



# EY Entrepreneur Of The Year®

## Do you have the foresight to envision solutions beyond problems?

Here's to the unstoppable entrepreneurs who find ways to create a better world.

### Meet the Judges

### Florida program 2020



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The better the world works.

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## Shari Dingle Costantini

**CEO**

**Avant Healthcare Professionals**

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2017 Florida winner

Shari Dingle Costantini is the CEO and founder of Avant Healthcare Professionals. Providing a unique solution to the worsening health care shortage, Avant has placed thousands of internationally educated nurses, physical therapists and occupational therapists with health care facilities throughout the US. The company, which has grown 40% annually since inception in 2003, has been listed on the Inc. 5000 in 2012, 2013, 2017 and 2018, and recognized by ACG SMART Awards, Florida Companies to Watch and as one of the Top 50 Women-Owned/Led Companies in the US by Women Presidents' Organizations.

Shari is a renowned expert in the health care industry, with 30 years of experience in strategic leadership, nursing and international staffing. She was named one of the 100 Most Influential People in Staffing – 2013 and one of the Global Power 100 – Women in Staffing – 2017 and 2018 by Staffing Industry Analysts. Shari is the President of the American Association of International Healthcare Recruitment (AAIHR), a trade association she helped form in 2007. Through AAIHR, Shari actively lobbies Congress for immigration reform to allow a consistent flow of highly skilled health care professionals.

Shari was named 2014 Entrepreneur of the Year Healthcare by i4 Business Magazine and a 2016 Entrepreneurial Vanguard award recipient from Junior Achievement. In 2017, she was the winner of the Entrepreneur Of The Year Florida Award in health care. Later that year, she successfully recapitalized the private-equity-backed company, partnering with Jackson Healthcare. Avant is now part of the Jackson family of companies, the third largest provider of health care staffing in the US



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## Karen Zaderej

**Chairman, Chief Executive Officer, and President  
Axogen, Inc.**

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2018 Florida winner

Ms. Zaderej joined Axogen Corporation in May 2006. Karen has served as President, Chief Executive Officer and a Member of the Board of Directors since September 2011 and became Chairman of the Board of Directors in May 2018. Karen served as Chief Executive Officer and as a member of the Board of Directors of Axogen Corporation since May 2010 and as Chief Operating Officer from October 2007 to May 2010 and as Vice President of Marketing and Sales from May 2006 to October 2007. From October 2004 to May 2006, Karen worked for Zaderej Medical Consulting, a consulting firm she founded, which assisted medical device companies build and execute successful commercialization plans. From 1987 to 2004, Karen worked at Ethicon, Inc., a Johnson & Johnson company, where she held senior positions in marketing, business development, research & development, and manufacturing. Karen is a member of the Viveve Medical, Inc. Board of Directors. Viveve Medical, Inc. is a women's intimate health company passionately committed to advancing new solutions to improve women's overall well-being and quality of life. Karen has an MBA from the Kellogg Graduate School of Business and a BS in Chemical Engineering from Purdue University.



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## Quang Pham

**Chairman and CEO**  
**Westwood Therapeutics**

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2018 Florida winner

Quang Pham is a biopharmaceutical entrepreneur with over 20 years of experience in financing, founding and growing companies. He has served as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer since he founded Espero in 2014. Espero has a robust cardiorenal clinical development pipeline, including tecarfarin (FDA Orphan Drug Designation and Phase III-ready for End Stage Renal Disease with atrial fibrillation), budiodarone (third Phase II-ready for atrial fibrillation) and DURLAZA (prescription extended-release aspirin). Espero was also twice named by the Jacksonville Business Journal as the fastest growing company in Northeast Florida.

Quang also founded Lathian Systems, an innovative company that provided online data and marketing services to pharmaceutical and biotech companies. He raised venture capital and corporate funding for Lathian, grew the business and led its eventual sale to D&R Communications in 2012.

After serving as a U.S. Marine Corps pilot in the Persian Gulf War, Quang began his pharmaceutical career with Astra Merck and Genentech BioOncology. He is a published author and holds a B.A. in Economics from the University of California, Los Angeles. He has received the EY Entrepreneur Of The Year®, BioFlorida's Entrepreneur of the Year and named a Veteran of Influence. Quang currently serves on the boards of directors of Espero, Westwood Therapeutics, Volunteers in Medicine and BioFlorida.



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## Vanessa Valera Nolte

***Co-Founder***

**Holstein Housewares Distrivalto USA Inc**

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2019 Florida winner

Vanessa is the co-founder of Holstein Housewares, a brand of functional small kitchen appliances and treat makers that offers families endless combinations of delicious treats and quick healthy meals.

She has been the recipient of awards and recognitions including winner of OWIT South Florida International Woman of the Year; and winner of EY Entrepreneur of the Year Florida – Family Business, among others.

She graduated Cum Laude from the University of Miami with a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration. Vanessa lived in Paris and Montreal in search of culinary and fashion inspiration – adding French to her already bilingual vocabulary.

Her impeccable ability to network and creativity alongside her talented brother's global supply chain and sales experience have made it possible for Holstein Housewares to grow at a fast pace. Holstein has been sold in more than 20 countries across North and South America.

Her number one priority is family – she has three kids and a husband who is also an entrepreneur. Her natural passion has helped her shine throughout her endeavours. Vanessa serves as an example to the community of female entrepreneurs by balancing her personal and professional life with ease.

Feeling that it is essential to give back to the community, she serves as a guest speaker in business seminars and educational forums, works closely with the entrepreneurship program of her Alma Mater, volunteer as mentor to programs including WIN Lab Miami from Babson College and UM Business School, collaborates with non-profit organizations including but not limited to Lotus House and Nicklaus Children's Hospital where she personally lights up the children's young spirits with a sweet spoon of fun in baking/decorating classes.

Vanessa's enthusiasm shows daily in her happiness, business precision and determination to succeed. Her goal is to be able to inspire other entrepreneurs along the way and make a difference in the South Florida community.



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## Michael Connolly

**CEO**

**Sonobi**

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2018 Florida winner

Michael Connolly, CEO of Sonobi, cofounded the company in 2012 to deliver his vision for the future of ad tech. Today, under his guidance, Sonobi is the leading technology provider of people-based marketing solutions, which enable media transactions against individuals in ways that are relevant, predictable, and measurable.

A serial entrepreneur, Michael has a strong background delivering innovative solutions for digital advertisers and publishers. In 2009, he and future Sonobi CTO Nathaniel Thomas created Digital Tech Publishing, a software company specializing in online web applications. DTP was generating over 30 million unique visitors and 1.5 billion ad impressions per month before being acquired in 2012. This success has followed him to Sonobi, where the company has over 70 employees, servicing clients in North America, EMEA, and Australia. Though ultimately product-driven, Michael nonetheless has extremely deep operational experience, and the rare ability to master details without ever losing sight of the big picture. Not content to simply chart Sonobi's path forward, he has a deep understanding of all aspects of Sonobi's operational and technology systems, which has enabled him to create an overarching framework for his company that is forward thinking, innovative, fiscally responsible, and technologically sound.

Michael has spent many years learning to lead gracefully under pressure, and his leadership skills are battle-hardened. As an ARMY officer and military aviator, Michael served as a Battle Captain in the Army during the Iraq War. Michael was responsible both for his soldiers and millions of dollars worth of equipment, and as a UH 60 Helicopter pilot, he has flown multiple missions throughout central Iraq. These experiences, combined with his experience as an entrepreneur, have been instrumental in developing his leadership philosophy, which is rooted in integrity, accountability, and adaptability.

A 2018 winner for Ernst and Young's prestigious entrepreneur of the year, Michael has also been recognized as one of Florida's most successful young executives under 40 by the Orlando Business Journal. While in service, he was awarded the Air Medal for Meritorious Service in Combat. He holds a B.A. in Business Administration and Philosophy from State University of New York at Albany and will graduate in 2020 with an MBA from Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



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## Sam Zietz

**Founder & CEO**

**TouchSuite**

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2015 Florida winner

Sam Zietz is the founder and CEO of the financial technology company TouchSuite® and its affiliated companies. In 2015, Sam was a recipient of the prestigious EY Entrepreneur of the Year Award in Florida; He has served on the judges' panel for the annual program since 2018.

Under Sam's leadership, TouchSuite has been the recipient of multiple awards and accolades, most recently named 17th on the list of "Best Entrepreneurial Companies in America" by Entrepreneur Magazine. In 2018, TouchSuite was named "Business of the Year" and one of the "Fastest Growing Technology Companies" by the South Florida Business Journal. The company has appeared on Inc. Magazine's "Inc. 500" list of the fastest growing private companies in America eight times. In 2017, the South Florida Chapter of the Association for Corporate Growth named TouchSuite "Emerging Growth Company of the Year." Florida Governor, Rick Scott, presented Sam with the Governor's Business Ambassadors award that centered on TouchSuite's growth and significant contributions to Florida's economy.

Sam has appeared on the South Florida Business Journal's list of "Power Leaders," for the last five years. Zietz was recently named one of South Florida's Ultimate CEO's by the South Florida Business Journal. Zietz was recognized in 2017 as the top CEO in Palm Beach County receiving the Apogee Award.

Zietz sits on the board of several educational and entrepreneur-focused organizations, including the Palm Beach chapter of the Young Presidents Organization (YPO), Chief Executives Organization (CEO), Florida Council of 100 and the Orange Bowl Committee. He speaks regularly at professional events and universities, has testified before Congress on Entrepreneurship and given a TED talk on achieving success through the entrepreneurial path.

Sam is an active speaker, mentor, and sponsor of the Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA) which teaches students the process of starting and running a real business over the course of a full academic year. He is also an active angel investor with numerous investments under management.

Prior to Touchsuite, Zietz was a corporate attorney specializing in Structured Finance with the New York-based law firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher and Flom, LLP. Before Skadden, he worked in the Business Tax Planning Department at PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Sam earned his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan then went on to receive his JD from St. Thomas University School of Law in Miami, Florida where he graduated first in his class. Mr. Zietz later earned his LLM in Taxation from New York University School of Law.

# Florida program leadership



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## About Entrepreneur Of The Year®

Entrepreneur Of The Year® is the world's most prestigious business awards program for unstoppable entrepreneurs. These visionary leaders deliver innovation, growth and prosperity that transform our world. The program engages entrepreneurs with insights and experiences that foster growth. It connects them with their peers to strengthen entrepreneurship around the world. Entrepreneur Of The Year is the first and only truly global awards program of its kind. It celebrates entrepreneurs through regional and national awards programs in more than 145 cities in over 60 countries. Winners go on to compete for the EY World Entrepreneur Of The Year™ title. [ey.com/eoy](https://ey.com/eoy)

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