



IREM® From the Front Lines Podcast

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Bonus Episode

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DISI Mentor and Leader

Todd:

Welcome to another edition of From the Front Lines, where we discuss both the day-to-day, and one-of-a-kind issues facing real estate managers. In this special bonus episode of From the Front Lines, we talk to RaN'ae Bacon, CPM®, ARM®, and Maria Richardson. RaN'ae served as a Diversity and Inclusion Succession Initiative, or DISI, Mentor to Maria, who's a DISI Leader. Welcome to the podcast, RaN'ae and Maria.

RaN'ae:

Thank you for having us.

Maria:

Yes, thank you, Todd.

Todd:

So first, can each of you introduce yourself? And let's start with Maria.

Maria:

Sure. I'm Maria Richardson, originally from Chicago, Illinois. I do reside here in Memphis, Tennessee. I am an asset manager for Absolute Storage Investments, and also a CPM® candidate.

RaN'ae:

And I'm RaN'ae Bacon. I am the Senior Regional Vice President for SHP Management Company. We manage affordable housing, that's all we do is affordable housing along the east coast Born and raised here in New Jersey. I am also a CPM® and an ARM®.

Todd:

Now was there an influential person who got you interested or played a role in how you started your career in real estate? Maria, why don't you go first?

Maria:

Um, sure. I would actually say that it wasn't a person, it just was an experience. And as a child, I moved, I moved around a lot. Living in Chicago, I will always see two sides of Chicago in terms of an economic standpoint. I was always daring enough to ask people what they did for a living. And it seemed that people who had financial freedom, or the freedom to live wherever they wanted to live, they always said that they own real estate. So I just thought that how cool that would be to just have somewhere to always, to always call home or always to have somewhere to stay. And it's solid. So it was an experience for me.

Todd:

And how about you RaN'ae?

RaN'ae:

Actually, there was a person. My mom is also in property management. And she retired as Director of Property Management for New York Housing Authority, but worked at various companies and also in the private industry. So it actually started with me working at one of her properties part-time when I finished college to fill in for somebody who was on maternity leave. And that interaction with people, you know, there's never a dull moment in this business. I stuck with it even after that temporary stint and started as a temp office assistant. Then worked my way up here to the position I am in now. And like I said, affordable housing holds a special place for us, you know, to be able to provide housing for people who need it, whether their rent is \$200 or \$2,000. You know, to have them be afforded the same quality housing and dignity, it's just something really rewarding.

Todd:

And RaN'ae, did you have a mentor in your life? Was mentorship, something you knew about or were interested in?

RaN'ae:

Once again, you know, there were several years in my early career in which I would always rely on my mother. But I also had another mentor, his name was Larry Corrid, and he passed away two years ago, he was my ARM[®] instructor when I was seeking my ARM[®] he was just a person. And even after I got my ARM[®], I would call him, I would see him at all the IREM events, I would ask him questions, I would bounce things off of him, you know, what would you do in this situation? What would you do in this situation? He was the one that encouraged me to lean in, as far as IREM, to be involved in the organization. He said you're going to see what it's going to do for you and he was right.

Todd:

RaN'ae, would you do anything different in thinking about your career path and how you've gotten to where you are today?

RaN'ae:

I'll be honest with you, I probably would have gotten involved in IREM earlier. Many people come into property management, not saying hey, I want to grow be a property manager, they kind of fall into it, either through an experience like Maria or through someone they know. And they usually only know the one sector that they get into. And to know the different ways that you could take your career in property management, commercial industrial student housing, affordable housing, luxury housing, to have been introduced to that earlier, would have been great.

Todd:

And how about you, Maria?

Maria:

Absolutely. I wouldn't have let the fear of the unknown get to me as much. I would have started, like, right after the last day of senior year getting into this. Yeah, I just wish, again that I would have been introduced to this at an earlier age. And I think my career path would have skyrocketed by me.

Todd:

And Maria, do you have any advice for someone wanting to enter the industry today? What would you suggest as their first step?

Maria:

Stop doubting yourself, embrace being different or new. Just get in there and be fearless. And note that you are in that role for a reason. Also, use failure as motivation. Don't be scared of failure.

Todd:

RaN'ae, how did you get involved with IREM? And how long have you been a member?

RaN'ae:

I've been a member, let's see if I don't date myself, I've been a member for about 15 years. Like I said, I wish I would have gotten involved earlier. But I've been a member for 15 years. How I got involved with IREM is the company I had worked for, the president of the company was an active member of IREM. And he did encourage the team members to get their ARM[®]. And so that was my first introduction to IREM. And so it was great to work for a company that you know, supported that.

Todd:

How about you, Maria?

Maria:

I actually got involved with IREM because I am a person who believes that if you have enough billboards or commercial presence, you must be calling some shots. So, I've always seen IREM Chicago all the time. And I'm like, "What is this? Who are they?" So I did my research. And I just knew that anything international, I wanted to be a part of. I felt like I never want to be a part of the local bunch, I need to be a part of the big city. So IREM just, yeah, drew me in from that. And I've been a member for about three and a half years now.

RaN'ae:

Being a part of IREM is going to open up your eyes to other opportunities within property management. And I would encourage anyone who is in the property management field to get involved in the education, the networking alone is worth it, but the exposure to the different avenues that you could take your career and the education, you know, it's just the cherry on top as well.

Maria:

And I would say IREM was appealing to me enough to join because, again, the international aspect of it. The fact that if I wanted to go to a different country, and I have IREM as that backup and that support just to verify who I am before I go anywhere else, that is the coolest thing ever. And it just certifies you without you having to give an introduction about who you are, IREM says it for you.

Todd:

Now let's talk about the DISI program. What are some mentorship essentials that make for a successful experience? RaN'ae?

RaN'ae:

The program, once again, to get involvement, you have a collaboration of people who I feel are coming together for a common interest, which is to gain some knowledge and some information that they can take back to their chapters or even their own company. So I think it's essential that you share your just your experiences within property management as a member of a minority group or an underrepresented group so that as you're talking to people within the organization, they can hear some things that are similar. Take back some ideas that they can share with your chapter, or even introducing the companies that they work for. So I think it's really good to just share your experiences. That's essential to being to make the program successful.

Todd:

Maria, how often did you meet? And can you give us an example of what one of your calls was like?

Maria:

All right, RaN'ae and I have such busy schedules that we don't have a frequency. We will email, text. But when we do get on a call, our calls involve, basically she sees she wants to know how I'm doing. She wants to know my next step. She will ask questions. Is there anything that she can do? Or point me in the direction of people who may be a little more local than she is. So we don't really have a set frequency. But our calls always involve my next steps. And just update the next steps. And I'll ask her the same as well.

Todd:

And outside of mentorship Maria, what are some other benefits and highlights of the program that you enjoyed?

Maria:

I enjoyed the Global Summit. It was in Canada. That was my first time to Canada. That was an eye-opening experience, just to interact with other people from other countries. The program also provided a way for me to complete some of my CPM® classes. So I definitely want to highlight that and thank all of the people who donate to the program, because they do help people out like myself. But the benefit of mentorship is seeing someone who looks like me, that has been down the path before. I'm able to ask questions, I'm able to provide feedback and have someone understand the feedback that I provide.

Todd:

RaN'ae, are there any habits or practices that you found to be most helpful for personal and professional growth?

RaN'ae:

One of the things I do is, personal and professional, I journal. You've got to have a plan. And the best way to hold yourself accountable is to write that plan out or say it out loud. I also, outside of meeting with people within the DEI, staying involved with the local chapter holds you accountable. Like Maria said, you get to be around people who have attained a level within this industry that you aspire to, or that you may have already accomplished that can help you with any projects that you may have going on. You're never too old to learn. Like, you have to remember that. You're never too old to learn, no matter where you go within your company, what title you obtain, you've got to be able to network and collaborate with people and always just interact with people who've been there, done that.

Todd:
Maria?

Maria:

I would say habits, practices, read, read, read, read, read, read. Everything is changing. That's the only thing that is consistent. Please don't feel like you know it all. Because you don't until tomorrow comes. Also, for personal growth, I would say always take time out for yourself to reflect on the things that you could have done better. The things that you did well. Also, for professional growth, I would say always put yourself around people who you aspire to be like, because again, if you're around 10 knives, and you're a knife, you only become sharper, but if you put yourself around, wood, you'll only be weaker. So put yourself around people who you aspire to be like and read.

Todd:

Maria, how do you balance your personal and professional commitments?

Maria:

I prioritize. However, I am a great pivot-er, if that's a word. I'm able to pivot. You can't really, you know, sometimes schedules just go out the door. But you have to be able to be prepared and ready for anything that comes your way so that you can pivot to make sure that your commitments are fulfilled. However, if I had to have a structured saying, I would say prioritize and do what means the most.

Todd:

RaN'ae, how do you find that balance?

RaN'ae:

For me, you have to compartmentalize. When I'm at work, I'm at work, and when I'm with family, I'm with family. And you have to delineate those two different times. It is hard, I will say, it is hard. I am the person whose cell phone never cuts off and sits on the nightstand right next to me, but you have to start with little things. You know, try not to answer emails on the weekends if you don't have to, or when you're with your family, you know, turn the cell phone upside down. But as you grow in this business, learn to partner up with people who can help collaborate with people. Don't be a micromanager, work hard, but understand work hard should also be balanced with playing hard. You'll just be a better person for it.

Todd:

Maria, do you have any goals coming up for your career?

Maria:

Yes. Right now, I am a licensed realtor in Tennessee and Mississippi. Also, I am in the process of taking my CPM[®] exam, so I have a goal to pass that. But my personal goals would be that I make enough money in real estate, to develop land for veterans and seniors to have somewhere to stay that is safe and affordable for them. But yeah, that's my goals.

Todd:

And RaN'ae, what advice do you have for people looking to stay relevant and successful in their careers in the long term?

RaN'ae:

Get involved with IREM. Our designations are highly recognized in this industry. When they see CPM® on your resume, it just puts you at that next level. Stay involved, take advantage of the education and the networking opportunities that are afforded to you. And, you know, like Maria said, you're never too old to learn something, read a lot, and invest in your career in the time and effort to make it a long-term career and to make it a successful one. You really have to be involved in networking and collaborate with other people. That's very important. And then like I said, make sure that you are at the forefront of the knowledge of the business by taking advantage of the educational opportunities that IREM offers.

Todd:

Thanks for joining the podcast, Maria and RaN'ae.

Maria:

Thank you.

RaN'ae:

Thank you for having us.

Todd:

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