

STEAM IT UP AT SOUTH FLORIDA'S TOP RESTAURANTS

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7 people who are making up

Florida Magazine Association
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The Visionary. The Glamour Queen. The Town Crier. The Civic Leader. The Activist. The Entertainer. The Entrepreneur. They are changing the way we think, feel and live. These are the people to watch in 2006.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY TYA TIEMPECH



THE ENTREPRENEUR

Charles Garcia

CEO of Sterling Financial Group of Companies

He races Formula 1 cars, rides horses and surfs on a regular basis. He travels the world, meeting with presidents and appearing on TV shows. And, in his spare time, he manages one of the fastest growing privately owned companies in the nation. As CEO of Sterling Financial Group of Companies, based in Boca Raton, Charles Garcia really makes success look easy. What's his secret?

"I used to be big into time management," says the 44-year-old. "I read a book one day that said it's not really about time management, but managing your energy level."

So now Garcia wakes up every morning, exercising for an hour before starting his day. This regimen, combined with an ultra-healthy diet, has given him the energy to channel the boundless ambition that has made him one of the most influential Hispanics in the country.

Ironically, Garcia's success is the result of what many would have seen as a risky career move. In 1997, the Panamanian-born Garcia gave up his lucrative legal career (he earned his J.D. from Columbia University) to start his own business from the ground up. With three partners, he created Sterling Financial in a cleaned-out broom closet. They wanted the company, named after Garcia's son, to provide products, services and research focused on the country's booming Hispanic market. "In 2050, one quarter of the [U.S.] population will be Hispanic," he says. "Everybody's trying to figure out how to meet this market."

Now, Sterling Financial has more than 60 offices in seven countries, and Garcia has even shared his tips for success with millions of readers through his highly successful book, *A Message From Garcia*.

Even though the industry press heralded Garcia for his business acumen, Garcia wasn't satisfied with looking at his fellow Latinos as numbers on a page. So he turned his energy toward education. "I'm making sure [Latinos] are in this new era of intellectual capital," Garcia says. "If we don't educate [ourselves], we'll be left behind in the global economy." To that end, Garcia has served two terms on the Florida State Board of Education. "I have focused on giving back to the community by trying to better the educational system, as it relates to minorities," Garcia says.

A graduate of the Air Force Academy, Garcia also weighs in on military and national security issues for such media outlets as CNN, FOX News and the Spanish-language Telemundo network.

Despite his jet-set lifestyle—Garcia was meeting with the president of Honduras the week of our interview—he still finds plenty of time for his family. "I have a block on my calendar called 'Charley Time' that's just for them," he says. "They mean the world to me." ♦

—Chelsea Greenwood