

odm Executive of the Month

Alex Getelman of Aragon

Construction is a builder of dreams

Alex Getelman



He founded and heads a leading New York City-based general contracting, construction management and consulting firm specializing in interior construction fit-outs for both the public and private sectors, working with some of the city's most distinguished companies.

He is a devoted husband to his wife, Kristine, and dedicated father to his two children, a two-year-old son, Luke, and a one-year-old daughter, Sydney.

And, in his spare time, he combines professional and personal pursuits, splitting his time between industry organizations and charitable committees. His firm is an active member of the International Facility Managers Association (IFMA) and CoreNet, and he continues to sponsor the Foundation for Fighting Blindness, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the Emmory Reagan Shapses Classic, an annual event that raises funds for tuberous sclerosis, among others.

Who is this go-getter? He's none other than Alex Getelman, the 32-year-old president and owner of Aragon Construction.

His meteoric rise in the world of construction has been an interesting journey so far. Getelman was raised with what he calls "one part innovation and one part education." His father was a garment industry business owner and his mother a school teacher, but Getelman always knew he was an entrepreneur at heart, even from the time he was 13.

At an age when most children were playing video games and baseball, he started his very own business, Alex's Car Washing Service. Never one to settle — his mantra is "never give up" — Getelman grew his business into a larger company that specialized in automobile detailing, named Mirror Finish Detailing. By the age of 16, he was incorporated in Nassau County, Long Island and employed several

of his friends.

When Getelman headed off for college, where he earned a BS in Business Management, he had a simple plan — to be "a businessman." Before long, his path revealed itself. Taken under the wings of an acquaintance, "big brother," and mentor who had long admired his work ethic and ambition — and who also happened to own a prominent interior construction management and general contracting firm — he swiftly rose through the ranks.

He began his career in construction in the estimating department, working alongside the company's chief estimator, and earned a Construction Management diploma from the NYU Real Estate Institute.

"The estimating department is the foundation of any solid construction business because that is where money is lost or made, jobs are bid and released to all internal departments and all the intricacies of the various trades come together," said Getelman. "It was the perfect place to get my start and learn from the ground up."

From estimating, his talents were next put to use as a site superintendent and, after that, a project manager where both positions oversaw the construction of countless high-end retail stores. These positions enabled Getelman to take on a business development role, where he learned to fully service the client and honed the values upon which his firm is based today.

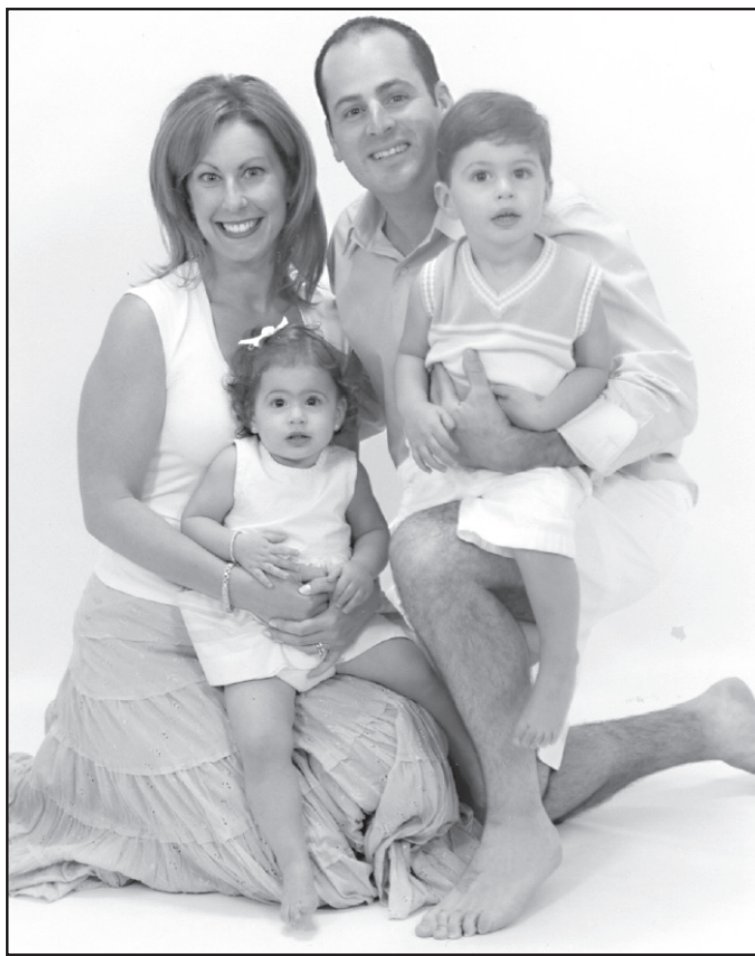
"You only get one chance, one opportunity, to make the right decision, which is important to remember when working with clients," he said. "Once you make a choice, you never look back."

After seven years, Getelman knew he had outgrown his current position and that it was time to follow his own vision.

He explains, "I started to notice that I could contribute something that was lacking in the construction marketplace — a passion and commitment to excellence from start to finish. The best way for me to deliver the type of client service and level of finished product I wanted to provide to my clients was to funnel that energy into starting my own company."

In 2000, he did just that. That same year he also married his wife, a facilities manager for a financial firm, who he had met while out in the field and considers his "good luck charm." He also moved into his present home in Bellmore, Long Island.

Humbly launching Aragon Con-



The Getelman Family

struction with only himself and two employees, a super and a laborer, he set out to create an interior construction firm to thoroughly service the mid-level market. In five short years, he has grown the firm to a \$50 million operation with class A clientele and over 30 construction professionals.

In fact, Getelman personally hand-selected every employee, from the receptionist and team of laborers on up to the executive vice president of operations.

"Since we work inside other company's corporate cultures and occupied spaces, it is important that everyone at Aragon not only knows how to produce a quality product, but also how to handle safety and human resource concerns and communicate effectively within a team environment," said Getelman. "That philosophy permeates our office as well. I employ an 'open door policy' and consider my colleagues to be one big family. We work hard, but we also have fun."

This attention to detail carries over to Getelman's relationships with the more prominent subcontractors with whom Aragon works.

"I fervently believe that you're only as good as your staff and your subs," he said. "Having a rapport with some of the city's largest and

including Lehman Brothers, The Bisys Group Companies, Elizabeth Arden, Macklowe Properties, Equity Office Properties, DHL, Sanders Morris Harris and The New York City Department of Administrative Services (DCAS). The firm's niche work has resulted in remarkable corporate build-outs, boutique retail spaces, industrial structures and multi-level parking facilities.

With additional staff in place, including newly appointed executive vice president and former Equity Office Properties executive Richard Hartz and experienced estimating professional Steven Knoll, Getelman projects \$100 million in revenues over the next two years.

"I continue to add the proper layers to support our growth and meet our goals," he said. "I'd like to continue working for financial firms, landlords and boutique retailers, growing our business by doing what we do best and developing from there. Eighty percent of our business is in Manhattan, which I consider my backyard, and I'd like to continue increasing our presence by focusing on tri-state businesses."

Asked about what else differentiates him from his competitors, Getelman says, in one word, "passion."

Rising before the sun does and logging long days at the office, Getelman takes great pride in delivering a beautiful space no matter what.

Whether it's creating an office or showroom for a client, or elevating his own company to new heights, Getelman sets out to accomplish his goals. The child who once detailed cars for customers now does the same for his interior construction clientele, with the enthusiasm and tenacity that has always been his hallmark.

"I enjoy my work because, with construction, you physically create something for a client," he concludes. "You can literally build dreams."



The Aragon Construction staff