

These are the women in Miami tech you need to know



By **Ashley Portero** – Senior Reporter, South Florida Business Journal
3 hours ago

The Miami tech movement wouldn't be what it is without the women founders, executives, nonprofit leaders and venture capitalists who have spent years championing the region's innovation community.

That representation is key as South Florida builds its technology sector, particularly after scores of technology founders and businesses migrated to the area in 2020 and 2021. Women are historically underrepresented among technology workers and corporate leadership teams, a trend local stakeholders hope to reverse in Miami's burgeoning tech industry.

Fortunately, the tri-county area is already home to several female entrepreneurs, investors and executives who are leading the charge to transform the region's innovation sector. Here's a look at some of the women in South Florida tech you need to know.

Michelle Abbs, managing director, Mana Tech



Mana Tech Managing Director Michelle Abbs

COURTESY OF MICHELLE ABBS

Abbs is at the forefront of transforming downtown Miami into a technology hub as managing director of Mana Tech, which plans to develop a sprawling innovation community in the neighborhood's Flagler District. Mana Tech is the tech-focused arm of Mana Common, backed by real estate developer Moishe Mana. Abbs was previously the director of Babson College's Miami WIN LAB accelerator program.

Jackie Baumgarten, CEO, Boatsetter



Boatsetter CEO Jaclyn Baumgarten

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Baumgarten leads one of South Florida's most successful startups, Boatsetter, a peer-to-peer boat rental venture. Founded in 2012, the company has raised \$31 million in funding to date, with San Francisco-based WestCap Group and Chicago-based Valor Equity among its investors. Boatsetter has about 50 employees based at its Fort Lauderdale headquarters.

Leigh-Ann Buchanan, founder, Aire Ventures



Leigh Ann Buchanan

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Buchanan is committed to helping South Florida community and business leaders build racially equitable, diverse and inclusive innovation centers through Aire Ventures. It's a rebrand of her previous organization, Venture Café Miami, the host of Miami's largest weekly gathering of entrepreneurs and innovators.

Nikki Cabus, interim CEO, South Florida Tech Hub

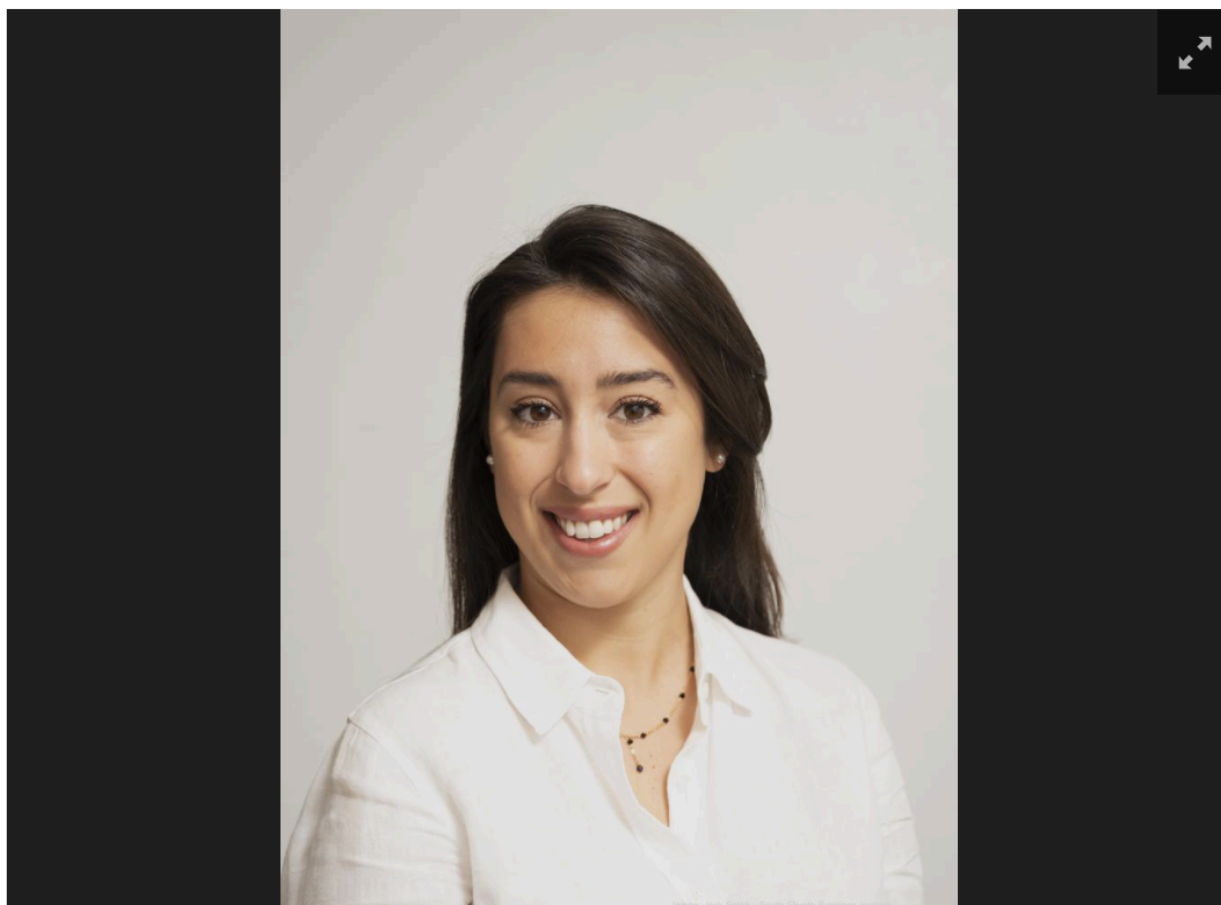


Nikki Cabus

NIKKI CABUS

Cabus leads South Florida Tech Hub, a nonprofit that provides networking, support, signature events, advocacy and other services to technology companies in Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Martin Counties.

Rebecca Danta, managing director, Miami Angels



Rebecca Danta, managing director, Miami Angels VC

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Danta is at the helm of Miami Angels, an angel investor network that invests in early-stage startups. Miami Angels has invested \$18 million since 2013 and reports 61% of its portfolio companies are led by minority and/or underrepresented founders.

**Francesca De Quesada Covey, partner at TheVentureCity and
Tech Innovation Advisor, Miami-Dade County**



Francesca de Quesada Covey

COURTESY OF FRANCESCA DE QUESADA COVEY

In September, De Quesada Covey was appointed Tech Innovation Advisor to Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, a role funded by the Knight Foundation. As adviser, she will focus on growing the county's technology sector in a way that emphasizes inclusivity. TheVentureCity is a venture capital firm that invests in software companies across the world.

Claudia Duran, managing director, Endeavor Miami



Claudia Duran, managing director of Endeavor Miami

ALVARO MATA

Duran is the managing director of Endeavor Miami, an organization that mentors and accelerates high-growth ventures in South Florida. Endeavor Miami was launched in 2013 with the support of the Knight Foundation. It's the first U.S. affiliate of Endeavor, a global nonprofit that has advised and helped scale more than 1,000 ventures in 37 markets across the world.

Laura Gonzalez-Estefani, founder and CEO TheVentureCity



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Gonzalez-Estefani is the founder of TheVenture City, a venture capital firm with offices in Miami and Madrid. Before that, she was the director of international banking and partnerships for Facebook.

Ana Paula Gonzalez, director of Miami Initiative, SoftBank



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As the director of SoftBank Group's Miami initiative, Gonzalez spearheads the conglomerate's tech investments in the Miami area. She played a major role in the region's tech ecosystem before SoftBank as the former head of 500 Startups' Miami operation.

Felecia Hatcher, CEO, Black Ambition



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Serial entrepreneur Hatcher champions startups led by Black and Hispanic entrepreneurs as the CEO of Black Ambition, a nonprofit founded by singer Pharrell Williams. The organization will identify and directly fund promising founders who are building tech, design, health care and consumer product ventures. Hatcher previously co-founded Code Fever Miami, now known as the Center for Black Innovation.

Peggy Johnson, CEO, Magic Leap



Peggy Johnson, CEO of Magic Leap

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Johnson was named CEO of augmented reality "unicorn" Magic Leap in 2020 after six years as executive VP of business development at Microsoft. In 2017, *Business Insider* ranked her No. 1 on its list of most powerful female engineers.

Kristin Johnson, CEO, Hotwire Communications



Kristin Johnson, co-founder, president and CEO of Hotwire Communications, at her home in Miami Beach.

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Johnson is the co-founder and CEO of Hotwire Communications, one of the businesses that led the effort to bring fiber optic cable infrastructure to Florida. The company, headquartered in Broward County, employs about 1,000 people in Florida.

Melissa Krinzman, Krillion Ventures/Miami VC in Residence



Melissa Krinzman, managing partner, Krillion Ventures

Investor and entrepreneur Krinzman was appointed the City of Miami's venture capitalist in residence in early 2021. She's also the managing director of Krillion Ventures, an early-stage venture capital firm that primarily invests in financial technology, property technology and health tech.

Melissa Medina, president, eMerge Americas



Melissa Medina Jiménez is president of eMerge Americas and the Medina Family Foundation.

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Medina is among the Miami tech community's most well-known faces as the president of eMerge Americas, which organizes South Florida's premier annual technology conference. Emerge, founded in 2013, aims to transform Miami into the tech hub of the Americas.

Johanna Mikkola, CEO and co-founder, Wyncode Academy (now Brainstation)



Johanna Mikkola, co-founder and CEO, Wyncode Academy.

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Wyncode, founded in 2014, was the first coding bootcamp to be licensed by the Florida Department of Education's Commission for Independent Education. Mikkola co-founded Wyncode Academy with Juha Mikkola in 2014. The coding bootcamp reports it has a 90% job placement rate for graduates of its 10-week courses, who are typically hired as software engineers, software developers and front-end web developers. Wyncode was acquired by BrainStation in January.

Lisa Nuessle, general manager, Ironhack

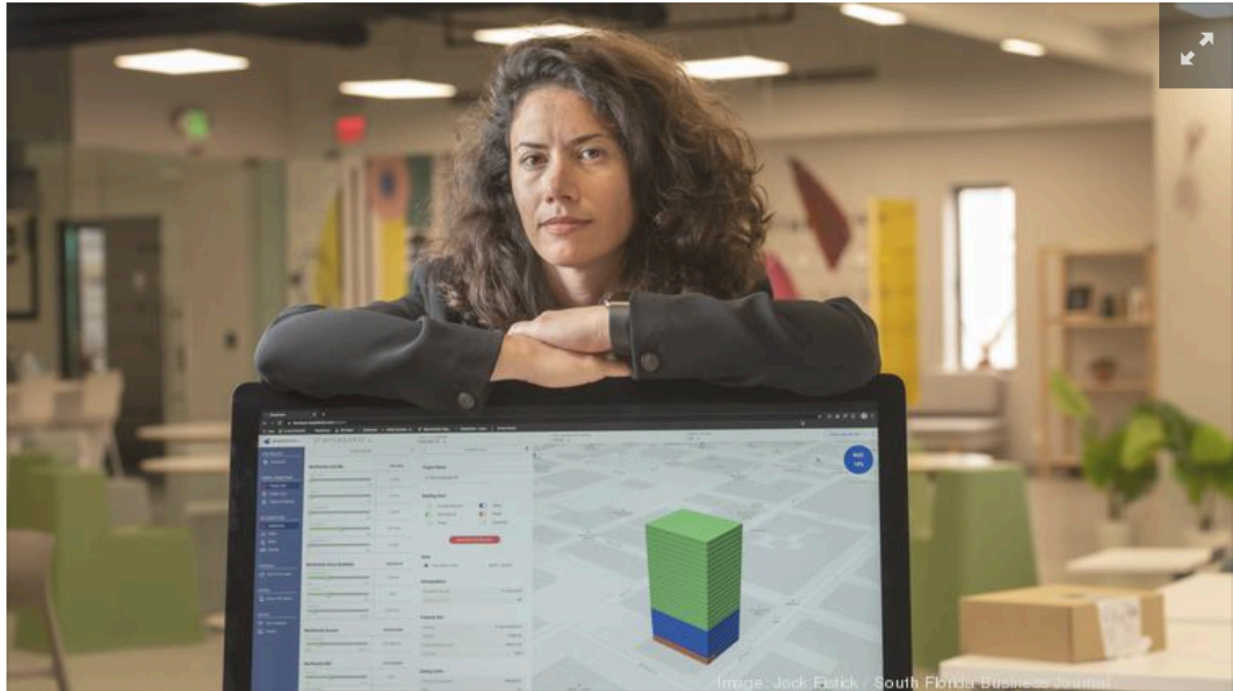


Lisa Nuessle, general manager at Ironhack

PHOTO COURTESY OF IRONHACK

Nuessle is the general manager of Ironhack, a Spain-based company that offers courses in web development, data analytics and more for students at nine campuses in Miami, Latin America and Europe. Since then, Ironhack has trained more than 8,000 students and partnered with dozens of businesses to match them with qualified talent.

Olivia Ramos, founder, Deepblocks



Deepblocks CEO Olivia Ramos

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Ramos is the founder and CEO of Deepblocks, a property technology venture that uses artificial intelligence to help real estate developers identify parcels for their projects. Ramos has a master's degree in architecture from Columbia University and a second master's in real estate development from the University of Miami.

Lillian Roberts, founder, Xendoo



Lil Roberts is CEO of Xendoo, a cloud-based accounting service for small businesses.

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Roberts leads Xendoo, a cloud-based accounting service for small businesses headquartered in Fort Lauderdale. The venture gained customers during the Covid-19 pandemic as businesses searched for ways to reduce costs, leading to a 700% increase in revenue from early 2019 to early 2021. Xendoo has raised nearly \$5 million in investment capital and has customers across 45 states and 12 countries.

Maria Derchi Russo, director of community, Florida Funders

As director of community for Florida Funders, one of the state's most active venture capital firms, Derchi Russo is responsible for building relationships with founders, entrepreneurial support networks and investors in the Miami area. Derchi Russo is also the executive director of Refresh Miami, a community for technology startups and entrepreneurs.

Nat Shaul, co-founder and CMO, SpringBig



SpringBig co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer Nat Shaul

NAT SHAUL

Shaul is the co-founder and chief marketing officer of SpringBig, one of South Florida's fastest-growing technology companies. The company's software-as-a-service platform is used by more than 1,000 cannabis businesses to market their goods and loyalty directly to customers via text message. Boca Raton-based SpringBig has 160 employees, up from 50 in early 2020.

Maxeme Tuchman, co-founder, Caribu



Max Tuchman is co-founder and CEO of Caribu

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Co-founded by Tuchman in 2016, Caribu is an interactive video-calling platform that enables parents and grandparents to read and complete other activities with children from afar. Before launching Caribu, Tuchman served as White House Fellow for the U.S. Treasury Department and executive director of Teach For America Miami-Dade

Maggie Vo, managing general partner and chief investment officer, Fuel Venture Capital



Fuel Venture Capital managing general partner and chief investment officer Maggie Vo
GESI SCHILLING

Vo joined Fuel Venture Capital in 2018 after six years at Boca Raton's Blue Shores Capital, a financial service firm. Fuel Venture Capital, based in Coconut Grove, targets entrepreneurs with early- or late-stage technology companies that have the potential for fast scalability. Its portfolio companies include Miami-based tax startup Taxfyle; Miami Beach-based Bolt Mobility and Ubicquia, a Fort Lauderdale-based smart city platform.