

# TAMPA BAY BUSINESS JOURNAL

## Trey Traviesa is finding purpose — and profits — after public service

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Trey Traviesa

Image: SUPERNOLA STUDIOS

Trey Traviesa's term as a state representative was short but impactful, and it's been the inspiration behind the turnkey government consulting firm he's spun up into a major partner of agencies across the U.S.

He took the reins of MGT in 2015 and, with the help of private equity and a series of key acquisitions, has built the platform to nearly 1,000 advisers across six offices, with annual revenue approaching \$500 million.

Traviesa brings a “grow fast or die slow” energy to leadership, but business performance isn’t the only driving force behind MGT. His time in public office illuminated the value of social impact and, in business, performance and doing good don’t have to be rivals, he said.

“They are powerful, self-reinforcing dynamics,” he said. “They need each other. Otherwise, they are both inhibited, minimized, frustrated.”

Traviesa spoke with the Tampa Bay Business Journal about MGT's growth, what it takes to serve the C-suite of a government agency, and why private equity is key in those pursuits.

How did your time in politics inform your work now?

It was a short four years out of 30, but it was impactful. I was young, and I was kind of lucky in terms of the timing. There was just a lot of action.

Of course, I didn’t know at the time that it was shaping the dimension of my experience that brought me to MGT. One of the realizations I had was that there was a fantastic business opportunity out there if we could successfully frame it and address it.

Earlier in my career some of the biggest criticism I got as a leader was ‘all this guy cares about is perform, perform, perform.’ Then I spent this time in public office where I got experience doing things that really help people. At MGT, that has been the defining mission.

MGT has acquired 10 companies in the last four years. What's the strategy?

We’re small compared to the market we’re in; we’re really on first base. So I knew when we started that for MGT to become really big, the plan would include acquisitions. I wasn’t sure exactly which segment or how I was going to get the money, but I knew that you can’t get big and scale fast without buying things.

What developed over time was a really clear vision of the product portfolio that we needed to serve the whole thesis of the organization, which is social impact and performance at scale.

We’re focused on the most specialized solutions that address mission-critical problems that live at the top of our clients’ agendas every day—the superintendents, city managers, CFOs, or heads of HR.

We spent seven years buying companies to build a portfolio that can serve the C-suite of public agencies. For us, it's about bringing new products to existing markets.

What does it take to serve the C-suite of a government agency?

The way we’ve framed the problem sets in state, local, education and government is, No. 1, human capacity. No sector of the economy has lost more human capacity over the last 20 years than SLED. When you lose 13% of your workforce, you lose a lot of capacity to do hard things, for sure, but also basic things.

The same dynamic is true in technology. The public sector has invested half the amount as the private sector has in the last 20 years, and its tech infrastructure reflects that level of relative underinvestment.

The third dynamic is that the work is increasingly complex and increasingly difficult that’s in SLED. In terms of threats, SLED is the No. 1 target for cyber threats. If you don’t have the people and the structure to deal with it, the problem can get really big.

We’re centered right in the middle of that three-part situation. We’ve acquired companies like GovHR, a human capital consulting business, and several technology organizations.

Your investors, Trivest Partners and Vistria Group, are bringing more than just money to the table. What’s the strategic value of their involvement?

Private equity is important for the credibility of an organization that needs to borrow money and engage clients that are bigger, work on bigger problems, and pursue acquisition targets that are bigger.

Trivest and Vistria have a lot of intellectual horsepower. As we were growing, I also needed to build a team, buy amazing companies, and persuade clients to take on bigger challenges. All of that requires a level of capital and credibility that the right private equity firm can provide.

Private equity doesn't have a reputation as a champion of social impact, are those two things compatible?

It's our vision and their money, not the other way around. As long as their money is powering our vision, it works. It's been incredibly compatible for us, which is why I say social impact and business performance are partners, not rivals.

I don't think when I came out of business school that I thought about social impact all that much in terms of what job I wanted to do. Now everyone has that at the top of their list. We're recruiting people from Goldman Sachs who are like, 'I'm done with this stuff. I want to go work where what I do is meaningful.' When people are motivated by that, they do everything better, which drives better business performance. That means you can invest even more in your mission and talent.

MGT covers clients across the U.S. and locally. What was your work with the Hillsborough County Public School system?

For background, 65% of what we do is technology-related, like cybersecurity and IT infrastructure, and 35% is advisory. Our relationship with Hillsborough began with advisory, it was a case of a district with schools that were underperforming and in need of temporary support to re-catalyze the learning process. That's about assessments, and specified instruction, and data to tailor instruction around what students need.

We acquired an organization called Ed Direction, which is what Hillsborough needed. The data on how schools that were rated F and D that are now B and C is incredible. And it's been sustainable.

## Closer look

**Formerly:** An officer in the U.S. Navy Reserves

**Legislature:** Florida House of Representatives for Tampa between 2004 and 2008

**Prior:** President and COO of Laser Spine Institute, co-founder and managing partner of Strategos Group, then founder and managing partner of Fort Brooke Merchant Partners, a family office operating company, for more than 15 years.

**Acquired:** Purchased MGT from its founders in 2015.

**Insight:** "There were experiences in my career that were all about performance, but I realized there was something missing regarding how to motivate and align people."

# MGT Timeline

2020

Trivest Partners  
invests in MGT

2021

MGT acquires IT  
services management  
company Cira Infotech  
and education  
consulting firm EH&A.

2022

MGT acquires Layer  
3 Communications,  
an Atlanta-based IT,  
cloud and  
cybersecurity  
company, Ed  
Direction, an  
education policy  
consulting and  
technology  
company, and  
education  
consulting firms  
Kitamba and Davis  
Demographics

2023

Vistria Group  
invests in MGT

MGT acquires Step  
By Step Learning, an  
education consulting  
and training  
company

2024

MGT acquires management consulting firm  
Cicero, human resources consulting firm  
GovHR, and IT management company AMS.NET