



Alrazi Ballal.

Alrazi Ballal, 33

Director of Operations and Finance at Plaza Construction

Change is a good thing. And Alrazi Ballal has seen his share of changes.

Ballal immigrated to the United States in 2006 following his college graduation. He is a native of Wad Ballal in the Sudan and earned a bachelor's degree in architectural engineering in 2006 from King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia, before getting his masters in construction management from Polytechnic University in Brooklyn (known today as Polytechnic Institute of New York University) in 2008.

Late last year, Ballal, who had been with Plaza Construction since March 2014, switched from a project manager to the financing and office management sides of the business. (He also has a background as an engineer.)

As a director of operations and finance, he is responsible for training new hires, ensuring accurate financial reporting, assisting the chief financial officer with establishing the annual budget and publishing monthly reports. Within the last year, he has successfully trained more than 350 employees in project and financial

management.

"Initially, the move was driven by a desire to know more about the financial side of the business in order to become a better project manager," Ballal said. "Honestly, I wasn't completely thrilled by the fact that I was going to spend the majority of my time away from the field. Over time and as I started analyzing more projects, I developed a keen interest in the financial and the operational side of the business after I noticed its direct impact on the project as well as the company's overall financial health."

—Liam La Guerre

Michael Bennardo, 30

Director of Construction at Legacy Builders Developers Corp.

Although Michael Bennardo works in the family business, that doesn't mean he went right to the top of his uncle's company, Legacy Builders Developers Corp. The firm was in its infancy when a 20-year-old Bennardo started at the company.

At that point (nearly 10 years ago) the company, headed



Michael Bennardo.

by his uncle, John Bennardo, was renovating apartments in Queens and Harlem.

Bennardo started out as a driver and laborer in Queens. He worked his way up through a handful of positions, eventually leading to his current role as the director of construction.

Although Bennardo grew up in Arizona, a good share of his family was based in New York, and he was drawn to join the business in the Big Apple. His brother, Tom, also works at Legacy Builders, in the estimating department.

In the last year, he has overseen construction on 350 units of Carnegie Park, the 31-story luxury condominium building developed by Related Companies at 200 East 94th Street between Second and Third Avenues.

"I love working with a design team and a developer in helping to make their vision on plans and renderings become reality," Bennardo said. "I love the adrenaline that takes over when you're working late nights and weekends to meet deadlines and pass inspections. Most of all, I love the rewarding feeling of success at the completion of a project when you can look back and see an old dilapidated building transform into a beautiful new space."—Terence Cullen