold and the top 5% among Royal LePage agents.



CHAD PILON

Chad Pilon is a teacher and musical director born and raised in Hamilton, Ontario. He has an avid passion for musical education and has been teaching with the HWCDSD since 2013. He currently serves as the Arts Department Head at the secondary school he attended as a student. Chad has also spent many years as a performing musician in the greater Hamilton Area, as well teaching private music lessons to many passionate young students.

ANDI POJANI

Andi's passion for people is at the core of his approach to real estate. With fifteen years of sales experience in the hospitality industry, he has spent years perfecting the art of service and demonstrating true care in every interaction. His exceptional interpersonal skills and attention to detail put him ahead in any client relationship or negotiation. As a valuable member of Martinus and Associates, he is committed to being a true embodiment of Sotheby's International Realty's values by providing the highest possible level of integrity and service to his clients.



SAVERINA SCOZZARI

Saverina works with a number of current and former athletes in the NHL including Shayne Corson, Doug Gilmour, Victor Hedman and Vincent Trocheck to navigate endorsement deals, set up interviews with top sports media outlets such as ESPN and Sports Illustrated, and provide them with access to luxury products and VIP events. She also works closely with the Kidney Foundation of Canada and St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton to raise awareness and funds for renal transplants. She has lived her whole life with kidney disease and received a transplant in January 2023. Through working with the foundations, she is able to use her platform and contacts to help and connect with others.

STEPHANIE SHAMOON

Stephanie, a 25-year-old from Hamilton, began her journey as a general laborer and rapidly climbed the ranks with seven promotions. Her pivotal role in launching a 198-acre grow field showcases her visionary leadership. Currently, as the Production Manager, she oversees post-harvest operations at one of Canada's largest sun-grown cannabis facilities, skillfully managing a workforce of 100-200 employees. Her multifaceted responsibilities encompass payroll, purchasing, meticulous inventory control, quality assurance, and strict regulatory compliance, including her RPIC status. Stephanie's inspiring rise from laborer to Production Manager underscores her unwavering dedication and innovative prowess.



ERIN SIMON

Erin joined Carmens Group in 2016 as the sole Human Resources professional when the department was in its infancy. Erin quickly transformed the way HR was structured and accepted within the organization, growing the reputation from an operational need to a strategic partner and employee advocate. In the past year, Erin further pushed the team forward, rebranding the department as "People & Culture", which is a testament to the progression her team has made.

Erin also holds her CHRL designation, was a Women of Distinction Nominee, and serves as a board member for the Industry Education Council.

MONIQUE SMITH

Monique is a self-taught content creator who specializes in lifestyle and video editing. She honed her skills at Mohawk College, where she studied Business. Her content has forged a strong audience connection. Monique collaborates with diverse brands, from local businesses to luxury fashion labels. Featured on Et Canada, Style Canada, Cable 14 Hamilton, she imparts industry expertise. Monique's commitment and education earned her a Digital Creator Award nomination at the Legacy Awards. She fosters a supportive space for emerging creatives and aims to unify the Black community. In 2023, she hosted her own Black History Month Celebration, "Fashion for the Culture," celebrating Toronto & Hamilton creatives.



KATIE STIEL

Katie is the Manager of Strategic Initiatives at the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce. Since graduating from McMaster University in 2009, Katie has established herself as a community builder who has developed and led a strong portfolio of local and national campaigns with not-for-profit organizations across the GTA. Through facilitating collective community action, Katie's work has resulted in millions of dollars of economic impact for our city and beyond. Katie currently volunteers at the Hamilton Small Business Centre, and serves on the Board of Directors for Arts For All, and Jamesville Bennetto.

KAELA TENENTE

Kaela Tenente founded Kaē Cosmetic Clinic in November 2019 after completing her first degree at McMaster University! The Clinic began with services such as teeth whitening, lashes and eyebrows! Kaela began nursing school in January 2020 looking to expand her business and be a part of our health care system! Kaē Cosmetic Clinic has grown tremendously in the last 8 months as an official Cosmetic Nursing and Health/Wellness Clinic while incorporating her nursing degree into the business. Kaela continues to work within the healthcare industry while operating her business. The different nursing skills in each setting remain important to Kaela!



NADIA VIEIRA

Nadia began her career in event management at a restaurant in the financial district of downtown Toronto. An opportunity at the restaurant's head office presented itself and Nadia made the move to Woodbine Racetrack where she organized events including the Queen's Plate. A change of location found Nadia in Moncton, New Brunswick where she learnt hotel event operations before a mid-pandemic move brought her back to Ontario. Deciding to settle in Hamilton, Nadia was committed to finding – and waiting – for the perfect position when she found Carmen's. Now at the Hamilton Convention Centre, she takes pride in being able to immerse herself in the community she now calls home.

COURTNEY WALYCHUCK

Courtney is a dedicated and passionate business leader, and volunteer. She received her B.B.A. from Wilfrid Laurier, and her M.B.A. from McMaster University. With over 17 years with Pioneer Family Pools, she currently manages their Patio Division and is the Marketing Director for several top industry brands. Most recently, Courtney initiated a Business Excellence committee, focusing on customer service and leadership development in her organization. Courtney volunteers her time as a Coach for her two daughters and recently was elected Chair of Corpus Christi Catholic School Council. Courtney centers her time around family and friends, and most recently, has developed a passion for Golf.



HEATHER WILLIAMS

Heather Williams embarked on her journey with Carmens Group in 2015. Over the years, she ascended to her current role as Executive Assistant to co-owners, PJ and Joe Mercanti. She coordinates the multifaceted initiatives of PJ and Joe within Carmens Group, all while enthusiastically supporting their community engagement efforts and projects across the venues. Her passion for Carmens Group and hospitality fuels her every action, epitomizing the adage, "we plan the party, but we are the party." Heather's extensive background in event management, coupled with her solutions-oriented mindset, renders her an invaluable asset to the company.



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7 Keys to Creating a Customer Focused Culture

Walking-the-Talk of your Mission Statement by Jeff Mowatt

“I’m just doing this until something better comes along – like retirement!” If that sums up the attitude held by some of your employees, then imagine the negative impact on teamwork, productivity, and especially on customer loyalty. Chances are that you, as a business manager or owner, are committed to satisfying customers. But what are you doing about employees who see their jobs merely as “fillers”? Business leaders need to create an environment that motivates employees to want to take care of customers. Unfortunately, the conventional methods to create a customer-focused culture through mission statements have often fallen short.

In the late 1980’s and early 90’s a lot of managers and business gurus seemed to think that if companies just had a corporate mission statement, all of their customer service and teamwork problems would be magically solved. These mission statements almost always touted the organization’s undying “commitment to satisfying customers” Blah, blah, blah. If only it were that simple. A mission statement is a good idea – provided there’s ongoing real-world implementation of the principles and values it conveys.

“Without implementation, customers and employees find that mission statements that brag about the importance of customers are annoying.”

Managers need a fresh approach to ensuring that customers are satisfied and that employees are personally committed to making it happen. After working with dozens of corporations over the years that have been faced with this challenge, I developed the concept of CAST Meetings © (Customer Service Team Meetings). Think of it as a way to breathe new life into your corporate mission.

At CAST Meetings managers and employees gather for a couple of hours once a month to focus on enhancing customer satisfaction. You may think you already do something similar in your organization. Perhaps you call it a ‘staff meeting’. The problem is that staff meetings end up focusing on workers’ needs and managers’ needs – not on those of customers. So, erase the notion that CAST Meetings have any connection to your current staff meeting. Everyone attending CAST – front line employees, support staff, and managers of all levels – will focus on the most important person, the customer.

1. Spread your Customers’ Words

At CAST Meetings, everyone learns the latest results of your customer surveys, letters and comments. One of the most useful, least expensive ways to collect customer feedback that we teach in our seminars is to ensure that employees directly ask customers a magic question, “What can we do to improve our service?” Asking that question and bringing the responses to CAST not only provides valuable information, it also reminds front line employees of one of their most valuable roles – being the eyes and ears of the company.

2. Get People Thinking

Prior to introducing the first CAST Meeting, we conduct training sessions for our client’s management and staff on ways to enhance customer satisfaction – without working harder. As part of these seminars, we brainstorm ways to boost customer satisfaction at each Point of Perception©. Here we generate a list of ways we might enhance customers’ experience at every point where they form an impression of the company – on the website, when they phone in, as they enter the parking lot, while waiting on site, and so on. Later we bring those ideas to CAST Meetings.

3. Sift to Find the Nuggets

At the monthly CAST Meetings, we sift through the feedback generated by both the customers and the employees. Just because we’ve collected a list of ideas from these groups, doesn’t necessarily mean that we can or should act on each suggestion. At the CAST we use two primary tools to evaluate the suggestions. One way is using a feedback grid that we discuss in our management training seminars. This grid reveals how your customers rate the various services you provide and how important those services are to them.

4. Implement Now – Perfect Later

When you identify an idea that on the surface looks like it has merit, the next step is to launch a preliminary test run, or “pilot”. So, let’s say for a 30-day trial basis you are going to give several front line employees in a specific department the authority to make a decision that typically requires management approval. Those same employees volunteer to try the program, monitor the results, and report their findings at the next CAST Meeting. If they indicate that the pilot went well, then at the CAST it can be fine-tuned and expanded to other areas within the organization.

5. Replace Policies with Parables

Perhaps the most critical element of any CAST Meeting is “story-time.” During this part of the agenda, managers call upon selected front line employees, who recently provided exceptional service, to share a specific on-the-job incident, and explain why they did what they did. These stories become your organization’s parables – living examples of your beliefs. Parables have been used to teach history and values since before the creation of the written word. They endure because they are interesting, teach us lessons, and are easily remembered. These stories become your “code” – the way you do business. In other words, these real-life stories not only reflect your organization’s mission, vision and values – they become its living and breathing embodiment.

6. Coach instead of Fighting Fires

We often hear one of the roles of the manager is to act as a mentor or coach. Yet managers get so busy that the only time they “coach” people is when a subordinate fouls-up. Worse still, only one person at a time learns from the mistake. That’s not our idea of being a mentor. An effective coach is more proactive.

One of my colleagues, fellow professional speaker, Joe Bonura, told me, “Spaced repetition is the mother of memory.” At CAST Meetings one of the roles of the manager is to take one of the customer service ideas that we’ve shared in the training seminar and reinforce its application. That way, simple vital customer service tips are repeated and are more likely to be remembered and applied. So rather than reacting to individual crises, managers help all employees to prevent customer service problems before they occur.



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7. Celebrate Service – not Seniority

In a study of Fortune 500 corporations, researchers found that a top two motivator of employees is recognition – knowing that they are appreciated. (The number one motivator is interesting work). CAST Meetings give managers a forum to provide recognition that's not based on seniority – but on exemplary customer service. Perhaps even more important is that the recognition doesn't just come from management – it comes from the workers' peers. That means you're creating a shift in culture right at the grass roots. Add to that a few words of open praise from the senior manager to the team, and everyone feels like they are part of a greater good. Combine it with pizza, snacks or lunch and you've created a customer-focused event that employees look forward to.

Bottom Line – It Gets Results

It's easy for corporate leaders to pay lip service to the importance of customers. Mission statements may play well for advertising purposes and look good on the boardroom wall. But employees see beneath the veil of slogans. They need to know that you as a leader actually mean what you say – and that you're willing to back statements with action. Simple logic dictates that if that kind of integrity is missing, even the best employee will eventually become de-motivated and start marking time.

With CAST Meetings employees discover that the company indeed practices-what-it-preaches. That's the kind of trust that translates into improved performance for everyone. One of our clients found that within the six months of using CAST, morale had noticeably improved and employee productivity increased by 34%. Meanwhile, they reported that number of customer complaints plummeted fourfold. That's a corporate culture where all the stakeholders benefit. After all, ensuring that everyone wins is very likely what your mission statement is all about.

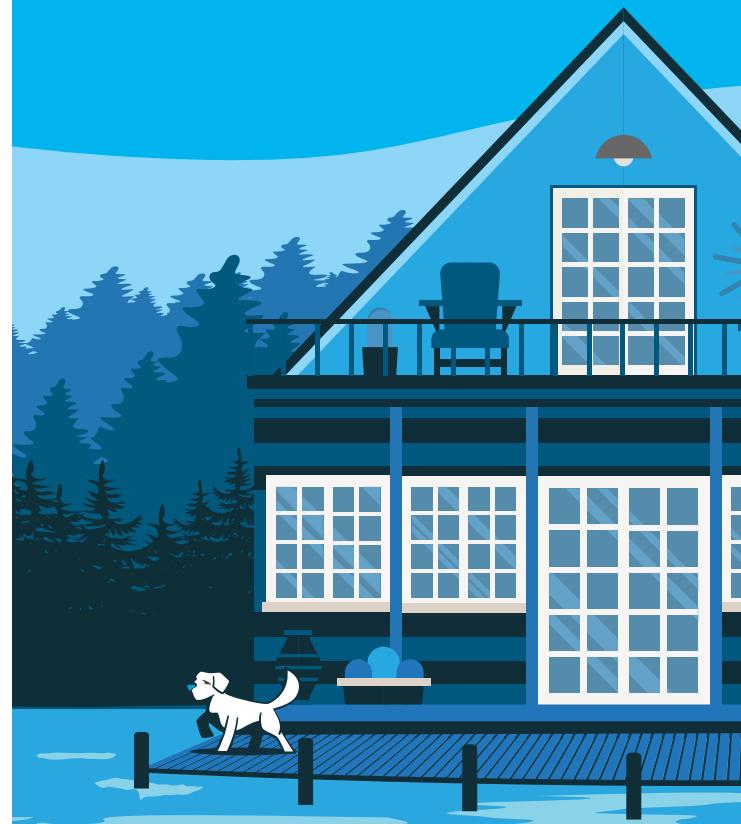
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Leadership Niagara welcomes new cohort to 2023-2024

Community Leadership Development Program



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Members of Leadership Niagara's Program Advisory Committee were excited to host an in-person Opening Retreat for its 2023-2024 Community Leadership Development Program at the Welland Flatwater Centre on October 13, 2023.

With 24 enthusiastic participants from 18 businesses and organizations from across the Niagara region, this year's cohort was the first to return to in-person learning since the start of the pandemic.

The first few learning days for the cohort focus on exploring leadership for a changing world. Participants are introduced to the program, which has worked to develop community-minded leaders since 2007. The new cohort will follow a leadership journey from October through until June with a focus on developing the skills and competencies required to be 'inspiring leaders building community.' Through a series of in-person and virtual workshops, interacting with numerous Niagara leaders from a variety of fields, the new cohort will join over 400 alumni who continue to live, work and give back to Niagara.

Holly Catalfamo, former member of Leadership Niagara's Program Advisory Committee and Senior Director of Global Engagement at Niagara College, introduced participants to the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership as outlined in *The Leadership Challenge* by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. Participants were actively involved in discussing these practices and how they have seen them in action in their workplaces.

Jessica Potts, a distinguished Leadership Niagara alumnus and President of Inspired Strategies, led a panel

conversation with Akram Askoul, Director of Technology Services, Niagara Region Police Service; Mike Lethby, Executive Director, the RAFT; Carolyn Mullin, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Niagara College; and Teresa Quinlin-Murphy, Director of Corporate Services, Town of Pelham. The panelists are all Leadership Niagara graduates who use the tenets of the program in their work and community leadership roles. The dynamic conversation allowed this year's cohort to hear how Leadership Niagara alumni have made volunteering and giving back to the community an integral part of their daily lives.

On the second learning day of the session, Shane Malcolm, formerly Executive Director of Leadership Niagara and currently Associate Director of Career Education at Brock University, introduced TetraMap assessments. Through TetraMap, participants explored opportunities for increased collaboration and improved understanding of team dynamics. Understanding how different individuals react to similar situations can alleviate conflict and lead to improved collaboration.

Throughout both learning sessions, participants had numerous opportunities to network and share experiences.

As the program progresses, participants will work in project teams. Each project team will work on an experiential project to support a community group and help address a challenge in their organization. As their learning journeys continue, participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their own personal growth as community-minded leaders in Niagara.



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