# Variety’s Business Managers Elite Report: Top Guns Build Relationships and Expertise With a Personal Touch

By

Mya Copeland, Paula Hendrickson, Carole Horst, Cynthia Littleton, Gene Maddaus



If there were a way to buy more hours in the day, business managers would be the first in line.

The demands of the job have grown exponentially over the past decade as clients at all income levels rely on trusted advisers to guide them through the inevitable ups and downs of a career in showbiz.
Business managers need to have expertise on tax policies that stretch far beyond U.S. borders. They need to understand currency fluctuations, royalties, residuals and the passive income that comes from vintage recordings, TV shows and movies that may no longer be on a client's C.V. The areas of specialization are as diverse as the artists who work in entertainment.

For sure, paying bills on time and monitoring the cash flow in a client's checking account is only a fraction of the job these days.

"When I started, a lot of the job was telling people what already happened. 'Here's what you made, here's what you owe.' Now it's all about forecasting what a tour, a catalog offer or what a label and publishing deal will actually net," says Justin Sauer, a veteran business manager based in Nashville with PS Business Management. "We spend way more time running the numbers before the decisions get made. The math is the same, but the conversation is completely different."

Congratulations to *Variety*'s Business Managers Elite honorees for 2026. This list is a primer for anyone brave enough to attempt the high-wire act of building a career in entertainment.

## Belva Anakwenze



## Abacus Financial Business Management

Anakwenze practices what she preaches to her creator economy clients on her YouTube financial show, “The Earn Up.” “I feel like we have been in almost a decade of unknowns between COVID and two unprecedented strikes, and the aftermath of those strikes,” she says, noting that education and preparedness are key to surviving. “The industry as we know is no more. There’s no pilot season. And even if you get a gig, are you going to work in America? Are we going to deal with foreign taxes? Do you have to relocate? So we just plan for the worst, but hope for the best,” she says, adding that business managers often now come in a lot earlier on clients’
contract negotiations.

## David Levin, Ellis Beber, Michael Nelson, Lewis Stark



**David Levin**
Managing director, David Levin Business Management

**Ellis Beber**
**Michael Nelson**
Partners, David Levin Business Management

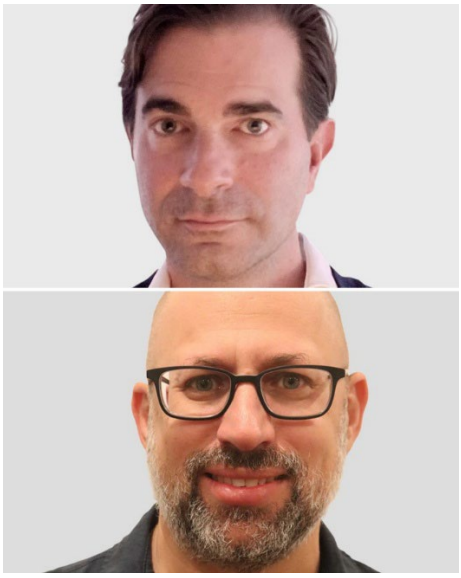
**Lewis Stark**

Partner, Adeptus Advisors Group

## Adeptus Advisors Group

Adeptus Advisors, which is also home to David Levin Business Management, made a major transition over the past year following its September 2025 merger with accounting giant Current. The Tampa, Fla.-based Current operates a network of sizable independent accounting and advisory firms. Adeptus, with offices in New York, California and Maryland, has maintained its existing imprints. Levin, who merged his firm with Adeptus in 2019, oversees a busy group with a high-wattage client list that includes Hailey Bieber, John Legend and Chrissy Teigen, Madison Beer, Lake Street Dive and more. Beber's milestone for the past year was helping a prominent band client execute their first tour of North America and Europe. Nelson leads the division's staff of bookkeepers and account managers, and he also manages the tax department. Stark oversees Adeptus' royalty audit and compliance group, given the depth of his expertise in royalty, distribution and profit participation audits, contract compliance investigations and related forensic financial skills.

## Anthony Bonsignore, David Altman

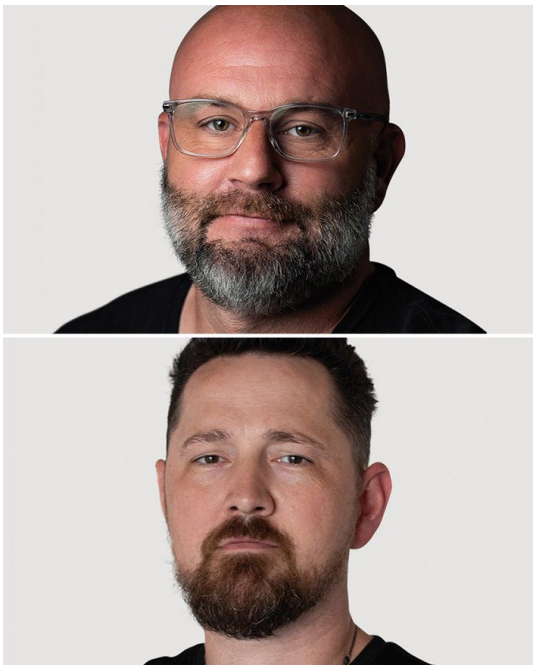


## Altman, Greenfield and Selvaggi

Given the upheaval in the industry, Bonsignore is seeing the slowdown of some deals for

his clients, but the unknowns are why you need him and Altman. They take “a proactive approach and not reactive,” says Bonsignore, who counts Rachel Zegler as a client. Altman notes that another key is making sure the firm is adaptable to the shifting business: “Whether it’s the regularity of how our clients work and where productions are being shot,” he says, adding that they must keep up with myriad tax laws involving global location shoots, real estate purchases and changes in revenue streams impacted by a shift to streaming. But ever since COVID, their office has gone completely paperless, with AI helping to open up more efficiencies. “We’ve been implementing technology in our office with programmers and the use of AI to streamline some of the processes,” he says.

## Lorne Clark, Tate Henshaw



## ARC Business Management

The Atlanta-based firm represents artists and athletes, and has recently opened an office in Nashville. Like others, the team is getting used to AI and how it can help keep track of things — while still having to double-check the outputs. And of late, the team has seen a revolution in the ability to profit from athletes’ name, image and likeness rights. “It’s an entirely new revenue stream for college and high school athletes,” Clark says. “The clientele is becoming a lot younger.” What’s the strangest recent assignment? “I did have to go pick up a car and drive it to a dealership and trade it in,” Henshaw says.

## Reggie Gooden, Kymberli Hall, Lisa Barringer



## 360 Business Management

360 Business Management has added more than 35 athletes to its client roster over the past year. Business manager Barringer joined firm founder Gooden and business manager Hall in fall 2025 and has facilitated the firm's growth across the NBA, NFL, MLB, WNBA, golf and MMA. The firm's client roster also includes names like Cedric the Entertainer, former NFL cornerback Trumaine Johnson, endurance athlete Diana Nyad and Grammy winner Cory Henry. With the rise of NIL rights, 360 has expanded its roster to high school and college athletes, which has meant adjusting their approach to handle clients at all levels. "It's important for business managers like us to be extremely flexible to quiet the cries that the sky is falling, but at the same time be very realistic with our clients," Gooden says. "We have to be very nimble."

## Adam Yorkshire



## Yorkshire Management Group

Yorkshire helps clients build their “financial fortress.” He has many clients, largely across the music space, and he works to make sure they know that he respects the privilege of working with their entire life and career beyond just the numbers. When it comes to handling shifts in the industry, his goal is to keep clients insulated and protect their quality of life. “We make it so everything’s not so dependent on them hitting a grand slam every single year,” Yorkshire says. “That way, if something does change, we’re gonna weather the storm.”

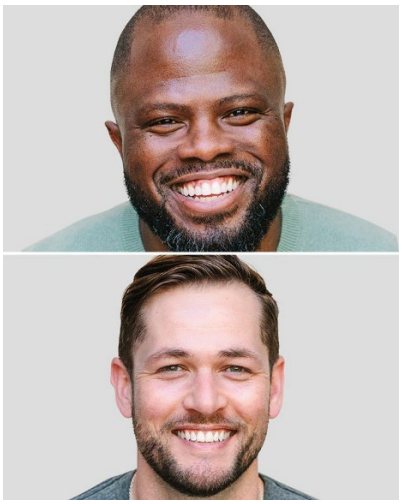
## David Weise



## David Weise & Associates, a division of NKSFB

Weise has no shortage of industry relationships from his 35-plus years of experience in business management. His client list includes leaders in music, television, the motion picture business and sports. Weise launched his own shingle in 2005 and specializes in royalty and compliance disputes, production and tour accounting and structuring business entities, among other services.

## Buwa Ijirigho, William Price



## True North Business Management

The pair launched their shingle last year. They surveyed the business management landscape with its consolidation, and “we kind of wanted to zag while everyone else was zigging and go toward more boutique and bespoke kind of business management services,” says Ijirigho. The duo makes sure its roster of showbiz creatives, athletes and more “are kind of aware of current situations, future situations — it’s just really communicating effectively with them and often,” Ijirigho says. Many of their clients are making a push toward ownership of content. That creates multihyphenates. “Now you’re a producer. Now you’re creating content. Now you’re podcasting. Now you’re doing a bunch of different things,” says Price. “Clients are really working toward ownership, and we’re trying to help them navigate those landscapes.”

## Lou Taylor, Lahteefah Parramore, Heather Kinder



**Lou Taylor**
Founder, CEO

**Lahteefah Parramore**
Chief growth officer, East Coast

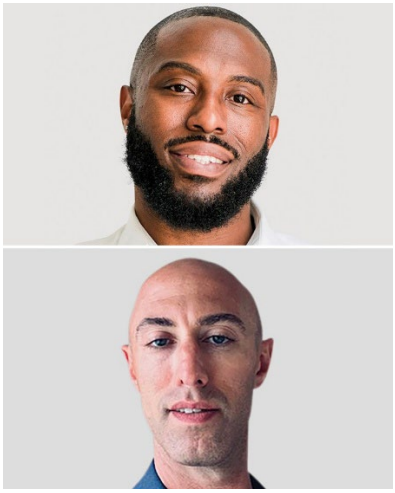
**Heather Kinder**
Chief client officer, equity partner

## Tri Star Sports and Entertainment Group

Tri Star opened a Miami office this year as a natural extension of the firm's strength in Los Angeles and Nashville. Tri Star chief Taylor was busy this year guiding financial aspects of Cardi B's latest blockbuster tour. Clients such as Charles Melton, Jodie Turner-Smith and the estate of Prince give Tri Star a well-rounded entertainment roster. But Tri Star's specialty for handling touring musicians is still one of its superpowers. "A tour is a business built around a deadline that does not move. You're committing money before revenue arrives, coordinating teams across markets and making decisions where a change in one area can affect the entire operation," Taylor says. Parramore adds that it's equally important to understand the inner workings of every client. "We have to understand their goals, family

expectations and relationship with money. We cannot simply manage the money and ignore the person," Parramore says.

## Joe McGill, Bryan Meyer



Owners

## Topline Business Management

Topline will mark its 10th anniversary in the coming year. McGill, Meyer and their two other founding partners had worked in business management at large firms. As they watched private equity investors pour into large legal and financial advisory outfits, McGill and Meyer saw a clear opportunity for a boutique operation to serve those clients who naturally leaned toward working directly with leaders of a smaller specialty outfit. The pair sell themselves as offering "a high-touch experience." In their role as business managers, the Topline pair echo the sentiments of others who say the demands of the job are ever expanding. "Our clients desire opportunities in the private equity space, and we have to educate ourselves constantly on established and emerging sectors we otherwise might not have been versed in," McGill and Meyer say.

## Josh Klein



## TKG Business Management

While Klein and the expanding TKG offer business management, tax work and personal CFO services to high-net-worth individuals, he's been a partner since the launch in 2020 of the successful venture capital firm Mantis, launched by his clients the Chainsmokers. It is raising a fourth fund — with a $100 million target. Changes in the field mean "we've gotten more involved, beyond just finances. Clients come to us for advice on all kinds of things, both personally and professionally. It's really about understanding the full picture and being there for whatever they need," he says. "Technological advancement is great and can make our jobs a lot easier, but at the end of the day, we're dealing with people. I think the enhancement comes from knowing our clients, understanding the ins and outs of their lives, and just having that personal relationship."

## James Nagel, Steven Shapiro



**James Nagel**
Partner

**Steven Shapiro**
Founder, owner

## Summit Business Management

Over the past 25 years, Shapiro created and refined a model that works. Although all of the firm's clients are technically his, he works in tandem with department heads, including Nagel, who oversees the business management department, to ensure clients — including Taylor Sheridan, Zendaya, Tom Holland and "Weird Al" Yankovic — receive direct, efficient and first-rate service. Following the Palisades and Altadena fires, Summit helped approximately 20 clients who lost homes navigate the aftermath. Some rebuilt, others relocated. That's why today, when a client wants to buy a multi-million-dollar house, price is no longer the main consideration. "The first thing we do is try to find out what the insurance is going to be," Shapiro says. "I have a client who recently bought a home in a very big fire area and their insurance per year is over $100,000 just for homeowners insurance, so it's all factored into the cost."

## Rick Shephard, Mark Tinglof



## Shephard Tinglof & Associates

With recent upheavals in the entertainment business, Shephard quips, “If you wanted job security, you should have become an accountant.” But the truth is that “the nature of Hollywood is that you don’t know whether you’re going to be working next year, and so you have to have sufficient liquid assets to know that you can go for two years without working,” he says. And he adds: “We’re fortunate. All of our clients are working more than ever.” While AI is helping them create efficiencies for clients’ bottom lines, “We wouldn’t be in business if they didn’t want to talk to us,” says Tinglof with a chuckle. “It’s important that we have communication with the client, but also manage their expectations as to what we can and cannot do for them. So that’s the interface between human power and technology — so that we can actually use the technology to get them the best solutions to whatever issue is facing them. But we really need to be there in order to explain it to them.”

## Wesley Childs, Robert E. Grubman, Marc D. Zand, Ron Myers



**Wesley Childs**
**Robert E. Grubman**
**Marc D. Zand**
CPA, partners

**Ron Myers**
CPA, California managing partner

## Shulman Lobel Advisors

Individually, these four represent a broad mix of high-earning clients in the film, TV, music and sports industries. While each has his own niche, they often collaborate with one another, even from afar. Grubman and Zand are based in New York, Childs is in Florida, while Myers, whose clients center on the film, TV, music and digital media side of the industry, heads the L.A. office. Childs' and Grubman's clientele includes rap, hip-hop and R&B musicians who in recent years have had to adapt to changes within the music industry. "They're not just going on tours and recording, they're investing in businesses and they're doing it much smarter now," Grubman says. "They're making really informed decisions and are smarter. They know to come to us because Wesley and I have also been involved in thousands of businesses, so we understand businesses in addition to entertainment."

## Jordan L. Josephs



Managing partner

## Royal Entertainment Business Management

With a client base consisting primarily of musicians, touring artists, professional athletes

and TV, film and digital talent, Josephs constantly seeks to modernize and improve REBM's business model. "Because we're a boutique firm, we have a little more flexibility in figuring out how to automate certain aspects of the job, how to be more proactive in our reporting systems, how to produce more digestible reports for our clients," Josephs says. With the band Ice Nine Kills and its frontman Spencer Charnas among REBM's clients, the firm earned a producer credit on the band's video for the "Scream" franchise. "It was pretty cool to do a collaboration like that with a huge studio production."

## Marta Botten, Steve Levitt, Rick Schenkel, Alec Stoll



Partners, business practice

## Richey May

These powerhouse partners have been laser-focused on ensuring a seamless transition following Genstar Capital and Aksia's recent investment in Richey May. They prioritized upholding Richey May's culture and values while exploring new opportunities and resources resulting from the acquisition. "We didn't want change simply for the sake of change. We wanted to identify where these additional capabilities could strengthen our business, support our people, and ultimately deliver even greater value to our clients," Botten says. Botten, Stoll, Schenkel and Levitt connect all facets of business management to help their clients grasp the bigger picture, anticipate potential issues and make better informed decisions. Ultimately, Botten says business management involves more than

managing money. “It’s about understanding the person behind the money, anticipating what they may not see coming, and being the person they can count on when the stakes are highest. It’s also about understanding the business behind the person and how the decisions being made today will affect their future.”

## Derrick Lee, Alan Reback



Founding partners

## Reback Lee & Company

For 22 years and counting, Reback and Lee have worked with each other as true partners. They even make sure to introduce one another to each other’s clients. That way, if one of them isn’t able to assist a client, the other is able to step in. Lee admits earning their 5% is more complicated today than it was just a few years ago. “There’s so much more compliance than ever existed before,” Lee says. “It’s kind of like every time you feel like you made it to the top of the hill, something keeps changing, and when you think you’ve conquered that, boom, something else comes up that’s new and different. So much compliance has made our lives busy.” Their high-net-worth clients — including a guarded

list of fine artists, actors, producers, writers, directors, executives and production companies — appreciate their dedication to staying on top of those changes.

## Jason Brown, Darren Calbay, Leo Jenkins, Anna DerParseghian



**Jason Brown**
**Darren Calbay**
**Leo Jenkins**
Partners

**Anna DerParseghian**
Managing partner

## PTD Business Management

DerParseghian keeps things on track at PTD and Calbay heads the firm's tax team. Along with Brown and Jenkins, they all have their own client rosters, but frequently consult with each other on complex issues. While the firm has historically specialized in serving touring musicians and comedians, in recent years, several of their touring clients have expanded into podcasts, Netflix specials, TV series and other non-touring opportunities. The partners also work with a growing number of actors, directors, writers and other non-touring entertainers. When Jenkins began his career, he had no idea how involved business managers would become as trusted confidants in their clients' lives. "Business manager is

the title our profession has, but their questions are not always business-related," Jenkins acknowledges. "Sometimes they're incredibly personal and private. Sometimes heartbreaking. Sometimes funny. It's really nice to be there for them in those moments where they maybe don't know where to turn."

## Tara Moore, Rob Gordon, Elizabeth Sasscer, Justin Sauer



**Tara Moore**
Partner

**Rob Gordon**
**Elizabeth Sasscer**
**Justin Sauer**
Senior managers

## PS Business Management

Nashville-based Moore is a key player in the lives of Aaron Dessner and Benson Boone, and last year she brought Conan Gray to the firm. Sasscer has worked closely with Leon Bridges. Sauer reps rising rootsy
pop group AJR and numerous songwriting clients. The global nature of the music biz has made the firm sharpen its expertise. "We have needed to find banking and technology solutions to mitigate currency fluctuation and be able to pay band members, crew and vendors globally," Gordon says. Sauer notes that forecasting is a bigger part of the job than ever before. "When I started, a lot of the job was telling people

what already happened. ‘Here’s what you made, here’s what you owe.’ Now it’s all about forecasting what a tour, a catalog offer or what a label and publishing deal will actually net,” Sauer says.

## Phil Sarna



Founder, senior managing director
**PS Business Management**

Sarna doesn’t name-drop his clients, but when you’re as successful as he is, it’s hard to hide them; in this case, this includes the likes of Benny Blanco, Billie Eilish, Chappell Roan, Lizzo, Benson Boone and Duran Duran. Sarna says the pandemic reshaped the market for touring musicians. Instead of scaling slowly, they’re leading from clubs to theaters to arenas faster than before. “It seems to be happening over months, not years,” he says, adding that some artists are “making decisions to play four or five nights in a bigger market and have fans come to them — a residency. Every artist is adapting to the new world.”

## Joseph Callaghan, Mark Carter, Joseph Rust, Thomas Smith



**Joseph Callaghan**
**Mark Carter**
**Joseph Rust**
Partners

**Thomas Smith**
Partner & entertainment industry leader

## Prager Metis

While Callaghan and Smith both work primarily with music industry clients on tour accounting, from budgeting and financial planning to settlements and merchandising, Rust focuses his efforts on royalties and IP issues, and Carter specializes in international and cross-border matters like multistate filings, Foreign Entertainer Unit clearances and global tour accounting. Each partner has his own clients, but collaborate as needed to ensure all clients receive the best advice possible. On the touring side, Smith says increasing costs over the past few years have compelled clients to find new ways to generate revenue: “I spend more time looking at expenses, finding ways to control overhead, and making sure new opportunities make financial sense. I’m always looking ahead because a short-term financial decision can have long-term consequences.” No matter the client, Smith says, “confidentiality is fundamental to our relationship with clients, and we take that responsibility seriously.”

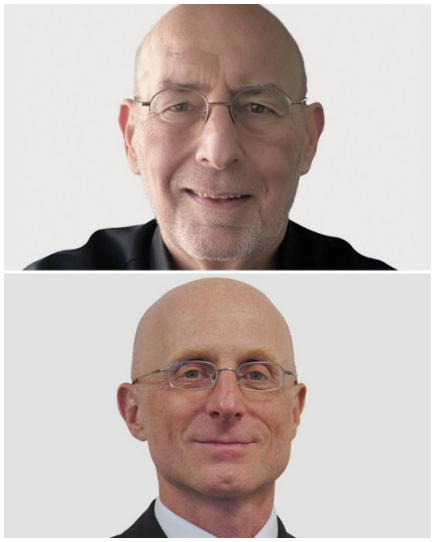
## Barbara Blanco, Jack Ketover, Mark Mingelgreen, David Zuckerman



## Peyser & Alexander

After four decades in the business, this quartet has pretty much seen it all, and come up with solutions. Their clients operate on the cutting edge of news and culture, including James Patterson, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Lawrence O'Donnell, Tamron Hall, Kurt Andersen and David Zucker. Their jobs have evolved to include working with outside investment managers who are looking at both traditional and new ideas (often AI-related), while technology and AI have made their jobs more demanding as clients are utilizing AI. That said, their clients look to them to clarify or rebut what AI has provided. That brings up another concern about web security — it's more critical than ever and takes more time than in the past. The firm works to stay vigilant against phishing and similar scams. The heightened concern about asset safety is an example of how technology cannot capture the institutional and experiential knowledge "we have of our clients, including their family dynamics, overall goals and risk tolerance," the foursome say.

## David Alexander, Tony Peyser



Founding partners

## Peyser & Alexander

Alexander and Peyser launched the firm 42 years ago. “We met at a business management firm that’s been out of business for a long time now. We were young, and we got along really well, and we decided that we could do a better job going out on our own, and we did that. And we got lucky,” says Alexander. He says that they like to be a hands-on, boutique operation that really digs into the needs of its clients, who include many bestselling authors and multihyphenates. “From my perspective, the most important thing is to try and understand their goals and their own psychology in terms of risk tolerance, because everyone’s different,” he says, adding, “As business managers, we’re very hands-on in terms of anything that comes up in a client’s life. I mean, financial or otherwise, it could be a divorce, it could be estate planning, it can be employment change, and tax laws change all the time.”

## Megan Goodrich, Odette Moradians, Brandon Russell, Sunny Sanghera



Executive account managers

## PARR/3

Having come up together at PARR/3, these four specialize in serving clients from the music industry, but have actors and even chefs on their rosters, too. “It was important for us to develop a system that isn’t fully reliant on one person being there 24/7,” Russell says. “As our company has grown, some of our employees have taken off time to get married or to have a kid, and we have their backs.” Russell leads the full-service firm’s royalty program, Sanghera heads client leadership and internal mentorship, Goodrich guides clients through retail real estate investments, while Moradians’ skills in organization and workflow keep everything running smoothly. “We’ve created this safe place where if a client’s going through a tough time, they know we’re more than just numbers guys; we’re actually there to problem solve and help them through those moments. We’re all humans at the end of the day, and we’re here to help,” Russell says.

## Rasheed Muhammad



## OTP Business Management

Not only does OTP offer a full array of financial and tax services, Muhammad also brings a deep knowledge of banking, investments and strategy to the table. That's important because technology throws curve balls at his clients every day. Like AI. "When you have something that has your name, image and likeness, and you had no physical participation in it whatsoever, that's a really big concern," he says, adding that business managers have to become more modern in their thinking about how technology is impacting their clients' bottom lines. But tech brings new opportunities, allowing some of his clients to make "money in revenue verticals that they never thought they'd make money in before."

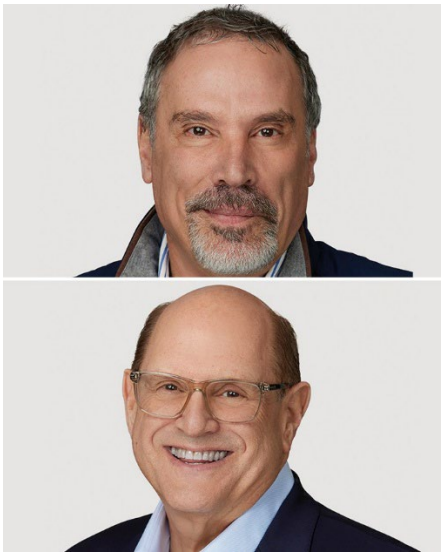
## David Bolno, Dian Vaughn, Matt Segal, Steve Landau



## NKFSB

Conventional wisdom has long held that the only way to make real money in music is through touring. But those revenues are softening, and in the last few years, a wave of catalog sales has upended that core
assumption, Landau says. “Wall Street has now figured out that music royalties are basically an annuity,” he says. “If it’s a predictable set of cash flows, they can price it … It’s completely changed what music labels are about.” And in a fragmented media environment, artists are finding new ways to monetize their notoriety: “It’s pretty exciting.” The most unusual thing they’ve had to do for a client? “We’re dealing with the IRS or divorces and all kinds of things like that, which isn’t unusual. It’s dramatic, but it’s not unusual.”

## Michael Karlin, Mickey Segal



Founding partners

## NKFSB

Segal and Karlin, who founded the firm in 1981, tend to focus more on protecting their clients’ assets rather than growth. Mostly that has meant stable real estate portfolios that generate steady cash flow. But in the last few years, the firm has gotten access to a series of pre-IPO investments in which the partners will invest alongside the clients. “Everyone wanted to be in SpaceX,” Karlin says. Additional opportunities have included Anthropic and

Anduril, the defense contractor. Other duties include thinking through the tax implications of music catalog sales. The most unusual thing they've had to do for a client? One actor was shooting a commercial in New York that ran behind schedule — and was desperate to see his dog. "We picked the dog up and flew the dog first class to New York," Segal says.

## Harley Neuman



## Neuman + Associates

Neuman's firm has been expanding into digital content creators and podcasters. "Our clients have become much more entrepreneurial, starting businesses outside of their primary business, so we have expanded our services to advise, consult and service them and those businesses," Neuman says. "I've been doing this for so many years that what might have seemed 'unusual' 20 years ago now just seems routine and normal. There is rarely a week when I'm not challenged with something new or exciting or groundbreaking." Like everyone, he is using advances in AI to better serve his clients, but "I don't think that technology will easily replace the value-add human factor that a great business manager brings to the table," he emphasizes.

## Eric Binder, Scott Landesman, Paul Zukowsky, Jessica Mooney



**Eric Binder**
**Scott Landesman**
**Paul Zukowsky**
Partners

**Jessica Mooney**
COO, business manager

## ML Management Partners

Working for a firm that's well-known for serving touring comedians, Binder, Mooney, Zukowsky and Landesman also have clients who are actors, writers, directors, producers and even social media stars. In the past five years, they've seen sitcoms shift from network to streaming, more film actors moving to TV — which Landesman calls "a more pervasive medium" — and a growing number of endorsement deals and branding opportunities. Landesman says AI appears to be moving a growing number of performers toward live entertainment opportunities for the connection they create with audiences: "Comedians going on the road and doing big stand-up tours. Actors wanting to do Broadway. Musicians consistently on the road and doing concerts. It's because seeing someone live in-person is a different feeling. There's no replicating the human appeal of seeing an actual person providing an entertainment value for you, whatever sort of entertainment that is."

## Mark Landesman



Founder, president

## ML Management Partners

Landesman means it when he says he's seen it all. He's watched the entertainment business grow, contract and compress and grow again throughout his career. "One part of the business I think is untouchable is live performance, certainly in sports and touring, whether it's music or comedic tours." He says business management has moved from film and TV to a venture capital world, with top-tier celebrities becoming start-ups' brand ambassadors in exchange for some ownership in the brands. "The bottom line is celebrities are becoming more [like] business people. And I admire that. They aren't necessarily waiting for the next job. They're thinking of other ways to prosper from their celebrity.

## Michael Kaplan, Justine Ruffalo



**Michael Kaplan**
Managing partner

**Justine Ruffalo**
Partner

**Miller Kaplan**

In keeping with the firm's client-first ethos, Kaplan is always seeking new ways to give his clients greater flexibility over their time and career goals by solidifying their financial foundations — even AI, which he notes a lot of recent industry disruptions have come from. "A lot of people are focused on how AI is going to hurt them, but it really can be something that can allow you to really broaden your horizons," Kaplan says. "On the flip side of that, we also obviously have to be careful of AI, because as we've seen most recently, AI-driven music, as an example, reached the top 10 in the charts." Meanwhile, Ruffalo advises her clients — which include individuals, estates, and companies — on the ways their IP and royalty income can pay off over time, which helps them prioritize their IP's long-term value when pondering enticing headline-generating offers

## Christine Choi, Daniel Marcus, Michael Meschures, Anthony Smalls III

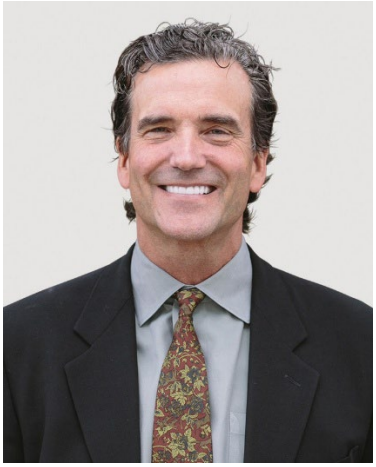


Partners

**MGO**

MGO's broad practice as a national CPA firm has come in handy as clients have been increasingly engaged in launching companies and negotiating equity deals in assets well beyond movies, TV shows and music. "Whether it's navigating NIL opportunities, managing a global tour, auditing royalties, building a creator-driven business, addressing cybersecurity risks or handling complex international tax matters, we bring specialists together under one roof," Smalls says. Meschures concurs: "We're having more conversations about diversifying revenue through live events, new businesses and strategic partnerships that give clients greater control over their financial future." This heightened level of activity requires a higher level of trust. "I don't want to just tell a client what happened financially. I want to understand what they're thinking about next and help them prepare for it," Choi says.

## Matthew Burke



Partner, business management

**Mercer Advisors**

For Burke, the past 12 months have been a period of significant transition after he spent 35 years at his previous job running a multi-family office operation known as Singer Burke. That firm was acquired in October 2025 by Denver-based Mercer Advisors, which also specializes in wealth management and services for family office investors. Burke, who is based in Encino, has sought to maintain the hands-on approach that Singer Burke was

known for even as he plugs in to a much larger firm and broader range of capabilities including financial planning, investments, tax, estate planning and insurance.

## Steve Gelon, Alex Smith, Justin Sroka, Van Lee



**Steve Gelon**
**Alex Smith**
Co-managing partners

**Justin Sroka**
**Van Lee**
Partners

## Mann Gelon Smith Sroka Lee

MGSSL, which will mark its 60th anniversary in 2028, has evolved significantly over the past decade as new senior leaders signed on and the core entertainment and sports practice has been expanded by the arrival of influencers. Gelon has been with the firm since 1985 and represents top-tier creative talent including showrunners and a host of writers and directors. Smith joined the firm in 2015 and has brought a wave of social media creators and influencers. Smith and Sroka also handle a number of prominent veteran rockers who tour frequently. Lee also has a strong roster of top film and TV scribes. “Although the firm’s

history has been heavily concentrated in film and TV, we really continued to expand our footprint in digital, music and also sports" in 2026, Smith says.

## Mark Cattalini, Paul Ta



## Level Four Business Management

Asked what sets Level Four apart from other firms, Cattalini has a concise answer: "Our people and our principles." The boutique specializes in helping workers in the world's most glamorous gig economy — Hollywood — manage unpredictable cash flows. "The universal challenge for professions working in the entertainment industry is the sporadic nature of working and getting paid. Learning to live within your means during periods of elevated or reduced income are prevalent and not something that is as common in more traditional professions," Cattalini says.

## John Rigney, Matt Lichtenberg, Mark Friedman, Charles Clancy



Partners

## Level Four Business Management

Rigney, one of the industry's most respected leaders and the 2022 Variety Business Managers Elite honoree, is philosophical in talking about how the company that he founded in 1987 has changed over the last 40 years. "There used to be a rhythm to life, both personal and business. Careers had a logical path with predictable buyers. No more," Rigney says. "There is nothing predictable except that there is in fact nothing predictable." Rigney knows whereof he speaks, having represented top stars since the early 1970s. Friedman joined Rigney as a partner in 1993, followed by Clancy in 1994 and Lichtenberg in 2007. Over his long tenure, Rigney has seen the entertainment industry go through many changes, but one aspect of today's economic landscape raises concerns for the creative community. "It seems to me there is now a two-tiered hierarchy where the superstars still make great money and the working artists are struggling more," Rigney observes.

## Lauren Cooper



## LC Business Management

The past few years have been busy for Cooper, who opened her own business management firm in 2024. She has helped clients go from “absolute day one to superstardom,” she says. Cooper strives to educate and empower her clients to make good decisions. “I want them to be the superstar,” she says. “I want them to feel so good about walking into that room and understanding exactly what’s being thrown at them, what’s being proposed to them, why, what it means, and being able to stand their ground and stand firm in their decision.”

## Elizabeth Kenney



## L&L Business Management

Business management “requires all the grunt work” of dealing with bills, but it goes beyond that into protecting wealth and building financial security for Kenney’s clients, including comedy touring companies, Awkwafina and Tiffany Haddish. Since hers is a boutique firm, Kenney says she can go above and beyond for clients in a way that a big 9-5 firm cannot always do. “If their tour manager quits, I’ll step in if I have to,” she says. “That’s just because it’s a small business and we’re able to do that here. I think that’s what makes me a little bit more unique.”

## Gary Schneider, Jason Schneider



## Kessler, Schneider and Scheltinga

Marking its 40th anniversary, the firm has just launched a secure, zero-data retention AI search tool for its staff. “I’m finding my client’s usage of AI in their interfacing with me to be healthy and collaborative. So much of what we do and the value we bring as business managers is done in the shadows and in tax strategy that can sometimes be difficult to explain. Using AI tools as an interpreter to understand our process, and to keep an open dialogue is a win for all,” says Jason Schneider, whose clients include Jordan Firstman, Megan Park and Lukas Gage. Gary Schneider oversees such names as Scott Bakula, Carol Mendelsohn and John Requa. Jason Schneider has seen a lot in his time at the firm: “A

client wished to purchase a vacation home in Iceland, and we had to work around our realtor's salmon fishing schedule."

## Craig McCormick



## Ground Control Business Management, Austin

Austin-based McCormick underscores the rising importance of the Lone Star State in the entertainment business. "Fundamentals haven't changed: protect the client, manage the risk, keep the lights on and plan for their future. The landscape is completely different," he says. "Linear media is in a belt-tightening cycle with fewer projects and smaller deals slowing financial recovery windows for talent when things go sideways. AI is also reshaping how content gets made, how it's valued, and how our clients' work and IP are monetized. Falling behind in AI adoption or understanding of AI-related issues affecting the industry and clients is a fiduciary failure."

**Nick Parkinson, Diego Lemus, Bhavini Ratan, Craig Shenkler**



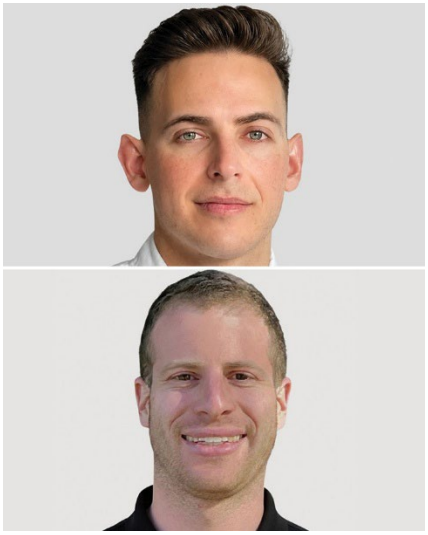
**Nick Parkinson**
President

**Diego Lemus**
**Bhavini Ratan**
**Craig Shenkler**
Managing directors

## Ground Control Business Management

The company's footprint spans the U.S., Canada and the U.K. "My role as U.K. president at GCBM has become more focused on overseeing the growth and development of our U.K. business. At the same time, my day-to-day client work has become far more international," notes Parkinson. Lemus says that "some of the most unusual tasks I've worked on have involved international projects, particularly working directly with accountants in Mexico. I've had the opportunity to use my Spanish in a professional setting and learn different accounting practices. " Ratan also has felt the global aspects of the job growing: "My work has become more international, with clients' lives and finances often spanning several countries. Our integration with GCBM U.S. has been a big change, bringing new colleagues, different perspectives and more opportunities to work together internationally." Shenkler adds, "We spend a lot of time talking about what could go right, but also what could go wrong, and making sure we have a plan for both."

## Travis Guterman, Simon Rosenberg



## Guterman & Rosenberg

A lot of Guterman and Rosenberg's clients are digital creators, who are "somewhat in charge of their own destiny," says Guterman. "There are new income streams that we're having to learn, and the clients are chasing the money wherever it takes them." Creators go from TikTok and YouTube to tours, traditional media, publishing, merchandise — and into new areas of tax law across state lines and the world. "Everyone wants to be a multi-hyphenate," Guterman says. AI helps with research and creating efficiencies, but "even when I look up something, it still comes out like AI. It's still complicated tax jargon that it's coming up with. So it's not so much that a normal person is just going to replace [us] with AI because they can search it themselves. You still have to have a pretty good understanding of the topic to make sense of what it's giving you," notes Rosenberg.

## Michael Altschuler, Andrew Crow, Jeff Gillman, Brandon Klein



Managing directors

**GRF**

Guiding a wide range of showbiz elites has changed over the years. “The role has evolved well beyond traditional business management. Today, we’re increasingly strategic advisers, helping clients navigate entrepreneurial opportunities, complex investments and an ever-changing entertainment landscape,” notes Crow. And technology has created a new set of issues: “Technology is paramount to security, which we take very seriously here at GRF. Fraud is becoming increasingly prevalent and sophisticated, so being consistently aware of what is going on with the client’s financial lives is key,” says Gillman. Echoes Altschuler: “Clients are getting information from platforms like TikTok, ChatGPT and Claude, which has changed the types of questions they ask. I’ve had to adapt by helping clients navigate the information they find online.” And that personal touch can sometimes lead to unexpected places. “I went to a client’s show expecting a fun night out and somehow came home as the tour accountant. And for the next two months I ended up settling shows every other night for the tour,” says Klein.

## Tyson Beem



CEO

**GRF**

Beem guides a company — celebrating 60 years of business management — that services entertainment, athlete and ultra-high net-worth families around the world. “While my role has changed as the CEO … the business has also changed. Our clients are working and living across the globe, needing services beyond traditional business management such as IP rights valuation, production accounting, royalty and participation examinations and family office operations,” he says. “The business has changed from transaction and compliance to value-add services and more bespoke offerings.” Beem notes that technology should enhance and support advisers: “Can you imagine what it would be like if we still operated by fax, or did tax returns by hand, or typed out checks to mail, or didn’t have our handheld supercomputers that allow us to stay connected to each other?”

## Ed Gold



## Gold Business Management

Gold focuses on creatives in the music business, like Teddy Swims, Gojira, Ian Asher, Pinegrove and Milk & Honey Music and Sports. He sees that changes in the discretionary spending habits of fans are impacting his clients. But he urges them to maintain and strengthen bonds with their audience, so buying a ticket to a concert becomes a “must” instead of a “maybe,” and “putting out that extra money becomes a priority for your fans. So it’s really got to be about cultivating that deep connection,” he says. His clients are also branching out on digital platforms, “choosing to do some studio work, do more co-writes, to do more producing, and going in and working with other artists” in order to make money — with the side effect of connecting with fans, too.

## Harvey Gettleson, Seth Gettleson, Randy O’Connor



## Gettleson, Witzer & O’Connor

Given the recent upheavals in the entertainment industry, this trio practices what it preaches for its clients. They prepare before any big event happens, says Seth Gettleson. “We always like to make sure they have a year or two worth of living expenses available to them.” While some of their clients have experienced cutbacks as studios slash big overhead deals, “we try to stay flexible, and we always try to coach our clients to have the ability to be flexible,” says O’Connor. Harvey Gettleson reflects that when he started, his first big actor client had three rules to take on a project: “If you paid him the price that was more than what he made in the picture before, let him bring his RV instead of a trailer and he wasn’t going to be terribly embarrassed by your project.” But now, everything is more complicated. “I truly spend a third or more of my time negotiating investments and ways for my clients to get involved in
a company.”

## Andrew Meyer, Steves Rodriguez



## Freemark Financial

After a rough period in the film and TV business, what's that funny feeling? Is it … optimism? "Recently it feels like there's more momentum in the space than there has been in recent years," says Meyer, whose clients include Mark Harmon, Ellen Pompeo and Jon M. Chu. "We're seeing more things happening, which is great to see." That's not to say it's all happening in the U.S. Meyer says that Spain has become the latest hot spot for clients' productions — and as business managers that comes with a level of complexity in terms of taxes and incentives. "You need to plan very thoughtfully on what projects you move forward with," he says. "We find ourselves being thought partners with clients now more than ever.

## Christopher Curry



Founding principal

## Forward Business Management

Curry oversees a boutique firm that doggedly fights for its clients. A lawyer who worked in wealth management and insurance, Curry built royalty tracking and payment systems at Universal Music Group, so is exceptionally skilled at digging up money for clients. “We are problem solvers. I wake up every morning and there’s fires everywhere,” Curry says, adding that he’s also got a psych degree. “My job is to try and really sit someone down, figure out what they really want out of life, and just give them good solid advice, and then distill all the information that will help them get there because they’re going to get taken advantage of.” Curry notes that his job has become more expansive, and his firm is trying to create generational wealth. “You have to give advice, and you have to be part of the team in the C suite that’s helping guide things.”

## Amir Malek, Pam Malek



## Focus Partners Wealth

The husband-and-wife team are starting to integrate AI tools, such as Microsoft Copilot, into their work, while trying to navigate concerns around security and client privacy. “It’s still new,” Pam says. “But we believe that if we’re not in the forefront of this, we are going to not be able to compete with our competitors in the future.” In one case, it took a couple of hours to do some tax work with AI that would have taken three days without it. “It’s a game changer,” Amir says. As for unusual client requests, Amir will get involved in renovation jobs, recommending landscape and hardscape contractors. And when clients are on the road, Pam has been a sked to shop for something special for their significant other. “We’re their gatekeeper in everything,” she says.

## Paul Barnabee, Julie Boos, Jen Conger, Dan Killian, Carmen Romano



## FBMM

The war in Iran has had all sorts of unexpected effects — including on touring artists. “The price of diesel is through the roof this summer,” Killian says. With revenues flat or even slightly down, that’s showing up on the bottom line. “Our costs are up 8%-10% from two years ago,” he adds. Romano says that festival artists are among the hardest hit as that part of the business slows down. Touring is one of the more complex undertakings for the FBMM team, but they are involved in all aspects of their clients’ lives. “Planning a wedding, buying a house, selling a house, dealing with the divorce — anything and everything that touches money,” Conger says. “Our jobs are never-ending, and there’s not many dull moments.” Barnabee says it’s fun not knowing what the next challenge will be. “If you built your relationship properly with a client, you’ll be their first call.”

## Jamie Cheek



CEO

**FBMM**

Cheek’s firm boasts some of the biggest names in country music. Before this year, he had not heard the term “blue dot fever” — the contagion of unsold tickets that has hit the touring business as concertgoers have less discretionary income. “I do think pockets are tighter,” he says. “You can see that just in the effect of fuel going up and other things going up.” The biggest acts don’t have a problem — but it has hit the mid-tier artists. In some cases, the solution is to forgo arena bookings in favor of smaller venues. The firm is also taking a cautious approach as artists are offered AI deals: “How much money that means? I have no idea,” he says.

## Elizabeth Campos



Founder

## Evolve Business Management

Campos notes that modern business managers are strategists who must navigate the complexities of each client's world. "Five years ago, much of our industry was focused on tracking money. Today, we're focused on tracking consequences. AI can generate answers instantly, but it cannot replace judgment earned through experience," she says. Campos gives a shout out to her chief client officer-business manager, Kayla Griffin Smith — "she's my right hand," Campos notes. And she needs one: "We spend less time compiling information and more time helping clients navigate an increasingly complex landscape of investments, exits, endorsements, technology and wealth transfer planning. AI has accelerated that evolution, but it has also reinforced the importance of trusted advisers who can see around corners and connect the dots before opportunities or risks materialize."

## Sally Velazquez



## Empower Business Management

When talent, like longtime client 21 Savage, meets with Empower Business Management, they get Velazquez personally. In 2026, she and vice president of operations Tracy Miller advised on the sale of two music catalogs, supported clients through recording and publishing negotiations, touring finances and other career and business decisions. Velazquez emphasizes the consistent direct access her clients have to her because business management goes beyond career planning. “At some point it just stops being about business, you just start caring about the people you’re working with,” she says. “That’s just being human.”

## Lea DiPerna



## DiPerna Associates

DiPerna leads a team of 21 CPAs, accountants, bookkeepers and administrative personnel with a roster spanning Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony nominees and winners. As a business manager in the entertainment industry, she emphasizes the importance of being capable of quickly switching gears, while saving room for things like tax deadlines. Her M.O. is to be direct. She does not mince words, something she says her clients appreciate. “Sometimes you just have to pull them out of this cloud that’s very high up and then back into reality,” DiPerna says.

## Brandy Davis



## Davis Financial Group

Davis considers herself a fiscal therapist. She understands that finances are emotionally charged and tries to understand how her clients interact with money: Are they terrified to spend money, or does it burn a hole in their pockets? She encourages up-and-coming talent to be thoughtful when it comes to their finances. “There’s the financial aspect of it, but there’s also the creative and the crafting of their career,” Davis says. “If you haven’t taken care of yourself financially and been responsible, your career may go in a direction you don’t want it to go because you have to take the job.”

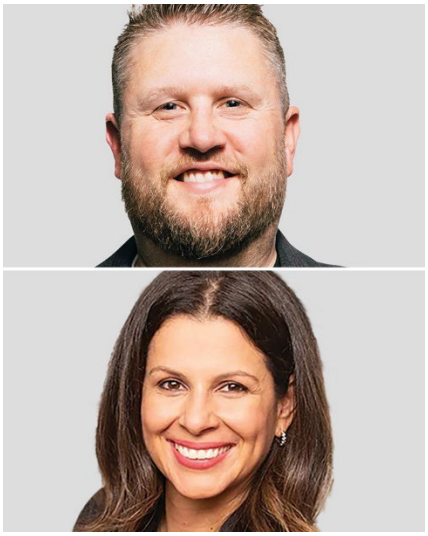
## Carrie Malcolm



## CRM Management, a division of NKSFB

*Variety*'s 2023 Business Managers Elite honoree has created deep relationships with her clients. "I have become so trusted an advisor to my clients and their families, that many clients' children — now coming into their own talent and subsequent success — have made the decision to work directly with CRM. From Ethan Hawke and his daughter Maya, to Alessandro Nivola and Emily Mortimer's son Sam Nivola, to Thomas Mars and Sofia Coppola's daughter Romy Mars, these young artists, talented in their own right, now work with CRM Management and our 'next gen' team," she says, adding, "Sometimes, it even goes the other way: this year Katherine Waterston referred her father Sam Waterston to CRM."

## Chris King, Maria del Pilar Lopez, Craig Tessler



**Chris King**
Partner and music industry practice leader

**Maria del Pilar Lopez**
**Craig Tessler**
Partners

## Citrin Cooperman

King joined one of the industry's largest business management firms late last year when Citrin Cooperman acquired his Nashville-based KBFM management and tax firm. He's taken the reins of the firm's robust music industry practice, overseeing one of the strongest streams of Citrin Cooperman business. He personally reps a diverse roster of artists, songwriters, producers and big-ticket touring bands. He also serves as a key mentor to younger members of the firm. Del Pilar Lopez handles a range of clients with a specialty in top Latin music stars. She's also dealing with the affordability crisis, putting emphasis over the past year on helping clients manage the fast-rising costs of mounting tours. And she's stepped up efforts to track and collect passive income from disparate royalty streams. Tessler has kept a laser focus on how the business of media is changing in order to best advise his film, TV and general entertainment clients.

## John Shaheen



## Business Wealth & Tax Management

Every day is unique for Shaheen — especially in a volatile market, like the one he has observed over the last few years — and he tries to get in front of changes impacting the industry. “Not that we have a crystal ball and can predict the future, but learning from what’s going on enables us to make better, more informed decisions,” Shaheen says. His goal is to help clients forge ahead when things arise: “You get to the river. You can’t go around it. You can’t go over it. You can’t go under it. You got to go through it, right?”

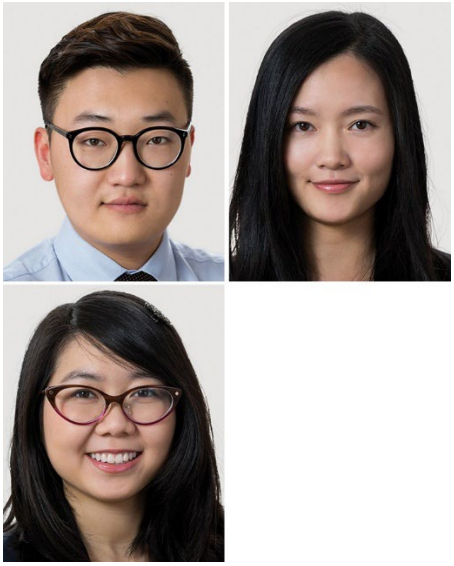
## Dan Weisman



## Bernstein Sports & Entertainment

The sports and entertainment division of Bernstein Private Wealth Management has staff based in Nashville, Los Angeles and New York. Since 2020, the Music City-based Weisman has seen a significant shift in the entertainment industry: “People are not competing for dollars; they’re competing for time,” Weisman says. “Time has become the commodity, whereas dollars before were truly the commodity.” Weisman, who joined Bernstein in 2019, now oversees nearly $7 billion in assets, with clients ranging from entertainers and athletes to executives, entrepreneurs and nonprofits. In his work with clients, Weisman tries to be not only a trusted adviser but a “Swiss Army knife when it comes to helping solve problems in our clients’ lives.”

## Yifan Yang, Carrie Zhao, Shue Zhu



**Yifan Yang**
Tax and financial management supervisor

**Carrie Zhao**
**Shue Zhu**

## Bell and Company

Yang describes himself as a “wristwatch enthusiast.” That description seems appropriate for an expert on tax policy and accounting concerns for entertainment clients who receive income and compensation every which way. Yang, Zhao and Zhu represent the next generation of Bell and Company leaders.

## Evan Bell, Liza de Leon



**Evan Bell**
Managing partner

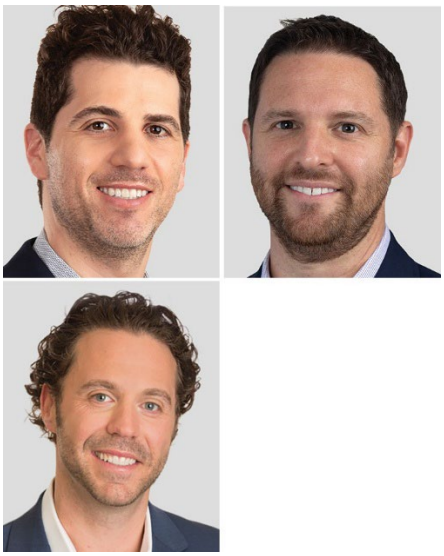
**Liza de Leon**
Administrative partner

## Bell and Company

Bell is one of the most recognized business managers in the field, having led his namesake firm for more than 30 years. Given his home base in New York, it’s no surprise that the company is known for representing top stand-up comics, as well as top stars. Recently, Bell and Company has branched out into showrunners. De Leon, whose tenure also stretches back more than three decades, is Bell’s top lieutenant. Among Bell’s specialties is managing complicated financial and business affairs, such as relocating clients to

Europe and other areas outside the U.S. for work or for personal reasons. De Leon is known for her meticulous care in monitoring the ebbs and flows of clients' cash flows, which can be unpredictable when considering everything from residuals and royalties to medical reimbursements. This past year, de Leon also advanced from senior partner to administrative partner.

## Rob Abramowitz, Craig Manzino, Jason Zayon



## Armanino Advisory

Successful athletes and entertainers get a lot of opportunities to invest, and turn to their managers for help. "It could be a whisky brand or whatever, and it could be a relationship aspect and they want to help," Abramowitz says, adding he tries to help the client see how illiquid investments would align with their brand and with their financial plan. "It's easy to go overboard with it; it's hard to rein it in." Manzino says they have focused more on music of late, though the clients tend to be "multi-multi-hyphenates" who need to adapt to a rapidly changing business environment. "The whole idea of trusting the system is not there," he says. "The only person you can trust is yourself." What's the most unusual thing they've done for a client? "Rent an apartment for someone's clothing," Manzino says.