

Make the Most of It

The visitor was well-dressed and carried a briefcase. He flopped down opposite a pleasant-looking middle-aged man in a white shirt and tie. After a quick look out the office door, the visitor unbuttoned his coat, took a deep breath, and leaned back.

"I'm here to get you started on a deal I've been working on for the last eight months."

The scene was a room in the commercial closing department of a big city office of a major title insurer. On the company side of the desk, the man in shirt and tie was a long-time veteran of complex commercial settlements, a senior closing officer whose specialty was office complexes and shopping centers.

The visitor was an attorney and developer with impressive commercial real estate credentials. He'd bought, sold, and financed properties, developed a few choice ones himself, and advised on many others. He was sharp, one of the sharpest, a major player.

The two knew each other well. More than a few big deals had closed right here.

The visitor pulled his briefcase up to his lap and took out two heavy file folders.

"Before we get started, let me tell you something."

"OK, shoot."

"There are maybe eight or nine sides to this deal. Partners, lenders, builders, anchor tenants, you know, everybody. And there were four or five others – who will be nameless – who wanted to be part of it who didn't make it for one reason or another. Guys who wanted their names to be in here, but they aren't," he said, patting the files.

"Sounds normal," said the closing officer.

"Yeah, it is normal," said the customer, "and let me tell you something about these folks. Every one of them had some kind of agenda going. Every one, as they talked to me, was scheming to figure out how he could use what we were talking about for his own purposes."

"Also sounds normal."

"OK, but let me remind you of something. You and your company are the only ones in this deal who *don't* have some kind of other agenda going. I don't have to worry about being seen here. I don't have to look around and see whether somebody's watching us or listening to us. I don't have to sit here and wonder what you guys are going to do with what you learn from me this morning."

"That's true."

"You have no idea how reassuring that is to me, and how valuable. If you don't know that, you should. If you don't make the most of it, you should. If you don't resist like crazy any attempts to change that, to go, let's say, 'big time' somehow, you should. As I say, if you don't make the most of this, you need to." ♣

Condell Private Letter No. 204

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Published by The Fort Sherman Group Inc, PO Box 6168, Hilton Head Island, SC 29938. Fax 843-686-6515

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