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2022 Women in Commercial Real Estate: Krista Manna, KR Architecture & Interiors

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Krista Manna
Owner

What has been your biggest challenge and how have you faced it? My biggest challenge was “making the leap” and going out on my own. I enjoyed the work I did for other firms, but found that none offered the flexibility in schedule that my circumstances needed. So in 2017, after a lot of research and planning, I took the leap and started my own company. I was fortunate in that a family member helped with initial funding, my husband had a stable job and my children were young. It was the right time for me. For anyone considering doing the same, I’d suggest doing your homework and being as prepared as you can. Being on your own does not come with guarantees, but I have never regretted the choice. I get to work with some interesting clients and enjoy the opportunity to help them achieve their vision and goals for their properties.

In the past year, what project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of? I’m most proud of the work I’ve been able to do on “aging in place” design. We’ve had a number of design projects to help people who have special needs. This could be, for example, designing space for a veteran amputee who looks for convenience in navigating through a living space. In our region many homes are not naturally designed for people who are not fully body-enabled. There are many split entries, for example, which present challenges for people with disabilities.

What trends will dominate your industry in the coming months? Corporate interiors will have more amenity spaces to entice people to return to in-person work environments. Many companies are finding that their long-time employees in particular don’t want to return to the office. They have become independent in their ways. The challenge is that the younger and newer employees need mentoring in order to succeed and advance in a company, so it becomes critical to have the experienced employees return to perform this function. Companies are seeking ways to make their office space more employee-friendly. This could include larger kitchenettes or “touchdown spaces” for workers, group team or “huddle” rooms, and comfortable furniture. Comfort has surpassed looks in room design. Another popular option is allowing people to stand at their desks (sit-stand) as opposed to merely sitting.