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Behind the career: KippsDeSanto Managing Director Kevin P. DeSanto

By Vanessa Mizell
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Kevin P. DeSanto

Position: Managing director and co-founder of KippsDeSanto & Co., a defense and technology focused investment bank based in McLean.

After studying accounting in college, Kevin DeSanto jumped right into investment banking for nine years until he and a partner decided to make an even bigger jump. They started their own investment bank, growing it fivefold since 2007. Now he will take another step from director to managing director of the firm.

What made you take the leap of faith to start KippsDeSanto?

Two things. There's the personal side--wanting to control your own destiny and having the responsibility that comes with running and strategizing the growth of a business. From a professional standpoint, it was an opportunity to add additional perspective for my skill set.

What was the key to growing the business?

I would say that one of my main contributions was to be focused on the culture of our business. I value the camaraderie with our team. I know how much they care and how hard they work. The key was providing an environment where they could excel, where they're not worried about politics or other issues that are not core to the work that we do.

As an entrepreneur, what would you say has been your smartest move?

To actually do it! Whether or not we fully thought through everything that was going to happen, it doesn't really matter at this point. The fact that we did this, it will always have a very meaningful influence on my life because it's afforded me the opportunity to develop as a person and professional in ways I have not envisioned. The other side of that is the timing of when we started--when the markets started crumbling. That posed as a significant challenge for a business whose success relies on the health of those markets. That second year of business was enlightening for me and the team because we had to really differentiate ourselves and push forward with a level of energy and creativity that may not have been required if things hadn't gotten so bad in the markets.

What was the best decision you made during those tough times?

We focused on what we did best. We put forth the same effort and didn't take any shortcuts. We didn't try to grab low-hanging fruit. We really focused on staying true to what we crafted as a business strategy from the outset despite the fact that it was a difficult time to get transactions done. The fact that we didn't stray has made us stronger in the end.

-- Interview with Vanessa Mizell