

Steve Gianfilippo

St. Petersburg, Florida



[Station House](#)

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Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Steve Gianfilippo:

There's no denying that entrepreneurship is hot. In the past five to ten years, words like lean startup, venture capital, scale, pivot, iterate, disruptive, accelerator and cowork have become ubiquitous throughout entrepreneurial communities worldwide. These buzzwords have even spilled over into mainstream corporate America, along with certain state, county and city entities that understand the importance of supporting entrepreneurial efforts as a way to spur innovative and lasting economic development. Cities such as Boston, Austin, Raleigh-Durham and Nashville, with the right combination of talent, ideas and capital, are doing their best to mimic the success of Silicon Valley, while creating their own unique identity.

Communities like St. Petersburg aren't too far behind. Forward thinking

and savvy entrepreneurs, such as Steve Gianfilippo, founder of Station House, play an important role in the evolution and re-development of urban city centers and areas that innovators and creatives are naturally drawn to. It's one thing to attract them. It's another to retain them.

Gianfilippo has done both by creating a lifestyle niche with Station House, a unique co-working space designed to highlight the arts, history and local culture of a city rooted in commercial fishing and aviation and bolstered by a tourism boom in the early 1900s.

"We're going on about two and a half years for Station House," Gianfilippo said. "We originally bought the property thinking it would be a hotel. It's situated right in the urban core of St. Pete. It's a great area of town and the building has a ton of character. After doing more research, we realized that the building was too old and that the materials were not conducive for setting up a hotel. We started researching trends and saw that coworking was big in a lot of Tier 1 cities like New York, but not here. St. Pete did, however, have similar characteristics to Boulder, CO, a community with ample coworking spaces and one I'm familiar with. We thought, 'here's our chance to offer affordable office space in downtown St. Pete and to capture the artistic character of the city that wasn't being portrayed.' We wanted a space for creatives, startups and even large companies in need of a satellite location, but was also wanted to make it a nod to the city."

With the idea of a creating a 24/7 lifestyle concept fueling their vision, Gianfilippo and his partners have materialized a space that captures most aspects of your daily routine. "In order to be a lifestyle brand, we needed to be open 24 hours a day," he said. "We also wanted to capture everything that happens in someone's day. You wake up, you need

coffee, a space to work, then lunch, amenities to help with productivity and finally, after work, you can do yoga, have dinner, a cocktail, a private meeting with investors or host a fundraiser. It's certainly not what you'd expect in a traditional coworking space. That's the feel we wanted."

Originally from New York, Gianfilippo moved to Florida to attend college at the University of Central Florida. After graduating with a degree in Finance, he spent seven years with Citi Group in their Investment Bank and Capital Markets Division. The latter part of his career with Citi was spent in Japan. When Gianfilippo repatriated back to the United States, real estate was booming. It was around this time when he came to the conclusion that he was working way too hard for someone else. He decided that if he was going to continue working as hard as he had been, it would be for himself. Gianfilippo dove into the world of commercial real estate and hasn't looked back since.

Using the financial skills he acquired with Citi and tapping into a creative side, Gianfilippo went to work on various real estate deals, condominium and hotel projects. Not long after, Gianfilippo formed GianCo Companies, which serves as an 'umbrella company' for a variety of different real estate assets, including Station House. As of late, GianCo has been more consistent with developing a brand identity through a collection of investments with a correlative look and feel.

What motivates Gianfilippo is closely tied to what keeps him up at night. "I love building and improving things," he said. "It's extremely rewarding to watch a customer enjoy themselves in a property you've worked so hard to create. The financial reward is also important, but if there's a reward, there's always a risk. Real estate is a difficult business to get

into on a hard cash basis. There is always debt involved in real estate. A lot of people celebrate when they close a property and acquire an asset, but in most cases you've just taken on more debt. Limiting your risk is a matter of keeping yourself relevant and constantly improving your position and assets. There's a parallel between hotels and coworking. You have a small window to give your customers a great experience. I preach to my staff that everything is always 80% complete. I want them to always be thinking about how they can make improvements."

Looking ahead, Gianfilippo's future growth strategy is pretty conservative. While they remain open to investments in many different categories, Gianfilippo is cautious with taking the Station House concept to other markets, but admits that there could be an opportunity to do something with one of the larger coworking space companies. For now, his focus is on Station House, GianCo Companies and the greater Tampa Bay community with a brand new 30,000 sq ft flagship location coming to Hyde Park Village, Tampa. With 300,000 sq ft of retail, Station House will comprise almost 100% of the office market in the Village.

"We want to continue to evolve the brand and create a true following and lifestyle," he said. "Within the past five years, St. Pete has identified its own personality. Arts have surfaced to the top and, with a low cost of living and a high quality of life, it's quickly becoming an attractive region for tech companies. City and county entities have been instrumental in the recent success, but were also doing something the city can brag about."

Gianfilippo offers up some great advice for aspiring entrepreneurs. "I've always justified my work by looking at the outcome first," he said. "You

need a goal in mind to justify working so hard every day. It's easier to set daily goals if you understand what your long term goal is. My mindset is that I'm not doing this to get rich, I'm doing this to retire at a certain age. Also, identify what you're good at. What do people call you for? Why are you invited to meetings? Why do they need you there? The answers to these questions will give you confidence to go out and do your own thing. It's also important to take time for self reflection. Is your skill set more valuable on your own than it is working for someone else? Finally, people make or break deals. You can have a bad deal with a good person that can still turn into a decent deal. A good deal with a bad person will always turn into a bad deal."

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