



2018 Walks of Life Honoree

Myles Gallagher

Myles Gallagher likes to quote one of his late father's friends: "Opportunity knocks every day; it just takes a smart man to open the door." Gallagher has made a career out of opening those doors. After graduating from John Carroll University in 1984, he landed a job selling copiers. Within a year, he was named the company's Top New Salesman. While on a flight to the corporate office, he sat next to the vice president of marketing for Dunlop Tire Co. By the time the plane landed in Connecticut, Gallagher had a job offer from the Dunlop executive.

Just six weeks into his new job, he was at Watkins Glen race track in New York when a Dunlop equipped race car crashed after a tire failure. A television reporter asked Gallagher what caused the blowout. Not wanting blame it on product failure, the rookie salesman explained that many other factors could have caused the tire to give out. "We'll have to take the tire back to the lab and look at it," he told the reporter.

Standing nearby was Mark McCormack, the legendary founder and president of IMG, the Cleveland-based sports marketing company. Upon hearing Gallagher's answer, McCormack reportedly quipped to a colleague and Gallagher's future mentor--Bud Stanner, IMG's Senior Corporate Vice President -- "Now, there's a salesman. Keep an eye on that kid." Shortly thereafter while still in his twenties, Gallagher accepted a highly sought-after position on IMG's marketing staff.

In the early 1990s, Richard Jacobs, then the owner of the Cleveland Indians, was looking for a salesman to handle sales of corporate suites at the team's new ballpark. An acquaintance recommended Gallagher, and Jacobs offered him the job, remarking that the position would be good experience for the firm he would eventually open. The young man asked the owner how he knew that Gallagher wanted to start his own firm. Jacobs replied: "All good salesmen want to create their own company." In fact, Gallagher already had his sights set on creating his own marketing firm. He even had a name, suggested by a Jesuit at JCU: Superlative.

In the 24 years Gallagher has operated The Superlative Group, the firm has produced more than \$2 billion worth of corporate sponsorships and naming rights throughout the United States and Europe. Among the company's clients are The US Marine Corps, Ohio Department of Transportation, Minnesota United FC., Twentieth Century FOX, the Rock, City of Miami Beach, Caesars Entertainment, Red Rocks Amphitheater, Events DC, London Olympic Venues and most of the universities in Ireland.

A decade ago, Gallagher read that the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority intended to call its newly renovated Euclid Ave. bus route the Silver line. Gallagher called Joe Calabrese, RTA's chief executive, and within 20 minutes convinced Calabrese that selling the naming rights would help subsidize the new line, now called the HealthLine. RTA became the nation's first transit system to sell a naming-rights sponsorship, giving the system \$11 million in additional revenue.

The Superlative Group, with offices in Cleveland, Chicago, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Toronto and Dublin, now represents 19 transit systems, numerous universities, sports teams, airports and state and local governments in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

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