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Business

## Hospitality industry leaders share insights at Schneps Connects

By Long Island Press

Posted on May 22, 2026 Comments



David Hersh, Michael Lessing and Josh Schneps discuss the Long Island hospitality industry (L. to R.)  
Siobhan Becker



CEOs of two of Long Island's most successful family-owned hospitality businesses gave advice from hiring to expansion at the latest Schneps Connects breakfast, designed to provide resources and networking.

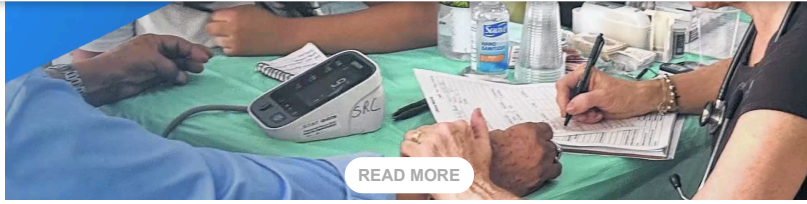


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Businesspeople on May 20 met, broke bread and enjoyed the opportunity to hear about the experience and expertise of the leaders of Long Island's best-known hospitality companies.

Michael Lessing, CEO of Lessing's Hospitality Group, and David Hersh, who with his wife Rachel founded Rooted Hospitality Group, spoke at the networking breakfast at The Mansion at Oyster Bay in Woodbury.

Schneps Connects is a membership-based networking group that brings together owners from start-ups to the region's best-known businesses, as well as professionals such as bankers, accountants and attorneys.

Members enjoy access to Schneps' reach, connections and resources. Attendees at this breakfast ranged from start-ups to Merrill Zorn, owner of Zorn's, one of Long Island's better known family-owned businesses.

### Building Opportunity in the Bronx with LaToya Williams-Belfort, Executive Director of The Bronx Community Foundation

Schneps Connects

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"When you talk about what these two gentlemen do, a lot of it's about white glove service and exceeding customer expectations. That's what we try to do," said Oasis Senior Advisory President Matt Virgilio. "Everybody's in hospitality. Everybody's in the service industry."

Ryan Koutsogainnis, a business banker at TD Bank and a Schneps Connects member who has worked in the hospitality industry, noted the variety of businesses.

"There are people from many different industries. It gives me an opportunity to meet people I wouldn't meet," Koutsogainnis said. "Not only do you get a meal and networking. You get an affirmative speaker. It's a great way to start the day. The people who come to these events are really value added."

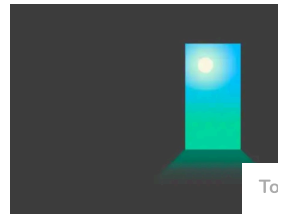
Marc Lawrence, senior managing director at 1031 ExchangeSolutions and a Schneps Connects member, appreciated "interesting insight on the hospitality industry."

"There were a lot of good takeaways on how to run longstanding successful businesses," Lawrence said. "In addition to other great attendees to meet, people I want to say 'hello' to."

Hersh recommended "Who: The A Method for Hiring" by Geoff Smart as a Bible for hiring. "Hire people who aren't looking for jobs," he added of finding good employees rather than waiting for them to find you.

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He said it's important to hear criticism, including of staff, while taking into account where it's coming from.

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“You have to listen to the people affected by somebody,” he said. “You have to weigh who you’re hearing it from.”


Many appreciated the hiring advice, looking beyond the resume, hiring a person not a sheet of paper.

“Hire quality people. Both spoke about hiring better than yourself,” said Bobby Bass, managing director of Peoples National Capital Group. “The most successful people I’ve ever known are people who hire people they would describe as smarter than they are.”



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Networking at the Schneps Connects breakfast (Siobhan Becker)

Dr. Nicola Beckles, a psychologist, said “you never want to be the smartest person in the room” as you build your business.

Lessing’s online management training program Lessing’s University can help elevate new managers.

“Not everybody makes it through it. Some don’t follow through on it, which is fine,” Lessing said. “That just means they’re not the right person for that job.”

Hersh said they’re focusing on procedures, developing leaders and various internal things as well as standard training.

“We train really well and hard. Sometimes, people don’t make it through the training,” he said. “Developing leadership is what we’ve been focusing on the last two years.”

Lawrence liked tips on running a multi-generational family business, including valuing, training and retaining employees.

“People spend a lot of time at their jobs,” Lawrence said. “If you don’t make it enjoyable, the majority of waking hours are not happy.”

Dr. Beckles talked about the room as rich in resources or at least people with extensive experience.

“Now I’m trying to connect with other people outside of my field,” she said. “What I want to do is go into networking, fundraising, meeting people in different business avenues.”

Some people network not only for themselves, but for clients, providing added value by creating connections.

“Whenever I go to a networking event, I look for an opportunity to bring in a new client,” Koutsogainnis said. “How can I maybe connect them with someone I do business with? They can help each other out.”

## ENTERTAINMENT



An ode to the burger



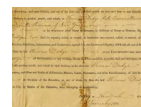
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care. "I met a bunch of people. Anybody can use our services."

Tapua Tunduwani, CEO of Sage Workspace, which provides co-working spaces and virtual offices, said the discussion about family members working elsewhere and bringing that knowledge to the company resonated.

"I'm thinking about how they might get involved with the business after they spend some time outside," he said of his children. "It was very educational for me."

Hersh said you have to look after yourself and your family, not just your family-owned business, employees and customers.

"A secret is to always have your next vacation planned," he said. "You have to have something to look forward to. We do a lot of traveling. We just got back from Hawaii, a great family vacation."

Some attendees pointed to other connections to companies at events. Beckles' son, for instance, recently became engaged with the wedding planned for Lessing's Pavilion at Sunken Meadow.

"It's a coincidence. But it must be a sign," she said. "They got engaged on Friday."

The next Schneps Connects breakfast welcomes business powerhouse Irwin Simon on June 30 at one of Simon's global breweries, the local Long Island Blue Point Brewery. For tickets and information on membership visit [SchnepsConnects.com](https://SchnepsConnects.com)



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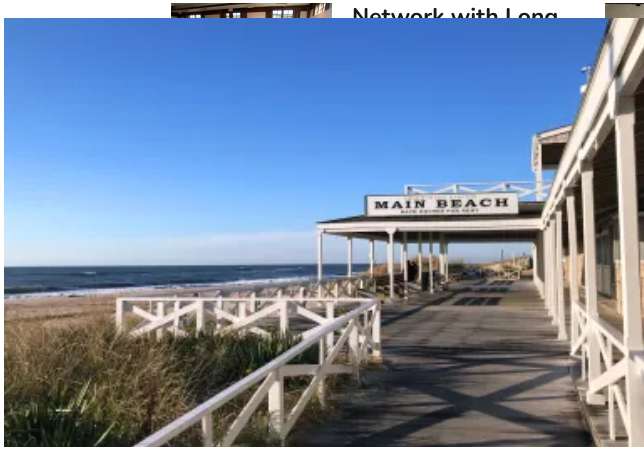


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