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Expatriate returns to lead 3AM Innovations

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Mel Passarelli is returning to Buffalo, and he's bringing decades of business experience with him.

He's the new CEO of 3AM Innovations, a technology company that helps specify the exact locations of first responders in times of crisis.

The startup closed last month on a \$9 million funding round, entirely backed by Grand Oaks Capital, led by B. Thomas Golisano. The venture capital firm was also part of 3AM's previous funding, along with Launch NY, Rochester-based Impellent Ventures and other investors.

The funding and leadership shift is part of a focus on scaling and growing the company.

Ryan Litt, who co-founded the business in 2017 with Patrick O'Connor, had been CEO but is now COO, focusing on executing operations as the startup courts and lands large clients.



PHOTO COURTESY OF 3AM INNOVATIONS
CEO Mel Passarelli, left, and Ryan Litt and Patrick O'Connor, co-founders, 3AM Innovations

Passarelli is a Buffalo expat, who got his bachelor's in political science and economics as well as his MBA in corporate finance and marketing, from the University at Buffalo. He left the region decades ago and made his mark on the Boston-area business community, including leading software company Attunity from near bankruptcy to a publicly listed NASDAQ company and then selling it to a private equity firm for about \$563 million.

His dossier also includes senior sales leader at Intergraph Corp., which grew into a Fortune 500 company. He's also vice chairman of the board at Launch NY.

Before taking on his new role at 3AM, he was ready to retire from the business leadership scene.

"I honestly would not be going back to work if this wasn't all so compelling," he said. "The difference we can make in people's lives, I have no choice but to do this."

The cherry on top: His mom worked as an M. Wile and Co. seamstress for 40 years in the same building as 3AM's office space in the University at Buffalo's downtown Gateway Building.

He will split his time between Boston and Buffalo.

After getting big clients and having conversations with large prospective ones, the business will benefit from a leader with so much experience, according to Litt.

"We need someone who is very sophisticated in that sales process and knows how to navigate and build a team around it," he said.

Securing large clients stems from O'Connor focusing last year on traveling for months, visiting first responder operations. Starting late last year, the startup saw those efforts pay off. The business has handled first responder operations at large events including the LVI Super Bowl and the Indy 500.

The company recently landed one of the top 10 largest American cities as a client and will be integrating its systems there this year. The leadership team said they can't yet disclose the city.

These jobs caused the company to shift gears and need more capital, Litt said.

“Then into 2022, suddenly I’m thinking it’s not so much about weathering the storm for the sale,” he said. “Now it’s standing up to the size of the sale.”

The company will use the added capital to hire workers and focus more on marketing. The business, which employs 12, expects to at least double its team by this time next year, with as many staff as possible based in Buffalo.

“For us, it’s about the essential tech for essential work,” Litt said. “I think the pandemic really helped the emphasize that to us all.”

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