



## **Executive of the Month: Through unique brand strategy, Mesis-Bruno of D&A is reinventing marketing for contractors**

April 20, 2021 - Design / Build



Andrea Mesis-Bruno

New York, NY The New York Real Estate Journal sat down for a question-and-answer session with Andrea Mesis-Bruno, this month's Executive of the Month.

Mesis-Bruno is the newly appointed president of Fix My Rank and founder of D&A Construction Advisors. Both of her companies have seen unprecedented growth earning her construction clients over \$12 million in new projects in 2020 alone despite the market uncertainty and COVID-related restrictions plaguing NYC construction. Fix My Rank's marketing campaigns were instrumental to

many of her favorite hometown shops and restaurants staying afloat as the lockdown forced so many local businesses to close permanently.

NYREJ: How were you able to achieve such strong sales results for your clients while other contractors were anxiously struggling to find work?

Mesis-Bruno: It wasn't easy, but it required my clients to emotionally accept the base building, retail, or tenant fit-out projects they projected to win were no longer probable or even a near possibility. We worked with our clients to strategize by quickly identifying other types of projects that would not only be approved quickly and at a premium, but also help them grow within a new niche, replacing previously planned projects that landlords cannot invest in until the market settles. Convincing the owner of a construction company of anything is a struggle, to put it mildly! Pitching the importance of a website or social selling to stay visible during the lockdown was as painful to them as it was for me. Our industry is far from innovative or open to embracing trends, but contractors reluctantly got on board with our revenue pivot plans when I showed immediate results. No one could have ever anticipated the pandemic and its crippling effect on our industry. Still, I knew a shift was coming and spent most of my 2019 learning how to differentiate myself to stay ahead of the market — as the daughter of a serial entrepreneur and resilient single mother, creating opportunity out of thin air is my specialty.

CaptionThe Mesis family (from left) Aron Mesis, David "DJ" Bruno, Andrea Mesis-Bruno, and Jimmie Mesis at Tuesday's Children's 2020 Military Golf Classic

NYREJ: Are these new businesses you started due to the pandemic layoffs?

Mesis-Bruno: Fix My Rank was established by my father, Jimmie Mesis, in 2012, far before most business owners even knew anything about digital marketing or Search Engine Optimization (SEO), while April marks the second anniversary of D&A Construction Advisors. D&A started as a means for me to broker construction projects but refined our focus during the pandemic to help smaller, minority, veteran, and women-owned construction companies gain exposure to major developers. After discovering many of the programs available to M/WBE firms focused on government and city projects, D&A committed to establishing ourselves as a new and more profitable resource for these emerging ventures. This type of work is often highly competitive and yielding little room for access to the quality-conscious and more profitable relationship-based contracts that the wealthiest contractors have historically monopolized.

NYREJ: How does digital marketing differ for contractors and developers as compared to other industries?

Mesis-Bruno: Well, a multi-million dollar contract will never be awarded based on a company's Instagram, for starters. There is no "Click Here" to "Buy Online" option for an electrical contractor or mechanical plumber. Advertising and digital marketing through Google Ads, a website highlighting past projects, LinkedIn posts, or even media coverage such as this interview are solely to establish brand recognition and credibility. These are the most overlooked but essential components of the sales process for contractors looking to court new clients. The real estate industry as a whole is synonymous with some of the most persuasive and dynamic sales executives. A clear and consistent digital brand presence is necessary to substantiate the claims and promises of their sales team made during one of our quintessentially New York steakhouse sales lunch meetings where most deals are either won or lost. Contractors are very particular about what they want to share with the public, their prospects, and most importantly, their competitors. I am also quite vague when discussing my clients by name for that very reason, but I embrace sharing my team's success and taking great pride in my duty to showcase women and minorities in the trades. If we do not give accolades to the hard-working employees that made our projects successful, they will be eager to leave for a competitor that showcases a strong company culture taking our best clients with them. Similarly, I have found more valuable prospects from my public speaking and community outreach efforts than I would have achieved if I had embodied the "best-kept secret" approach taken by many contractors.

Caption: Fix My Rank President Andrea Mesis-Bruno and CEO Jimmie Mesis at 2019 NYC's Top Latinos 40 Under 40 sponsored by Negocios Now

NYREJ: So will your services still be in demand as the city loosens its restrictions and what do you foresee for marketing within the industry moving forward?

Mesis-Bruno: Absolutely! A surprising new trend has recently emerged for property management executives seeking our services. They are jumping on the personal branding trend with even more enthusiasm than their vendor counterparts. Property managers have been hiring D&A more than ever for strategic advisement on building their personal brand to further their personal career advancement. Most have short term goals of honing their public speaking skills following the influx of virtual industry events and are eagerly seeking media placement opportunities to enhance their resumes while bringing media coverage to their landlord employers. Staying behind the scenes is no longer an option for anyone looking to thrive in the new NYC real estate market.

Through our unique brand strategy, many contractors that offer a multitude of services, have found best results by hiring us to make them known as niche experts for a specific service which has directly translated to new business for them from top developers. Since it will still be months, if not longer, before we can all rub elbows again at industry and charitable events, networking without a conduit is nearly impossible for contractors not using firms such as D&A as sales strategists. My clients have been amazed at my access to key developers that might have not been returning their

calls. Our growth over the last two years speaks for itself, as we have grown to employ a full-time staff of dedicated account executives assigned to the businesses we currently have under contract. I have even expanded on our family-centric approach by recruiting my cousin Aron Mesis as the head of our client relations team. She has quickly adapted to New York life after relocating from Miami and is already negotiating multi-million dollar contracts for her clients with ease. I know my son, DJ will also carry on our hard-wired entrepreneur legacy of success when he one day takes the helm as the future CEO of D&A named after him.

The outlook is clear—branding and marketing yourself as well as your business isn't just a passing fad. I caution business owners to find an industry insider that can offer both sales and marketing under a unified plan with concrete metrics to prove the associated costs to prove measurable returns. Owners should embrace sharing more to stay top of mind with decision makers, be open to changing norms, agile to make quick course corrections as the world changes minute by minute, and trust the experts. You may know how to build a building, but I know how to build your business. Together you will endure the storm with a stronger foundation for your future.

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