

New York and the Next Generation of Technology Innovation

An Interview with **Howard P. Milstein**,
Chairman and CEO, New York Private Bank & Trust
and Emigrant Bank and Chairman, Milstein Properties



The lobby of Company, a vertical technology campus at 335 Madison Avenue in Midtown Manhattan

EDITORS' NOTE Howard P. Milstein is the third generation to lead the Milstein family business and philanthropic activities. An entrepreneurial builder of innovative, large-scale companies, Milstein's ability to marshal business, government, philanthropic and family resources drives a breadth of initiatives. Milstein is Chairman and CEO of New York Private Bank & Trust, and chairs and operates the Milstein family's real estate companies. He is Executive Chairman of the Nicklaus Companies, and is also owner and publisher of GOLF Magazine, among other sports-related ventures. In the philanthropic arena, Milstein is a Trustee at Cornell University, an Overseer of Weill Cornell Medical College and serves on the Dean's Advisory Board of Harvard Law School. He is Chairman of the American Skin Association, the Howard and Georgeanna Jones Foundation for Reproductive Medicine, and the Milstein Medical Asian American Partnership Foundation. Milstein also serves on the boards of the National September 11th Memorial and the Nicklaus Children's Healthcare Foundation. Milstein was named the 2008 Entrepreneur of the Year by Cornell University, and also served from 2011-2014 as Chairman of the New York State Thruway Authority, where he successfully led the design and procurement process for a new Tappan Zee Bridge – the largest infrastructure project in the nation.



Howard P. Milstein

COMPANY BRIEF New York Private Bank & Trust (nypbt.com) and its operating bank, Emigrant, is the largest family-owned private bank in the nation. Through various subsidiaries, NYPB&T offers fully integrated advisory, investment management, wealth planning, lending, private equity and venture capital services to individuals, families and institutions.

You view New York City's location as a key advantage when it comes to technology and start-up business, in contrast to other traditional startup hubs. What do you see as New York City's advantages in this regard?

New York City has always been the most diverse, culturally rich environment in the United States. This is reflected in the fact that more than 200 languages are spoken here. New York is home to some of the greatest cultural institutions in the nation as well, including not only museums

and classical cultural assets like the Metropolitan Opera or the New York Philharmonic, but also Broadway, off-Broadway, and a host of others. New York City's creative people – including those operating in cutting-edge technology – are very comfortable living with other creative people. In fact, they seek them out. Thus, New York City has the critical mass required to attract the most creative people, not just in Manhattan, but in a myriad of locations throughout the five boroughs. It is almost inevitable that New York would become a leading

center of technology and innovation.

In 2014, you and your son, Michael, created what has become New York City's foremost tech accelerator, Grand Central Tech, located at one of your buildings, 335 Madison Avenue. Will you highlight Grand Central Tech and has it evolved how you had hoped?

We've been very pleased with the progress of Grand Central Tech, which was an idea my son, Michael, had to help New York City establish a technology incubator equal to those you would find in Silicon Valley. Our plan was to create something of equal weight here in New York, which has so many important features vital to technology start-ups. Our region has historically been the financial, media and corporate capital of the world, so the goal was that Grand Central Tech leverage these vast resources, many of which are right in the same neighborhood. It has been tremendously successful: Grand Central Tech was instrumental in contributing to what has become a surge of interest in the New York City ecosystem for startup technology companies.

You recently built on the Grand Central Tech initiative and rebranded all of 335 Madison Avenue as "Company" – a vertical technology campus right at the center of Midtown Manhattan. What is your vision for "Company"?

Company is the answer to the question that most major companies have today: "How do I attract and retain the best millennial talent?" These companies know that they must refresh their ranks with the most talented people of the millennial generation in order to reimagine their products and services for the 21st century. By creating an ambience and environment of community for this million square foot office building, we are at the vanguard of creating the office building of the

future, one that emphasizes hospitality the way a hotel would, with common facilities such as cafeterias, meeting places, lounges, restaurants and bars throughout the campus. Grand Central Tech and Company have now established a center of this kind of activity, which is very much sought after by major corporations.

The Milstein family has long been a major supporter of education, and in 2017, the Milstein family donated \$20 million to Cornell University to launch the new Milstein Program in Technology and Humanity. What is the focus for this program and do you see this as a new approach to developing 21st century leaders and innovators?

We were delighted to support Cornell's College of Arts and Sciences and Cornell Tech, and their Deans, Gretchen Ritter and Dan Huttenlocher. The Milstein Program in Technology and Humanity is taking the next step in the tech revolution, by making sure that those who are creating the future are as exposed to the humanities and social sciences as to computer science and coding. We believe it is critically important to make sure that undergraduates at Cornell have leaders of the future who think differently about both what the future can be and the kind of education they are looking for. By having these scholars on campus in both Ithaca and New York City, all Cornell undergraduates will see the way these leaders are relating to each other and the world.

What do you see as the value of startups learning from established companies?

A lot of what startup companies are doing is finding ways to revolutionize things that more established companies do, and the ways they do it. But startup companies begin with a few people, and every business must perform certain tasks to succeed – including finance and accounting, marketing, sales and creative planning. Frequently, a founder possesses the creativity, and perhaps a bit of some of the other required skills, but not all. Yet all successful and established companies must be able to perform all of these things. Thus, one of the important ways to measure a startup is by assessing whether they have the skill sets in each of these functional areas, so that they can grow and become a successful enterprise. If not, you need a clear plan to get those skills. This is where learning and leveraging the strengths of more established companies becomes so important, and why New York City has so many advantages for the startup community. ●