

# FROM CLIENT-SIDE TO INSIDE THE TRENCHES OF A GLOBAL ARCHITECTURE FIRM

**BY: ERIK WALDMAN**

In 1998, I started my career in the public assembly industry as a Zamboni driver for the Orlando Arena. Cutting ice for Orlando Solar Bears was such a fun job. I grew up playing ice hockey and I couldn't believe that I was getting paid to be a part of the show. Having been a part of some of the world's largest events, the feeling never gets old.

When I was working for the Florida Panthers organization as the Vice President, General Manager of Arena Operations, I had the opportunity to work with my first architect. They helped me to understand the role of the architect in the renovation of the arena where we added some premium space. I can remember having dinner with them during an event and commenting that I found their job to be fascinating. Their team was single handedly building iconic structures where historic memories would be made. I shared that one day I would like to join a firm like theirs and use my knowledge of managing facilities to help in the design process. I would soon leave the Florida Panthers organization for an opportunity to work for the Georgia Dome/Georgia World Congress Center Authority (GWCCA)—a decision that allowed me to work and learn from some of the great leaders in the industry.

Today, the GWCCA's ever-evolving campus spans more than 220 acres and includes the convention center, Centennial Olympic Park and Mercedes-Benz Stadium. I spent eight years with the GWCCA, and was a part of some special events that included major tradeshow using over a million square feet of space, division 1 collegiate championships and Super Bowl LIII. When the opportunity became available to join tvsdesign and revisit the desire I once had, I couldn't resist.

I've always been a student of the industry. The International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM) has afforded me continuing education opportunities through programs like Venue Management School, the Academy for Venue Safety and Security (AVSS) and the annual VenueConnect conference. I've also been fortunate to share my experiences through presentations at these programs and the Mentorship Program. For everything this industry has done for me, I'm always looking for a way to help others grow and continue to make it the best.

The experience that I bring from my 20+ years of working in venue management will allow for our architects to have an outlet to test their theories. I look forward to reviewing designs and providing feedback from the perspective of a venue manager. In the short time that I've been here, I've been able to converse with past colleagues and explain my new role. Each of them has commented that tvsdesign's innovative thinking is right on and will only help our industry. These are huge expectations to fill and I'm excited to contribute.