

Rafael Mendez Bio

A Life Transformed, A Community Championed

If you asked a young Rafael Mendez in Miami if he'd one day, be an award-winning leader in the heart of the Midwest, he probably would've laughed you out of the room. Life, however, has a funny way of taking unexpected paths to bring us exactly where we need to be.

Rafael isn't a native Kansan by birth, but he is one by choice and deep-seated gratitude. Over 24 years ago, a critical decision between jail time and attending a small university in Salina changed everything for him. Upon arriving at Kansas Wesleyan University, Rafael found that the school didn't just provide him with an education; it saved his life. It altered the trajectory of his existence, moving him from a path of uncertainty to one of profound purpose, leadership, and service.



Professionally, Rafael is a powerhouse; a results-driven executive currently serving as the Vice President of Customer Culture at Blue Beacon, Inc. Whether he's navigating complex challenges or scaling new initiatives, Rafael operates with a multifaceted approach that has navigated almost every corner of the business world. His track record is defined by massive scale and strategic depth; he has successfully steered emerging brands to become multi-million-dollar market leaders and has pursued complex, revenue-generating mergers and acquisitions to ensure long-term stability. Beyond the high-level deal-making, Rafael is equally at home in the weeds of operational excellence, building intricate business strategies within food manufacturing to optimize retail distribution and supply chain performance.

However, his true superpower lies in his infectious, sometimes relentless, passion for people. If you stand near Rafael for more than five minutes, there is a 90% chance you'll leave with a personalized blueprint and a new best friend. This obsession with architectural personal growth follows him everywhere; while his colleagues find his dedication to their professional evolution inspiring, his three daughters often call it unsolicited "Dad-vice." He leads with a sincerity that is as abundant as it is contagious, drawing a circle wide enough for everyone to fit inside.

Though his roots are Cuban, Rafael has embraced his identity as a Kansan. He has reached a stage in life where he considers 60-degree weather to be t-shirt weather. For Rafael, community service is not just a checkbox; it's a lifelong thank-you note to the community that felt like home when he needed it most.

His commitment to Salina is reflected in his tireless involvement. He recently concluded nine years on the Kansas Wesleyan University Board of Trustees, giving back to the institution that gave him a second chance. He serves on the board of the Salina Family Healthcare Center and champions their campaign for a new facility, currently under construction. He supports local entrepreneurs through the Project OPEN Advisory Board,



organized by the Salina Area Chamber. As a member of the Leadership Kansas Advisory Board, he uses his gift for relationship-building to showcase the best of the Sunflower State.

A first-generation Cuban American with a J.D. from Washburn University, Rafael also travels across the state sharing his story. He uses his past: the struggles, the trauma, and the triumphs to deliver powerful messages that emphasize how one's history does not have to dictate one's destiny.

When he isn't busy transforming organizational cultures or advocating for his neighbors, Rafael is an adventurer at heart, enjoying life with his wife, Renee, and their three daughters, Sofia, Mackenzie, and Gabriella. Rafael Mendez stands as a testament to the power of second chances, a builder of people, and a man who has turned his life into a bridge for others to cross.

Salina gave him a home, and in return, he's giving Salina everything he's got.