

# Meet Rana Florida



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We caught up with the brilliant and insightful Rana Florida a few weeks ago and have shared our conversation below.

**Rana, thanks for taking the time to share your stories with us today Let's start with something countless entrepreneurs have had to figure out on the fly – how have you dealt with the rise of remote work?**

For many industries remote-work is not an option, health care, retail, and bricks and mortar where you are providing customers with custom service. However for knowledge or creative workers, they can be quite productive working remotely, some might argue even more productive. COVID of course, accelerated the trend of remote work. When I began as CEO at the Creative Class in Washington, DC our team was scattered across the US. I told my team that it was up to them to manage their time, workload, clients, and to deliver a quality service. I like to hire team members for their skills and expertise and set them free to work whenever and however they'd like.

Josh Patrick, the founder and principal at a financial advisory services firm, told The New York Times, "One of the things we constantly told employees was the following statement: 'You are the expert at your job.' It took several years for some of our people to actually believe it. But I've used this mantra in my business life ever since. The key is that when you make this change, you stop telling people what to do and you start asking them their opinion about the best way to get something done. This can produce all sorts of benefits."

I also believe remote work options make society and families stronger. Less time commuting provides more time to be productive. More social cohesion with families with parents working from home rather than dropping young kids off at daycare.







**As always, we appreciate you sharing your insights and we've got a few more questions for you, but before we get to all of that we want to introduce our readers to your background.**

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

As former Vice President of Marketing for HMSHost, the world's largest airport developer, she brings to this leadership role more than two decades of experience in corporate strategy, communications, and marketing. Prior to that, she was Vice President of Communications, for Disney on Ice and Disney Live! through Feld Entertainment. She helped found and launch, CityLab, a new digital platform for The Atlantic where she also worked on events and programming for The Aspen Ideas Institute and Bloomberg.

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. She 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 business 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 philanthropy including The United Nations Global Network on Digital Technologies and Sustainable Urbanization for UN Habitat, The Olympics Committee, Canadian Freestyle Ski Association, Silver Art Projects, The National Ballet of Canada, St. Mike's Hospital Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit, Luminato Festival, Travel & Leisure Rebel Awards, Le Miami, The Design-Exchange, Isabella Blow Foundation, Girls E Mentorship, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Airports Council International, Council for International Visitors, and The Founders Junior Council of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Rana holds a Bachelor of Arts in communications and an 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.









## **Have you ever had to pivot?**

We are brought up as children to get good grades, get on the right team, and score the winning goal. If we fail the class, we won't get into a good school; if we don't get into a good school, we won't get a good job; and if we don't get a good job, we'll be living at home with our mom and dad for the rest of our lives or living on the streets, and everyone will know we're a failure. There is nothing great about failing a class or losing the statewide football championship. We set up children from a very early age to believe that only success is rewarded, especially when it comes to school. This, however, is very unlike the way we learn.

Ted Talk celebrity, Ken Robinson observes that you can't learn or create anything new unless you first open yourself up to the possibility of being wrong.

We learn through trial and error, by making mistakes and analyzing them. That is how scholarship works, as well as science: you put your idea out there, you test it, and you make your data available to other people so that they can test it too. You have to have thick skin; being challenged and criticized is an integral part of the game.

Sara Blakely is the outrageously successful entrepreneur who founded the undergarment company Spanx. She is the world's youngest self-made female billionaire and has been included in the Time 100, Time magazine's annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world. In his profile of her in *The Startup Playbook*, David Kidder relates that "when she was a little girl, her father would ask her, 'What did you fail at today?' He made it clear that failure was an indication that you tried something. It was a good thing. That's a profound idea, and it speaks against many of the assumptions of our success-based culture."

We need to rethink how we approach failure. "If you celebrate a child's gift rather than her effort, you do her a disservice," Kidder continues. "In exactly the same way, it does no good to celebrate an entrepreneur's idea. The important thing is being able to execute on it."

Peter Sims, the entrepreneur and bestselling author of *Little Bets: How Breakthrough Ideas Emerge from Small Discoveries*, advises us to place lots of small bets. It's just a numbers game, after all; in the end one of them is bound to succeed

Success in life often comes after failure, after being turned down but not giving up.

Most of us need to reset our definition of failure. Too many of us view it as something we haven't been able to accomplish, a goal not met; worse, we view it as a disaster, a catastrophe, or a fiasco, a shameful black mark that we can never erase. When I interviewed Grammy Award winning singer Nelly Furtado she told me, "Failure is very important, as it is inevitable in life. Incredible growth, self-realization and reflection come from failure."

It took me awhile to embrace failure as part of the learning process but I believe we all need to create a new definition of failure.









**What's a lesson you had to unlearn and what's the backstory?**

As an entrepreneur you have so little time and you try to do everything yourself. Tennis star, Andre Agassi told me, "People chase money and forget that time is our most precious resource."

Time is more important than money and possessions. It's the one thing you can never get back and something you can't buy, barter, or borrow. Once it's gone, it's gone for good. Those who succeed protect their time fiercely and selfishly.

Time. It's the one thing we can't buy, trade, or get back. The Boston Globe calls it "a problem so common it may qualify as a new American epidemic: We've got no time. Too busy. Overwhelmed by work, family obligations, and the fast-paced nature of a run-ragged world,

many Americans—especially working adults, parents of young children, and those with college degrees, according to polls—feel strapped for time and are leading less happy lives as a result.

“Researchers in the 1990s gave this familiar, if dreadful, feeling a name: time famine. More recently, they coined a term to describe the opposite: time affluence, that elusive feeling of being rich in time.

Time affluence, it appears, has real benefits in our lives. If time famine can create a state of rolling personal crisis, studies have shown that feeling ‘time affluent’ can be powerfully uplifting, more so than material wealth, improving not only personal happiness, but even physical health and civic involvement.

I’ve had to learn to protect my time and prioritize what’s most important for a work life balance. This lesson is also tangled up in the notion to empower your team rather than think you can do everything better on your own.