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Pizza

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How did you find your way into the industry?

My first job in real estate happened by chance when I went to work digging ditches and laying geo-fabric for my father's geotechnical and environmental engineering firm during my undergraduate studies at Cal State Fullerton. The biggest personalities I met during that time were developers, they drove the coolest cars and they seemed to have the most fun, so naturally I pursued a career in real estate development. After working in construction and private equity, my biggest break came through earning my Master of Real Estate Development degree from USC and landing a great job with a fast growing retail development firm, Paragon Commercial Group. As I continued down the path of developing real estate I had no idea how much I would grow to love the profession, the industry, and in particular, the people that I would meet along the way.

What advice would you give to an emerging young leader just starting their professional career?

Set a goal, make a plan, follow that plan until you reach your goal. Remember to be flexible and allow that plan to change. For example, I never thought I would be a restaurant owner but the opportunity arose and the rest is history.

What traits do you think define a successful leader?

The leaders I respect the most are honest, open to new ideas, always willing to help their teammates, treat people with respect, and lead by example. Your staff will reflect your behavior so the last one is especially important in my opinion.

What is your current job and what types of projects are you working on now?

I don't have a job, I have a dream. Right now that dream consists of opening the next locations for my pizza restaurant concept, Rance's Chicago Pizza. The next one to open will be in Belmont Shore at 5258 E. 2nd Street, Long Beach, CA. The third location is in lease negotiations so I can't disclose just yet. My responsibilities include all the site sourcing, selection, lease negotiations, planning, design, permitting, construction, finance and marketing. Once open, I turn the restaurant over to my operations partner, Rance, who has been a best friend of mine since grade school. I'm now taking my retail real estate expertise and helping other restauranteurs and developers through my consulting firm ATE Real Estate.

What do you find most challenging about your profession on a day-to-day basis?

Handling so many different aspects of store development requires me to be very efficient with my time just to keep up with the growth of the business. What makes that especially challenging is that there are so many fun things to do in life and I like to have fun.

What are you looking for in terms of career development - OR In what areas would you like to professionally develop further?

Once the next two pizza shops are open, I'm really looking forward to get back to acquiring and developing retail properties. I'm especially interested in all food related real estate.

Describe a situation that was a great learning experience.

Opening the first restaurant was a tremendous learning experience because I had never worked in one before. Let's just say the learning curve was very steep. It was like going from 0-100 mph in a few seconds, so I guess it was fun but there was a moment when I thought I was going to die.

How do you deal with stress at work?

Go outside and take a break, surf, stand-up paddleboard, golf, meditation and most of all just remembering that anything is possible.