

Where Are They Now?

Catching up with prior SFNet 40 Under 40 Award winners

BY EILEEN WUBBE

From promotions to new jobs to starting their own advisory firms, award winners share their career advice and what they have learned.



**HAILEY BENTON-THOMAS, CEO,
TBS FACTORING SERVICE, LLC**

2020 WINNER

What advice would you give on meeting people and networking in this industry?

It's incredible the connections that can be made when you treat networking like a chance to make new friends instead of an awkward meeting with the purpose to market yourself.

What advice would you give to recent grads or entrants in this industry?

The best career move I made was to pick a leader rather than a particular position. This allowed me to work for someone that I could learn from and would take an interest in me. As I result, I was given opportunities earlier and had a leader who would support my achievements and invite me into the conversation because he recognized the value that I bring. I had been in some large firms with more prestigious titles for years without receiving near the level of reward and personal achievement that I did in months of working under Wood Kaufman, the founder of TBS Factoring.

**MICHAEL BOHLEY, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
BOHLEY ADVISORY SERVICES**

2016 WINNER

What made you decide to launch your own field examination firm and why now? What are you looking forward to on this new venture?

For anyone who spends a considerable amount of time in a field examination role either as a contractor or with an internal team, I think the idea of starting your own firm is common. For me personally, the first time I considered starting my own firm was nearly 15 years ago, prior to starting my long tenure with Wells Fargo. Since then, I've thought about it from time to time, but the growth and opportunities at Wells kept me in place. Given some internal changes at Wells and the pandemic changing my view of risk and security, the idea of going solo gained traction about two years ago and became more than just an idea last summer. I spoke with others who followed this path and met with a trusted business advisor to challenge my assumptions. On January 1, 2022, I filed my legal paperwork and began the road to launching the firm. I am looking most forward to working with start-up and established non-bank lenders in the ABL space. That's not to say that I'm not focused on serving traditional bank teams and specialty lenders in other spaces, but the growth of non-bank lenders in the ABL space presented itself as a great opportunity as most



■ **HAILEY BENTON-THOMAS**
TBS Factoring Service, LLC
2020 Winner



■ **MICHAEL BOHLEY**
Bohley Advisory Services
2016 Winner



■ **BEN COLLEY**
PNC Business Credit
2021 Winner



■ **ELIZABETH B. GARNER**
Parker, Hudson, Rainer & Dobbs
2021 Winner



■ **CAITLIN SANDERS**
Callodine Commercial Finance
**2017 Winner and 2022
SFNet 40 Under 40 Award Judge**



■ **BHAVJYOT SINGH**
Paul Hastings
2020 Winner

organizations do not have internal exam staff. With my broad technical background and experience as an exam manager, I think it will be a great fit.

What changed for you professionally after receiving the award? Did receiving the 40 Under 40 award encourage you to become involved in additional professional or community activities or organizations?

As I mentioned in my original bio for the 40 Under 40 Award, the field exam role is not often celebrated, and I believe the recognition gave me the boost to find a way to make an impact outside of my normal line of business. Not long after the award, I got involved in the Veteran Initiative of the Wells Fargo D&I council with an open mind to help better serve the veteran community in any way possible. Through those efforts, I was connected to the Veteran Employment Transition (“VET”) team who hosts an annual, top-notch recruiting event for veterans of all armed forces who are considering careers in banking and finance. I had the privilege of participating in the VET event for three years, doing both formal interviews for internship-to-permanent roles and being part of a team leading an ABL case study to help educate candidates on the business. The experiences at VET were some of the most fulfilling of my career and I met some true heroes!

How can YoPros stand out with new work arrangements, such as remote or hybrid?

While the pandemic forced a change to working arrangements for so many, I have spent over 75% of my career as a remote worker. There are definite pros and cons to remote working, but I think the best way to stand out and be a key contributor to your work team is through proactive communication. That may sound somewhat generic, but I truly believe it is the key! As a remote worker, especially in project-based roles, communication can get very transactional, and you do not get the benefit of sharing ideas. Make a point to regularly schedule phone/video calls with teammates and supervisors, and they do not need to always be formal/structured. While others may be getting the same quality work completed, I believe having the open dialogue can make a difference in being noticed and also personally benefitting from the conversations.

**BEN COLLEY, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER,
PNC BUSINESS CREDIT**

2021 WINNER

Did receiving the SFNet 40 Under 40 Award help your career? If so, how?

It helped me expand my network, as some folks I didn’t know in the industry reached out on LinkedIn and offered their congratulations. I was and still am appreciative of the honor.

How can YoPros build their brand and recognition in this industry?

Be genuine with people and hustle. I encourage all professionals early in their career to go to as many industry events as their schedules allow and to try to meet a handful of new people at each event. Follow up with folks and be consistent.

What advice would you give on meeting people and networking in this industry?

Utilize the network you have, because “everyone knows everyone in ABL.” So, if you are looking to meet a specific person or group, leverage your network, no matter how small it may seem. Don’t be a wallflower at events – try to seek out meeting people you don’t know instead of spending the time conversing with folks you already know.

How can YoPros stand out with new work arrangements, such as remote or hybrid?

Be present with your manager(s) and co-workers regardless of work arrangement. If primarily remote, make the extra effort to meet for lunch/coffee with your team on a consistent basis. Offer to come in consistently to foster team camaraderie and morale. Most importantly, be efficient with your time, regardless of where you are physically working.

What advice would you give to recent grads or entrants in this industry?

Understand the competitive landscape in ABL, the differences between bank ABL and finance company ABL products, and even nuances within bank ABL (product partner vs. separate). We all operate in a commoditized environment of lending money, but the difference in how each competitor views credit, new business, and approaches the market with their footprint can be dramatically different. It’s important to understand all the different facets and players in the industry.

What is something you know now that you wish you knew when you started your career?

That the ABL world is relatively tiny compared to other industries, and that I wish I had found the industry sooner! I spent approximately five years in public accounting and the firm I worked for would provide field exam consulting services for various ABL shops. This is how I discovered the product and was fortunate to join one of our clients, beginning my ABL career in underwriting.

**ELIZABETH B. GARNER, PARTNER,
PARKER, HUDSON, RAINER & DOBBS**

2021 WINNER

Did receiving the SFNet 40 Under 40 Award help your career invisibility? If so, how?

Absolutely – I noticed that two things happened shortly after I won this award: (1) I gained access to the exclusive network of talented individuals, now friends, who have previously been recognized as 40 Under 40 winners, and (2) I became an instantly credible resource to people with whom I didn't already work. Our industry recognizes that award winners are incredibly bright and capable young professionals.

How can YoPros stand out with new work arrangements, such as remote or hybrid?

Maintain a positive attitude; regularly check-in with and offer assistance to colleagues and superiors; be willing to take on projects and assignments outside of your comfort zone; and take initiative to anticipate your clients' (or colleagues') needs.

What advice would you give to recent grads or entrants in this industry?

Collect great mentors and spend the time and energy necessary to maintain those relationships – even as you, or they, move jobs, cities, or careers. You have many working years ahead of you and these are the people who will be your greatest resources for support, connections, knowledge, and advice.

**CAITLIN SANDERS, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
CALLODINE COMMERCIAL FINANCE**

2017 WINNER

Did receiving the SFNet 40 Under 40 Award help your career visibility? If so, how?

The SFNet 40 Under 40 Award does an excellent job of elevating the recipient's career visibility. The award is a recognition from both your own institution, as well as the greater industry, acknowledging your successes to-date. The Award helped to expand my network outside of the Boston market. As an underwriter at the time, it gave me the opportunity to meet a number of peers at other firms that I hadn't yet partnered with on deals. The magazine profile also prompted other people in the industry to reach out and introduce themselves. A lot of those relationships I still maintain today.

You served as a 40 Under 40 judge this year. How was that experience?

I really enjoyed my judging experience this year. I did not know much about the process heading into it. I found it to be even more thorough and thoughtful than I had anticipated. I enjoyed having the opportunity to read through the submissions

and learn more about each nominee. The level of talent and industry involvement that each of the nominees possessed was impressive. I think that supporting the rising talent in the industry is important, and I was happy to play a small role in it.

What advice would you give on meeting people and networking in this industry?

Start early. If I could go back and do anything differently, it would be to start networking earlier. I think it is important for every role. As an underwriter, having a relationship with the people on the other end of the deal helps with negotiations. As a woman in the industry, having relationships with other women outside of my firm has helped me to create a wider support system that has been key in everything from navigating the work/life balance to setting a maternity leave policy for my firm. When a business development opportunity opened up at my firm, it was the network that I had spent time growing over the prior years that helped me to transition into that role.

I think it's important to remember that creating your network takes time. Over the years I have made it a point to seek out the people whose careers I admire in the industry, but what I consider my true network are the people who I have become genuine friends with over the years as we have risen through the industry together. We share and compete for deals; we share advice, and we support each other inside and outside of work.

How can YoPros stand out with new work arrangements, such as remote or hybrid?

The remote/hybrid work environment is new for all of us. My advice to YoPros would be to sign up for the in-person industry events. SFNet has done a great job of hosting national and local events this year. It is a great way to start networking in-person again. If you can't make it to the scheduled events, or if there aren't any in your area, reach out to people directly. Schedule a coffee. I think that most people are receptive to that.

What changed for you professionally after receiving the award? Did receiving the 40 Under 40 Award encourage you to become involved in additional professional or community activities or organizations?

The 40 Under 40 Award gave me a greater appreciation for all of the resources that SFNet offered outside of my local chapter. Over the last few years, I have become involved with the SFNet Board of New England, the Women's Committee, and now the 40 Under 40 Committee.

What is something you know now that you wish you knew when you started your career?

I wish I had a better appreciation for the fact that things

change. I started my career outside of the commercial finance industry and was convinced that was the job I would retire in. Little did I know that a move back to Boston would have me walking through the doors at Gordon Brothers and entering an entirely new industry. I have been through ownership changes, management changes, and have changed roles. A lot of the change has been unexpected, but ultimately ended up being the best thing for my career. I would tell people starting out in the industry to be open to change. You never know what may come of it.

**BHAVJYOT SINGH, OF COUNSEL,
PAUL HASTINGS
2020 WINNER**

Did receiving the SFNet 40 Under 40 Award help your career invisibility? If so, how?

It definitely did. This award is well known in the industry and it was great to catch up with clients and colleagues who had seen the award announcement. I am so privileged to be in the company of such talented women and men across the industry—I have much to learn from them.

What advice would you give on meeting people and networking in this industry?

Be genuine and be yourself. I think that is critical to making long-lasting connections with others in the industry. People may be different than you, have different beliefs than you, or even a different approach to career decisions than you, but they will always appreciate an honest conversation where they can get to know the real you. I would also recommend to first and foremost always listen to what others have to say. Listening is a great skill and underrated. Others in the industry are going through much of the same challenges you are—so always identify something you can do to make their life easier. Maybe you can put them in touch with a personal connection that would help them in their professional journey. Maybe you can give a recommendation for great counsel or another service provider that was excellent during a transaction. Maybe you can recommend a great local childcare provider or preschool with flexible hours. When we are there for each other and help each other make it through day-to-day life, that creates great bonds. We are all going through the same things together.

How can YoPros stand out as there are new working arrangements, such as remote or hybrid arrangements?

Always schedule face time, even if virtual! It has undoubtedly been difficult to connect with others in a remote environment. I have found though that video calls really create a personal atmosphere when it is not possible to see others in person. Also make time to reach out to your contacts and catch up

periodically—whether it be colleagues, juniors on your team who would appreciate the mentorship, clients, or others. Schedule one-on-one chats. This type of outreach will bring your network closer even though it involves a bit of a time investment on your part.

What advice would you give to recent grads or entrants in this industry?

Always communicate where you visualize your career heading! I can't stress that enough. If there is a certain project or opportunity you are passionate about, make sure others at your institution know how you feel. If there is a great leader in your organization that you want to work with, make sure they know so they can keep you front of mind when the next opportunity arises. Others around you cannot read your mind and likely don't want to make assumptions, thus, you have to be clear in how you communicate. The world is for those who ask. 📌

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