

# PRWeek

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## Silicon Beach: Agencies are flocking to Miami as city's tech sector booms

And the VCs and ambitious, young tech executives are driving growth in other industries across South Florida.

by [Chris Daniels](#) / June 09, 2022



The next Silicon Valley': VCs are flocking to Miami. (Photo credit: Getty Images)

The PR scene in Miami is hot — and not just because of the picturesque beaches or tropical party scene.

What makes it sizzling is a booming startup community, including in the areas of financial technology, artificial intelligence, robotics and blockchain. Venture capitalists are flooding cash into the market, with investors bullish about the prospect

of the Sunshine State's diverse, chic metropolis becoming famous for more than just South Beach.

"Miami is the next Silicon Valley," founder of San Francisco-based Soma Capital, Aneel Ranadive, **declared** this year. "I haven't seen so much buzz and excitement among young, brilliant founders happy to come and explore since I started working on startups in San Francisco when no one was in San Francisco in 2005."

"Skate to where the puck is going," he advised people looking for the next big tech scene.

As these startups look to attract more funding and scale their technology, agencies, both in and outside Florida, are reaping the benefits.

When Steve Hirsch cofounded Hirsch Leatherwood in his native New York 18 months ago, he never imagined its roster would feature Miami clients.

"I assumed the bulk of our clients would be based in New York and San Francisco," he says. Hirsch expected more clients from the West Coast, given he started his career there, including stints with Max Borges Agency and LaunchSquad.

Hirsch's assumption has proven accurate, but only to an extent, as the now-20-person shop has four clients in Miami, and that number could climb.

"I figured we'd be traveling a lot to San Francisco, but lately it feels like it's been to Miami," he says. "We can fill a week of meetings down there pretty easily [between existing and potential clients]."

On the itinerary for those trips south are a Fortune 500 tech-focused company. While this company is headquartered in New York, Hirsch Leatherwood's client contact, a CMO, relocated to Miami during the pandemic.

The firm's other clients in Miami are startups positioned largely between the intersection of tech and finance. Hirsch Leatherwood is developing and executing content marketing for them.

"They recognize their industry is saturated with all kinds of innovative, disruptive technologies, and they need to execute a strategy to stand out," says Hirsch. "When it comes to fintech, there is still a lot of explaining and education that needs to be done around the new technology."

Hirsch contends Miami is benefiting from Silicon Valley falling several notches in the eyes of some entrepreneurs, VCs and other stakeholders.

“I think the romanticism of Silicon Valley has been to an extent either paused, or is over. It certainly seems that way for early stage fintech startups,” he says. “As time went on in San Francisco, we saw cultures and lifestyles that weren’t super appealing to people, and that gave way to markets in different geographies to create their own version of a tech hub.”

Another big difference between San Francisco and Miami is the Magic City’s politics.

“It is a very inclusive place for thought, unlike in San Francisco and New York, where you’re not going to run into too many people who express different opinions than you,” Hirsch says. “It is OK for people here to talk politics, converse and have differing opinions. That is important to Miami and not an irrelevant factor to its appeal.”

Agencies that have long resided in Miami are also benefiting from the burgeoning tech sector, noting it extends across southeastern Florida to include Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Boca Raton.

BoardroomPR has seen a 200% to 300% increase in tech clients from five years ago, says the firm’s COO, Don Silver.

In the past year, the agency has won accounts from the South Florida Manufacturers Association and Endeavor Miami. The latter offers a two- or four-month accelerator program in support of local startups.

“We not only publicize their programs, but also do PR everyday for the actual companies in the program,” says Silver. He cites Memic, which has developed technology for performing minimally invasive robotic-assisted hysterectomies.

BoardroomPR has also benefited from global clients who want to be in Miami. In Q1, Adatastra, a Toronto-based data and analytics company, hired the firm and then opened an office in Miami, citing the Florida economy as “one of the fastest growing in the U.S.”

Silver credits myriad factors for the strength of the startup scene. In addition to funding platforms designed for Miami startups and support structures like Endeavor Miami's ScaleUp, he cites the city’s networking and knowledge-sharing events, like the world’s biggest Bitcoin event. An annual conference that moved from Los

Angeles to Miami in 2021, Bitcoin 2022 attracted more than 30,000 attendees in April.

Silver agrees there is a positive flow of energy in the tech scene.

“This boom in tech is relatively new for us, and so we don’t have the concentration of mature companies like a Silicon Valley, with the Googles and Facebooks of the world,” he says. “The environment feels more creative and looser, where you don’t have everyone recruiting and poaching talent from each other.”

Jorge Plasencia, cofounder, chairman and CEO of Republica Havas, which has worked with Google for years, has also seen a shift in the once-nascent local tech sector.

“A few years ago, there was a lot of hype around Miami, but now the tech scene just feels part of the fabric of the city,” he says. “Companies that relocated here or opened offices here are here to stay.”

In April, Republica Havas produced the launch issue of **eMerge Magazine**, which features female tech leaders in Miami on the cover, for a longtime client, eMerge Americas, which distributed the magazine at its annual tech event. The event attracted more than 16,000 attendees.

Cori Rice, president of Miami-based Samcor Communications, adds that the tech sector has produced a domino effect, fueling growth and comms opportunities in real estate, leisure, hospitality and more.

“We are seeing growth in all these ancillary verticals, as more people have relocated here, and we’re getting more visitors mixing business with pleasure,” she says. “It really is a goldmine of potential for agencies here right now.”