

LEADING Development

Ronson Development is an experienced and dynamically growing property developer, with residential investments in Poland's largest cities, namely Warsaw, Poznan, Wroclaw, and Szczecin.

Images courtesy of Ronson Development

Shraga Weisman, CEO of Ronson Development, says that an optimistic attitude is something which every leader should possess. "If you are not optimistic then you are not able to make the best next move because you have to look at the long run," he says. "You have to take calculated risks and be optimistic.

"When you are running a company, 99 per cent of the employees, even sometimes the management, are just looking at the next quarter or the next month or the next balance sheet. As a leader of the company, you have to look in the long range and, sometimes, really go against the interest of the short term."

Shraga joined Ronson in 2008 and has a wide range of experience in the residential, construction, and

real estate industries. With such a broad perspective on the nature of the property business, he was well prepared for the leadership role, especially given the challenges he had to face in the early days. "When I came here, during the Global Financial Crisis, my past gave me more confidence to deal with the tough market," he explains. "The other thing is that most of my experience is from Israel, and Israel is much more competitive than the market that used to be in Poland."

"With this experience we coped with the situation in Poland in an easier way and we started to implement innovative things into our design and development. We took a more innovative approach largely due to my experience from the past. When you have experience, you are not jumping

from the roof if the situation is too good, and you are not jumping if it's too bad. It's all about balance."

Since its origins in 2000, Ronson has gained the trust of thousands of clients to cement its spot as one of the leading developers in Poland. The business creates spaces for exceptionally convenient living with its current offering including residences to suit the needs of various client groups—from up-scale apartments to mid-segment flats. It is a member of the Polish Association of Property Developers and has won numerous industry awards and certificates.

Over the years, Ronson has had a steady increase of sales. When Shraga joined the business it was selling around 100 residential >

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units per year and last year it exceeded 700 units. Shraga says the plan now is to reach more than 800 units. “We are growing fast but not too fast,” he notes. “We are cautious, but we are growing steadily during this period.”

This gradual approach means that Ronson has had the opportunity to start many new projects. For 2015, its plan is to begin, more or less,

1,200 units. This is how it will grow its activities while staying committed to the residential property market. To achieve this target, Ronson will continue to ensure it provides a high-quality product at an affordable price to its customers.

“I think that’s what distinguishes us from the other developers in the market,” Shraga says. “We have a very strong brand, especially in Warsaw as this is our main market, and so that strong brand is known for being high quality with an affordable price. I think this is the strategy that should lead us and should give us the lead in the next few years, even when the market will be better and will improve. Not only is the price the winner—it should be the quality together with the price. This is our strategy going forward.”

Shraga is very positive about the future of the residential housing market in Poland. He believes that the economy is strong and not determined by outside

opportunities or foreign investment. The main Polish population are the ones purchasing the properties and therefore this is what Shraga describes as a ‘basic’ marketplace. He recognises that there will always be ups and downs along the way but generally speaking the market is looking up.

“I don’t think that the prices will go up dramatically, but steadily it’s going to go up 1, 2, or 3 per cent. This will be the future market and the same will happen with the quantity. The quantity will grow but not dramatically. In my opinion, there are some fundamentals, or basics that are showing and influencing the growing of the market. The main one is the huge immigration from the small cities and villages to the big cities like Warsaw and it’s creating, or generating, the demand for such a product as residential properties and units.

“For companies like Ronson, it will be even better than it is now

because you can already see that in this market the strongest players will be even stronger. This is because there are some consolidations of small companies to have bigger entities and the bigger ones will improve their position due to the resulting stronger brand and the greater access to the financial market. So from this point of view, I am very positive about the market generally and about the position of Ronson in the market.”

Since joining Ronson, Shraga says there have been a few key projects which he has been particularly proud of, the first being a development called Sakura in Warsaw. “The site itself and the location is not far from the good areas but it was located not in the best position. We found that to succeed we needed to create and innovate something new. In order to be distinguished from the others we created an idea which includes a really beautiful Japanese garden.

“In this way, we were able to distinguish ourselves from our competitors and we were able to give our product additional value. We really succeeded and now we are in the last stages of construction there.”

Another highlight has been Tamka, which is also located in Warsaw. This project is in one of the best areas of the city and Ronson was able to integrate the surrounding environment into the design. “It is adjacent to the old city and architecture and we were really able to connect the new building to that,” Shraga says. “We didn’t make something that is in contradiction with the architecture and the surroundings. I am proud that even though we put more money into the construction to create such a project, we succeeded and managed to do it in a very nice way.”

Shraga credits his great team of staff as the reason these projects were so successful. “We don’t have cranes; we have our team,” Shraga notes. “So we are investing



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a lot in them with regard to training and development.

“First of all, we are hiring the best employees that we can find for every one of our positions, and secondly, we are investing in two elements: skills and the social environment. Skills is the easiest one. If you are an accountant or an engineer or a sales manager, you are going every year, two or three times, to undergo training to really improve your skills.

“The other, social environment, is no less important. At the end of the day, we should work as a team. Having the right social environment can encourage this. We are holding three or four events in every one of the departments and at each level of the company as a whole in order to really create the atmosphere that by working together we are able to achieve our goals as a team and not as individuals.”

Shraga continues on to say that it is also crucial to have solid relationships with the contractors and designers it regularly outsources work to. With the

contractors, Ronson has the viewpoint that a joint venture is the most beneficial way to get high-quality products and services at an affordable price. Relationships have been developed over a number of years with some of the best contractors in the country and this in turn leads to successful outcomes for both sides.

With the designers, Ronson has a select few it works closely with. “We are collaborating with four or five designers, not 20, and so in the long run we are sharing the same philosophy and the same way of thinking about designing the product. We are benefiting and the designers are benefiting due to the really good product that we are producing. So this is, I would think, a very, very important element in the running of the company.”

With his optimistic outlook on the state of the Polish property market and on Ronson’s future pursuits, Shraga is committed to leading his dedicated team forward at a steady pace, further positioning Ronson as a highly competitive player in the sector. •

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