



JANUS et Cie®

BEYOND TOPIARY



Residential Sales Specialist Alex Bernal Celebrates 25 Years with JANUS et Cie

This spring, a key member of JANUS et Cie's sales team reached a new milestone of 25 years with the company. Alex Bernal, Residential Sales Specialist, celebrated his 25th anniversary as an et Cie, and sits down with SVP of Residential Sales, Danya Lane, to discuss his early days with the company, where he finds inspiration, and what he loves most about JANUS et Cie.

Danya: Tell us about your first day on the job with JANUS et Cie?

Alex: It was [the] Monday before West Week. Everybody was running around trying to put the showroom together and I was the only one in the showroom while everybody [else was] running around. But luckily, on that particular day, a designer and their client walked in and they started asking questions. I had no idea what I was doing here, but at the same time, you know, they asked me about Weatherend, which I had no knowledge [of] at all. But if you know Linda, little Linda, the cleaning lady, she's always listening? She went and grabbed the Weatherend catalog and handed it over to me. So I started looking, and you know, getting some answers for them. I gave them the catalog. We took each other's information. [A] couple of days later, they called and they gave me a list of items that they wanted [to purchase], including umbrellas.

Danya: That's so funny. First day?

Alex: Completely, completely, you know, but luckily after that particular order came in, I was like, OK, this is the place.

Danya: That is so cool. I can't believe that. I never knew that. I didn't know that you closed a huge order your first day with Linda's help! So, what is it about the JANUS Company Culture that has kept you here for 25 years?

Alex: Yes. With Linda. JANUS is synonymous for the quality of furniture that we represent, that we show, that we sell, the quality, the style and the options that we offer. Now that's on the furniture side, but then the culture itself. Even though we are a corporation, we're still very family oriented? it has become very personal.

Danya: Tell me more?

Alex: And even back then, when I started with the company, I think I mentioned that [there was only eight of us]. So, it was a very intimate group, but [as] more people started coming in, everybody was very welcoming no matter what their background was, and we became very good friends. So that's what kept me within the company? the welcoming community and the support.

Danya: That's great. What have been a couple of the real highlights, would you say, of your career?

Alex: Oh my, there are so many, but going around seeing clients with Janice Feldman herself, [that is a real highlight]. In addition, the company events and annual company meetings? those have been very [memorable for] me. And of course, seeing how the company has grown, every year from 10-12 people to now almost 400 people. So that's always a very nice thing to see.

Danya: I agree. So what do you think distinguishes JANUS from our competitors? How are we different in your mind?

Alex: Oh, in my mind, the large variety of collections that we show and offer... not only in different styles, but different materials, different budgets. We have something pretty much for everybody. From an estate to a small single-family home.

Danya: What have been your favorite two or three collections over the years?

Alex: Well, my number one all-time [favorite is] Amalfi, only because I know the old Amalfi and the new and improved Amalfi by JANUS et Cie. This new Amalfi has proven that [it] is the best investment our clients can make if they're able to. If the budget allows it and if the style allows it for the house, that's the best investment on outdoor furniture that they could do. So that's my number one, but again, Mattone is also one of the best for me only because I just love the oversized comfort? I definitely want to have it in my in my living room!

Danya: That's great. So where do you personally find design inspiration?

Alex: Well, I guess now [through] social media. I enjoy seeing our clients' projects, our clients' posts and every once in a while, I'll go to the museum down the street. I love the outdoors; I like to [be in] nature. So, all those help me to [feel inspired].

Danya: Hmm. I had a feeling you would say nature. I also thought you might say your mother because she seems like she has a great design sense, you know?

Alex: She's a very funny, I mean, thank you for mentioning [her]. She's a very funny lady. She surprises me how she puts herself together and she's about to [be] 89 years old now. She still has that little, you know, touch of style and elegance.

Danya: Who are some of the designers that you really admire? They don't have to be clients of ours, just in general. Who are the designers that you admire?

Alex: In general, I truly I admire Joan Behnke? excellent designer, excellent lady. Mark Weaver [is also an] excellent designer, and very supportive of me and supportive of JANUS. Elizabeth Dinkle [is] another great designer.

Danya: That's great. And who has inspired or mentored you in your career? Have there been a series of people who have served as mentors to you?

Alex: Definitely, yes. It's been a series of people. My second job within the business was at Kneeder Fauchère and that was in 1991. I was very lucky to work very closely with Dorothy, the owner and founder. She was such a great lady. She was very welcoming to everybody [who worked for her]. She made sure that we were properly educated in the arts and design. I remember going with her to Hermès to see how craftsmen sewed the silk scarves, and she'd take us to trunk shows. So that was my number one.

Danya: Where do you see JANUS et Cie in five years in your, you know, crystal ball?

Alex: I can see JANUS still here in the PDC, but perhaps in a larger space. I see that. We're probably going to be around 600 people by then instead of, you know, 400 that we are about now. I see that we're going to have a lot more new collections to offer.

Fresh technology and we could be ready for the next generation to come. I do have a lot of faith in the present management.

Danya: That's great Alex thank you so much for your time and for an incredible 25 years!