



Father Knows Best

A Brief Look Into Some of the Father-Son Relationships of SIOR

What is SIOR's Story?

Stories engage us. Stories move us. Stories encourage us. Stories create an experience. So what's SIOR's story? You've seen the marketing materials, no doubt—the pamphlets, flyers, and emails with phrases like: “Over three-thousand industry-leading professionals worldwide!” and “Billions of dollars' worth of business!” And yes, while these statistics are accurate, and necessary, and powerful, they are also surface—they don't tell SIOR's story. Every organization has numbers, statements, facts, movies, etc. on why they are the best. Yet one very important thing that is apparent after spending any amount of time with an SIOR member, is that those that carry the designation are the best, and the power of the father-son stories within the organization is evidence of this.

The stories of these men exemplify the intimacy of SIOR and its membership—of the bond between family, friends, and organization. It's not uncommon to see second and third generation SIOs—members who have chosen to make the organization part of their family—members who have passed their family business, and SIOR, down from generation to generation. The SIOR network is built on these friendships, and families, and the trust that encompasses them both.

The SIOR Trust

When a father passes something down to his son, there is an element of trust that goes along with it. As a father you have spent your life

building or maintaining an item or responsibility, and by handing it down to your son, you are entrusting that responsibility to your children. To the fathers and sons in SIOR, this is a deeply personal topic of discussion.

Says **Milt Podolsky, SIOR Retired**, of Podolsky Northstar | CORFAC International, Riverwoods, IL, “I remember at one point at one of my first conferences with Steve there was a research done, which interviewed ten men in the real estate industry. Out of the ten men, I was the only one who trusted his sons enough to successfully transfer leadership to them. It was the only way—I can't even understand the others—you can't grow a family business without eventually letting go of the reigns and letting the young men who have helped develop it take over, or else it has been a failed operation.”

“All three of his children came into the business, and he trained all three of us to be president,” adds his son, **Steve Podolsky, SIOR**, principal at Podolsky Northstar | CORFAC International, Riverwoods, IL.

“Yeah right,” chuckles Milt. “They all thought they were president the day they came in.”

To achieve this level of trust is uncommon, however, and while it seemed vital and constant within all the father-son relationships in SIOR, the way through which it was achieved varied from family to family. While the Podolskys were involved in the family business from the start, **Hugh Zimmer, SIOR Retired, CRE, RICS**, chief executive officer of Zimmer Real Estate Services, Kansas City, MO, and his son **David Zimmer, SIOR, FRICS**, president of Zimmer

Real Estate Services, Kansas City, MO, took a different, more “tough love”, approach.

“David came home for Christmas during his senior year at TCU, and I remember a conversation where he said, ‘Dad, I just can’t wait to come back to Kansas City, and work for you at Zimmer!’ I think David will also recall my response, ‘Well, David, that’s just fantastic...but there are currently no openings at Zimmer,’” laughs Hugh.

“My dad told me to pick three cities where he would like to go and work, and that he would help me get interviews. I ended up in Dallas, and after five years I was able to build a credible record for myself. After those five years when I moved back to Kansas City and was welcomed with open arms,” recounts David.



David Zimmer, SIOR, FRICS; and father, Hugh Zimmer, SIOR Retired, CRE, RICS

Doing Business, the Right Way.

Part of this trust comes from having a sense of “the right way to do business.” From its beginnings, SIOR has been on the forefront of defining the standards of ethics and the standards of practice in the commercial real estate industry. The strength of the SIOR network depends on these principles—as does the strength of SIOR father-son relationships.

“We can rely on each other’s sense of how to do business—the ethics and standards of practice mean something to my son and I,” says **George Charbonneau, SIOR Retired, CRE**, senior vice president at Cassidy Turley, Indianapolis, IN.

George’s son, **Milt Charbonneau, SIOR, CCIM**, senior vice president, principal of Cassidy Turley, Somerset, NJ, believes that the values his father had passed down to him from SIOR are essential in his business practices, and will be an important part of his daughter’s character as she enters the workforce. “I have a daughter in college, and my suspicion is that she will not go into real estate. However, she will enter the job market understanding the power of a network that works with you and for you, and she will certainly be using the same skills and overall sense of how to do business that I have learned, applied, and passed down from SIOR,” he adds.

SIOR and Family

The intimacy of SIOR is also demonstrated by its presence in the family of its members. For those who have fathers in the organization, memories of SIOR oftentimes go as far back as

childhood, well before the start of their professional careers.

Milt Charbonneau recounts his earliest memory of the organization, “SIOR was around since I was a kid. I remember in the kitchen of my house growing up, the SIOR directory was always right next to the phone book. I never quite processed what it was, but I remember my dad regularly thumbing through it making calls from the old rotary phone.”

David Zimmer shares his memories of his father’s involvement with SIOR from High School, “I remember my parents leaving twice, sometimes three times a year to go to conferences and coming home and talking about them—talking about conversations and other families they had caught up with, and committee work. I also remember seeing pictures of him [Hugh Zimmer] wearing a white dinner jacket at what appeared to be very formal events. It sparked my curiosity.”

During his first conference David found out what his dad had been doing all those years, “I remember at my first conference was in Colorado Springs at The Broadmoor. I was wearing a tuxedo at a table full of men, and the national officers and their wives were announced while they entered the ballroom in a formal grand procession. I was much younger than everyone else in the room, and I remember thinking, ‘What am I doing here?’” laughs David. “Experiencing what my dad had been doing all those years was something else.”

In the Podolsky household, real estate was an every-day topic of discussion. “I got into this business through osmosis,” laughs **Randy Podolsky, SIOR**, managing principal of Podolsky Northstar | CORFAC International in Riverwoods, IL. “Dad [Milt Podolsky] lived, breathed, and ate real estate. He was very good at what he did, a hard worker, and 100 percent engaged in it. He talked about real estate a lot around the dinner table, and I even recall some Sunday mornings when I was younger, prior to a family activity, we would go for a ride and look at industrial buildings around O’Hare,” he shares.

Growing up, Randy was cheerfully engrossed in the world of real estate. “Since Randy was younger, when we took trips it was like an adventure—he kept listening, and kept asking more and more questions. It eventually became like candy to him,” recounts Milt.



Milt Podolsky, SIOR Retired



Randy Podolsky, SIOR



Steve Podolsky, SIOR

Defining the Organization

There is a pervasive sense of pride amongst the older generation of SIORs—pride in their success, the successes of their children, and the success of SIOR. From its beginnings, SIOR has seen an evolution, from what was essentially a social club, to industry leaders in terms of ethics, and production. The older generations of SIORs were actively involved in this transition, and their involvement in the organization became a vehicle for not only making personal relationships, but passing down the value of SIOR to their sons. Like their success in real estate, SIOR was something they personally had a hand in progressing.



George Charbonneau, SIOR Retired, CRE; and son, Milt Charbonneau, SIOR, CRE

George Charbonneau recounts his time on the education committee in the early seventies, “We worked with two professors from the University of Connecticut to write a textbook called *Industrial Real Estate*, and we would come to Washington, DC, to work with the authors, staff, and the other committee members. From these experiences we created two courses, prerequisites for admission into SIOR, one of which I taught for eight years. This was all in an effort to make the Society a more professional organization—to define the industry’s code of ethics, and its standards of practice. This committee work was where most of my friendships within the organization were born. These were the people that my wife and I stay in touch with to this day, forty years later.”

The courses George Charbonneau had a hand in designing are the same courses his son Milt, and every member, completed to become a part of SIOR.

Milt Podolsky was on the same committee. “When I first became involved it was a slow moving organization—it was a social club. I can’t remember how many weekends I spent in Washington, working to publish *Industrial Real Estate*. We took it upon us to change SIOR—to get the industry, and the corporations to respect us, and the designation.”

Steve, his son, adds, “When I first became involved in SIOR I had to take the two required courses, and sure enough Dad [Milt] was one of the instructors. My time in those classes inspired me to follow in his footsteps and become and I ended up teaching in SIOR for twenty years.”

He continues, “My early involvement in SIOR was strange, because I didn’t want to be known as Milt Podolsky’s son for my entire career. But what I quickly learned is that although my father’s name would open doors for me, if I didn’t show the talent and moxy to succeed, the doors wouldn’t stay open for long. So when I came in I began teaching and never looked back. And today, there are probably a lot of SIORs who know Milt as Steve’s dad.”

“That’s true. And also true for Randy,” adds Milt.

“That’s not true. Nobody knows Randy,” quips Randy.

A Final Word, Looking Back

We all know the professional value of becoming an SIOR. Yet the memories most frequented have little to do with this value. Instead, you will find the intimate moments fashioned by decades of friendships and family.

Hugh Zimmer recounts, “There are too many fond memories to count—memories of conventions, of being with my wife and other SIORs, and their wives sitting around pools, and restaurants, and hotels and enjoying some wonderful friendships. While I am no longer active in the organization today, a month doesn’t go by where my wife and I won’t recall an event from SIOR, or a relationship, or a fond memory of friends that we have had over the years.”

Milt Podolsky recollects, “There’s not just one fond memory if you have been an active member from 1961-1988. There were so many memories—so many friends. It is a great organization, with great people, great families, and great class. It was all enjoyable, and to see the organization grow was exciting. During the time I spent working on the organization, and creating Industrial Real Estate, there was no compensation for the flights, for the time we took to put into it—we did it because we loved it. It was just our life. So did I have one fondest memory? No. I have a lot of them.”

George Charbonneau adds, “When my son and I are together, we don’t grouse about anything and that’s always nice. During conference time we would spend time together and even room together. Since we now live 600 miles apart we want to know what each other is working on. But I think the biggest thing is that Milt has worked hard to follow in my footsteps; he’s put a lot of effort into the organization and gotten a lot out of it—like I have. Those are my fondest memories—catching up with my son.” 

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