

[POWER PLAYERS]

Epicentre shows value of risk, reward

Afshin Ghazi, Developer, The Ghazi Company



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Question: Give us a brief synopsis of your business.

Answer: We strive to be on the cutting-edge of real estate development, to look at each individual deal based on its own merits and to make sound decisions based on calculated risks and potential rewards.

Q: What is your business philosophy?

A: Our business is all about risk and reward. Managing risk and maximizing profits, all while building and creating destinations of interest where people will shop, dine, work and live for many years.

Q: What is your definition of success?

A: We have been successful when a project is completed, up and running, and meeting or beating proformas. It is also crucial that the project operates and is self-sufficient with minimal oversight at the highest level.

Q: What is your biggest accomplishment?

A: The completion of Epicentre, a vision that is now a reality. I could not be happier with the results we have with this project. The opportunity was overlooked by some and passed off by others. The Epicentre is located in the heart of Charlotte, and I speak for many in sharing that the heart rate is up in downtown Charlotte. Between the retail, nightlife, restaurants, theater, hotel and so much more all in one location, The Epicentre has raised the bar.

Q: What are you most proud of?

A: From a business standpoint, being able to achieve all that we have to date with minimal overhead and fixed cost. Personally, simply being able to say, "I did it" — with lots of help, of course.

Q: What is the best thing about your job/company?

A: Being small and nimble, being able to act quickly and decisively. Although my favorite part is still that it feels like a hobby!

Q: What is the toughest decision you have had to make?

A: I can't think of a particular decision that has been "the toughest." I can tell you that it always seems to be more difficult ending things than it is starting. Nobody likes failures and nobody is 100 percent successful. The day you decide a particular project is not going to happen is always a tough decision day.

Q: What do you think was most important in preparing to run a business?

A: Accepting responsibility. Getting into business is easy ... staying in business is very difficult at times. Every business that thrives becomes a living, breathing organism that constantly needs fuel to survive.

Q: What do you wish you knew when you were getting started in business, that

you know now?

A: How long it would take and how hard it would be to get comfortable. It feels like no matter how much you learn, there is still something you know nothing about!

Q: What advice would you give other entrepreneurs and business owners?

A: Try while you have time and are young; accept the cards you are dealt, all while staying positive and leading by example. Set realistic goals with different time limits. I had an annual goal, a five-year goal and a 10-year horizon goal. Anything beyond 10 years when you are starting is dreaming.

Q: What is your favorite book?

A: *Learn to Swim with the Sharks without being Eaten Alive* by Harvey MacKay.

Q: If you weren't doing what you are doing, what else would you want to do?

A: This has not changed from the day I started my business, which was either skiing out West in the winters or diving in the South Pacific. Work would involve either a coffee shop or an ice cream shop.

Q: What do you want others to know about entrepreneurs and small-business owners?

A: That they are the true testament to a capitalistic free market society. For those who have the ability, the freedom that comes with it is irreplaceable.

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(USPS 336-900) is a newspaper of General Circulation published Tuesdays and Fridays by Dolan Media Company

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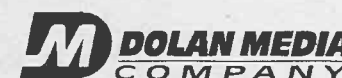
Friday, 10 a.m. for Tuesday publication
Wednesday, 10 a.m. for Friday publication.
Submit public notices to: legals@mecktimes.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Six months: \$50.00 | 12 months: \$75.00

The Mecklenburg Times is a member of:

- American Court and Commercial Newspapers, Inc.
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