

Meet the Judges



Andrew Barrier - Vice President, Private Wealth Advisor, U.S. Bank

Andrew Barrier is a Private Wealth Advisor who works closely with Orange County founders and privately held business owners as they navigate major inflection points in their companies. His practice centers on exit and transition planning, guiding clients through succession, liquidity events, and how enterprise value becomes long term family wealth and legacy. He engages with clients well before a transaction, coordinating with investment bankers, attorneys, and CPAs to ensure the right structures and strategies are in place ahead of a sale or transition. After liquidity events, he helps families manage and preserve wealth through an integrated approach that includes investment management, trust and estate planning, and private banking solutions. Barrier earned his MBA from the University of California, Irvine, and completed his undergraduate degree in finance at Portland State University. He lives in Corona Del Mar and serves clients throughout Orange County. He enjoys tennis, golf, and traveling with his fiancé.



Sean Foley - President, Orange County and Inland Empire Region, Banc of California

Sean Foley is President of the Orange County and Inland Empire Region at Banc of California. He is responsible for overseeing and expanding the team dedicated to the bank's commercial and real estate businesses in the area, which includes client acquisition, client retention and portfolio management. Foley joined Banc of California in 2020 and has several decades of experience supporting clients and structuring debt facilities that meet their strategic needs. He has held significant leadership roles at major U.S. banks. Prior to his current position, Foley served as the Commercial Banking Executive at KeyBank in Washington state and spent 10 years as Regional President of U.S. Bank's Southern California market. Foley has lived in the Southern California community for more than 30 years. In that time, he has served in leadership roles at many business, community and nonprofit organizations, including the Mardan Foundation of Educational Therapy, California Bankers Association, United Way of Greater Los Angeles, the Pacific Symphony and Town Hall Los Angeles. He is currently a member of the Chief Executive Roundtable at the University of California, Irvine. Foley earned a bachelor's degree in accounting and business from the University of Pittsburgh.



Victor Guerrero - President & Chief Operating Officer, Infinity Bank

Victor Guerrero has dedicated over 35 years to serving the Los Angeles/Orange County communities in banking. Starting out as a teller at Bank of America in 1988, he's worked in many roles in the industry, from operations to sales, credit, and finance. Since 2018, Guerrero has been the founding executive at Infinity Bank, where he serves as president and chief operating officer, and previously served as the founding CFO of Orange County Business Bank. Guerrero finds his greatest joy in helping people achieve their dreams and goals as a banker, advisor, and partner. With 33 years of marriage and two adult sons, Guerrero's family keeps him humble and generally grounded, but never quiet!



Andrew Mason - Partner, Stradling

Andrew Mason is a litigation partner at Stradling. He advises Southern California-based businesses, family-owned enterprises, and individuals on a broad range of litigation matters. Known as a practical problem-solver, Mason focuses on achieving efficient, strategic outcomes through creative negotiation or trial when necessary. His experience includes commercial contract negotiation, business disputes, litigation risk counseling, internal and regulatory investigations, judgment enforcement, and trust and estate disputes. He has represented clients in California state and probate courts, federal district courts, and arbitral forums.



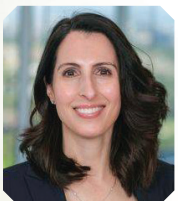
Paul O'Mara - Senior Vice President, Relationship Manager, U.S. Bank

Paul O'Mara is a senior vice president at U.S. Bank managing a portfolio of middle market relationships in the Orange County Commercial Bank. He provides the bank's wide array of products and services to middle market clients in the Southern California Region. Prior to assuming his current role, O'Mara was managing director at Union Bank managing the Orange County Middle Market team. From July 2009 to October 2019, O'Mara was regional vice president at Wells Fargo Bank. O'Mara held a number of other positions at Wells Fargo over 20 years including divisional sales manager where he managed a team of business development officers covering the Midwest portion of the country. O'Mara spent 16 years at Continental Bank/Bank of America as a market executive for the middle market lending division in Chicago. O'Mara earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Finance from Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL. O'Mara is a member of the University of California-Irvine Chief Executive Roundtable. For the past five years, O'Mara has been a board member of the J.F. Shea Therapeutic Riding Center. Paul is a Board member of the Forum for Corporate Directors (FCD). FCD promotes the highest standards of governance in forum where peer-to-peer relationships develop, and valuable insights are gained through outstanding programs.



Richard Reisman - Publisher, Orange County Business Journal

Richard Reisman is publisher of the Orange County Business Journal. Reisman joined the Business Journal in 1990. Since then, the publication's acceptance by the business community has been dramatic. Paid circulation and advertising volume has grown significantly, making it possibly the top Business Journal in the country. Prior to the business journal, Reisman was director of marketing for the Orange County edition of The Los Angeles Times. Earlier in his career, Reisman practiced law in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. While in private practice in Washington, Reisman served as special counsel to the House Ethics Committee. Reisman holds an MBA from UCLA, where he was awarded the R.C. Baker Foundation Fellowship, and a law degree from George Washington University, where he graduated with honors. Reisman is listed in "Who's Who in America" and has served on numerous boards.



Micol Small - Partner, Stradling

Micol Small is a Counsel in Stradling's Litigation practice group. Small has extensive experience in complex business litigation, risk analysis, and corporate counseling. She has a track record of successfully leveraging her negotiation skills and in-depth knowledge of all phases of complex federal and state litigation to achieve her clients' objectives.



Ivo A. Tjan - Chairman, President & Chief Executive Officer, CommerceWest Bank

Ivo A. Tjan is the founder, chairman, president & chief executive officer of CW Bancorp and CommerceWest Bank, a publicly traded full-service commercial bank with a distinctive vision and culture dedicated exclusively to serving the business community. Tjan founded the Bank and successfully led its Initial Public Offering in 2001, making it one of the few banks in California to go public under founder-led leadership. Headquartered in Irvine, CommerceWest Bank partners with businesses across California, providing strategic banking solutions with a digital-first, relationship-driven approach. Tjan's banking career began with leadership roles at Eldorado Bank, Home Savings of America, and Great Western Bank, where he gained broad expertise across commercial banking disciplines before launching CommerceWest Bank. He has been widely recognized for his leadership and entrepreneurial achievements, including being named a 2025 LA Times CEO Honoree, one of Orange County's Most Influential Business Leaders on the OC500 and OC50 Lists by the Orange County Business Journal, and recipient of the Robert Ross Founders Award from the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). He was also recognized as one of Vivid Magazine's Top 10 Asian American Entrepreneurs and listed among OC Metro's "Hottest 25 People in Orange County." Tjan earned his Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from California State University, Fullerton. Beyond his corporate leadership, he is deeply engaged in community and industry organizations. He currently serves on the Board of Working Wardrobes and is an active member of the Young Presidents' Organization (YPO), CEO Affiliation Group, American Bankers Association, Bank CEO Network, and The Pacific Club. His prior board service includes California State University, Fullerton; New Majority; Marconi Foundation; The Children's Museum; CASA Advisory Board; and the ABA Government Relations Committee. A strong believer in giving back, Tjan actively supports a wide range of charitable and nonprofit organizations throughout Southern California, combining his entrepreneurial success with a commitment to community impact.



Michelle Vallejo - Vice President, Relationship Manager, EverBank

With over 14 years of experience in banking, Michelle Vallejo built her career around developing trusted relationships and helping businesses navigate growth with confidence. As a relationship manager, Vallejo specializes in commercial and specialty banking, with a strong emphasis on deposit strategy and delivering tailored financial solutions aligned to each client's goals. Vallejo is known for taking a thoughtful, solutions-oriented approach and for asking the right questions to truly understand each business - an approach that she is excited to bring to this year's judging process. It's a privilege to connect with leaders, learn their stories, and highlight the innovation and impact behind their success. Vallejo is also passionate about mentoring emerging professionals and continuing to grow as a leader, while contributing to a strong and collaborative business community.



Jeffrey M. Verdon - Partner & Chair of Asset Protection, Falcon Rappaport & Berkman LLP

Jeffrey M. Verdon is the Chair of the Asset Protection Planning Group of Falcon Rappaport & Berkman, LLP, a NY based full-service laws firm. Verdon is based in the Newport Beach, CA office, whose practice is focused on integrated estate planning with asset protection for affluent families and successful business owners. Verdon is the author of Estate Planning for Women Only, now in its 4th edition; a regular speaker to professional organizations and financial conferences and have published over 25 articles with Kiplinger.com and a regular contributor to the Orange County Business Journal.