

REAL ESTATE WEEKLY

Selinger celebrating 15 years of delivering on what he promises

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By Alan Wax



ROSS SELINGER

For Ross Selinger, president of Selinger Enterprises, father knew best.

It was 1996, while Selinger was considering ideas to further his career in commercial real estate that his father, Harry, advised him to start his own company and continue the family tradition of entrepreneurship.

That tradition started with Ross's grandfather, David, who had a large chain of furniture stores, Selinger's Furniture, in the metropolitan area in the 1950's and 1960's,

Selinger heeded his dad's advice and started his own firm, which has flourished. This year marks the 15th anniversary of Selinger Enterprises, which has become the longest running tenant/buyer representation real estate firm on Long Island. Since its founding, Selinger, working alone, has leased or sold space totaling 342,000 s/f worth an aggregate of \$37 million.

For the Brooklyn-born-Long-Island-raised Selinger, the route to running his own business was a circuitous one.

After a stint in the Army, he returned to school and graduated from New York University's Stern School of Business in 1972. He went on to earn a master's degree in industrial design from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and then worked for Dakota Jackson, a New York City design firm, for five years before deciding it was time for a change.

Selinger said he missed interacting directly with people and began working for the Beechwood Organization, a prominent Long Island homebuilder. Working at Beechwood introduced him to the real estate industry, but he soon realized he wanted something more challenging.

In 1989, he joined Polimeni Enterprises, a prestigious Long Island landlord and commercial real estate brokerage firm. There he established himself and began to get noticed.

In 1993, he moved to Steven Fine Associates, where he was introduced to the concept of tenant representation. The idea of only representing company owners and having no conflicts of interest appealed to him. "I always liked the challenge of fighting for the under-dog," he said. After several years with Steven Fine, Selinger decided it was time to become an entrepreneur.

Now, looking back, Selinger remembered his first deal in which he represented Crossland Mortgage, now part of Wells Fargo. Initially the bank hesitated to use Ross because his company was new. But the other brokers who had attempted to work for the bank, had been unsuccessful. The problem was that the out-of-state bank would only do a one-year term and Long Island landlord's needed a longer term to amortize their upfront costs. Ross understood the dilemma and went to work finding a solution. The resolution: "A compromise that worked for everybody. A true win-win."

Following the Crossland deal, Selinger Enterprises was on its way to becoming a leading Long Island tenant advocacy firm. A New York City firm, hearing of Selinger's reputation, sought Selinger's assistance for a client seeking space on Long Island.

He succeeded in this endeavor and as a result was invited to New Orleans for a meeting of the International Tenant Representatives Alliance, (ITRA), one of the largest organizations in the world comprised solely of tenant representatives.

"I loved the opportunity to meet top brokers from around the world," Selinger said. He later was elected to the board, became vice chairman and served for eight years until December 2010. "ITRA allows me to offer best-in-class real estate services to companies seeking space throughout the United States, the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific Rim."

Selinger works differently than his competitors. "I don't take on an assignment just to do a deal. I get very involved with my clients, large or small, and fight to negotiate great deals," he said.

"I believe in educating my clients about the markets, so they can recognize a great opportunity when it becomes available."

Additionally, his design background enables him to get involved in shaping his clients' spaces. "Creating a great work environment is key to improving employee productivity," he said.

Clients say they appreciate Selinger's exceptionally high level of service, knowledge of the markets, and attention to detail. The fact that Selinger has no conflicts of interest, since he represents only tenants or buyers, is especially appreciated by his clients because they know he is working solely for them.

As a result of this approach, Selinger has developed a loyal following among Long Island's top business executives, including Raj Mehta, president and CEO of Infosys International, who said, "Ross fully understood my company's needs and was able to locate the perfect building and negotiate an excellent deal for us."

Nathiel Egosi, president of RRT Design & Construction, an engineering and construction company in Melville, who has done numerous deals with Selinger since 1996, said "Ross, like all brokers, promised us a bunch of things ... The real difference is that he delivered on those promises."

Egosi said he felt his own lack of real estate knowledge put him at a disadvantage when dealing with landlords. "Ross leveled the playing field, He was on my team from Day One."

Selinger lives in Port Washington with his wife, Morisa, a physician practicing in New York City, and their two Siamese cats, Lance and Coco, named in homage to the couple's favorite pastimes: cycling and chocolate. Their son, Harris, is a chef in New York City