

# The People Business

An Interview with Michael A. Rodriguez, Chief Executive Officer and President, Alliance Building Services

**EDITORS' NOTE** Michael Rodriguez began his career as a porter at the World Trade Center in 1988. Following the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, he left janitorial services and began a supervisory role at a prominent security company. Rodriguez then returned to his roots at the World Trade Center as a janitorial supervisor before joining First Quality Maintenance in 1995. In 2000, he was appointed President of Alliance Building Services and assumed the additional role of CEO in 2020. In 2009, Rodriguez was chosen as one of Crain's 40 most dynamic businesspeople under age 40 in New York City. In 2010, he received the Los Niños Image Award for Business from the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc., and in 2014, he was honored at the National Jewish Health's AIR Society The Sky's The Limit Benefit. Under the Alliance banner, he has sponsored several community events, including "Swing for a Cure" Golf Classic to benefit The Herophilos Fund for Pancreatic Cancer Research at Columbia University Medical Center for the last ten years. Rodriguez also advocates for the betterment of the Latino community by serving on the Board of the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. and the Diabetes Research Institute. He contributes substantially to several organizations including Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW), Big Brother Big Sisters of New York City, St. Francis Food Pantries and Shelters, Nassau Suffolk Services for Autism (NSSA), and enCourage Kids Foundation.



Michael A. Rodriguez

**COMPANY BRIEF** Founded in 1992, Alliance Building Services ([alliance.us](http://alliance.us)) provides comprehensive facility-related services for approximately 75 million square feet of space in the New York Tri-State area. Alliance offers facility maintenance and janitorial services, security officers and security technology systems, and restoration services through its brands – Alliance Maintenance, Alliance Security, and Alliance Restoration. Alliance has become an industry leader in building maintenance and security services by

taking the time to understand its client's needs and creating partnerships for mutual success. Alliance's unified management team, seamless communication, use of the latest industry technologies, and cost-effective procedures create the most dynamic solutions for its clients' facilities.

**Alliance Building Services is celebrating its 30th anniversary. What have been the keys to Alliance's strength and leadership in the industry?**

It is hard to believe that it has been 30 years. Alliance has gone from being a thought in 1992 of creating a company that would clean a handful of buildings on its own, to today where we have approximately 3,000 employees cleaning nearly 75 million square feet. That has happened with organic growth by building relationships and building the business through word of mouth and referrals. It is really exciting and we are blessed to be in this position.

**Will you provide an overview of Alliance's business today?**

The maintenance business – cleaning and engineering services – has been the behemoth of the business. The physical security offering is a perfect spin-off since we can provide high-end labor that can deliver maintenance programs and high-end labor that can deliver security programs. There is a strong synergy between these two service offerings. The restoration offering has progressed well, and this is more of a specialty service that builds off of our other solutions. We focus on growth in all our service offerings and see great opportunities ahead. We are building programs that are cutting edge, not only when it comes to security, but also in regard to technology so that our clients know that they are getting state-of-the-art service.

**Alliance is a leader in the New York market. Will this remain the primary focus for the company?**

We love the New York market and are committed to continuing to invest and grow in New York. We recently took on a new client in South Florida that we are very excited about, and we see opportunities to expand in that market as we look to the future. Our focus is on having enough volume to provide the proper service, so if we can find the right volume, we are open to expanding into new markets, most of which will be the markets that our clients are expanding into as we grow with them.

**You have said that Alliance is not a service provider, but rather a partner to your clients. Will you elaborate on the client relationship?**

We are firm believers that once we understand our client's vision for the property,

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it is our job to execute based on that vision. We are committed to exceeding the client's expectations and being partners to our clients in achieving their goals. We see ourselves as partners and focus on building relationships since this is a people business. When a client knows that their service provider is going out of their way to execute their vision, and is transparent and open about what is happening in their building and what needs to be done, it builds unbreakable relationships. That is a partnership and that is what Alliance is all about.

**What are your views on the future of work?**

It is clear that hybrid working continues to be a part of how companies work, but we see that clients want their employees back in the office since it is critical to building culture and collaboration. Clients are also more focused on specialty cleaning and hygiene in the buildings, with significant focus on providing their employees with the safest and cleanest environment. As more people return to the office, especially young people who want to be in the office to learn and grow in their roles, Alliance is creating some amazing cleaning programs that will enhance the work environment.

**What was the vision for Alliance moving toward an employee-owned company structure?**

I have been very fortunate to have an amazing partner for over 25 years, someone who gave me an opportunity that became a life-changer for me, and the time had come for my partner to want to take his equity and move into other businesses. As we were evaluating the best way forward, there was undoubtedly private equity

money interested in the business. Still, I wanted to maintain control of the company because we have 30 to 40 key managers that have been with us and have helped grow the business for more than ten years, and this was about what was best for them as well. We looked at the future with a priority on what was best for our people since it would pay off in the long run if you supported and invested in your talent. We were able to find a way to satisfy my partner's interests in a very fair deal for him, while also providing a structure for me to stay with Alliance which was my priority as we continue to grow the business for the future, and our employees can now be owners as we move forward with an ESOP structure.

In addition, because of the makeup of our company, we believe that in the near future we will receive minority status which will provide even more opportunities to expand the business and grow with other industries and leading corporations.

**How critical has it been to invest in education and training programs for Alliance's employees as the company has grown in size and scale?**

When you are in the labor business, you are nothing without your labor. I can sell, entertain, and build relationships with real estate owners, but if our team does not deliver, we will not grow the business. We invest a tremendous amount in our people at all levels of the business, from our supervisors and managers to our new hires. We provide education and training programs that are not just focused on how to do the job better, which is a priority, but also show our people that we care about them and want them to succeed. We want our team to know that they are an integral part of

what we are building, and we will take the time to provide them with the tools they need to grow and fulfill their potential. It is so fulfilling to see a person progress in the company and take on more responsibility since we are committed to providing opportunities for our employees to have rewarding careers.

**How has your role evolved as Alliance has grown over the past 30 years?**

I have had to evolve as a leader since it does get harder to manage my time with the growth of the business, but it will always be a priority for me to be with our team and to spend time with our employees. The success of Alliance comes down to the talent and people at the company. When you are in the people business, you need to put your people first, which will lead to great client service and lasting client relationships.

**When you look back at the impact and success of Alliance over the past 30 years, do you take moments to reflect and appreciate what has been accomplished?**

There is no question that when you are constantly looking at trying to grow and where the opportunities are for the future, it is hard to take moments to look back and reflect on what has been accomplished. I can do this a little bit more today because of the strong talent of our managers and supervisors doing such a great job. I want to take the time to tell our people about the history of Alliance over these past 30 years and to tell the stories about how we built the company and created long-lasting client relationships, since this helps build on our history and tradition as we look to the future. ●

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