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Sidd Ahmed

President and CEO, VDart, Inc.

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2017 Southeast Winner

Sidd Ahmed is the Founder and CEO of VDart, Inc., one of the leading digital staffing companies found in the industry globally. VDart was born months after the recession during a time when companies were closing, and its success was the result of sheer effort and motivation from its captain. Sidd claims that because his mindset has always been to “create opportunities of success for others,” the company is standing where it is today. Today VDart holds accolades such as Supplier of the Year Class IV by the National Minority Supplier Development Council and MBE Advocate of the Year by the Georgia Minority Supplier Development Council to name just a few. Along with those victories, Sidd also received the coveted Entrepreneur of the Year Regional Award for 2017, Small Business Person of the Year for 2017, and the Eagle Award for 2017 and 2018.

Sidd’s vision has been to build a leading enterprise that would “touch the lives of people, to create success, wealth and quality of life.” He was able to orchestrate this goal successfully by navigating a workforce of more than 2400 people located in seven different countries, and at the same time, increasing those figures year on year. His vision is also the force that drives VDart’s CSR program, which helped change the lives of children in need, the disabled and for the hundreds of people who were victims of natural disasters. It is a remarkable feat considering that prior to VDart’s success, Sidd had never worked in any large organization nor had he come from a corporate background. However, despite lacking those experiences, Sidd has maintained exponential growth in the IT staffing industry and is now embarking on the digital frontier of technology,

Industry 4.0. Along with VDart, Sidd is the CEO of VDart Digital, Ledgr Inc., and VDart BPM. His leadership in the world of digital transformation has now expanded VDart into new geographies such as Japan and Belgium. He is also a member of the Board of Directors for the Georgia Education Foundation, which supports GMSDC Academy, and he is an active alumni advocate of the Georgia Mentor Protégé Connection. Sidd contributes to the foundation’s goal of scaling new heights of excellence and achievement that ultimately will mean economic growth and job creation.



Bernie Dixon

Founder and CEO, LaunchPad2X

Bernie Dixon has been crushing boundaries her entire life. She launched her career in the US Army Signal Corps where she was among the first class of women earning a commission as a 2LT. She quickly moved through positions in the Signal Corps while simultaneously training in Field Artillery and nine other weapon systems. Her Army career culminated in her service as an Aide-de-Camp to a three-star general, Director, Defense Information Systems Agency while supporting the needs of the White House and State Department. Upon departing the US Army, she served as a national security and emergency preparedness consultant with Booz Allen & Hamilton supporting the Presidential Advisory Committee for National Security and Telecommunications, and other high-level government organizations.

Over the next two decades, Bernie went on to shatter glass ceilings and walls as she climbed the ranks of some of the world's largest technology, aerospace and defense companies. Among other positions, while at United Technology Corporation, she served as the Chief Information Officer of Hamilton Standard and the Chief Information Officer of Carrier Corporation. She continued her executive role while at Raytheon Corporation and served as Enterprise Chief Information Officer. Bernie's corporate career culminated in her role at HP as Vice President, HP Services, Americas.

As a tireless advocate for entrepreneurs, women in leadership, business and in the entrepreneurial space, Dixon went on to serve as the first female Chairman and President of The Atlanta Technology Angels. Simultaneously she founded Launchpad2X, "the nation's only founder-to-CEO accelerator and training organization focused on women founders and CEOs" where her impact is pronounced in the success of the 175 female led companies and their economic impact. She continues to serve as Chairman and President, Launchpad2X.

Bernie continues to advise venture capital firms in the areas of aerospace and defense, and technology: Task ForceX Capital, Forte Ventures and Brainware Ventures. Additionally, she advises and sits on the Boards of numerous early stage technology companies. She is continually identified as one of Atlanta's Top 500 "most powerful leaders." She serves on the Board of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Board of Directors of the Women's Entrepreneur's Initiative for the City of Atlanta and the Women Lead Policy Council for the State of Georgia.

Bernie graduated summa cum laude from the Penn State University and also attended the University of Michigan Ross School of Business and the University of Virginia Darden School of Business.

Dixon is a sought-after speaker on topics surrounding early stage investing and entrepreneurship. She is often heard to say, "I have had tremendous opportunities in my life to serve my country and to accomplish large scale impact in my Corporate career. The most personally rewarding work I have done is supporting and assisting in the success of hundreds of entrepreneurs. Those hundreds of entrepreneurs are the engine powering the USA economy."



Phyllis Newhouse

Founder & CEO, Xtreme Solutions, Inc.

Founder, ShoulderUp

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2017 US winner

Phyllis Newhouse is an entrepreneur, retired military senior non-commissioned officer, mentor, Founder and CEO of Xtreme Solutions, Inc. and Founder of ShoulderUp. A pioneer in cybersecurity, she is the first woman to win an Ernst & Young (EY) Entrepreneur Of The Year® award in the technology category. Passionate about women-led businesses, Newhouse teaches aspiring entrepreneurs to recognize and capitalize on their leadership skills and empowers others to operate in greatness.

From growing up as the youngest child in a family of modest means, to her days as a U.S. Army officer and her time in the US Army. Newhouse, a service-disabled veteran, has constantly relied on hard work, ethics, her love of technology and a desire to make a difference to become recognized as one of the top leaders in technology.

While serving in the United States Army on various assignments she has always focused on our National Security. She established the Cyber Espionage Task Force. Although offered a senior level position, she decided to shift her focus to entrepreneurship and founded Xtreme Solutions, Inc. (XSI) in 2002. Today, XSI offers a wide range of IT expertise and provides industry leading, state-of-the-art information technology and cybersecurity services and solutions. XSI has employees in 42 states, with 40% of its workforce made up of veterans.

Newhouse doesn't just advocate for her cybersecurity clients, she is also an avid supporter of women in business. In 2019 she founded ShoulderUp alongside Academy Award-winning actress Viola Davis, a nonprofit dedicated to connecting and supporting women on their entrepreneurial journeys. Through ShoulderUp, Newhouse encourages women to speak up, stand up and shoulder up, allowing them to see themselves in a different context, teaching them to grow their influence, encouraging them to increase their economic power and create their own, powerful legacy. Newhouse hosts Leadership Inspirational Talks (LITalks), addressing the ShoulderUp audience directly to develop leaders through their spiritual and inspirational journeys.

In 2017 and Newhouse became the first woman to win an Ernst & Young (EY) Entrepreneur Of The Year® award in the technology category. She was admitted into the 2013 class of EY Entrepreneurial Winning Women, and in 2019 was inducted into the Enterprising Women Hall of fame. Additionally, XSI received inclusion in the Inc. 5000 list in 2013 and 2014, and has been recognized as one of Women's Presidents' Organization's (WPO) 50 Fastest Growing Women-Owned Companies in the U.S. consecutively for the past seven years.

Newhouse was elected to the board of the Technology Association of Georgia (TAG) in 2019. She is currently a member of the Business Executives for National Security (BENS), and she is a member of the WPO where she proudly serves on the Executive Board. Newhouse also serves on the Board of Directors of Girls Inc., a nonprofit organization that encourages all girls to be "Strong, Smart, and Bold."

Newhouse has been featured in Entrepreneur, Inc., Atlanta Business Journal, Tallahassee Democrat and more. She received her degree from John F. Kennedy University and currently resides in Atlanta, Georgia. For more information, please visit www.xtremesolutions-inc.com.



Michael Praeger

Co-Founder, Chief Executive Officer, AvidXchange, Inc.

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2018 Southeast winner

Michael Praeger is the Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of AvidXchange, the leading provider of on-demand accounts payable and payment automation solutions. Since founding AvidXchange, Michael has led the company to secure the coveted title of Global Unicorn by CB Insights three years in a row, with a \$2 billion-plus valuation by investors, 5,500 customers and 600,000+ suppliers nationwide.

An expert on fintech, payments innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership, Michael has been an active participant and speaker at various industry conferences, a Forbes contributor with appearances in Authority Magazine, Business Insider, Inc., and The Wall Street Journal, he is considered a thought leader in developing creative solutions for mid-sized companies to grow their businesses, increase revenue and drive efficiencies. Michael was also named the 2018 Business Person of the Year by the Charlotte Business Journal as well as the EY Entrepreneur of the Year for the FinTech category in the Southeast.

Before establishing AvidXchange, Michael was Co-Founder of PlanetResume.com, a technology career enhancement and recruiting site that successfully completed its merger with CareerShop.com in November 1999. Prior to that, he was Co-Founder and CEO of InfoLink Partners, a software company specializing in automating the tax billing and collection functions for municipalities. Michael also served as an Associate with Summit Partners, a Boston-based Venture Capital and buyout partnership with more than \$1 billion under management.

Michael is currently active in the Young Presidents Organization (YPO) and serves on the advisory board of the North Carolina Technology Association (NCTA). He is also a board member of Charlotte City Center Partners, Kare Partners and E2D.

Michael received a B.S.B.A. in Finance from Georgetown University and is a graduate of the "Birthing of Giants" executive entrepreneurship program at MIT.

He lives in Lake Norman, N.C. with his wife.



Asif Ramji

Chief Growth Officer, FIS

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2017 US winner

Asif Ramji is a seasoned technology executive with more than 20 years' experience leading companies within the software and payment transaction processing industries.

Most recently, Asif served as Chief Product Officer for Worldpay (WP:NYSE), which was acquired by FIS (FIS:NYSE) in a \$43 billion transaction in 2019. Asif was responsible for the development of Worldpay's innovative customer-centric global products, marketing strategy, worldwide payment card networks and data organization which include data science, machine learning and analytics. In this role, Asif had responsibility for over \$4 billion in annual product revenue and served on Worldpay's Executive Committee as a Section 16 officer.

Asif reports to the FIS Chairman & CEO and has progressively taken on a broader role leading product and innovation for the overall FIS business. He currently serves on the FIS Business Leadership Team which supports \$12 billion of global revenue, 57,000 employees and an \$80 billion market cap.

Prior to these roles, Asif was the President and Chief Executive Officer of Paymetric, a private equity backed global enterprise leader for cloud-based secure integrated payments, which touts numerous

Fortune 500 companies as customers. Asif led successful venture capital rounds and a private equity transaction for Paymetric in 2013. Paymetric was ultimately acquired for over half a billion dollars in 2017 by publicly traded Vantiv (VNTV:NYSE), the largest payment processor in the US. Under Asif's leadership, Paymetric was consecutively named to the Deloitte Fast 500, which recognizes the top 500 fastest growing technology, media and telecommunications companies in the US.

Following this transaction, Vantiv announced the \$11.3 billion merger with WorldPay Group, creating one of the largest payments company's in the world (WP:NYSE); where Asif served on the overall group's Executive Committee post acquisition.

Asif serves on non-profit community boards and organizations including the Alliance Theater Board of Trustees, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta's Foundation Board, and is former vice chair of the Atlanta Ballet and director with the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

Asif is Founder and Chairman of GiveWorx, which helps raise money for the Marcus Autism Center, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals by improving the ability of non-profits to raise money and nurture donor relationships through integrated financial software and engagement platforms.

Asif was awarded the national 2017 Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young for Financial Services and has received multiple awards for CEO value creation and operational excellence.



Karl Schledwitz

Chairman and CEO, Monogram Foods

Entrepreneur Of The Year 2014 Southeast winner

Karl Schledwitz was born and raised in Memphis Tennessee. He worked his way through college at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville where he was student body president and was heavily involved in democratic politics. Karl also worked full time through his graduation from the University of Memphis Law School. Karl began his career as a lawyer and real estate developer and transitioned to entrepreneurship in the 1980s by raising private equity for startup companies. He has since raised over \$500 million of private capital.

In 2004, Karl became Chairman and CEO of Monogram Foods, which he founded with his partner, Wes Jackson. Monogram Foods began with nine employees and has since grown through co-manufacturing and licensing deals to manufacture meat snacks, processed-meat products, sandwiches and appetizers. Monogram Foods has more than 3,000 employees, operating out of eight plant facilities in six states. Monogram Foods' 2020 revenue is projected to be \$900 million. Monogram Foods has been on the Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Private Companies in America list for ten straight years. Monogram is the third company that Karl has founded to have been recognized on the Inc. 5000 list. In 2014, Ernst & Young recognized him as the Entrepreneur of the Year. In 2017, Karl was selected as the recipient of the Meatingplace's Richard L. Knowlton Award, recognizing his innovation and business acumen within the meat industry. Also in 2017, the National Provisioner named Monogram Foods "Processor of the Year." Most recently in 2018, Inside Memphis Business honored Karl with the title of "CEO of the Year" for the 1,000+ employees category.

Karl is an active member of the community, having managed several political campaigns and served 10 years on the Board of Trustees for the University of Tennessee. He is a board member emeritus for the Memphis Zoo after serving on its board for 16 years, and he is currently serving as a board member for the University of Memphis Law School, Orpheum Theatre and Memphis Tomorrow. Karl and his wife, Gail, have been married for 38 years. He has two daughters, Kathryn and Karly.



Theresa Sexton

Partner, Claritas Capital

Theresa Sexton is a Partner of Claritas Capital, a multi-strategy alternative investment firm based in Nashville. She co-leads the equity investment team, which focuses on providing \$2-\$20 million of equity capital to healthcare and technology companies. Theresa spends most of her time sourcing and evaluating investment opportunities in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic. Often, she is a company's first round of institutional growth capital to support rapid expansion. Theresa invests between \$2,000,000 and \$5,000,00, initially but can support existing portfolio companies with up to \$20,000,000 in capital. She serves on the boards of Genomind, TwelveStone Health Partners, Virtue Technologies, nSight, Apcela, and Oasis Holdings Group.

Claritas Capital has invested in over 100 equity, private credit, and real estate transactions which have received over \$1 billion in total financing.

Southeast program leadership



Chevy Arnold
Entrepreneur Of The Year
Southeast Program Director
+1 404 817 5980
chevenry.arnold@ey.com



Erin Colatrella
Entrepreneur Of The Year
Southeast Program Manager
+1 404 817 5598
erin.colatrella@ey.com



Kelcey Thomas
Entrepreneur Of The Year
Southeast Program Coordinator
+1 404 541 8370
kelcey.thomas@ey.com

For more information,
visit ey.com/us/southeast_eoy

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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

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