



Executive of the Month: Avi Akiva of Tri State Commercial Realty: “When you keep giving, you keep getting back”

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New York, NY The New York Real Estate Journal (NYREJ) sat down with this month’s Executive of the Month, Avi Akiva, for a question and answer session. Akiva, the vice president at Tri State Commercial Realty, discusses his ascent on Brooklyn’s commercial real estate scene.

NYREJ: How did you know real estate was the career you wanted?

Akiva: I started as an intern when I was 18 years old as part of my high school program. I was studying to be a pre-med student, and before that I worked in retail during the summer. I actually ended up doing my first deal within my first month in real estate.

What made me love commercial real estate was that the only way a deal would work was when everybody succeeded and got a good deal. Everybody had to make money—the landlord, the tenant, the broker, the contractor, the lawyer, the architect, etc. So I said to myself, this is an amazing business. I get to help a lot of people make money by doing deals.

To this day, that's exactly what I do. When doing a deal, I refer out architects, contractors, attorneys, even insurance brokers that I work with so that when I'm doing a deal, everyone around me makes money as well. I take no referral fees from this. I do it just so that everybody benefits from my deals. And I've found that when you keep giving, you keep getting back. It's given us a large amount of blessings, thank God.

That was when I realized I was going to make the switch from pursuing medicine to staying in real estate. I was fulfilling my desire to be helpful to everybody around me without spending 15 years in medical school. I found my passion and knew this would be my career.

NYREJ: What drew you to begin your career at Tri State Commercial?

Akiva: I was looking for a company with no ceiling. Where I could grow and everyone around me could grow. I feel that although real estate is supposed to offer unlimited opportunity or earning potential in any brokerage, I find that in almost every firm there is a ceiling, or there is a long, 30 year plan to get you up the ladder. When I met with Shlomi Bagdadi, the founder of Tri State Commercial, I saw a few things. First, he was extremely honest. I had never met anybody in my life with his extreme honesty. I could see that he was a good person who cared deeply for his team to grow in their career and reach their potential. Lastly, he cared for every single one of his clients like family. I saw that we shared all of those values.

When I joined TSC, I quickly saw there was no ceiling on the colleagues around me. You can literally build your own business within the firm. You have the ability to be entrepreneurial and build your own company within the firm's framework and there were no limitations on that potential. I saw my team earning six figures their first and second year in the industry, which is unheard of!

My team ended up becoming managing directors in less than three years and experienced not only tremendous financial growth, but also personal growth. I moved to Tri State Commercial after my first few years in the business and I haven't looked back since.

NYREJ: How did the firm's unique culture allow you to rise quickly within the real estate industry?

Akiva: What I love most is that our culture is optimized for seasoned agents and new professionals to climb the ladder quickly. We help each person develop a clear picture and plan for growing from an associate to a managing director or even a vice president. That culture of mentorship and growth is very important.

Our pioneering approach to harnessing technology in unique ways to serve our clients also sets us apart and makes our agents more effective. Whether somebody is coming in as an associate, director or VP, everybody has been able to earn more and grow faster while working the same hours as their previous firm simply because of our technology, infrastructure, and culture. That played a key role in my own growth.

NYREJ: What are your current goals as you continue to play a key role in growing Tri State?

Akiva: First and foremost, continue servicing our clients and agents in the most efficient manner. We

are constantly tweaking to ensure that. Another one of our goals is to expand to more states in the Northeast. Our New York City business is thriving and we also recently acquired a firm in Philadelphia. There are opportunities in many major cities right now and that geographic expansion is a big goal of ours.

Helping my team grow is also one of the things that brings me the most fulfillment now. I want to see my associates become managing directors and the managing directors becoming vice presidents. I'm proud of the culture we've built on my team where I see personal growth taking place every day, people love coming to work, there aren't office politics and everyone wants everybody to win.

NYREJ: What are the most important factors young real estate professionals should consider when choosing a firm to build their career with?

Akiva: First and foremost is culture, which I've talked a lot about because it's so important to me. Finding great culture in real estate is harder than one would think. Does the firm you're considering have a happy environment that emphasizes integrity? Can you trust the person to the right of you? If not, that's not something you want to be in everyday, no matter what the financial opportunity is.

Second, do they have a training program and a clear path to help you rise from wherever you're entering to the highest level you want to go? There needs to be specifics on how the firm and its systems can help you get there. Look at examples within their current team and the growth they have experienced. I would even speak to other young professionals in the firm and ask about the support they receive for advancing their career. If they don't have an answer, that's a problem.

NYREJ: What role do you play in mentoring the firm's next group of rising stars?

Akiva: In my role as vice president, I personally train and manage associates up to the managing directors. I dedicate significant time everyday to helping them grow both professionally and personally. I am extremely proud of the high caliber of human beings we have helped nurture in our firm and how they treat each other, our clients, and colleagues in the brokerage community. Values are very important to us.

NYREJ: What are you excited about right now about the future?

Akiva: Right now in Tri State we're at the throttle point. What that means is we went through what I call the "pregnancy process." It's building all of the infrastructure; growing the team from three people to now, between Philadelphia and Brooklyn, almost 50; growing the backend and perfecting our systems and technology. We provide a very high level of experience to both our agents and our clients and we can scale faster than ever before.

That positions us to be like a bullet train toward success. That's what excites me the most. I know we're going to be expanding rapidly across the states over the next five years. We are taking on larger, notable clients than we ever have and we're honored to represent them. All my expectations have already been exceeded thus far. I'm very excited to see what the future holds for us.