



## **Executive of the Month: Fortino, president/CEO of Metropolis Group; Knows what it takes to run a successful company**

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At the young age of 20, Frank Fortino worked with owners and builders while working towards obtaining his bachelor of arts in Architecture from NYIT. While in the midst of his undergraduate career Fortino joined the architectural firm named Emory Roth & Sons. A well-regarded firm that designed and built along with construction companies such as George Fuller, Mose Diesel, Lehr, McGovern, and Tishman Construction, etc. Just after a few years of persistent hard work and dedication, at the age of 24, Fortino procured the title of associate.

Working alongside his project managers, Fortino continuously displayed professionalism and exhibited his expertise as a code and zoning consultant at Emory Roth & Sons. His daily experiences within the firm and all city agencies allowed him to grow within the industry.

In 1988, at the age of 29, Fortino started his own company, which we know today as Metropolis Group, Inc. He is currently the active president/CEO of the company. From the start, he knew he wanted to work closely with owners on code and zoning matters but also to assist in the development of construction sites. Fortino wanted to expand his horizons and get involved with endeavors outside of new buildings such as, renovations on existing buildings and other issues owners face with their properties as well. It was here that Fortino reinforced his capabilities by finding a solution to every project he worked on.

As his career continued to prosper, Fortino knew what it took to operate a successful company that will continue to flourish for years. He continuously focused on hiring employees based on reputation, honesty, and hard work. He was and remains a firm believer in working hard and being part of a good, yet solid, organization which can in turn help grow the services offered to clientele.

Metropolis Group, Inc. began building fruitful working relationships with city agencies that include but are not limited to the Department of Buildings, Landmarks and Department of Transportation. Fortino never depreciates how difficult dealing with various city agencies can be, given his experience and expertise of the process and codes. He has managed to create a business using his very own personal touch. He works tirelessly to remain constant in the everyday on goings at Metropolis Group, Inc. He continues to meet with associate members of his company along with project managers to remain involved in projects and to ensure clients remain satisfied at all times. Fortino always stresses that communication between employees and clients are key to success. The reason is simple, there are many moving parts to a project, and if open communication is not there, then the project will suffer.

Fortino's key role is to meet with owners and developers to provide a strategy on how to best approach each individual project. As consultants, Metropolis Group is here to assist clients and help each project team member understand the process but most importantly, know that all issues that arise are addressed immediately and are cured as smooth as possible. It is important to remember

that as a company, we file projects for the city's assessment and not one staff member can assume when the examiner will receive the project for review and no one can predict what setbacks are to come or what types of objections will be raised. What we do promise is, given our expertise, is to provide a complete factual package; which provides the examiner proper information so that they can render the examination, possibly minimize the objections, and obtain the approval in the most efficient way possible.

Fortino prides himself in having the ability to see zoning and building code issues prior to them occurring. N.Y.C. being one of the most unique and challenging places to build, he has truly mastered his craft. The laws put in place make it challenging to design, whether it's renovating a space or a building. This being one of the main reasons the industry continues to thrive, for these challenges are always dealt with during preliminary stages of a project. Fortino and his team have mastered the review process on a project in order to find solutions to all issues that arise. Whether it's modifying the design or finding a solution to a technical issue; Fortino and his staff deliberate over issues, and then file with the executive office for pre-reconsideration. The executive office always finds that the requests are in line with the intent of the code, and usually receives a favorable response.

One of the unique attributes Fortino has implemented in his office is based on structure. He created teams of individuals who have the knowledge, capability, and leadership to execute tasks at hand, delegate fellow team members, and ensure the success of the day-to-day operations that take place within the office. The teams are comprised of a project manager, project coordinators, and a project expeditor. Each team has been thoroughly examined and specifically picked in order to ensure the best possible communication and team working skills amongst each other. Administration and fellow staff members find that the team structure implemented within the company utilizes the strengths of all staff resulting in successful projects and satisfied clientele.

Not only has Fortino created an effective composition of his office, he has also created an impeccable tracking system. Each development requires a detailed matrix from the onset of the project. The matrix expands with information throughout the life of the project until it receives a letter of completion or amended Certificate of Occupancy. Part of the matrix shows all the different files submitted, the status of each filing, the progress, and the requirements needed to obtain an approval. The matrix will also show all of the outstanding violations, what category they fall under, and how the violations will be cured. In today's new policies and procedures, the Department of Buildings also requires the owners to complete the files, which are done at the buildings. Their matrix will have this information recorded during the construction phase. The building's owner and the consultant will know and understand what it takes to obtain a clean building, which has no violations and has all applications, signoffs, and an updated Certificate of Occupancy.

Apart of Fortino's goals from the start of him being owner of Metropolis, he set out to make his company a key player in coordinating with construction companies and sub-contractors. Metropolis Group, Inc. always begins with the Certificate of Occupancy process with the owner or owner's representative and the contractor. At this point the project matrix will be updated to show all the outstanding open applications; which need to be completed and closed. They list all the outstanding violations and report back on how to cure the violations as part of the matrix. They list details of what is required for the sprinkler, construction, plumbing, and fire alarm. As part of the list, they show roughly, what inspections have been done and what is required in order to obtain final signoff. As part of their service, Metropolis always walks through the building or space to see how the

construction phase is panning out. They point out all the defects that construction may have. They coordinate this effort with the contractor and establish a schedule as to when they would be finished with construction. They do this so that we can arrange and be prepared for the Department of Buildings inspections and the construction signoff. The Construction Division and the Certificate of Occupancy Division need to ensure that they provide other signoffs to their division, in order to release the final amended Certificate of Occupancy. Metropolis arranges and coordinates the completion of the signoff from other agencies, such as Landmarks, Department of Transportation, Department of Parks & Recreation, and The Bureau of Electrical Control. Many times these agencies have been a part of the scope of the project, and since they were originally filed and the project required their input and approval, it will require the agencies to visit and complete signoff.

Finally, the special controlled inspections are a crucial factor within the project. This phase is where the owner selects a company or multi-companies to perform inspections during the course of construction. The companies that are hired work in tangent with the contractor as an independent third party, who has been approved by the Department of Buildings to perform the inspection services for many different developments. At the beginning of each project, the special inspections are identified by the scope. The owner enters into a contract agreement and the company provides the services to the owner until the project is completed. Once all forms are completed and signed off, Metropolis will file all the documents to be filed into record and the Certificate of Occupancy can be issued. The Department of Buildings being the lead agency has created a well-prepared structure; which deals with all aspects of the construction project. As stated before, it is difficult to follow and keep up with all the different codes, rules, policies, and procedures. As N.Y.C. grows and more requirements are put into place, the Metropolis team knows the ins and outs and they can assist the owner, builder, developer, professional, and construction companies achieve the goal they desire.

Fortino's involvement in the industry does not stop with Metropolis Group. Fortino also owns a 50% share in the company known as Iron Bridge Consulting. Iron Bridge essentially is a byproduct of Metropolis Group, Inc. It is made up of ownership representation and code consulting which handles all types of projects. As the manager of multi-level size developments results in bringing a different level of understanding and professionalism to the project.

Outside of being passionate for his business, Fortino is also always contributing to a numerous amounts of charities. In the past, him and his company, Metropolis Group, raised money, donated, and attended the Walk to End Alzheimer's in Brooklyn and The 911 Memorial Walk. Besides this, Fortino has also been involved in donating to Cystic Fibrosis, St. Jude's Children Research Hospital, the Special Olympics, the Columbus Foundation, Breast Cancer Awareness, the Women in Need Program and much more. In his spare time, he is involved in the Westfield Boosters Association. Fortino's understanding in code and zoning brings a different light and flavor to the Westfield Board of Adjustments. He is one of seven individuals who vote on different types of variances in the town's development. Part of his role in this association is to provide financial assistance in an effort to support the Westfield High School athletic programs, including the annual Coaches Golf Outing, a day of leisure and fun for the coaches that assist and dedicate time to the children of Westfield. By having this role, the association has had great support from many Westfield residents and professionals who generously donate each year. They also put together fundraising events for the members of the association to attend along with anyone they feel may be interested to attend and donate as well. Lastly, Fortino's pride and love for family is immeasurable. The constant support to

his wife and children's endeavors are endless. Fortino is an adored family man, an unswerving colleague and friend, a phenomenal professional and business owner.

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