

Father's Day is every day

Dan Carter/DJC
Josh, left,
and Barry
Schlesinger
carry on
with The
Schlesinger
Companies,
a family
business
that's lasted
through four
generations.



12
th
FLOOR



JONATHAN AND BRAD MALSIN



RICHARD AND SHANA FREIMARK

For the offspring of hard-charging professionals, the family business proved an irresistible lure

By TYLER GRAF
tyler.graf@djcOregon.com

Josh Schlesinger works for a development firm, but he doesn't consider himself a developer. After all, he has never created a building from scratch, like his father, Barry, has ... or his grandfather Ralph Schlesinger, for that matter.

But development is in Josh's blood, and he knows he will develop something at some point. Josh works with his father and two of his uncles at the Schlesinger Companies, which has been developing and owning property in Portland for four generations.

That makes for a very long lineage of development in the company's office.

That's because in the 1950s, one of Josh's

great-grandfathers – also named Josh – turned a family business specializing in clothing into a property ownership firm. He had three sons, including Barry, and all joined the company.

Barry has been at the firm since 1982. He joined the family company after working as a juvenile parole officer, construction worker and a professional fisherman.

All routes led back to the Schlesinger Companies, Barry said. He came to work for the firm because his father asked him to. It was the same tactic Barry used on his son.

Josh says he always expected to work for the company. He can still remember the first land-use meeting he attended when he was in sixth grade.

But Josh was always more inspired by the political part of the business. That's why he pursued, and eventually received, an undergraduate degree in political science from Pitzer College in California. So it was policy-making that almost kept him from a life of development. After college, he worked

Father's Day: Family is 'very important' to firm

Continued from Page 1

briefly for the European Union on issues concerning American-European relations.

Since joining the firm in 2004, Josh has worked primarily in property management. He finds it more fulfilling because he's able to create long-term relationships with people. The family has worked to retain tenants over the decades, and he wants to keep that going into the future.

Barry, though, still likes to develop projects.

"I developed my first project in 1986," Barry said. That was an industrial property. More recently, the two generations of Schlesingers teamed to redevelop the Unitus Credit Union building near Portland State University. The university

became the building's main tenant.

Barry said he persuaded, but never pushed, his son to join the company. He emphasized, however, that family is "very important" to the Schlesinger Companies.

Josh agrees. He said there's more pride in a family-run business.

"It's nice knowing you have someone like (Barry) with the same last name," Josh said.

Despite the obvious familial connection, the firm downplays it in public. When people are around, Josh doesn't call his father "Dad" but rather "Barry."

"Of course, if we're out fishing or eating dinner, it's 'Dad,'" Josh said. "But when we are in meetings with people outside the company, he calls me Josh and I call him Barry."



Josh, right, learned his fishing skill from Barry, who worked as a professional fisherman.

Courtesy of Barry Schlesinger