



2019 Women in Real Estate: Melissa Billig, Ingram Yuzek Gainen Carroll & Bertolotti, LLP

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Name: Melissa Billig

Title: Partner

Company Name: Ingram Yuzek Gainen Carroll & Bertolotti, LLP

Association/Organization Affiliations (REAL ESTATE ONLY): Center for Architecture

What is your favorite motivational quote?

"Success doesn't just find you. You have to go out and get it." My parents instilled this in me at a very early age. They taught me to work hard at everything –big or small–and the harder you work, the greater you will feel when you achieve what you set out to do.

How do you hold your own in a negotiation?

I am tough, but reasonable. When I started practicing law 21 years ago, the construction industry was largely male-dominated. To be successful, I've had to work twice as hard, but the payoff for me has been twice as rewarding. I study and research the issues in advance to ensure I push for the terms that are the most critical. I have found that my male counterparts are often surprised with my construction knowledge and experience. I enjoy the process and, most of all, making the deal.

What was one of your biggest accomplishments in the last 12 months?

Becoming an equity owner in the firm this year has been my biggest professional accomplishment. I have achieved what I set out to do upon graduating law school and it feels great. I love what I do and, to me, that is everything.

What books, blogs, podcasts, resources or influencers would you recommend to women?

I would recommend the book "Never Eat Alone" by Keith Ferrazzi. This book focuses on the importance of not just networking for the sake of networking, but building true relationships. I owe much of my success to the support and encouragement of my professional and personal relationships.

Who inspired you to join the CRE Industry?

There's no specific person, but more so the community of people that work together to support and develop the built environment. Seeing my work come alive in New York City's brilliant landscape

affords me the opportunity to be a part of something great with each project.

What is the best advice you have received, and who was it from?

“Never drop your briefcase and run.” This simple yet effective advice came from Brooklyn Law School professor, Joseph Crea. Be prepared, do your research, be creative and by all means, be persistent.

What recent project or transaction are you most proud of?

It's not so recent, but it is one I look upon quite fondly. My firm prepared and negotiated the agreements for the major redesign (and overhaul) of Governor's Island (which project was eight years in the making and largely consisting of the creation of four hills created by artificial topography). The time spent preparing and negotiating the agreements for this development really came together at the well-attended ribbon-cutting ceremony. Having the opportunity to see your written work transformed into reality is just so amazing.

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