

Franklin McLarty in Driver's Seat of RLJ McLarty-Landers Automotive

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Franklin McLarty, RLJ McLarty-Landers Automotive (Photo by Jason Burt)

Franklin McLarty is well into his second career at RLJ McLarty-Landers Automotive. He assumed the post of CEO at the beginning of the year.

“I think the role is comprised of multiple things,” said McLarty, 38. “But if I was to sum it up as simply as I could: My job is managing the business end in the way that’s in the best interests of all our shareholders.”

RLJ McLarty-Landers is made up of 35 automotive franchises and three Harley-Davidson motorcycle dealerships in eight states and was ranked No. 19 in Automotive News’ Top 125 U.S. auto dealerships.

McLarty was company vice president in 2008 when, at age 33, he was an Arkansas Business 40 Under 40 honoree. A graduate of the University of Richmond, he joined the family business in 2005, after his run in the hospitality industry ended when his stint with the McKibbon Hotel Group — selling a number of properties the group still wanted to manage — ended sooner than expected.

“Based on the McKibbon job being a faster track than anticipated and the fact that we had begun to reconstitute our family business, I just thought it was an opportunity to test the automotive business,” McLarty said.

Company co-founder and former President Steve Landers has eased into a senior adviser role, and McLarty, part of a management team that includes his father, company Vice President Thomas F. “Mack” McLarty III, said he is grateful for the foundation left behind.

“It’s been a great transition,” Franklin McLarty said. “Steve Landers was a great leader of the company.”

McLarty said that if he can satisfy the customers, the company’s 1,400 associates, the shareholders and the original equipment manufacturers McLarty-Landers represents, then he has done his job.

“If I can keep a harmonious relationship between all those shareholders, then everything seems to work out pretty well,” McLarty said.

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