



Executive of the Month: Mandara, principal of Mancini Duffy: Brings 20 years of experience in architectural design to firm

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William Mandara, Jr., AIA,
Mancini Duffy

New York, NY The New York Real Estate Journal recently sat down with its executive of the month, William Mandara, Jr., AIA, principal at Mancini Duffy, for a question and answer session.

Mancini Duffy is a full-service design firm specializing in architecture, planning, and interior design. Headquartered in New York City with a branch office in Millburn, New Jersey, the practice complements its hundred years of expertise with contemporary entrepreneurial spirit and technological skill, delivering innovative solutions for the commercial, education, financial and professional services, retail, sports, and tech and media sectors. The firm's clients include Somerset Development, Normandy Real Estate Partners, Vision Real Estate Partners, Guardian Life Insurance, Jersey Central Power & Light, Energy Capital Partners, Commvault, Pinnacle Foods Inc. and Sills Cummis & Gross.

Q: How did you get started in this business?

A: My father and grandfather were general contractors. When I was in high school, during the sweltering summers in New Jersey, I'd go to work at my dad's jobsites, where he would give me the worst jobs to do—things like stacking 12-inch block or filling mortar pans. This was his way of steering me away from the construction industry and towards architecture school.

Q: Of all the roles you've played, what has been the most instructive?

A: I have learned a lot working with Ted Hammer at Mancini Duffy. He has helped me see things, especially at work, in a different way. Ted encouraged me to take a step back when things got tough—whether it was an internal issue at the office or something to do with a project—and break down the situation differently than I had in the past. Up until that point in my career, there was nobody who played that kind of a mentoring role.

Q: What has been the biggest challenge you have faced working your way up?

A: I was working at TSC Design in New Jersey when it was acquired by Mancini Duffy in 2011. When this happened, I had to assimilate to not only working in New York City, but also adjust to life at a larger company. A couple years later, when Ted and later, Christian Giordano (Mancini Duffy president) came to the firm, I felt more at home; I recognized there are people here who are a lot like me.

Peloton, 125 West 25th St. - New York, NY

Q: What would you consider one of your notable achievements at the company?

A: Working with Christian and Scott Harrell, I helped transform Mancini Duffy from a super buttoned-up organization to a cool, hip design studio. Our new culture takes a lot of cues from the progressive mindset that is found at many start-up enterprises in the tech and media fields.

While change in the workplace is an ongoing process, we have already taken several big steps to create an atmosphere that's supportive of big thinking. One of these has been to set aside the traditional, seniority-based model for career advancement; we promote all of our staff, including our less experienced architects and designers, based on initiative and merit. We are convinced that by empowering our people to do their best work, they will give their best efforts to our clients. It's a win-win deal.

Q: What recent project have you found rewarding to work on?

A: The Peloton headquarters at 125 West 25th St. is a recent favorite. Located on the top five floors of an old industrial structure that we repositioned into class A office space, it's 50,000 s/f of open-plan workspace—including two terraces that run the full width of the building—that reflects the forward thinking of the fitness company. To support all facets of Peloton's business, we built out several specialized areas: a photo studio, an R&D studio, an apparel-design studio, and a fitness center complete with changing rooms and showers.

The Mandara family celebrates their performance in a school play.

Q: What do you think your clients value about Mancini Duffy?

A: One thing that I know our clients appreciate about us is that we have a consistency of vision and of values. This lets us respond to our clients quickly, with clarity and authority. We never put ourselves or our vision ahead of the client's.

Q: What sectors are you currently targeting for growth?

A: Looking ahead, I want to focus on continuing to grow our base-building work and our interiors projects—areas where we have been very successful. As far as new-business sectors are concerned, we are actively looking into doing government work.

Mandara brings over 20 years of experience in architectural design to the Mancini Duffy team. He joined the firm as part of TSC Design in 2006, was named a senior associate in 2009, and a principal in 2014. He has contributed his design, management, and technical abilities to a variety of project types, including building repositioning projects, base-building architectural work, corporate offices, housing, industrial facilities, and educational facilities. He is active in all aspects of project development and management, from initial design through construction and project closeout. His previous experience in the construction field has given him an extensive understanding of many aspects of construction. A member of the American Institute of Architects, he is a graduate of New York Institute of Technology, and holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree.

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