

# The Rudin Culture

An Interview with Samantha Rudin, Senior Vice President;  
Alice Eaton, Senior Vice President for Foundations; and  
Seema Blott, Senior Vice President – Head of Residential Department, Rudin Management Company, Inc.

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Samantha Rudin is Senior Vice President and sits on the executive committee of Rudin Management Company. She focuses on development, redevelopment, design and marketing of the Rudin portfolio. She has been actively engaged in the development of 130 W. 12th Street and The Greenwich Lane Condominium Developments in the West Village, in addition to the Rudin's latest project, Dock 72, a 670,000 SF office building focusing on the Technology sector at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Rudin sits on the boards of Incarnation Children's Center and The Roundabout Theatre. She is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.*

*Alice Eaton is Senior Vice President for Foundations. Prior to joining Rudin Management in 2016, Eaton worked at two other family foundations: she served as the Executive Director of the Leon Lowenstein Foundation and as Program Director at the Mai Family Foundation. She started her career with the international NGO WaterAid, holding various positions at their offices in New York, London and Addis Ababa. Eaton holds a B.A. from Barnard College, an M.A. from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and an M.B.A. from Columbia Business School.*

*Seema Blott has been with Rudin Management Company since 2015. Previously, she worked in residential real estate sales, rentals, and new development at Corcoran and Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group. She earned her B.A. from West Virginia University and is a licensed real estate broker.*

**COMPANY BRIEF** *New York-based Rudin Management Company, Inc. (rudin.com) was founded in 1925 and operates one of the largest and most respected private real estate portfolios in New York, comprising 17 office towers (more than 10-million square feet) and 20 luxury apartment buildings (more than 2,000 apartments). Rudin family projects include a residential development in partnership with Eyal Ofer's Global Holdings located in the West Village called The Greenwich Lane, and the state-of-the-art high-tech office building at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in partnership with Boston Properties called Dock 72. The company's portfolio includes the Thomson Reuters' North American headquarters at 3 Times Square, 32 Avenue of the Americas, One Battery Park Plaza and 345 Park Avenue, which is the family's flagship two million-square-foot office tower, as well as 211 E. 70th Street and 215 E. 68th Street.*



Samantha Rudin



Alice Eaton



Seema Blott

## What makes Rudin Management so special?

*Samantha:* When I first started at Rudin Management, I was so relieved to be surrounded by the support and love of my family and the people in our company who made me feel secure and welcomed. Even though there were not as many women when I started, I was so encouraged as a woman and that was tremendously empowering. My father has always been supportive of me and my work here and so has my mother and now my husband, David, as well. Many times, I was the only woman in the room.

In July of 2017, I reached my 10-year anniversary with Rudin Management so to be more cemented here is very special for me. To be a part of this business with my family is an honor. As I look around the room now, I see more women. To have inspiring women like Seema and Alice taking leadership roles in our company is a big accomplishment. It's incredible to see so many strong women working around me now.

I'm also a part of Mary Ann Tighe's Women in Real Estate group, which I joined soon after I started working in real estate. I had felt so alone as a woman and when I was invited to join this group, I met all these bright young women also working in real estate. I didn't feel alone anymore, rather I felt at home and motivated by these impressive women. Mary Ann's grace, wisdom, intelligence and business acumen are unparalleled. There is no greater role model.

## How has your role evolved?

*Samantha:* When I first began working here, I had to learn how each department worked. At the time, we were starting the St. Vincent's redevelopment project, which was in the zoning process. We ended up developing

a condo project at 130 West 12th Street, which was separate from the main St. Vincent's site. This was my first taste of developing a condo and through my involvement in that process, I fell in love with development. That was when I started to feel connected to and passionate about what I was doing.

That property opened in 2011. Simultaneously, we were developing The Greenwich Lane, which was a much bigger undertaking. Every element of developing that project was incredible. Since I was a part of it from the beginning, I saw all the pieces come together.

## Alice, what brought you to Rudin and will you discuss your areas of focus?

*Alice:* I manage the philanthropy component, which involves several charitable foundations affiliated with the family and company. Many times, family philanthropies are managed at a separate family office, but it is completely integrated here.

I work for the real estate company at their headquarters and sit among my Trustees. This is great for me because I'm not separated from everyone and left to guess what kinds of projects they would like to do or what programs they want to fund. The Trustees sit on many boards and are personally very involved with many nonprofits in the city, so I'm always here to help them move along gifts and such.

What brought me to the company is the family's philanthropic reputation in the city, which is unparalleled. Everyone understands that if there is a disaster or common cause, the Rudins are here. As a New Yorker, it's wonderful to have that kind of involvement in my city, and to have the alignment between the philanthropy and the business is a great privilege.

## Is the strategy for philanthropy based on where you can make the greatest difference?

*Alice:* The strategy here is "place-based philanthropy." Rather than looking at different program areas and deciding to have an impact within one area, we look at the overall needs of the city. The vast majority of the foundations' grants are made to local nonprofits.

## How critical has it been to have the entire family so engaged in this area?

*Alice:* It is critical, and I would also like to add that the family engages with organizations

in a long-term way, which is really important to be able to understand the issues and how to address them. Anyone who manages a foundation could only hope to work with people who are as earnestly invested in the projects they're working on as this family is.

**Is it important to put metrics in place to track the impact of these efforts?**

*Alice:* We look at each organization we support and make sure that they're fulfilling their missions, that they have the best possible leaders, and that they get the resources they need to do their work. We also evaluate if they have good, sound plans in place if those elements are not there. We fund across a broad variety of pro-

gram areas so we don't try to keep track of how many students pass the SAT based on our funding, for instance. The metrics we seek out are essentially the same ones that someone investing in a for-profit business would seek out.

We recently implemented a system that allows us to collect more information about our grantees so it will be much easier to compare them than it has been in the past, but the fundamental evaluation process will not change.

**Seema, what brought you to Rudin?**

*Seema:* I met the Rudin family when they were developing The Greenwich Lane. In order to prepare for my role on that project, I watched *The Lew Rudin Way*. It was incredible. It has been fascinating to hear Samantha and Alice talk about their experiences in joining RMC. We all seem to have a similar experience of inclusion at this high quality, dependable and fair company. These traits of the company are evident to every person we encounter in business and philanthropy because it's simply the Rudin way.

When we were discussing managing the residential department, those pillars not only came across to me in the interview process, but I also knew about them first-hand having worked at The Greenwich Lane.

This is a unique, special place, with a very respectful and high-quality culture.

**Are you more focused on new residential development or investing in Rudin's current properties?**

*Seema:* The family is committed to the buildings they own. That longevity also crosses over to our residents, who tend to stay in the portfolio for many years. We don't have a large turnover rate, so reinvestment is critical. Our residents are relying on us to continue to offer them the high quality that we have provided for more than 100 years.

Our deep knowledge and long history managing high quality assets informs our new development strategy. There are always new opportunities to grow. When the right opportunities come along, we know what we're doing.

**As the company grows, how do you maintain the family feel?**

*Samantha:* It's always about honoring the great legacy we have been handed and continually looking for ways to improve and expand.

**"We are very fortunate to have Samantha, Alice and Seema, who are not only leaders within our organization and within their respective fields, but are role models for other women in the business world and, in particular, real estate. Having women in leadership roles and at every level of our organization has been integral to Rudin Management's history and success. We strive to create an organization that values collaboration and found that providing support and creating equal opportunities to all fosters that environment."**

**- William C. Rudin, Co-Chair and Chief Executive Officer,  
Rudin Management Company Inc.**

It's not about men or women here – it's about working together and finding the talent we need and maintaining our level of quality. It is our responsibility to find people who are talented, regardless of their gender, in order to keep the company moving in the right direction.

The Rudin Way is in our DNA. It's about keeping us all connected and working together; I think it comes down to teamwork. Of course, it's also about making deals and being successful, but if I'm not feeling the love in my heart, then I'm not doing it the way it needs to be done.

If we remain connected to that and carry it forward, the family feeling will continue no matter what direction we go in or how large we become.

**When you're looking to bring in talent, is the focus as much about their abilities as their culture fit?**

*Samantha:* It's a balance. We want to make sure our employees are happy, feel good and are well taken care of. We need to feel right about the fit. We want everyone who works here to succeed.

*Alice:* The family has fantastic values and people want to work here as a result. Everyone knows what the Rudins stand for and who they are, so it's an easy sell.

*Samantha:* At the end of the day, we want people to come here and like what they're doing and to feel passionate and connected to what they are doing. That benefits all of us and it yields a better product in the end and makes for happier tenants and customers.

We have people who have been with us for more than 40 years and that says something about creating an environment where people are happy and do want to stay.

**Alice, was philanthropy something you were always interested in?**

*Alice:* Yes, I've always worked in the non-profit sector.

**Seema, was real estate something you were attracted to early on?**

*Seema:* Real estate wasn't a third or fourth career for me. I started early on because I truly have a passion for the business and for the buildings that define this great city.

**Samantha, is it possible to ever turn off the business when you're with your family?**

*Samantha:* My mom raised my brother and me to value our family bond. My brother, Michael, and I get to work together now, as well as our father, Bill, and our cousin, Eric, Aunt Beth and our other family members, and I love it. As a kid, I did say that I would never go into the family business, and now, I can't imagine anything else because I love it. I love to be around my family.

There are times when I want to take a break, but we have fun together. It all comes back to that special feeling of all being connected and feeling good, and that is where I want to be.

**What advice would you give young women today on how to build their careers and really grow?**

*Alice:* Philanthropy is a space in which women can take on leadership roles more easily as compared to other industries.

I might have come up through the ranks rather quickly, so people are sometimes surprised that someone so young is running the foundations, but there are other young women running comparable-sized philanthropies.

*Seema:* I came from a brokerage background, so I have been negotiating for years. Negotiating is an important skill set for anyone young, whether man or woman, in order to move forward with the best opportunities for themselves.

My needs changed in my life when I got married and had children. When you find the right opportunity, you should have the skills to go for it.

Not enough women do that; they stay in their same positions, hoping something will change around them. My advice would be to hone your negotiating skills, take charge, and pro-actively make the career moves that work best for you.

*Samantha:* I think it is our job to make it a little easier for the next generation of women and the ones who come after. My aunt, Beth, and cousin, Madeleine, have made it easier for me. If I can help clear the path a bit more for the women who come after, for my daughter, Elle, and the future generations, I will see that as a huge success. My advice would be to never give up.

*Seema:* One of the things Samantha does so well here is support all of the women around her and lead by example.

**Will you highlight the work you are doing with Association for a Better New York (ABNY) to support women?**

*Samantha:* At ABNY, we've created a group for working women to come together to connect with each other and share their experiences and address any areas where they feel they're not being heard. The platform of ABNY is a great way to support women in the ways we need and help tackle the issues women face. Ultimately, allowing women to come together and share in this way is very empowering. ●