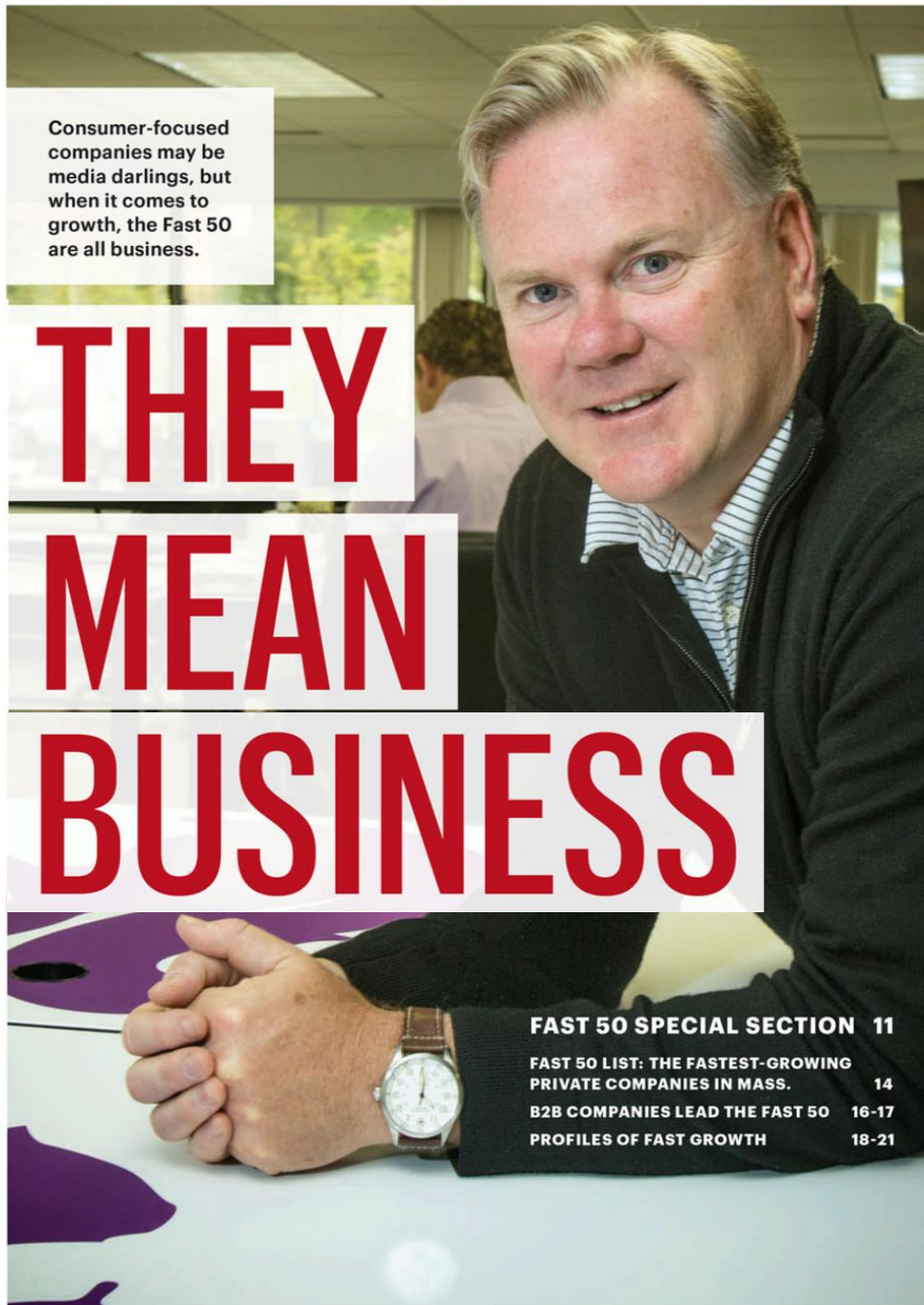


BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL



REAL ESTATE

DAYS ARE NUMBERED FOR STORIED STEAKHOUSE 7



Consumer-focused companies may be media darlings, but when it comes to growth, the Fast 50 are all business.

THEY MEAN BUSINESS

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UP FRONT



Kerry Healey to step down from Babson

The former lieutenant governor announced she will vacate the post of president next year. **MAX STENDAHL, 4**

BIOFLASH

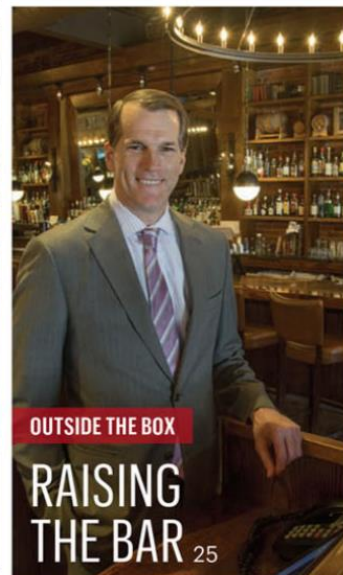
Sanofi lays off 95 in Framingham

The parent of Sanofi Genzyme said the cuts are part of a streamlining effort in manufacturing. **MAX STENDAHL, 6**

HEALTHCARE INC.

Oncologists aren't up on marijuana

While lots of cancer docs are talking to patients about the drug, most say they lack knowledge of whether or how it helps. **JESSICA BARTLETT, 8**



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BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

May 18, 2018
Vol. 38, No. 13, \$6.00
70 Franklin Street
8th Floor
Boston, MA 02110



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Patrick Lee at the Temple Bar in Cambridge.

OUTSIDE THE BOX | PATRICK LEE

W. MARC BERNSAU

Kings of the Square

CAMBRIDGE RESTAURANT OWNERS CITE 'VIBRANCY'

Since 1996, Patrick Lee and his partners at Grafton Group have been "colonizing" the Harvard Square restaurant scene, with a total of four restaurants currently operating in the Cambridge neighborhood. But his family got started in Greater Boston much earlier than that: His father opened the Irish Village bar in Brighton in the early 1970s, and employed Lee, his brother Peter, and their two other Grafton Group partners – Sean Kennedy and Gerry Sheerin – at different points.

Hanging around, and working at Irish Village, is what got the four guys, then in their mid-20s, thinking about opening their own restaurant, Lee said. He recently spoke with Business Journal Correspondent Sean Teehan about starting out in the restaurant business and nuances of Harvard Square.

TITLE: Partner, Grafton Group
AGE: 48
RESIDENCE: Boston
FIRST JOB: Irish Village in Brighton



You were 26 years old when you opened the first Grafton Street. Are there mistakes you made then that you would now advise your younger self against?

You know, I talk to young potential restaurant owners (about this). We sort of jumped into a business deal because we loved the space, we had been looking for a long time ... and we probably got into a deal that we shouldn't have. We signed a lease that was only five years. The option the landlord gave us was, we could stay longer (if business was good), or he could push us out (if not). We sort of naively went along with that. Ultimately, we ended up leaving that space on Grafton Street. We were able to move to a building that was still in the neighborhood, but opening a restaurant, and then closing within four-and-a-half years, is something no restaurant owner wants to do.

When you opened Redline in 2001, it had a different feel to it than the neighborhood bar or restaurant style of Grafton Street and Temple Bar. Why did you go in a different direction? So Redline went into the former Crimson Lounge. The concept for Redline was a little different in that it was a full-service restaurant, but the Crimson had always had a nightlife vibe to it, and we felt like that (nightlife) should always be an aspect of the place. So, at Redline, there was entertainment, even as we served lunch, brunch and dinner. Redline was open for about 10 years, so it had a nice run.

Cambridge has changed a lot since 1996, how do you stay ahead of the curve and avoid becoming dated? When you have a strong foundation to a business, it puts

you in a position to reinvest. If you're able to reinvest in the business, you can make subtle changes that react to things that may be happening around you. You don't change the soul of the place, but shift it just so much that there's enough of a change so that people continue to want to come there. I think that that can be done through aesthetic changes, but it can also be done in how you're presenting the menu and what type of food you're serving. All those things, over time, need to change.

Owning one restaurant is often a 20-hours-a-day type of job, and Grafton Group owns seven. How's the work-life balance? (Laughs) Probably not as healthy as it should be. But I think as you get older, you sort of have to figure that out, because you're more productive if you're able to get away from it sometimes. I think it's better for the company. But certainly, historically it's a business that demands a lot of your time, for sure.

You started out working at Irish Village in Brighton, but now four of Grafton Group's restaurants are in Harvard Square. What makes this neighborhood unique? You certainly have regulars; people who live in the neighborhood, and people who come during the school year who you get to know, and it's great. I think that's the backbone of any restaurant. But I think the fun part about Harvard Square is that you also never know who you're going to see walking through the door. There are new people all the time, and there's a very cyclical nature of the business school, the undergrads, the Kennedy school, and the continuing-education programs. There are lots of different types of people walking around Harvard Square every day. That makes it an exciting place to work. It's also very accessible for people who just want to visit for the day and see something they might not see in other parts of the city, like street performers, or public art installations, or street fairs. There's always something going on, and that vibrancy ... is pulsing through the neighborhood.