



## **2021 Year in Review: Yaakov Zar, Lev**

December 28, 2021 - Spotlights



Name: Yaakov Zar

Job Title: Founder and CEO

Company Name: Lev

What are your predictions for your industry in 2022?

I think that CRE finance is going to change a lot in the next year. I am a believer that the current capital markets environment will not last through the year. If access to capital tightens and the growth in rents slows, I think that a lot of people who have bought tight cap-rate assets with hopes to add value to them and increase rates are going to be constrained in their options. I am nervous about the implications of the shock that would cause.

What is the best advice you received in 2021, and who was it from?

The best advice I received in 2021 was to just focus on building our business and not worry about what others in the space are doing. I think that in every industry, but especially in CRE, there is way too much attention put into keeping up with every single deal and every single transaction—and that has made its way into keeping up with every broker, lender, partner, etc. I think all of that could be distracting to deciding what the right strategy is for your own organization and then executing on it with precision and focus.

What was the biggest lesson you learned while working during the pandemic?

The biggest lesson I learned was that developing trust amongst your team and your customers is pretty much the only asset that matters. More than capital, more than knowledge, more than “relationships,” true trust amongst colleagues and amongst clients is the only thing that really allows you to get through anything. Knowing that there are incredible people who have my back, who have our company’s back and who have our clients back, gives me the confidence to work in any economic or social environment.

How has your working environment changed over the last year?

I think the pace of business is at an all time high. I’ve realized that I almost never do first-meetings with clients, potential employees, and vendors in person, and that means that we are all able to do more each day and increase productivity. I think people no longer feel that they “owe” someone 45 minutes in a conversation that doesn’t deserve that duration, just because the other party might’ve commuted for an hour to get there. It’s important to prioritize our time effectively, but also figure out the right balance to not burn out in a fast-paced environment.

What was your greatest professional accomplishment or most notable project, deal, or transaction in 2021?

The most exciting accomplishment in 2021 was definitely growing our team from around twelve people to nearly 100, while increasing our bar for talent. It is truly a difficult task to find great talent, especially when it comes to convincing them to join a young company amidst a global pandemic, but we’ve been lucky enough to be able to truly increase our talent density while growing our team by nearly 10x within a year. It is thrilling.