

## Hollywood's Top Business Managers of 2020

The entertainment industry's money managers prefer to avoid the limelight. To their chagrin, public documents and insiders help The Hollywood Reporter spotlight the people who help A-listers build empires and avoid bad investments.

BY ASHLEY CULLINS

OCTOBER 7, 2020



Each year, The Hollywood Reporter editors do intensive research to choose who should be highlighted as a Power Business Manager. It's no small task, especially because many of the people on this list won't confirm clients, let alone offer more information. So, in addition to digging through public records, THR surveys Hollywood insiders about who they trust most with their clients' money. (Note: Ad sales have no bearing on who makes the cut.)

## Reggie Gooden, Josh Martin and Justin Stiegemeyer (818 Management)



Gooden and Martin joined forces with Stiegemeyer in 2018, bringing with them a roster of around 20 clients who span the digital and music industries, like singer-song-writer Cory Henry. The firm, which counts Ashley Benson, Bella Thorne and Taylor Kitsch as clients, has a knack for working with young Hollywood but also knows how to handle the finances of industry stalwarts like Benicio del Toro and Lisa Marie Presley.

### **My 2020 mantra**

Gooden: “Tough times don’t last. Tough people do.”

Martin: “The ‘new abnormal.’ Whenever possible, return to your normal routine.”

## David Altman, Anthony Bonsignore, Tom Carr and Frank Selvaggi (Altman, Greenfield & Selvaggi)



The bicoastal firm works with some of Hollywood’s biggest talents — Rachel Brosnahan, Jimmy Fallon and Anne Hathaway, to name a few — so while clients were paused during the pandemic production shutdown, business for the accountants ramped up. “I was joking that I think I have worked harder this year than I have worked my entire life almost,” says Altman. The East Coast-based Bonsignore says the coming months will be about ensuring cash flow amid continued uncertainty: “People are starting to work again, but it is still all out of our control.”

### **Best advice for weathering a pandemic**

Altman: “Think things through.”

Bonsignore: “Don’t panic. Don’t do anything drastic.”

## **Evan Bell (Bell and Co.)**



The firm's roster, including Steven Soderbergh, Baz Luhrmann, director Robert Eggers (The Lighthouse) and Phillip Sun, a former WME partner who recently teamed with Macro's Charles D. King to form management firm M88, has benefited from uninterrupted support. Bell's team has been back at the midtown Manhattan office since Memorial Day. "We have had no furloughs or layoffs and no salary reductions," he says. "If you work remotely, we pay 75 percent, but our entire staff is coming in, and we have had no infections."

### **My 2020 mantra**

"Communication, communication, communication."

## **Christopher Fank (Christopher Fank, CPA)**



Following a “good, busy” year in 2019, a lot of recent change has come, Fank explains, from tax planning for feature films to filing for unemployment on behalf of some clients. “I’ve learned that a lot of these people have done very well and they have a lot of money,” he says. “They can survive a lockdown for a year — but everybody still really wants to work.” Among Fank’s clients are 13 Reasons Why actress Alisha Boe as well as Shia LaBeouf, who continues to ride the waves of Honey Boy and The Peanut Butter Falcon while writing amid the COVID pandemic.

### **Line that always makes me laugh**

“Day ain’t over yet.” (City Slickers)

### **Douglas Cammarano, Arnie Herrmann, Wayne Mejia, Matthew Segreto and Sharon Sullivan(Citrin Cooperman)**



Lately, business involves ensuring eligible clients have access to PPP loans and talking about cash flow via videoconferencing. “We’re very fortunate in that our clients are really, really bright,” says Mejia, noting that their job is a lot easier with clients who are on top of things. On its roster are Martin Lawrence, Martin Scorsese, Liam Neeson, Damien Chazelle and Sam Mendes. Sullivan says their COVID-19 strategy is “staying the course and not reacting.”

### **My 2020 mantra**

Sullivan: “Positive thoughts, positive mind, positive life.”

## **David Weise (David Weise & Associates)**



“We have been able to really maintain our staff during these hard economic times,” says Weise about his Encino outfit. He credits the support of Los Angeles-based NKSFB, of which it became a division in 2019. “Despite the pandemic, we continued working as if nothing happened,” supporting such clients as The Weeknd, Marshmello, Usher, Carole King and Coldplay. Weise also says he oversaw “several huge catalog sales, which generated lots of revenue for clients.”

### **Hollywood’s 2021 priority should be...**

“To be safe, healthy and smart.”

## **David Levin (DL Business Management)**



Musicians aren’t touring, and many actors aren’t on set, but that hasn’t stopped Levin’s business from booming busier than ever, but not necessarily in billable hours,” says the veteran, who has worked with Live frontman Ed Kowalczyk for nearly 30 years and also counts John Legend and Chrissy Teigen as well as Hailey Bieber as clients. The extra time at home, he explains, has given his clients time to reassess their financial priorities: “That’s

where being a business manager and a CPA and a lawyer is great, but you also have to be a counselor and a psychologist.”

**My 2020 mantra**

“Always better safe than sorry.”

**Patt Dunn and Tony Peyrot (Dunn Pariser & Peyrot)**



At a time when the world is “reckoning with social injustice,” Peyrot talks up client Giancarlo Esposito — a “man of color and great integrity” who received two Emmy nominations this year for Better Call Saul and Mandalorian. Among their long-term clients is Fresh Off the Boat star Randall Park, who recently launched a production company, while new clients include Tiffany Boone (Little Fires Everywhere) and her husband, Marque Richardson (Antebellum). Dunn also has been working on a rollout of a game company that will involve multiple acquisitions.

**My 2020 mantra**

Dunn: “Don’t panic. Stay calm and think. Be creative. Find new ways to do things.”

Peyrot: “Prepare for the worst, hope for the best and, if all else fails, have some good anejo tequila.”

## **Julie Boos, Jamie Cheek, Mary Ann McCready and Carmen Romano (Flood Bumstead McCready & McCarthy)**



A new generation has taken charge of the Nashville outfit, including chair Boos, president Cheek and vpRomano, upholding its reputation as a powerhouse for country stars likeBlake Shelton and Keith Urban. Its roster also is said to include Kelly Clarkson, The Black Keys and Diplo. Boos was “really excited” to open an L.A. office in February. Then COVID-19 hit. “Our clients are virtually all touring clients, and live performances came to a screeching halt,” says Romano. PPP funds were helpful to some, adds Cheek: “We helped them get the federal funding they needed to keep some of their staff on longer.”

### **Best advice for weathering a pandemic**

Boos: “Spend less.”

Cheek: “Have two years of lifestyle in reserve.”

Romano: “And if you don’t have that, learn from it.”

## **Andrew Meyer and Steves Rodriguez (Freemark Financial)**



Freemark has helped individual talent (Kenya Barris, Ellen Pompeo) and companies (Droga5, Smuggler) navigate the changes presented by 2020. Meyer and Rodriguez, both self-proclaimed optimists, are quick to note the silver linings. In switching from calls to Zooms, Rodriguez says, “There is a lot more connectivity with clients. Ironically enough, [work] seems more personal than it used to.” Meyer adds that many clients have used the downtime from work to simplify assets and reinvest money ethically: “That’s been powerful in its own way.”

### **My 2020 mantra**

Meyer: “We can control what we spend but not always what we earn.”

Rodriguez: “This too shall pass, and when we get to the other side (and we will), we will be better for it.”

## **Eric Fulton and Elizabeth Ricin (Fulton Management)**



One of the biggest developments for the firm handling finances for Channing Tatum, Miles Teller and James Charles is the addition of THR Next Gen alum Matthew Gilbert-Hamerling as a partner. Fulton says the extra leadership has been helpful in a year that “economically, has been a challenge” due to the COVID-19 production shutdown. The pandemic also has brought perspective. From now on, Ricin says, “I don’t think clients are going to take work for granted.”

### **Line that always makes me laugh**

Fulton: “My partners will think I’m weird for saying this, but I always smile when I hear someone say, ‘That’ll do, Pig,’ from Babe.”

## Tyson Beem, Andrew Crow, Todd Gelfand and Melissa Morton (Gelfand Rennert & Feldman)



The pandemic shutdown has created time for “a deeper dive into clients’ assets, whether that be a publishing catalog or a revenue stream from movie participation,” according to Beem. The firm also helped some clients, a list including Jordan Peele, Christina Aguilera and Keke Palmer, support causes they care about, such as Peele’s \$1 million donation to Black Lives Matter, the Equal Justice Initiative and three other groups this summer. Gelfand adds that he hopes people in Hollywood continue to use their platform for positive change even after the current crises have ended. “Don’t let the events of the past year that have brought significant social change to our country fade,” he says. “This is not the time to forget about social justice and the things that are going on in this country. So in ’21, ’22, ’23 and ’24, use the pulpit to continue to move this topic and agenda forward.”

### **My 2020 mantra**

Crow: “Chop wood, carry water.”

Beem: “Back to basics.”

Morton: “Be kind. Be kind to everyone and, I can’t stress it enough, keep a kind heart.”

## Harvey Gettleson, Seth Gettleson and Randy O'Connor (Gettleson Witzer & O'Connor)



“I’ve appreciated the resourcefulness of our staff and clients in embracing the change in our lives, but with a spirit that embraces and supports the needs of others,” says Harvey Gettleson. Even amid the pandemic, the hunger for content has been good for the firm’s creative clients, who include Ava DuVernay, J.J. Abrams and Will Packer, as well as Franklin Leonard’s Black List Film Fund. Fortunately, the firm was able to keep its full staff during the shutdown. “We are very proud of how our staff adjusted quickly to the pandemic work requirements,” says O’Connor. New to the list is Seth Gettleson, who notes that clients “have embraced charitable and social causes in response to the pandemic.”

### **My 2020 mantra**

O’Connor: “Masks are not optional.”

S. Gettleson: “You do have time for family.”

## **Laura Gordon (Gordon & Associates)**



After three decades at her boutique firm, with clients who are said to include Nick Cannon, Amandla Stenberg and David Oyelowo, 2020 has been a year unlike any other. As one of few women of color in her field, Gordon has long promoted a multicultural workplace, and is hopeful industrywide change is possible amid national calls for racial justice. “We have to figure out how to relate to one another and work together in a much healthier way,” says the board member of Women in Film. “And value someone’s heritage and culture, as opposed to pretending like you don’t see it.”

### **Hollywood’s 2021 priority should be...**

“To establish authentic cultural inclusion at every level where decisions are made; and pay equity for women and people of color.”

### **Howard Altman, Corey Barash and Warren Grant (Grant Tani Barash & Altman)**



“There are really no ‘highlights’ I can speak of. This is 2020, after all,” quips Altman of the firm’s past year, noting that its focus has been maintaining stability for its clients and staff. “We have worked hard to keep things in order for everyone during this volatile period.” Grant adds that the firm is busier than ever: “Our clients’ needs lately vary from buying and selling homes to leasing out-of-the-city rentals, renting their vacation homes to others, and a lot of mortgage refinancing.”

### **Best advice for weathering a pandemic**

Grant: “Keep a good cash reserve. Focus on safety over income.”

## **Elizabeth Kenney (L&L Business Management)**



Kenney’s boutique firm may be a smaller operation (a staff of five) but it packs a punch with clients that include top talent like TiffanyHaddish and Awkwafina. In addition to fielding a lot of questions surrounding PPP and EIDL loans, she’s been heartened by another new trend: “2020 has been a lot about philanthropic endeavors. With everything that has happened this year, I feel people are more connected to their communities.”

### **Line that always makes me laugh**

“This one time, at band camp ...” (American Pie)

## **Charles Clancy, Mark Friedman, Matt Lichtenberg and John Rigney (Level Four Business Management)**



This quartet, which has a client roster that includes Quentin Tarantino, comedy multihyphenates Will Ferrell and Danny McBride, and actors Samuel L. Jackson and Jim Carrey, has seen a range of responses to the COVID-19 crisis. One unifying trend they've noticed is a desire to leave California. "Of my own clients, I've had maybe three or four of them move out of state," says Rigney, explaining that remote work, high income taxes and wildfires have all contributed to the exodus.

### **Line that always makes me laugh**

Clancy: "I did absolutely nothing and it was everything I thought it could be." (Office Space)

Friedman: "Yippee-ki-yay, motherfucker!" (Die Hard)

Lichtenberg: "Well, what if there is no tomorrow? There wasn't one today." (Groundhog Day)

Rigney: "Work work work work work." (Blazing Saddles)

## **Humble Lukanga (Life Line Financial Group)**



"We haven't been worried about COVID as much as George Floyd and social injustice," says Lukanga, reflecting on 2020. The Ugandan founder of Life Line Financial Group represents entertainment and sports superstars from Issa Rae, Yara Shahidi, Marsai Martin and Robin Thede to Arian Foster, DeAndre Hopkins and Charlamagne tha God. Says Lukanga, "It's time for Hollywood to lead the entire world on what it looks like to invest in and empower and support people of color." Lukanga is hopeful for Hollywood's future, inspired by the noticeable change around racial justice, "from my fight to, now, our fight."

### **Best advice for weathering a pandemic**

"Protect your mental health and do not allow yourself to fall into a mindset of scarcity."

## John McIlwee (McIlwee & Associates)



McIlwee struck out on his own in December, bringing all 40 of his clients — including Weakest Link host Jane Lynch and The Batman director Matt Reeves — with him. Though the pandemic hit just a few months later, he says the firm was “ready to take on literally every single thing that was thrown Hollywood’s way.” That’s included the postponement of the Olympics, where client skateboarder Sky Brown would have become one of the youngest-ever competitors, and the shutdown of production for Batman.

### **Hollywood’s 2021 priority should be...**

“Remember we’re all in this together, so everyone needs to bear some of the burden.”

## Mark Landesman and Paul Zukowsky (ML Management)



“It was certainly the most challenging year of our career,” Landesman says of 2020. “Never would we have dreamt that all our clients would be needing our advice pretty much exactly

at the same time.” Since the COVID-19 lockdown began in March, the duo — who rep Bruce Willis, James Cameron and Gal Gadot — have rented and bought homes for clients and offered advice as the industry ground to a halt. Says Zukowsky, “We’re number one or number two on everybody’s speed dials about how to live their lives and where should they live.”

### **Best advice for weathering a pandemic**

Landesman: “That’s the same answer I would give every year and it’s basically ‘save your money.’ You can’t pay today’s bills with tomorrow’s income, because tomorrow’s income brings tomorrow’s bills along with it.”

### **Harley Neuman (Neuman + Associates)**



Neuman, whose powerhouse client list includes Ryan Murphy, Scarlett Johansson and Netflix chief Ted Sarandos, is fairly certain 2020 has been the single most difficult year to be a business manager. “From the initial jolts to the stock markets to the loss of income because of coronavirus to the government assistance programs that were passed in haste, it’s been probably one of the most challenging periods of time in the 30 years I’ve been doing this,” says the rep, who also advises Lena Waithe, Janet Mock and Ellen DeGeneres.

### **Hollywood’s 2021 priority should be...**

“Getting back to work.”

**David Bolno, Richard Feldstein, Bernie Gudvi, Michael Karlin,  
Michael Oppenheim, Matt Segal, Mickey Segal and Larry Tyler  
(NKSFB)**



The election is dominating conversations with clients, says Oppenheim. Talks include not only potential tax implications but also “what will happen if Trump is re-elected [and] how moving out of the country would affect them.” Gudvi says another challenge has been “the touring business being out of action for 18 to 24 months.” That’s especially relevant as the firm reps such clients as Beyoncé, Drake, Post Malone and Katy Perry. New to the list are Larry Tyler, who reps Bruno Mars and Tori Kelly, and Matt Segal, whose roster includes NBA star turned cannabis entrepreneur Al Harrington and pro gamer Pokimane. Segal says of pandemic times, “Staying on your toes is more important than ever.”

**My 2020 mantra**

Gudvi: “One day at a time ...”

Oppenheim: “It has to get better.”

## Martin Meeks and Aaron Philpott (Philpott Meeks)



Together the duo reps a range of clients, from Hollywood royalty like Friends creators David Crane, Kevin Bright and Marta Kauffman to publishing giants such as Benedikt Taschen of Taschen books fame. Meeks — who celebrated his 50th birthday this summer with a quarantined family vacation in Oahu, Hawaii — advises TV heavyweights Dick Wolf and Jerry Bruckheimer, as well as Nicolas Cage. Meanwhile, Philpott runs point on actor James Caan and STX chief Bob Simonds.

### My 2020 mantra

Meeks: “Don’t let fear control you. Don’t let it dictate your decisions.”

Philpott: “Wash your hands and don’t share an ice cream spoon.”

## Craig Manzino, Dean Michaels and Marc Rosen (Prager Metis)



“We forget this year didn’t start on March 12,” jokes Michaels, who says the firm has been focused primarily on navigating “the time since shutdown.” He says clients, who include Samira Wiley and Laverne Cox, are prepped to weather drought periods. “Even though there’s an industry-wide shutdown and things are coming back, things are not coming back equally,” says Rosen. “So your advice to somebody on a scripted show that’s starting up again might be different than somebody who’s on Broadway, where there might not be an end in sight.” He adds that many clients are becoming podcasters, influencers and MasterClass instructors in their spare time.

### **Hollywood’s 2021 priority should be...**

Rosen: “To level the playing field. How clients consume content will be data-driven. Therefore, resources can be deployed differently to reach more diverse audiences.”

## **Jeff Turner and Bill Vuylsteke (Provident Financial Management)**



With offices across California and in Nashville, the firm reps film, TV and music stars including Angela Bassett, Mike Judge, Al Pacino, Lucy Liu, Jesse Williams, Shakira, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and writer-director Rick Famuyiwa. They’re hopeful for Hollywood clients who are slowly returning to production, but note music touring has taken a big hit. “Touring is down by 90 percent of what it was,” says Vuylsteke. “So many businesses have been hit; unemployment within the industry is pretty severe.” Turner adds, “We’ll be very fortunate if music tours come back in 2021.”

### **Worst financial decision in a pandemic?**

Turner: “Investing in a restaurant.”

Vuylsteke: “Anything that will get you into debt.”

## Tara Moore and Phil Sarna (PS Business Management)



“2020 started off in fairy-tale fashion with my clients literally sweeping the Grammys,” says Moore of Billie Eilish and Lizzo — then COVID-19 hit. “My clients lost a ton of money from not being on the road,” she says. “But they gained time” to focus on larger issues. With client Halsey among those leading the charge for social justice, Sarna says, “I’ve been amazed and inspired by how many clients have risen to the occasion.”

### **Best advice for weathering a pandemic**

Moore: “Spend Less. A lot less. You do not need full glam while quarantining. And do you actually need full glam as much as you think?”

Sarna: “Planning for the long term is always best when faced with something adverse.”

## Jeff Bacon, Chris Bucci and Rachel Martinez (Savitsky Satin Bacon & Bucci)



“The pandemic has triggered a higher-than-usual amount of real estate transactions,” notes Martinez, though she warns, “It may not be a good time to make big lifestyle decisions like moving out of state.” The ultra discreet firm, which reps top talent across the industry, is also fielding questions about potential tax changes, Bucci says, and “where the economy currently is and where it may be headed.” (Steve Savitsky is THR’s 2020 Business Manager Icon. Read his profile [here](#).)

### **My 2020 mantra**

Bacon: “Empathy, perspective, and less Twitter.”

Bucci: “Silver linings.”

Martinez: “Just roll with it ...”

### **Steve Campeas (SJC)**



“Clients are nervous about their health and their family’s health more than anything,” says Campeas, noting that it’s been a struggle to convince some clients to collect unemployment. “What most people don’t understand is that most celebrities, the lion’s share, are working people just like everyone else.” His firm’s roster includes longtime client John Stamos as well as Chiwetel Ejiofor, Rebecca Romijn, Katee Sackhoff, Boaz Yakin, Kevin Abbott and Lana Condor.

### **Line that always makes me laugh**

“Well, apparently we have a failure to communicate.” (*Cool Hand Luke*)

## Lauren Cooper and Lou Taylor (TriStar Sports & Entertainment)



“The pandemic has impacted every single person and business in America,” says Taylor, who jokes, “If I can survive 2020, I can do anything.” With firm clients including Mary J. Blige, Travis Scott, Steven Tyler and Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Cooper says 2020 has been a time of innovation: “Virtual concerts and strategic partnerships have managed to keep momentum in their careers.”

### **Hollywood’s 2021 priority should be...**

Cooper: “Getting people back to work safely!”

Taylor: “Leading the change.”