

# SHOUTOUT MIAMI

## Meet Rana Florida | CEO, Creative Class Group & Best Selling Author, Upgrade

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We had the good fortune of connecting with Rana Florida and we've shared our conversation below.

### **Hi Rana, what role has risk played in your life or career?**

For most people, assessing and accepting risk takes a severe emotional toll; it causes fear and confusion and it can lead to stress and fatigue. Life is already risky, many of us think — why 'rock the boat?' But most successful leaders, thinkers and innovators understand that new opportunities and rewards come only after taking risks. Facebook's motto is "Move fast and break things," meaning, it's okay to take a chance on several things at once. But the harsh reality is that most of us are not rewarded at work for taking risks. Curiosity is stifled in a risk-free environment. If workers are afraid of getting laughed at for their ridiculous ideas, any number of important inventions won't ever see the light of day. Our society and workplaces need to encourage more risk-taking. Innovative leaders understand that not every risk yields success but they also don't reprimand their teams for taking risks. They encourage them to think their ideas through and assess their potential consequences. Humans learn by trial and error, starting when they are developing their motor skills at a very early age. Experimentation and investigation in various methods are tried until the desired result is achieved. Sometimes, like Edison trying the different filaments in the incandescent light bulb, it takes a long time but has a big payoff.

Sometimes it turns out to be a dead end. It's surprising to me how few organizations encourage risk taking and foster a culture of outside-the box thinking. We are taught to set goals, achieve measurable results and assess success. But we are rarely encouraged to push the boundaries of new ideas and pioneering thoughts. Workers keep their heads down, tending to focus more on what might go wrong and what might be lost or punished. They're afraid to take risks as they may lead to failure and they want to keep their jobs. Risk is not something that is embraced at the workplace. It hurts them more than they know. "Traditional creative organizations can be quite hierarchical, but this is a hard idea to scale, especially if you want to work on a diverse range of projects," Tim Brown, the CEO of the design consultancy IDEO told me. "We have tried to create an organizational culture where every individual is comfortable taking risks and exploring new ideas, but where they are also fixated on helping improve the quality of each other's ideas." Peter Sims, author of *Little Bets* says, "Amazon, Pixar, Apple and to a lesser extent Toyota, 3M and Google have little bets infused into their cultural DNA. Steve Jobs has evangelized about the benefits of the approach described in *Little Bets* more than any other CEO, while little bets are a way of life at Amazon, whether the company is expanding into new markets or improving internal processes. And, I wrote a lot about Pixar because it's the closest thing to a constant learning organization using little bets around today. But any company or team can make use of little bets. Procter & Gamble is an example of a more risk-averse organization that is working to build a culture of little bets." Whether we are a leader of an organization or a worker, anyone of us, Sims advises should commit to making little bets. "Look for interesting problems and work toward larger aspirations. Once you get into the habit of making little bets, they can constantly open up new possibilities that just might lead to something big."

### **What should our readers know about your business?**

I joined the The Creative Class Group (CCG) a strategy firm comprised of leading researchers, thinkers, and business experts over a decade ago as CEO. 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 my husband, the urban theorist 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.

### **If you had a friend visiting you, what are some of the local spots you'd want to take them around to?**

I love all the green spaces and parks for toddlers. From South Point Park, to Belle Isle and Purdy Street, as well as the beaches. Lincoln Road for a stroll and there are so many safe places to

gather outside for dinner or a rooftop drink at Juvia or Mila. Love outdoor lunch at the Perez Museum, Cafe Verde or the Standard I love the terrace at the Four Seasons Surf Club, Bal Harbor Shops, the creative public art installations in the Design District and the graffiti walls in Wynwood. The cool shops like Plant the Future for browsing green or make your own orchid classes. I really enjoy taking the kids to the rooftop at the Frost Science Center and love petting the stingrays!

**Who else deserves some credit and recognition?**

I'm honored to serve as an advisory board member to so many amazing organizations including GEM, which is a girls e-mentorship program. GEM has helped to transform the lives of hundreds of young women to become the next generation of future female leaders. GEM is founded, led and made up of women who believe every girl deserves equal opportunity to develop professional skills, pursue higher education and build successful career paths. We are a force of dedicated women committed to youth education, promoting gender-equity and working with diverse communities. In collaboration with our community, partners, and our formidable body of dynamic and passionate volunteers, the GEM community is passionate about building more inclusive societies and advancing inclusive economic growth. Also I'm excited to join the board of Let Grow! Let Grow believes today's kids are smarter and stronger than our culture gives them credit for. Somehow our culture has become obsessed with kids' fragility and lost sight of their innate resilience. This concern grew out of good intentions, but treating kids as fragile is making them so!