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## *Jim Lighthizer, Principal of Chesapeake Real Estate Group, Implores NAIOP Maryland Developing Leaders to “Endlessly Pursue Self-discovery”*

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Leveraging a successful sixteen year career as a commercial real estate brokerage professional, Jim Lighthizer recognized the enormous opportunities and endless possibilities of presenting attractive real estate deals to institutional investors. This motivated him in 2005 to found **Chesapeake Real Estate Group, LLC**, a full-service commercial real estate operating company that includes brokerage, property management and development services. Lighthizer recently traced his professional background, along with “lessons learned,” before the NAIOP Maryland Developing Leaders group,



which is comprised of members aged 35 years and younger. Among the takeaways of the interactive session, held at Birroteca Restaurant, included Jim’s insights about:

**Pursuing self-discovery:** Everyone’s journey is different. And, that is OK. It is critically important to identify what you are good at and also understand what you are not so good at. Then, work hard to overcome the deficiencies. I strive to improve as a leader, real estate professional, husband, father and friend.

**Hitting the ceiling:** Recognize when you are close to hitting the professional ceiling. That is, you’ve risen high enough within your organization where you cannot go any higher. When that happens, get out and expand your horizons. For some, it is desirable to just “remain in the middle of the fairway” and enjoy a high quality of life. I understand that philosophy, but that was never OK for me, and wanted to continue challenge myself.

**Figure out your competitive advantage:** I was the son of a County Executive (Anne Arundel County Executive O. James Lighthizer). That label had good points and bad, but I started to use my recognizable last name as an advantage. It took me some time to understand that. I started to become more out-going and engaged with the media. In addition, I attended a seminar and the speaker pointed out people needed to be different than the majority of the group. “That’s an old guy. There is a woman.” I started to think, “what is up with this guy?” Then came his point. Use these differences as your competitive advantage to set you apart from others.

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**Exploit your strengths:** While playing basketball, I had a slight height advantage of the person that was guarding me. During a time-out, one of my team mates suggested I start “posting this player up” (basketball lingo for establishing a position in the “low post” under the net to take advantage of a smaller defender and try to score a basket). It was only a pick-up game, and I thought this was not appropriate. But then I thought differently, because our team was losing! Height was an advantage to me and more importantly our team, and I needed to use it. In business, I try to use every advantage I have.

**Starting in a “down” market:** It is significantly better to start your career when the economy is not doing well. Think about it. When the commercial real estate market is booming, leasing professionals perform as “order takers.” There is not much selling to be done. When the market is performing poorly, these same leasing professionals need to work extra hard and be creative in order to make it. And, they learn valuable lessons that they will utilize throughout their careers.

**100% attendance:** As a young professional, and even now, attend every meeting you can to soak up new information. Be a participant at space planning sessions. Go to meetings with attorneys. Never think you are too busy to learn something new.

**No replacement for hard work:** Over the years I have worked hard, about 11-13 hours each day. This work ethic - over a long period of time - positions me in an advantageous position because this investment continually builds up. After a while, you outpace the competition and create a space that is too large to be made up. I know a local professional team that is working right now (he looks at his watch that reads 7 pm) and they will be in the office until 8 pm. It helps to out-work others to get where you want to go. And, everyone can achieve whatever they put their minds to.

**The value of a commission salesperson:** Someone once commented that professionals working on a strict commission basis are in the poorest job security position. I think the opposite. They have the most secure job. They only have to depend on themselves. It makes them work harder, longer and smarter. I valued my career as a commissioned real estate broker. It taught me life lessons.

Headquartered in Baltimore, **Chesapeake Real Estate Group** currently has more than two million square feet of industrial projects under construction in the Mid-Atlantic region. Notable projects include Penn 95 in Prince George’s County, Baltimore Crossroads in White Marsh, and Perryman Logistics Center in Harford County. For more information visit [www.cregllc.com](http://www.cregllc.com).



Kate Jordan of Lee and Associates and Co-Chair of the NAIOP Maryland Developing Leaders group with Jim Lighthizer