



## **Jaskiewicz of Gotham Organization: Inspiring people and projects from Manhattan to Tallahassee**

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While millions have moved from New York to Florida over the years, relatively few have gone the opposite route. Christopher Jaskiewicz, chief operating officer and general counsel of Gotham Organization, Inc., the 75 year old New York-based real estate company, successfully "swam upstream" from Florida to New York.

Jaskiewicz grew up in Orlando at Walt Disney World - literally. His father spent 35 years at Disney in positions ranging from opening River Country - Orlando's first water park, to vice president of human resources. Jaskiewicz graduated from Florida State University, studied a year in Paris, then began his career at PepsiCo, Inc., where he was selected to go into its management program and spent two years as a Pepsi district manager. Jaskiewicz then attended St. John's University School of Law where he was a Dean's List Student and received a leadership scholarship as president of Phi Delta Phi legal association. The Platzer Swergold law firm gave Jaskiewicz his start as a Manhattan lawyer and he spent two years litigating commercial cases before moving to Proskauer Rose LLP, one of the nation's largest and oldest law firms, which boasts current NBA and NHL commissioners as alumni.

At Proskauer, Jaskiewicz litigated and negotiated issues involving motion picture copyright infringement, franchise agreement disputes, securities fraud, and professional athlete-league discipline issues. After bringing corporate clients into the firm, Jaskiewicz transferred to Proskauer's corporate transaction department where he concentrated on hospitality, real estate and merger and acquisition deals. During his first month in the corporate department, Jaskiewicz was assigned to handle legal tasks for a longtime Proskauer client named Gotham Construction. Two years later, Jaskiewicz was offered the position of general counsel to Gotham and its parent company, Gotham Organization.

Gotham develops residential and retail properties, owns and operates buildings, and builds for itself and for other developers. Buildings owned by Gotham include Manhattan luxury residential buildings the Atlas, Nicole and New Gotham, and urban retail centers including Harlem USA (credited for initiating the recent revitalization of Harlem) and DC USA (a soon to be opened 1 million s/f retail complex that will include Washington D.C.'s first Target store).

His prior experiences in business and in both aspects of law practice - transaction and litigation work - equipped Jaskiewicz to deal with daily tasks such as serving as president of the condominium board of a condo developed and built by Gotham, selling buildings, working through issues with Gotham retail tenants such as Starbucks and Citibank, negotiating construction contracts with developers and with subcontractors, negotiating with producers of Heidi Klum's Project Runway series (which makes its home in Gotham's residential buildings), and litigating disputes when necessary. Says Jaskiewicz, "To stay challenged with diverse work while being able to help build

and operate important and lasting projects makes me feel like I have one of the best jobs in New York."

When he comes home from work his priority is his wife and two children, but Jaskiewicz, who competes in Olympic-length triathlons, also makes time to contribute to causes that matter to him, which include hands on work for charities and special projects such as March of Dimes, and Mayor Michael Bloomberg's "Adopt-a-Company" program, where he led the "adoption" of over 50 small businesses hurt by the 9/11 attacks by lawyers who provided free legal services.

This September, Jaskiewicz completed a project he started in 2001 that bridges his love for New York to his Florida roots. He led the endowment of the FSU-NYC 9/11 Scholarship Fund, which he established in 2001 when he was president of the FSU alumni club of New York. The fund will help send relatives of victims and first responders of the 9/11 attacks to his alma mater.

"We were living in Manhattan when the attacks happened and we decided that a great way to honor victims would be to send a child or relative to FSU," said Jaskiewicz. "I will never forget that when we put this idea together, bodies were being counted and smoke was in the air. Thanks to New Yorkers and FSU leaders, the idea is now a reality."

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