

BOTW PROFILE

Eckardt C. (Chris) Beck
 Managing Partner
 Synapse Partners, LLC

■ **Residence:** Boca Raton, Fla.
 ■ **Favorite part of job:** Fulfillment of our client's business objectives



Vita DeMarchi
 Managing Partner
 Synapse Partners, LLC

■ **Education:** Syracuse University
 ■ **Residence:** Manlius
 ■ **Favorite part of job:** Facilitating real-estate transactions, sustainable community development, and business opportunities with our clients and partners



BOTW FACTS

Synapse Partners, LLC
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■ **Type of business:** Environmental risk management, insurance products, professional services and training
 ■ **Year founded:** 2003
 ■ **Employees:** 11
 ■ **Headquarters square footage:** 5,000
 ■ **Company managing partners:** Eckardt C. (Chris) Beck, Vita DeMarchi, Daniel Beck, Brian Macrae
 ■ **Other locations:** East Brunswick, N.J.

Synapse finds harmony with environment

Risk-management firm turns contamination issues into business opportunities

By Kristina Martino

Journal Staff

SYRACUSE — The name of a Syracuse-based environmental risk-management firm, Synapse Partners, LLC, resulted from successful early conversations between the company's managing partners prior to its establishment in 2003.

One definition of the word synapse is: "to join together."

During a six-hour meeting in Syracuse in 2003, Eckardt C. (Chris) Beck, Vita DeMarchi, and Brian Macrae joined together to discuss creating a risk-management company focusing on environmental risks.

"You could really see the synergy in the first meeting," Macrae says.

Following the meeting Eckardt and DeMarchi established Synapse, a family of three limited liability companies including Synapse Partners, LLC, Synapse Risk Management, LLC, and Synapse Services, LLC. *The Central New York Business Journal* estimates the combined, 11-employee firm generates more than \$5 million in revenue annually.

Synapse works with insurance carriers including ACE Environmental Risk, and AIG Environmental to assist commercial businesses, environmental firms, financial institutions, and owners of contaminated properties.



Prior to meeting, Beck had served as the assistant administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for water and waste management while DeMarchi worked as regional director for the Northeast U.S. SECOR International, a U.S.-based international consulting firm.

The first Synapse office was located on East Washington Street in Syracuse. In 2005, Synapse purchased the four-story 5,000-square-foot building located at 325 Water St. and completed a full-building renovation for the office's eight employees. City property records show that the building was purchased for \$249,000, and the building's current, total assessment is \$280,000.

Synapse Partners collaborates with developers to create brownfield property-management strategies and

acquire financial risk capital. This enables property owners to maximize the value of environmentally impaired real estate, according to the company. Brownfield properties are abandoned or underused industrial and commercial properties where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by environmental contamination.

Synapse Risk Management oversees and manages any environmental risks associated with impaired properties and business operations.

"To us, environmental issues our clients don't want to deal with we turn into business opportunities," Beck says.

Macrae, who heads this division, says his team facilitates property development, real-estate transaction support, and liability transfers.

"A lot of our transaction

drive has a lot to do with real-estate transactions,” DeMarchi says.

Synapse employees have assisted in the remediation of polluted property in Rome and provided the company an insurance policy covering prior and future exposure. The company has also conducted a project in Brodheadsville, Pa., that reduced remediation costs for the property owner.

Synapse Services, LLC is managed by Managing Partner Daniel Beck, who is an excess and surplus lines insurance broker specializing in environmental products and services. Its 1,300-square-foot office in East Brunswick, N.J., employs three.

“Synapse is the broker’s broker. We pro-

vide the environmental expertise required to obtain the right insurance program for their clients,” DeMarchi says.

Synapse offers a variety of environmental risk-management services such as property risk-management overview, property management, liability transfer, insurance programs, claims management, and transaction support. Synapse partners say the services are effective methods of risk management that can have positive financial effects.

“Brokerage firms come to us to help their clients. This gives us buying power,” Beck says.

Beck says that many companies’ gen-

eral insurance policies don’t cover losses derived from pollution but that Synapse services do.

Beck has also involved Synapse in pro-bono work through a not-for-profit he founded. Universal Brownfield Revitalization Corporation promotes and facilitates the remediation and reuse of Brownfield properties in Central New York. Beck says that Synapse provides the professional technical staff. In 2004, the group secured roughly \$475,000 in state grants to create a comprehensive revitalization plan for downtown Utica. □

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