



Block of Winick describes his professional accomplishments

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Name: Lee Block

Title: Director

Company/firm: Winick Realty Group LLC

Year company was founded: 1982

Years with company/firm: 6.5 years

Years in field: 8.5 years

Years in real estate industry: 8.5 years

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Real estate organizations / affiliations: ICSC

Which professional accomplishment, honor or achievement has meant the most to you and why?

Professionally, advancing and succeeding in NYC has been the greatest achievement I could ask for. There are so many people who work in the real estate industry in NYC and to be able to set yourself apart and build an honorable name and a reputation is a huge accomplishment. I started in the business on a whim and truly worked from the ground up to learn the market and the ebbs and flows of the retail brokerage business. The market is constantly changing and you have to be focused and agile to adapt when necessary. I feel I have done that successfully and it shows.

Which project, deal or transaction was the "game changer" in the advancement of your career?

Leasing 222 West Houston St. to Houston Hall (owners of Heartland Brewery.) After over a year of searching, I found them the space, a 5,000 s/f, almost 100 year old horse carriage house that was completely raw with no utilities in place. I worked hand in hand with the tenant and his design/architect and construction team to transform this property into a restaurant, uplifting an area of this neighborhood while adding several jobs and excitement to an area that was previously under the radar. It was eye-opening.

What advice would you give to those just starting out in commercial real estate?

Stay very informed on all market intel, news and transactions. Do research on anything you are working on and have the answers to questions before they are asked- anticipate and prepare for everything. You want to set yourself apart from the competition as there are countless other brokers vying for the same jobs you will be pitching. Most importantly, your reputation is essential and can be tainted with even the smallest of errors. Be completely honest and transparent - it is better to give bad news when necessary than cover it up. Karma will catch up with you. Lastly, network with everyone. You never know who may be sitting next to you on a plane or at a restaurant.

Who or what has been the strongest influence on your career and why?

When I got started in the business, my uncle (A real estate tax attorney in Maryland at the time) told me, "a year of experience in Manhattan is equal to five years in any other market." I believe this statement to be true. Working with the top landlords and corporations in NYC has been an unbelievable learning experience and I have been able to tackle projects and assignments that I wouldn't have the opportunity to work on in any other place in the world. The people with whom I've developed strong relationships are now not only work colleagues but friends. Being able to pick up the phone and speak with the head of a public REIT or a family dynasty landlord in NYC is like having an ace up your sleeve in negotiating and those relationships are extremely valuable.

Working for a reputable and strongly-connected company has also been invaluable. Winick Realty Group is the best at what they do, Jeff Winick is the most knowledgeable broker I have encountered in the industry and is very hands-on and has helped me grow to where I am today.

Where would you like to be 10 years from today?

Working in retail brokerage as I am today, but also focusing more on investment and development in and around the metro area. NYC is the most exciting place to be and I can't see myself doing this job anywhere else. I am looking to get more involved in deals on the equity side, working with other owners to find new opportunities for redevelopment or new ground up development.

I've had some experience on this side of the business and would like to continue with it.

How has the increase in social media changed the way you are doing business?

Everything these days is done digitally, whether it's communicating with clients by email or texting or reading about breaking news on Twitter about a building being sold or a new tenant opening in the market. I believe this will continue and expand as information is the most coveted asset in our industry and social media is proving to be the quickest way to get news and information to the masses.

However, I do believe that face to face meetings are still imperative as you can't read a situation over email or through social media. I hope that this new age of technology will not change this part of the business. I just see it as another way of communicating and passing information along to others.