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## Business Management CPE's Hot Brokers

### Jonathan Ahron



Darrell Levonian saw a lot of similarities between himself and the job candidate in front of him: self-motivation, assertiveness, an entrepreneurial nature. And, oh yeah--Jonathan Ahron was a fellow University of Southern California alumnus.

In early 2004, Levonian, now president of brokerage for the Charles Dunn Co., hired Ahron as an associate to fill a void on the firm's roster: negotiating sales of high-end storefront retail in West Hollywood and Beverly Hills.

By 2006, Ahron and his team had chalked up 30 percent of the brokerage arm's West Hollywood sales for the year, and they repeated the feat in 2007. Deals on which he worked in 2006 and 2008 also made the *California Real Estate Journal's* Deals of the Year, and in those years, he was also the company's top-earning broker.

"He is loosening these properties and then getting the new owners to create branding on (those) streets ... which makes them a little recession proof," said Albert Mizrahi, owner of a real estate firm that purchased four

properties on Larchmont Avenue in March 2008 in one of the Deals of the Year.

The result: Five years after he scored his first real estate job, Ahron has just been promoted again, to senior managing director. "We gave him a business plan, and his earnings just multiply year after year," Levonian said.

Charles Dunn, and Ahron by proxy, delves into database development and mastering markets. Having grown up in Santa Monica, he knew the area when he joined the firm, and he came on board at a time when storefront retail was just heating up. Still, 80 to 90 percent of the deals he brokers are off-market transactions, for which he not only identifies a buyer and seller but also often convinces the buyer to sell to begin with.

Next up is taking that matchmaking skill to more leasing transactions. He knows it will not be an easy transition, but after struggling to define what it would take, he came up with a simple, Charles Dunn-like answer: "It's the same as selling. You just create a new database, and you have to sell tenants on how they're going to make money, how they're going to get a good return on investment."

To make those databases work, of course, Ahron has to stay familiar with the people in them, such as Janet Gullixson, who is a founding partner in Gullixson & Kennedy L.L.P. and a graduate of USC rival the University of California at Los Angeles. In 2007, her law firm and other longtime tenants had to leave GE Real Estate's newly purchased 8383 Wilshire Blvd., and Ahron uncovered an unlisted office property in the about-to-explode Culver City submarket that just fit her needs.

The time he took to find the property, convince the owner to sell, usher the deal through escrow and even help Gullixson obtain financing is what impressed her. What will keep her using him as a broker, though, are the personal touches: the phone calls, the greeting cards. He even bought himself a UCLA sweatshirt to show Gullixson how far he would go for her. Her response: "Those are the things that bring you back to people."—*Amanda Metcalf*