



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

A SIT DOWN WITH
DREW KISAK, ARM®
Ollie at Baumhaus

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I had the pleasure of sitting down with newly-inducted IREM ARM (Accredited Residential Manager) Drew Kiskak, on a hectic Friday afternoon to pick his brain about work, life and current events. Drew holds the distinction of being the Western PA chapter's first and only virtual inductee, so our meeting by Zoom was fitting.

Like many, Drew's path to property management was by happy coincidence. He had graduated from Penn State in 2009 with his Bachelor's in Hospitality Management and a minor in Sociology. He worked in hospitality after graduation, which was satisfying at first, but as a man about to be married, the long hours and changing schedule held less and less appeal. In 2017, he struck up the fateful conversation with some long-term guests of his hotel. In jest, he asked when they would have a job open for him. As fate would have it, those guests owned Ollie, a co-living company based out of New York, and were branching out into the Pittsburgh market and building Ollie at Baumhaus.

Ollie at Baumhaus would be a prototype for property management by offering conventional rental units, as well as furnished units and coliving suites. Beyond housing, Ollie at Baumhaus would offer its residents housekeeping and an active community for social engagement. Given Drew's background in hospitality management, it was a perfect fit. Drew began with Ollie at Baumhaus as their first Hospitality Manager, responsible for implementing and providing feedback on brand standards. Drew took such an active role in the development and growth of Ollie at Baumhaus that he earned a promotion to General Manager in November 2018.

As Drew talks about his work life, one can tell how much he thoroughly enjoys his profession. The best part of working for Ollie at Baumhaus, according to Drew, is the people with whom he works, both staff and residents. It was obvious from my conversation with Drew, as people passed through his workspace that he has a strong bond with his colleagues. To an outside observer, the work culture was close and playful.

Drew's promotion came with the recommendation to continue to nurture his talents with supplemental certifications and education, which is how Drew found IREM. Drew's experience with IREM has been exceptional. He describes his process of completing his ARM certification as straight-forward. While he enjoyed all of his coursework because it was hands-on knowledge that could be immediately applied to his current position, the Ethics course was his favorite.

Drew has a strong set of ethics that he holds himself to, as well. They are based on trust, inclusiveness and dedication. Inclusiveness is a tenet very near and dear to his heart. It sparked for him when he worked as a Teaching Assistant for his Race Relations class. Drew has found that most importantly, people - regardless if they are a client, a colleague, or new acquaintance - just want to feel heard. Drew has navigated some of his toughest client interactions by sitting down with the individual, giving them a forum to completely speak their mind and conducting an open conversation so that all sides are heard and an amicable solution is found. Through this practice, he learned one of his most important property management lessons, which is "Saying 'No' isn't a bad thing." When 'no' is said with strong reasoning and compassion for the other side of the conversation, it is more readily received and doesn't exacerbate the problem.

Outside of the office, Drew enjoys a variety of hobbies. He finds that he is math-oriented and enjoys problem-solving and puzzles. In particular, he enjoys tournament-style Texas Hold'em Poker and Euchre. He likes it because he's fascinated not just by the analytics and game of chance aspects, but because of the opportunity to read people, get to know them, find common ground, and learn new perspectives.

Something that was surprising to learn about Drew was that he started his college career in an engineering program and tutored college math. He even took a 400 level accounting course his senior year of college... for fun!