

# Why getting out of your comfort zone is so important: a Q&A with David Ariola, SIOR

By Jason West, SIOR, President of the Chicago Chapter of SIOR and Executive Managing Director, Cushman & Wakefield

Apple Computers changed the tech world by applying its mantra “Think Different.” Like many adages from the technology world, there’s a lot commercial real estate professionals can learn from those two words. David Ariola, SIOR, President and Founder of Chicago Realty Company, sat down with me recently and explained his approach to business, networking—and differentiating himself as an independent broker.

Ariola, a veteran office broker in the Chicago area, founded Chicago Realty Company in 2005 after many years in the business. His goal: provide real estate services on his own time, his own terms. Part of running a business on his own terms is to do things that others don’t think to do.

**Jason West, SIOR:** What’s so important about networking in different circles?

**David Ariola, SIOR:** The national network of SIOR connects me to people across the country. Going to the events gets me out of my regular circle of other local office brokers—I can mine ideas and real estate knowledge from other geographies and other sectors, like industrial. It gives me variety, and that helps me bring connections and ideas to my clients.

**West:** Do your clients in the office sector recognize the SIOR designation?

**Ariola:** Absolutely—actually in most areas of the country, there’s an even split of office brokers and industrial specialists. While here in Chicago we’re still weighted to industrial, it’s the same process, the same rigor around transaction volume to qualify



David Ariola

for the designation. Everything is just perception in the market. Particularly as an independent broker, I value something that quantifies my experience, and lends credibility to my business. People want to know they’re making the right choice.

**West:** So when our programs dig deep into industrial, do you just check your phone?

**Ariola:** (laughs) You know, it’s all commercial real estate at the end of the day. We’re not as different as you might think. Speakers who address innovation or financing, and events like the one we had with the Chicago Bears, are useful for everyone.

Also, I’m always looking for opportunities and a few of them may include both office and industrial requirements, so there’s lots of Chicago-area SIOs to help me with that. It expands my capabilities and definitely my breadth.

**West:** How important is trust, when you’re connecting beyond your day-to-day colleagues?

**Ariola:** Well, my business is just me and an assistant, so all the networking I do

is beyond my office—that’s how I make connections that help me serve my clients, and offer the expertise and experience they need, even though I’m not with a big firm. The connections with other SIOs are invaluable, because we’ve gotten to know each other over the years, and we trust one another. Recently, I connected with the son of one of my fellow SIOs, and I’m now helping him with his real estate search. That kind of referral doesn’t happen outside a network where everyone has a high level of trust.

It’s ironic—but if you’re going outside your comfort zone, it’s important to have a high comfort level. I like to go where others don’t; that’s the way to make valuable and unique connections, and help clients accomplish their real estate goals.

Interested in learning more about the Chicago Chapter of SIOR, and what it has to offer office brokers? Come to the September 26th SIOR Open House, in the new Cushman & Wakefield downtown Chicago offices, and open to the public.

*Jason West, SIOR, is the 2017 President of the Chicago Chapter of SIOR, and is Executive Managing Director at Cushman & Wakefield. This column is the second in a series exploring advice from leaders in the Midwest brokerage industry.*

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