

Forty Under 40 2019: Kevin O'Brien, Zepponi & Company

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Career high so far? Last year was very productive as we closed four transactions that were all notable. These included the sale of Acrobat wine brand (largest Oregon wine brand transaction), sale of Galaxy Wine Co. (leading independent wine distributor), and sale of Duck Pond Cellars (largest vertically integrated winery transaction in Oregon). The year concluded with the sale of the Vista Hills Vineyard to the Family Coppola.

What qualities do you possess that allow you to succeed at such a young age? Empathy is one of the most underrated qualities to possess in business. In the transaction world, emotions can run so high, so it's been beneficial to try and reconcile the gaps between two different points of view.

Nonprofits you support, why? Those that serve the homeless and the other isolated members of society. Growing up, my dad and I volunteered at soup kitchens together. This gave me an appreciation of how fortunate I was. I proudly serve as a board member at the Maybelle Center and continue to volunteer and donate to causes that support those needing support to live healthy and productive lives.

What was your first job, what did you love/hate about it? My first job was working as an usher at the horse races at the Sonoma County Fair. I loved the job because a group of older horse-racing aficionados sat in my section and would give me betting tips. I'd take those tips and wager my lunch money in hopes of hitting it big. Winning was great because then I could feast on corn dogs, funnel cakes, popcorn and more. Losing meant I dined on whatever granola bar I had stuffed in my pocket that morning.

How do you relax? Music has always been a big part of my life. In times of real tension, listening to a familiar album will take me back to a certain period of my life where things were less stressful and that seems to be an effective way to relax. I also like to hike around Tryon Creek State Park with my two young kids. It's hard to be stressed discussing the nuances of what worms eat for breakfast!

Kevin O'Brien

AGE: 37

HOMETOWN: San Francisco

COMPANY: Zepponi & Company

JOB TITLE: Senior Vice President

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