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Traits Of A Successful Real Estate Investor



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The traits of successful real estate investor often surface early in life then evolve to play a fundamental role in a career. Here's three investors/developers who have stayed in the game with big wins.



Fortune International Group

Edgardo Defortuna, CEO and Founder of Fortune International Group

Edgardo Defortuna's [Fortune International Group](#) is recognized as a leader in high-end luxury real estate throughout South Florida, Latin America and Europe. Defortuna came to Miami in 1983 from Argentina with a degree in electrical and mechanical engineering starting his company that year. Today, Fortune International Group is noted for shaping Miami's dynamic skyline with luxury projects. Its portfolio of developments includes Jade Residences at Brickell Bay, Jade Beach, Jade Ocean, Auberge Beach Residences & Spa Fort Lauderdale, The Ritz-Carlton Sunny Isles Beach and Jade Signature.

For Defortuna, determination is what counts. “When I want to get something done, I am very determined.” He points to the project, Jade Residences at Brickell Bay. “I decided it was the building that would position us as top of line Miami luxury developers, then 9/11 happened. Rather than lying down seeing what would happen economically we built a sales center so buyers who had reservations could see were moving ahead and sign sales contracts,” Defortuna said. “We took some risk and it paid off.”

Listen to Paul Habibi, Continuing lecturer of Finance and Real estate at UCLA Anderson Graduate School of Management. “Successful investors and developers must always use good judgement. You can’t be driven by ego,” says Habibi an investor himself for the past 22 years. “If you let your ambition get ahead of yourself, you will take risks that may grow your investments in the upcycle but will take you out in the down times.”



Miami Worldcenter
Art Falcone at Miami Worldcenter

As Founder and Managing Principal of [Miami Worldcenter](#), one of the largest master-planned urban environments in the United States, Art Falcone knows about controversy while maintaining and executing a vision. Miami Worldcenter encompasses more than 30 acres across nine blocks in the heart of downtown Miami. Upon completion, the entitled project allows for more than 15 million square feet of mixed-use multi-billion-dollar development, including retail, restaurant and entertainment, hotel, residential, and office. “With Miami Worldcenter, I had the vision 14 years ago of what I thought would work. It started with an auction property next to the Miami arena.”

Falcone's career began in the food service industry. At 22, he became the youngest operator of a McDonald's franchise ultimately growing that to more than 100 McDonald's, Wendy's and other family-style restaurants throughout New York, Florida and California. "Growing up in Queens, I was very sports orientated which gave me a big leg up in being competitive and wanting to win," Falcone said.

Win he did indeed. In 2005, Falcone sold his homebuilding and land development company Transeastern Properties, Inc for \$1.6 billion. "When you come from nothing you have to work a lot harder to get ahead. Starting from zero you are always the underdog which led me to define the traits for my real estate business."



KAR Properties
Shahab Karmely, Principal, KAR Properties

In 1978, at age 16, Shahab Karmely born in Tehran, immigrated to the United States with his family. Political circumstances forced Karmely's family to exile to Europe for several years, they then returned to the United States.

Today, Karmely, through his New York-based real estate investment and development firm, [KAR Properties](#) has acquired a significant real estate portfolio. Assets, in KAR projects in New York, Miami and Los Angeles total over 5 million square feet. In Miami development of two luxury condominium projects, One River Point and 2000 Ocean demonstrate Karmely's confidence in Miami's future.

In 1985, Karmely negotiated his first deal which he calls, “probably the best deal I ever made” He purchased an upper east side townhouse for \$1 million on a handshake. “I was standing on the sidewalk in the pouring rain and negotiating. The tenants were gone and there were structural issues. I only had \$100,000 for a deposit. The deal was I would I get the financing and move forward without even an engineer looking at the property,” Karmely recalls.

“I was naive but believed in the building and the block. I was totally open to taking risks which I probably wouldn’t do now. Today, I would over analyze it,” he concludes. Today the building is home to a number of art dealers.

On the flip side perseverance when a deal goes sideways then moving forward with lessons learned, Karmely believes is key to his success.

No surprise persistence and determination are mandatory to have staying power in an industry where many make millions only then to lose their fortune.