

Interview with Rana Florida

by Joe Fields | Aug 17, 2021 | Interviews,



Rana Florida

CEO of [Creative Class Group](#)



Key Topics: Cities and the Creative Class

Location: United States & Canada

Bio:

As Chief Executive Officer of the Creative Class Group, Rana Florida manages new business development, marketing, consulting, research and global operations serving such diverse clients as BMW, Converse, IBM, Cirque du Soleil, Audi, Zappos, and Starwood Hotels – to name just a few.

She brings to this leadership role more than two decades of experience in corporate strategy, communications, and marketing, having directed global strategic communications for HMSHost, the world's largest airport developer, as well as having executed marketing initiatives for Disney Live and Starbucks and events experience working with The Atlantic, CityLab, The Aspen Institute and The Knight Foundation.

Well known as a writer on business and leadership – for Fast Company, [Inc.com](#), the Huffington Post, and the Miami Herald – Rana has also served as a guest business analyst on The Today Show. and MSNBC's, The Cycle, has been a Fox News contributor for several years, and has

been featured in the The New York Times, Vogue Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, Market Watch, CNN and The Globe and Mail .

Her one-on-one high profile interviews have covered notables – from President Bill Clinton and First Lady Michelle Obama to Andre Agassi, Nelly Furtado ,Tory Burch, and many more. She is also heavily involved in philanthropic including The United Nations Global Network on Digital Technologies and Sustainable Urbanization for UN Habitat, The Olympics Committee, Canadian Freestyle Ski Association, The National Ballet of Canada, St. Mike’s Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Luminato Festival, Travel & Leisure Rebel Awards, Le Miami, Objekt USA-Canada, AMBI 2.0 Gala, The Design–Exchange – DX Intersection, Isabella Blow Foundation, Girls E Mentorship, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Airports Council International, Council for International Visitors, The Founders Junior Council of the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Marketing Magazine Awards in Design.

Rana holds a Bachelor of Arts in communications and a MBA in marketing and management. Her book, Upgrade—Taking Your Work and Life From Ordinary to Extraordinary was a ‘Business Best Seller,’ by Tattered Cover, the largest independent bookstore retailer in the U.S. and The Globe and Mail, Editor’s Pick.

How did you get to become an expert in your key topics?

I interviewed a wide range of successful leaders including President Bill Clinton, First Lady Michelle Obama, grammy-award winning musicians, star athletes, startup sensations, architects, doctors, artists and more. I culled their advice and expertise in my book, Upgrade.

What sub topics are you most passionate about?

I’m most interested in new ways of thinking and working. Things like risk taking, collaboration, and embracing failure weren’t things we were taught in school, but they are traits, every successful leader embodies.

Who influences you within these topics?

The wide range of creative leaders I’ve interviewed have influenced my thinking and working. Also, my husband Richard Florida, professor and urbanist who founded the idea of the Creative Class. The ability to compete and prosper in the global economy no longer depends on access to natural resources, raw materials, or flows of capital. It is the ability to create that fosters innovation and sustainable economic growth, and the power to create lies in the hands of individuals. Whether creating new ideas, new business models, new cultural forms, new technologies, or whole new industries, creative capital is driving the world economy.

What challenges are brands facing in this space?

The brands that constantly push the status quo are ultimately the ones that succeed. Those that follow the same trajectory or path rarely are the industry leaders. Whether it’s Nike embracing new technology and focusing on the needs of the individual athlete or it’s Pixar making all their

senior leaders a film director by creating a collaborative “Brain Trust.” Pixar founder Ed Catcall wrote in his book, *Creativity, Inc.* that “early on, all of our movies suck.” And how to take a sucky movie and make an uber successful one takes a laborious collaborative process where they take feedback seriously. They equate every new idea as an ugly baby, “awkward and unformed, vulnerable and incomplete.” And they are usually cast aside. At Pixar however, they stick with the ugly baby, nourishing it along the way. Feeding it, investing in it, mentoring it is what makes an idea bloom. Catcall continues, “Our job is to protect our babies from being judged too quickly. Our job is to protect the new.”

What do you think the future holds in this space?

Creativity is endless and the most innovative brands will continue to push the boundaries. Allowing talent to work in a way which breaks the norm of the traditional office environment will reap tremendous rewards. Whether it’s flexibility and remote work and encouraging risk taking and failure, the traditional office environment is over.

What brands are leading the way in this space?

Apple for obvious reasons, Netflix was a pioneer in live streaming putting established big boxes like Blockbuster Video out of business nearly overnight, Google’s spinoff company Alphabet which develops technology to the world’s biggest challenges. Also, startup REEF Technology has a bold mission to transform static parking facilities into thriving mobility and dynamic logistic hubs, which is more important now in a post-pandemic world, then ever before. Their innovative thinking landed them a \$700 million investment from SoftBank.

If a brand wanted to work with you, which activities would you be most interested in collaborating on?

The Creative Class Group (CCG) is a strategy firm comprised of leading researchers, thinkers, and business experts. Drawing on our own proprietary datasets, we advise corporations, governments, non-profits, and universities on topics ranging from economic development and growth, competitiveness, talent attraction and retention, real estate investment and locational strategy, and inclusivity and sustainability.

Our approach centers on the proven research of urban theorist and CCG founder Richard Florida, author of the seminal book *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Making up about one-third of the U.S. work force (much more in some cities), the Creative Class collects half of all wages, and accounts for 70 percent of discretionary spending. No company, organization, or economy can afford to overlook it.

From Jerusalem to New York, CCG has helped cities small and large on five continents develop economic development strategies. We assisted BMW with its Ideas Class advertising campaign and advised Audi on its Urban Future Initiative, supported Art Basel’s introduction of Art Basel Cities, and launched CityLab with The Atlantic. Cirque du Soleil hails CCG’s research as its number one indicator for ticket sales. Starwood Hotels collaborated with the leadership team on

real estate expansion, marketing and branding. We have also helped Philips, Converse, Kraft and many other companies target the Creative Class in their marketing.

What are your passions outside of work?

I'm passionate about anything creative, from creative entertaining to cooking to design, decor and fashion. I'm constantly curious and eager to learn from others. Also especially now in a post pandemic world, nature is extremely important. I love being outside, hiking, walking, playing with our kids, tennis or just enjoying green space.

What would be the best way for a brand to contact you?

[Email.](#)