

Next Gen Employee Profile: Chris Kirles

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Each month, *units* profiles one of our industry's rising stars to give you a preview of multifamily's bright future.

Name: Chris Kirles

Title: President, Construction

Company: Flaherty & Collins Properties

Years in the Industry: 10

Volunteer Positions: Urban Land Institute (ULI) U.S. Multifamily Council and Indiana District Council Advisory Board Member, The Penrod Society.

units: How did you get involved in the apartment industry?

Kirles: I was hired by Flaherty & Collins Properties (F&C) as a Development Associate immediately after graduating from college.

I grew up around a family-owned jewelry business that my grandfather started in 1951, but had some early exposure to real estate development through an uncle, which sparked my interest in the development business.

I graduated from Indiana University with a degree in business-finance and spent several weeks networking with real estate companies and industry professionals to help me better understand the real estate path I wanted to pursue.

Ultimately I accepted an opportunity with Flaherty & Collins Properties. F&C was looking to hire a recent graduate who they could groom into a developer. I was optimistic about the long-term outlook for apartments, and also felt I could add a different, younger perspective to the business since I was similar in age to many of our renters.

units: What's been the most surprising thing about this field?

Kirles: The amount of work and different people it takes for a project most surprised me when I first started. There was a time when I would look at a building and did not think much past the construction aspect—as if it just came out of the ground with a few bricks and sticks. From the time an idea is conceived to opening the doors to first residents, there are more than 2,000 people involved, and each person plays a critical role in bringing the project to fruition.

units: What's the best piece of career advice you've received?

Kirles: Always have an opinion and trust your gut.

units: Is there anything you wish you would have done differently at the start of your career?

Kirles: No, but I would strongly encourage people to start thinking about their career before graduating from college and to take advantage of internship opportunities.

units: Are there any misconceptions that older generations seem to have about young professionals?

Kirles: Younger generations are sometimes discounted because of age, which can be mistaken for inexperience. There are certain characteristics about Gen Y that are much different from older generations.

Organizations that recognize this and embrace the ideas of today's young leaders and work to combine the talents and experience of both younger and older generations will be better positioned.

To be considered for a future Next Gen column, please contact [Lauren Boston](#) at 703-797-0678.

