

The **30** Biggest Black-Owned Businesses in Tampa Bay

- by Gypsy C. Gallardo

The Power Broker is grateful to the business leaders who contributed to the search for the Top 30. They are Sanford Woods, Derek Holmes, Lorian Williams and Dr. Cynthia Johnson.



Movers, Shakers & Industry Makers

They collectively generated business revenues of close to **three-quarters of a billion dollars** in 2005, employed an army of more than 1,000 people, broke new records, launched new ventures, and even shaped new industry niches in some of Florida's biggest and hottest sectors for growth. Their achievements land them in the top 1% of all black-owned businesses in the Tampa Bay region. Two of them even tip the scales on a national level, ranking #3 and #50 respectively on Black

Enterprise magazine's Top 100 for automotive dealers and industrial service companies. If it surprises you to know there is such power in our midst, you'll be shocked to discover there's plenty more where they came from. So many, in fact, we are relatively assured that no one, not even the U.S. Census, is accurately counting the power of black-owned businesses in Tampa Bay. The Power Broker is pleased to present its 2nd Annual List of the Biggest Black-Owned Businesses in Tampa Bay.

#1 Sanford Woods CEO - S. Woods Enterprises



S. Woods Enterprises climbed to #3 on Black Enterprise's 2006 list of the Top 100 Auto Dealers in the nation and stays at #1 for a second year running on The Power Broker's ranking of the biggest black-owned firms in Tampa Bay, with revenues of \$443 million in 2005. When asked if he ever imagined his business earning close to half a billion in yearly sales, **CEO Sanford Woods** said, quite simply, "Yes." With characteristic cool, he added "I'm only surprised it took me this long." In case that sounds cocky, read on. Sandy shared some insights with The Power Broker that may change the way you do business.

The Power Broker: Why are you not surprised? Can you honestly say you knew you could make it work?

Sandy: It's not surprising to me because I planned it. I don't count myself overly smart, but I do count myself committed. I started out with \$189,000 in capital in 1989 and stuck with a disciplined plan. Brandon Dodge was my first, but I knew I was on my way to a second and third dealership

Sandy left a 16-year career with Chrysler to form Brandon Dodge in 1989. He currently owns 7 dealerships, but still considers Brandon his home base. Sandy is also a shareholder in 2 collision centers and diverse real estate holdings. He opened his first Popeyes Fried Chicken & Biscuits franchise in 2005 and built two more this year.

from day one....and I worked accordingly. My goal is to visualize and plan 7 years ahead. I set a course and I followed it.

The Power Broker: It's almost a cliché to advise CEOs to start with a plan. Let's say they have one, and let's assume it's a good one. What's the secret to achieving it?

Sandy: Good decisions and the best team you can possibly find. You've got to have the stomach for hard choices, and the patience to build a really good team. I tend to make decisions in an instant, but I've learned to hold them and think them through before acting. When it comes to my team, I treat them as co-equals and they respond as co-equals. I help them find their personal "ownership" in our success and I reward them well for it.

The Power Broker: How much bigger do you plan to get?

Sandy: This is it for me (he laughs). I plan to retire in 14 months, enjoy life, do some traveling. I'll still dabble in real estate, but it's time to smell the roses.

Oscar acquired Sun State International Trucks in January 2000 and by December 2005 had doubled yearly revenue to \$80.5 million. How did he do it? Oscar says "I built an engine," which probably refers to his penchant for making his company operate like a well-oiled machine. He attributes his success to serious planning (every one of his executives submits monthly profit projections) and constant review (every executive reviews monthly performance against goals). Both are habits he developed while climbing the corporate ladder at International Truck & Engine Corporation, where he capstoned his career as Vice President and General Manager of its \$200 million foundry business, overseeing 1,500 employees in every division from manufacturing to information technology. In 2006, Sun State International ranked #50 on Black Enterprise's list of the Top 100 Industrial Service companies in the nation; made the Tampa Bay Business Journal's 2006 list of the Top 25 minority-owned firms in the region (for a 6th year), this time as #2; and headlined a feature story for Florida Trend Magazine. The company earned \$80.5 million in 2005.

Oscar Horton #2 CEO - Sun State International Trucks



#3 George Tinsley CEO - PenGeo, Inc.



George easily takes the #3 spot again this year, and we weren't the only ones to take note of his success. The East Polk Committee of 100 honored owners George and Seretha Tinsley with the Gold Cup of Industry Award in October. The couple also received the coveted 2006 Bankers Cup Award in September. PenGeo holdings include 45 restaurant franchises and concessions (30 at the Miami International Airport and 6 at Tampa International), including licenses with KFC, TGI Friday, Pizza Hut, Starbucks, and Jose Cuervo. His success is all the more amazing when you consider his life story, which actually sounds more like a movie. Abandoned at birth and raised in poverty by a neighborhood babysitter, George went on to become a basketball legend and a business phenom. He led his college team to 3 Division II NCAA National Championships and 2 national titles before being drafted to the old American Basketball League. He holds just as many records in business. PenGeo has received the highest honor possible for a franchisee – twice from KFC and three times from TGI Fridays. Its 2005 revenue exceeded \$45 million.

#4 Lynn Mims CEO - Mims Construction

Mims Construction is one of only a handful of women-owned concrete and masonry construction firms in the nation,

which made Lynn Mims, its CEO, a must have for this year's Top 30. Her story was so rich, we even bent the rules to get her. Lynn entered the world of concrete masonry as a part-time bookkeeper and single mother supplementing her income. Doing the books gave her a quick grasp of the dollars and sense behind the bricks and mortar. Within 10 years, Lynn launched her own firm and since 1991, when things really began to heat up, Mims has completed more than four dozen substantial projects, 25 of them for the Walt Disney World Resort. Mims handled the concrete masonry for Harambe Village Marketplace and the new 500-acre Disney Animal Kingdom Park. In 2004, Mims teamed up with the American Bridge Company to handle a \$4 million project for Phase 5 of the \$700 million Orange County Convention Center. Under a joint venture with WG Mills, Mims is party to a \$220 million project to build 8 schools and a sports stadium in Palm Beach County. Having done most of her business in the private sector to date, Lynn is unaccustomed to publicly reporting company income. According to off-the-record remarks during our interview, Mims earned well into the eight figures in 2005 and is a well-deserved addition to this year's list.

#7 Art Hooper CEO - Elite CNC Machining

Art Hooper is the Cinderella Man of aerospace machining. By the time he went from tech school grad in 1964 to self-taught master machinist 10 years later, he was teaching his bosses how to shave money off the manufacturing process. Early on at Pratt & Whitney Tool and Aircraft, he took "the toughest jobs they had" to hone his trade. It paid off when he was hired as 1 of 4 experimental machinists by Adco, which trained 2 of them in the new Computer Numerical Control technology. Since Art wasn't one of them, he taught it to himself, *after-hours* and *off-the-clock*. Within months, he wrote a program that cut production time in half for Adco's biggest-selling part. When he took it to

company execs excited that it could increase profit, they couldn't believe an untrained machinist could 'out-program' college educated engineers and at first declined to even test it. The day they finally did, results were amazing and Art quit on the spot. It wasn't long before he realized he had the eye of an engineer and the detail-fixation of a master machinist, and that the combination was worth a lot of money. He became a consultant helping manufacturers maximize production and retired early to Florida in 1981. When he got bored and fancied taking part-time work, he found that none of the local shops would hire an uncertified machinist. He took a Tool Maker B job with Square D Corp, which promoted him to Tool Maker A within months, then to Model Maker, before bumping him up to Product Development and ultimately selecting Art among 20,000 staff for its *Elite Award for Excellence*. He couldn't help but notice

it was dejavue. He was once again helping a manufacturer boost the bottom line. This time he decided to put his talent to use for himself. Elite CNC was born in 1994 with 2 employees and 2 machines. Over the next 12 years, Elite would outgrow its space 3 times over, pick up top aerospace clients like the U.S. Army, Raytheon and Lockheed Martin, and staff 135 employees in an ISO 9001:2000 Certified, 45,000 sq foot facility making 2 million parts per day. Elite earned \$12 million in 2005 and will surpass \$35 million in year.

#6 Paul Curtoom CEO - Curtoom Companies

Curtoom is #10 on the Tampa Bay Business Journal's 2006 list of the top 25 minority firms in Tampa Bay, with 2004 revenue of \$12.3 million.

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#5 Mark Lindsey CEO - Megabyte International

Twenty years old this year, Megabyte International (a.k.a. MIC IT) was ranked one of Florida's 100 Fastest Growing Firms in 1997, as one of Tampa's Top 5 computer companies in 1999, and herewith as #5 on the Power Broker's 2006 list of the Top 30. MIC IT is a computer manufacturer with a build-to-order facility in Tampa. It is also a value-added reseller for 200,000 products and 300 manufacturers. In lay terms that means MIC IT fills large orders for new computers by corporations and government agencies - federal, state and local level. From work stations to mobile deployable solutions for our military MIC IT is known as one of the best in the business, particularly when it comes to its specialties in Microsoft and Intel solutions. The company has several classified service contracts with the U.S. Air Force. Its customers include all military units and civilian clients such as the Federal Aviation Authority, NASA, and the Department of Energy. In the private sector MIC IT sells fulfillment products to L3, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Lockheed Martin and Northrup Gruman, to name a few. Mark, an ex-pro soccer player whose career brought him to Tampa from his home in England, says he fields the same strategy in business as he did in the arena. "You go at it with everything you've got and live by the team." Mark's stewardship led the MIC IT team to record sales of \$15.3 million in 2005 with 24 employees in Tampa and offices in Georgia and Rhode Island.

#8 Lanny Sumpter CEO – Sumpter Enterprises

Lanny Sumpter is definitely one to seize his opportunities. In 1983 while serving as Executive Director of the Metro Miami Action Plan, McDonald's offered him the opportunity to train as a franchisee. After 10 years in government leadership (at a time when it was rumor that a promotion to Assistant County Administrator was impending), Lanny took a leap and never looked back. He opened his first restaurant in 1986. Within 9 years, he owned 4 in Tampa. Then in 1996 when he got an offer he "couldn't refuse," Lanny didn't blink an eye at selling all of them at a very healthy profit. As soon as he got the chance to buy into the market again, he did. Sumpter Enterprises now owns 5 franchises – 2 in Plant City and 3 in Lakeland – which together grossed \$9.6 million in 2005 and charted 10% growth for the previous year. Lanny also jumps in with both feet when it comes to community activities. He is an active Board Member of the National Black McDonald's Owner/Operator Association and a past member of the board of the Boys & Girls Club of Tampa.

#9 Barbara Manzi CEO – Manzi Metals

You may have seen Barbara on the cover of The Power Broker magazine when she headlined our 1st Annual Women's Edition in April 2006. We called the cover story "The Manzi Machine: How Barbara Manzi built a multi-million business in metals."

#10 Alan Turnquist CEO – Mentors on a Mission

She's back, but this time as #9 on The Power Broker's Top 30 ranking.

Manzi is one of the nation's largest distributors of raw and processed metals (stainless steel, carbon, titanium, monel, aluminum and exotic alloys) serving aircraft, automotive, missile and shipyard industries in the United States and Canada. With \$6.7 million in sales in 2005 and a roll call of prestigious clients – Rolls Royce, NASA, Northrup Gruman, and General Electric – Manzi shows no signs of slowing down. The company operates in a 10,800 square foot warehouse in the Hernando Airport Industrial Park, with a staff that was ISO 9001:2000 Certified well ahead of its competitors. Manzi this year received *Six Sigma Greenbelt Certification*, which keeps

the company on track to continue aggressive growth like the 81% increase it experienced in 2005. Hot in pursuit of the industry's coveted Nunn-Perry Award, Barbara counsels "I see Manzi growing to the point where we are a threat to giants in this industry. That goal is stated in my business plan. It's my passion, and everyone in my company feels it."



Al is best known in the home-based business industry as a money making machine. After 30 years building businesses – for himself and others – Al is training entrepreneurs across the globe in what it takes to be successful at their own enterprise. Early in his career, Al became known as the 'consummate closer.' After topping the lists of star sales execs for corporations like John Hancock, he put his singular skill to work for himself and built top performing multi-level organizations for Excel, Amway and others. In what he calls the capstone of his career, Al is taking it up another notch. He founded Mentors on a Mission to give serious entrepreneurs a stronger chance to succeed in lucrative businesses. He has personally helped hundreds of entrepreneurs develop a thriving business in the multi-level industry, but says even the best companies net 95% turnover "because they teach their reps time wasting activities and lead them to believe they won't have to 'self.' And if you can't sell, you fold." Invoking the name of his training program, he adds "You either 'make money or make excuses.'" Mentors grossed \$6 million in 2005. Its team of trained 'closers' is doing business in virtually every English speaking country worldwide.

Unanimously Modest Many Remain Anonymous

Virtually all of the targets for the top 30 search had to be coaxed and cajoled to let us publish their successes. In the end, several notable CEOs chose to remain anonymous, or at least opted to keep their revenues private. Heavyweights like **Sol Davis** of Sol Davis Printing, which is recognized as one of the largest African-American owned printers in the Southeast U.S. concedes only that he earned between \$1 and \$2 million in 2005. **Jonathan Graham**, who owns two companies that may have made the list, graciously declined the honor. His companies are Horace Construction and GPM, Inc. Public records indicate that execs like **Thomas Huggins**, CEO of Aerial Business Solutions, would certainly make the ranking. **Woodrow Grady** of Freedom Solutions, LLC thought about it for a while before opting no. Why do so many of our top producers prefer a low profile? Besides modesty and economy (these men and women stay "on the go"), several of them shared a thought provoking reason. They say it doesn't pay to be too public, especially among black folks. Does the community still suffer from the crabs-in-a-barrel syndrome? Stay tuned to future editions to explore the question. To send us your thoughts, email reachout@powerbrokermagazine.com.



#11 Carl & Emma Calhoun
CEO/COO - Commercial Bedding

They went from careers in banking and teaching to co-executives when Carl and Emma purchased the Commercial Bedding Company in 1982. Together, they tripled the firm's capacity within 4 years and put themselves on track to become a national leader in bedding. The firm supplies mattresses to hotels, universities, cruise lines, government agencies and designers nationwide. In 2005, Disney placed a 4,000-unit order that boosted Commercial Bedding to \$5.5 million in sales. This year looks promising as well. The firm became 1 of only 3 manufacturers in the nation with Preferred Vendor status with America's Best Value Inns. In January, it will launch a new luxury memory foam latex sleep system, Pinache, designed to appeal to middle and upper-income households. Commercial Bedding employs 45 people producing hundreds of sleep systems per day in a 50,000 square foot facility.



#13 Kenny Rushing
CEO - Rehabber's Superstore

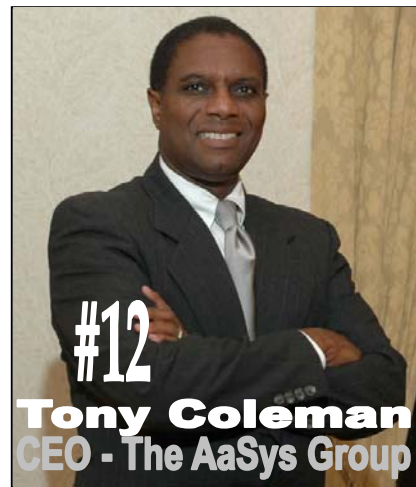
Kenny's combination of business savvy, style, stamina and "street" makes it entirely possible that he could succeed in turning *House Hustling* into a national movement. Kenny founded Rehabber's Superstore in 2000 to buy, rehab and sell single family homes. In 2005, his businesses, including a joint venture for real estate investment, financed \$5 million in purchase and sale transactions on nearly 80 residential properties. In 2006, Kenny decided to take his self-described "hustler" strategy to the street. His *House Hustling* magazine premiered in Tampa and Miami. His "Get on the Bus: *House Hustling* Real Estate Investment Tour" launched with 4 coach buses packed by 200 pupils, some drawn by success stories of former drug hustlers who studied under Kenny to become 'house hustlers' with their own property investment firms. A new website at www.househustling.com is attracting students from

across the country who can train on-line or buy Kenny's line of "House Hustling" DVDs.

#15 Kevin Simmons
CEO - R.E.A. Remedial Solutions

when they helped put Westinghouse Environmental, a division of Fortune 50 Westinghouse, on the map in Florida. When Kevin Simmons and Jose Seech, now a VP at Remedial, were recruited to Westinghouse in 1990, the company had 10 employees. They left it with 230. Remedial has earned its status as a standard of quality in the industry. It serves some of the area's largest commercial projects and clients, including MacDill Air Force Base, Skanska, Cone & Graham Construction, Beck Contractors, and Airside B at Tampa International Airport. Most recently, Remedial Solutions handled the environmental work on the Meridian Street Elevated Crosstown portion of the Leroy Selman Expressway Authority Project. The firm earned \$3.8 million in 2005.

Frank Kendrick founded NuJak Construction in 1992, NuJak Development in 1999 and NuJak Properties in 2005 with the goal of being able to develop, build *and* manage commercial real estate. In 2006, Frank, along with Timothy Jackson, established NuJak Companies, which subsumed all operations and added construction management and broker services to the portfolio. The company is currently developing Lost Style Luxury Townhomes in downtown Lakeland and is in the planning stages of a \$30 million mixed-use project that includes 100 residential units and commercial sites. Tim was brought on board to guide the companies' rapid growth, particularly in the development field. He is a 1999 MS grad of NYU's Real Estate Institute. While its construction arm still accounts for the lion share of revenues, the Properties group manages \$2.5 million in real estate ranging from multi-family sites to retail. NuJack has built over 20 financial institutions and 50 churches throughout Florida. In 2005, NuJak was named Minority Business of the Year by the Tampa Bay MED Week Committee. It earned \$4.2 million that year.



#12 Tony Coleman
CEO - The AaSys Group

AaSys is the ultimate example of a superior niche strategy. Formed in 1992, AaSys spotted a boom in Florida's banking industry, and quickly built a reputation for its ability to "open a bank from scratch." AaSys rode the trend in new 'denovo' bank openings to accumulate an unrivaled base of bank clients. Celebrating the opening its 30th bank, its Bank Consulting Division is handling turnkey implementation and support for new bank operations, contract negotiation, systems and applications in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina and Virginia. AaSys later expanded to help existing banks be more efficient at improving their bottom line, this year launching the new Profit Enhancement Solutions Division. In 2005 AaSys employed 32 people, generated \$5.1 million and surpassed 100 community banks using its support services. When asked what he considered his biggest accomplishment this year, Tony said quickly as a shot "the birth of our son, Trent Gregory, on June 9th 2006 - our first." Trent Gregory will definitely keep Tony on his toes.



#14 Frank Kendrick/Timothy Jackson
CEO/COO - NuJak Companies

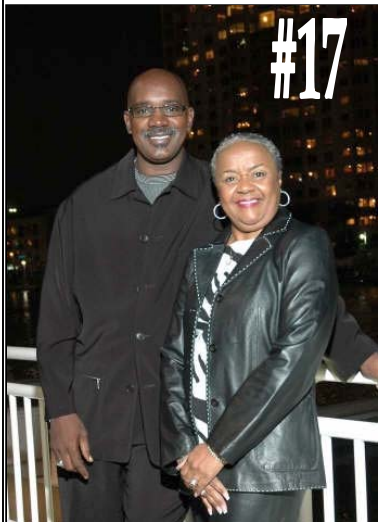
#16 Dr. Glen Cherry CEO - Tama Broadcasting

In 1969, the late Charles Cherry, Sr., civil rights warrior and former statewide NAACP President, founded the *Westside Rapper* Newspaper because he was convinced that "Black folks will win more battles when more of us print by the bucket." His sons, Dr. Glenn and Attorney Charles Cherry, Jr., took the lesson. In 2005, we reported Tama's status as the largest black-owned media company in Florida, and the 5th biggest black-owned radio group in the nation (with ownership in WPUL in Daytona Beach, WCSZ in Greenville, WTMP in Tampa, 4 stations in Jacksonville, and 3 others in Savannah, Georgia). In 2006, Tama spun out a new subsidiary just in time for the February launch of *The Florida Courier* as the first African-American-owned statewide weekly newspaper. The Courier is the third paper in Tama's portfolio. The original *Westside Rapper* evolved into The Daytona Times, still circulated to 50,000 readers each week in East Florida.



#18 Simone Gans-Barfield CEO - Gans, Gans & Associates

Simone leveraged her love of politics to form a successful executive search and HR firm. Gans opened offices in Chicago and Philadelphia in 1986, expanded to the bay area in 1996 and relocated to Plant City in 1997. In 2005, the firm earned just over \$3 million and placed 2 dozen high powered execs, including Executive Directors for the Newark Housing Authority and the Housing Authority of Pittsburg. COO Ernest Barefield specializes in government relations. He currently lobbies the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on behalf of the City of Philadelphia and previously served as Deputy Mayor of the City. He holds the distinction of having worked for 4 black mayors – Andy Young, Maynard Jackson, Harold Washington and Wilson Goode. Look for her cover story in the upcoming 2nd Annual Women's Edition of The Power Broker Magazine.



#17 Parnell & Ernestine Dickinson Children's Discovery Center

Ernestine opened her first Children's Discovery Center in 1983 and grew to 3 locations by 1986. She subsequently sold 2 of them, and spends most of her time these days directing the Center at 13101 N. 23rd Street in Tampa, which is licensed to care for 210 children (day and night...the Center is open until midnight). Through a multi-million dollar annual contract with Hillsborough County's School Readiness Coalition to serve low-income families, Ernestine is blessed to live her passion. She was a social worker prior to opening her first Center and says, "It's our goal to give children the total package – not only the education, but the love, the nurturing and development, which is crucial for minority children." In 2005, Children's Discovery earned \$3 million and earned its certification to operate the new Florida Dept of Education Voluntary Pre-K program. See more on Mr. Dickinson in the following pages.

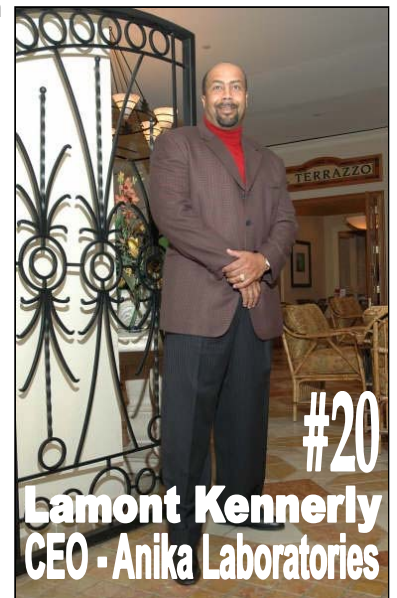


#19 Ronnie Williams CEO - R.W. Tymewell

CEO Ronnie Williams founded Tymewell in 1996, ten years after he started his first company, called MRB Properties, a real estate investment firm still in operation today. Although better known these days for Tymewell's commercial construction services, Ronnie says his first love is real estate investment. Tymewell was actually founded as a division of MRB to renovate the properties he bought for investment purposes. Ronnie says his revenue gains over the past several years are due to his decisions to liquidate some long-time holdings at just the right time. Indeed the area's profit-rich real estate market just began to slow down in earnest earlier this year. The company currently has \$3.2 million in construction under contract and earned just over \$2 million in 2005 from construction contracts and will earn \$2.5 million this year.

When Lamont stepped off the fast track to law school to take a sales position with Pro-Line Hair Care, he found himself on the way to executive leadership in the ethnic hair care industry. He left Pro-Line to become a Brokers Rep for F.M.L. Brokers, where he represented top ethnic lines like Soft Sheen. Before long he and a partner decided to launch

K&C Sales, selling Carson, Always Natural and Vigorol products, among others. All of it proved excellent training for his present enterprise. Lamont founded Anika in 1991 to manufacture and market the Soft & Precious baby line, specially formulated for African-American babies. The company earned \$1.5 million in 2005 and expects to top that this year. Anika recently closed a deal with Dollar General to sell the line in 4,900 stores. Soft & Precious is also sold through Walmart, Kroger's, Walgreens, CVS, Food Lion, Family Dollar



#20 Lamont Kennerly CEO - Anika Laboratories

#22 Eric Brown, CEO - ROI Consulting

ROI Consulting hit the \$1.5 million mark in 2005, and Eric says it's on track to reach \$2 million this year. ROI provides temporary and permanent IT staff and support for clients like the Florida Department of Corrections and Department of Agriculture. Closer to home, clients include Pinellas County, where ROI completed a 3-year staffing contract, and Hillsborough County Public Schools. With a host of large government accounts to its credit, ROI growth strategy includes aggressive expansion at the city, county, and state levels.

#23 Kori Monroe/Guysen Bohler, CEO/President - IROK Construction



Kori, 34, and Guysen, 32, are the youngest entrepreneurs on this year's list. In 2005, Irok Construction grossed \$1.45 million. Its projects that year included construction of 12 new single family homes. IROK also began a project to renovate 5 McDonald's franchise locations, which it recently completed. The firm has also secured a construction management contract for the new Progress Energy Headquarters building in downtown St. Petersburg in partnership with Brasfield & Gorri. IROK was founded 2003.



#21 Larry Newsome

By the time Larry retired in 2000 he had financed and managed well over a billion dollars in commercial real estate transactions. He rose through the ranks at Florida Progress from Accountant to CFO of Progress Credit before becoming CFO at Echelon International Development. Larry is spending this last leg of his career developing commercial real estate in underserved markets across Florida. He formed UDS three years ago and put the firm on the map with its flagship project, a shopping center anchored by Sweetbay Supermarket. UDS is now developing a 3-story SunTrust Bank Building, Phase I of the South Springs Subdivision and a downtown Pensacola office building. UDS earned \$1.5 million in 2005.

Harry Howard, Howard & Associates Architects #24

Harry credits his start in business to the politics of Arthenia Joyner, a push from his former boss and good preparation. He had been promoted to Associate with prominent local designer Sol Fleischman when Joyner was seated to the Hillsborough Aviation Authority Board and began advocating for it to do more business with minority firms. It was all the encouragement he needed. Howard & Associates opened doors in 1991 and has made a name in educational and medical designs, including Blake Performing Arts High School in Hillsborough County. The firm earned \$1.2 million in 2005, with 8 professionals on staff.

#25 Kyle Jackson & Larry Day, CEO/COO - The Equity Resource Group

Kyle was a Managing Director at First Choice Lending and Larry the owner of a division of Cateret Mortgage before both exited the mortgage industry to enter Stetson Law School. They soon decided they would much rather be millionaires than lawyers. So they founded ERG with little more than their ambition and experience. In 2005, the firm financed \$850,000 in mortgage transactions. Their goal – nothing short of being licensed in all 50 states.

#26 Derek Holmes, CEO - Tec-Link

Named to the *Top 40 under 40* in Central Iowa by the *Des Moines Business Record*, this former Clive City Councilman continues to blaze new trails. He founded Tec-Link in 1999 after leaving Wells Fargo as a Senior Software Applications Engineer. With a specialty in Enterprise Resource Planning systems, Tec-Link clients include Danka, International Truck & Engine and systems giants EDS and Unisys. Derek's design of an award-winning system for the nation's 9th largest district (Hillsborough County), opened the door for Tec-Link to ink a new contract with Atlanta Public Schools in 2006. The firm earned \$700,000 in 2005 and will surpass \$1 million this year.

You may know her as a TV talk show host, but by day Floran is Senior Partner with Harvey, Covington & Thomas, which recently announced the merger of three successful CPA firms with offices in Tampa, Orlando, Ft. Lauderdale and Jacksonville and combined revenues in 2005 of over \$1,000,000.

#27 Floran Thomas, Partner - Harvey, Covington & Thomas



#28

Foster Lovett/Priscilla Williams - Lovett & Williams CPAs

Their clients include industry leaders on both sides of the bay, including several of the Top 30. Lovett & Williams expanded beyond its base of accounting and tax services in 2004 to include consulting in financial and accounting systems and services. In 2005, the dynamic duo contracted with the Polk County Opportunity Council to redesign its financial processes while serving as Director of Finance for the \$18 million agency. It earned \$440,000 that year.

#29 Michelle Patty, CEO - Michelle Patty Medical Referral Services

Affectionately known in community circles as 'Miss Patty,' she's on the cusp of achieving 'tip of the tongue' status for victims of auto accidents and injuries, particularly in Tampa. Always seen in bold hats matched to beautiful suits, Michelle promotes her medical referral service through TV and radio ads. The company grossed \$420,000 in 2005.

#30 Booker Pickett, CEO - Westchase Mortgage

Booker Pickett began his business 5 years ago after getting his sea legs in the industry as a young graduate of the University of Miami. The company grossed \$400,000 in 2005.

Outside the Board Room

In case you had any doubt, these men and women are just as interesting outside the board room. Two of them are ex-professional athletes. One co-hosts a TV show. Three are former elected or appointed officials. Two served time in prison while another toured for 5 years with an R&B band (you'd never guess who). The Top 30 also includes the only two African-Americans who own a season box for Tampa Bay Bucs games, a medical doctor who never practiced medicine, an ordained minister, a single mother, an ex-social worker, an aspiring author and a License Inspector for the National Football League. So, what do they have in common? Here are some fast facts about this year's Top 30:

60%

It's interesting to note that 18 of the Top 30 are transplants to Tampa Bay. Many moved to the area from the Northeast and Midwest. One is from overseas.

57%

More than half of the Top 30 learned their trade on the job in Corporate America before entering the world of entrepreneurship.

30%

Almost one-third is in Construction, Development, Real Estate or related fields, while 17% are in Business Services. Manufacturing and Technology claim 13% each. It is noteworthy that 79% sell primarily B2B, while 21% sell to consumer markets.

27%

The Top 30 includes 8 businesses that are owned or co-owned by women.

18

18 of the Top 30 earned revenue sufficient to place them on the Tampa Bay Business Journal's annual list of the Top 25 minority firms. Of those, 5 of them were featured on TBBJ's 2006 list. Interestingly, The Power Broker's #1 (Sandy Woods at \$443 million) would have also ranked #1 on the TBBJ list, which had Sanwa Growers in the top spot with \$75 million.

5

Only 5 of the Top 30 are located in St. Petersburg or Pinellas County. Lakeland & Polk County claim 3.

\$698,000,000

The Top 30 earned a combined \$698 million in 2005. Sandy Woods' S. Woods Enterprises was a thumb on the scale. His business accounted for 63% of the total.



Mass Misperception How Big is Tampa Bay's Black Business Sector?

Based on our research for this year's Top 30, it's entirely possible that official research sources are undercounting the size and strength of the black-business sector. According to the most recent research by the U.S. Census Bureau, released in August 2006, black-owned firms in the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater Metropolitan Area earned \$493 million in 2005 (2002 figures adjusted to 2005 dollars).

Considering the fact that the Top 30 earned a combined \$698 million in 2005, plus the fact that many of our largest businesses chose to remain anonymous and thus are not counted in the total, combined with the fact that the Top 30 did not capture the professional sector (doctors and lawyers, who, by the way, will be covered in a dedicated edition of The Power Broker in 2007), **it appears probable that we suffer from mass misperceptions about the size, strength and diversity of black-owned businesses.**

Is perception important? You bet it is, especially when it impacts our bottom line. I've heard a major prime contractor sit across the table from black civic leaders and say that he would like to do more business with black-owned firms, but can't find qualified black subcontractors.

I've witnessed one of the local Chambers of Commerce approach "minority business development" as though it were a social service program, in part based upon the false premise that black entrepreneurs lag so far behind (and apparently need hand holding).

I've also heard a local black developer conclude that there just aren't enough black-owned businesses that have the size and revenue to lease his retail space. He had been holding out on leasing to mainstream retailers in an effort to fill several of his stores with local black-owned establishments. In the end, he did manage to lease to several locals, but had the dickens of a time finding them.

So, yes, perception is important. We – as a community – should have an accurate picture of who we are and where we stand. To help us along, The Power Broker will soon release an on-line database of over 1,000 black-owned businesses in the bay. Be one of them. Register at www.powerbrokermagazine.com