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Nitkin of The HB Nitkin Grp.; Contributing to the industry

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Name: Helen Nitkin

Title: Chairman

Company/firm: The HB Nitkin Group

Years with company/firm: 28

Years in field: 38

Years in real estate industry: 38

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Real estate organizations/affiliations: REFA

During the last 10 years of your career, which professional accomplishment, honor or achievement has meant the most to you and why?

I consider my greatest accomplishment stepping into the role of chairman immediately after my husband passed away in 2009. This was a challenge given the economic climate and the personal loss I was facing. Now four years later I have transitioned into the role, guided our company through a multitude of business decisions and moved our company forward. I consider myself fortunate to be part of a team of extremely talented professionals, all of who remained, and are committed to the long-term goals of our organization and to the success of the properties.

Which project, deal or transaction was the "game changer" in the advancement of your career during the last 10 years?

In 2005, our firm was selected through an RFP as the developer for the The Front Street District, the restaurant/entertainment/residential portion of Adriaen's Landing in downtown Hartford. Phase 1 is built and 60% leased and we are in the design process for Phase 2, a 123 unit residential rental building to be completed in 2015. This is a transformational project that is a meaningful component for the revitalization of downtown of Hartford, our state capital. This development required vision, tenacity, patience and a full commitment of financial and intellectual capital.

How do you contribute to your company and/or the industry?

My role is to recognize and adapt to the changes taking place in the industry, to move the company forward and to provide the financial resources required for a real estate investment and development company. I am not a micro manager as the individuals working in the firm excel in their given positions yet I understand the importance of giving recognition and acknowledgement for other's creativity and expertise. I hope the way we conduct our business is a role model for women entering the field and especially my daughter who is interested in making a career in real estate.

What advice would you give to women just starting out in commercial real estate?

I have a daughter who entered the business so I have some insight. I recommend being part of a team of individuals you respect and gaining the broadest exposure possible. Working on the brokerage side of the business whether sales, leasing or financing enables you to gain an understanding of how markets function and when and where opportunities present themselves. My advice for those who want to become developers and/or an investor is to have a partner, invest in an area you know best, establish credit, have the financial resources and reserve funds required for completion and changing market conditions.

How do you manage the work/life balance?

As the owner my time is more flexible and acknowledge that work can take place anywhere at any time. The life/work balance requires attention just as work does and having seen my husband's life cut short, I am aware of the importance of living now and not deferring life's enjoyment.

Who has been the strongest influence on your career and why?

My husband was an excellent businessman, a creative problem solver and understood how to motivate his colleagues to be creative and productive. He was a very good listener and gave each person respect and appreciation. I am very aware of his influence now that I am chairman in how I deal with my team and all who I come in contact with. The wisdom he brought to his business has been invaluable to me as I transitioned into my role of chairman.

How are you using social media to promote yourself and/or your firm?

We do not use social media to promote our firm or myself.

Where would you like to be 10 years from today?

In ten years, I hope that my 25-year-old daughter and my 24-year-old son take over the leadership of the business and expand it from the foundation that has been created. I will still remain involved on an advisory basis but in 10 years the business should be approached utilizing the wisdom of experience with the ever-adapting approach influenced with a younger vision.

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