

PROFILE OF THE WEEK

Lawyer who's an expert at shop talk

By JASON TURCOTTE

Ronald Kremnitzer says it's the experiences that shape who you are as an attorney.

With exposure to such an eclectic mix of deals, the Pryor Cashman partner and Real Estate Group co-chair — with more than 25 years in the industry — has added several layers of unique transactional work that makes him one of the city's most dynamic deal-making attorneys.

Assisting on complex retail leases, commercial office leases, hotel sales, gargantuan multifamily acquisitions and high-end condo sales, Kremnitzer has seen — and continues to see — it all. And even during the quietest times in the commercial sector, he's making things happen.

Most recently he represented Mario Batali, Joseph Bastianich and Lidia Matticchio Bastianich in their 44,232 s/f lease at the former International Toy Center site, overlooking Madison Square Park. There his clients plan to open the renowned Eataly restaurant and market (which already has locations in Turin, Milan, Bologna and Tokyo). The plans also include an artisan foods market and a 4,500 s/f rooftop beer garden serving up beer brewed onsite.

Undaunted by the complexity of deals, Kremnitzer says the "numbers intensive" nature of transactional work fueled his interest in real estate, along with the fact he was exposed to the industry at an early age.



Ronald Kremnitzer, co-chair of real estate Pryor Cashman

"My family was involved in the ownership of properties in Manhattan, Queens and a little bit in the Bronx, so I've always had a passion for real estate," said Kremnitzer, who was raised in Queens.

After graduating from law school at Syracuse University, Kremnitzer spent six years handling litigation with another firm before joining Pryor Cashman, where he has worked since 1987. There, he has been immersed in a wide range of transactional activity.

"Up until a couple of years ago, the big thing I was doing was multifam-

ily acquisitions," Kremnitzer said. "We had one client buy over 800 buildings."

In fact, that same client purchased 100 of those buildings in a single day. Kremnitzer recalled receiving a phone call from his client to meet with a seller's attorney. After 11 hours of negotiating — well into the wee hours of the morning — and a 75-page contract that included complex financing from multiple mezzanine lenders, he closed the deal at 4:35 a.m.

The key to Kremnitzer's success as an attorney is that he zeroes in on both the practical and theoretical language. He said theoretical language in a contract can cost a client thousands of dollars in litigation. He aims to minimize that risk by creating as many "safety nets" as possible for his clients.

While his clients run the gamut, he's cultivated a strong niche with "foodie" related retailers. He recently handled the sublease at 355 West 14th Street for Scarpetta restaurant (which opened last year); he's assisted in a number of deals for Lenny's Deli, Duane Reade and Bed, Bath & Beyond — impressive considering the citywide slowdown in transactional volume.

"I would say the volume is extremely curtailed; there's no rush [to buy] anymore," Kremnitzer said. "People are much more reluctant. And new construction? I think it's dead and if not, it's on life support."

Nevertheless, retail clients have kept Kremnitzer busy. Working with a number of clients looking to take advantage of lower rents and expand their in-

fluence in the New York market, he said there's plenty of eye-catching opportunities for tenants and great deals are to be had even along the most coveted of corridors — even Madison Avenue.

Also knowledgeable of the multi-family sector, Kremnitzer continues to closely follow the Stuy Town situation, which he feels will have strong ripple effects in the housing sector and ultimately take its toll on building values at all J51 properties.

Kremnitzer not always advises clients from an attorney's perspective but as an

investor as well. "Everyone has their own magic when they invest. For me, I have a common interest with one of my main clients and that's multifamilies — but not the super luxury," he said, emphasizing the importance of investing in properties with upside.

On the residential side Kremnitzer's guided high-profile clients Dan Akroyd and Martha Stewart; closed deals in the \$5-30 million range; and, most recently, assisted with a client's successful conversion of 11 buildings on Riverside Drive.

While transaction volume on both fronts is down, Kremnitzer sees an improving 2010 market has remained active nonetheless. As fundamentals continue to improve, he's hoping the common sense of players in the game does as well. But wanting a return to a healthy market, rather than one of excess, may prove no more than wishful thinking.

"I'm hoping it will be a more sane market," he said. "But if you look at history, after a couple of years people just get stupid again." ■

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