

In-Rel moves leasing in-house, lures Riley from Trammell Crow

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by [Kate Miller Morton](#)

Two months after naming **Trammell Crow Co.** the exclusive listing agent for Clark Tower, owner In-Rel Management, Inc., has decided to bring the leasing for all three of its Memphis properties in-house.

The Lake Worth, Fla.-based investment group has hired former Trammell Crow vice president Ron Riley to handle the leasing for Clark, Poplar Towers and Lynnfield Office Park.

In-Rel partner Charles Stein says the company's long-term plan had always been to bring leasing and management of its Memphis portfolio in-house. The company does its own leasing, management, financial services and construction in South Florida, where its retail and office portfolio is slightly above 1 million square feet.

"When we closed on Clark we had enough critical mass to start taking it in," Stein says.

In-Rel named Trammell Crow as its listing agent in September, one month after its \$40 million purchase of the 34-story East Memphis office tower. It simultaneously announced it would bring management of all three properties in-house under the leadership of Lisa Ritenour, a former Trizec Properties employee who managed Clark Tower for several years prior to In-Rel's purchase. In-Rel now has nine employees in Memphis, most of whom worked for Trizec.

At the time, Stein said office leasing required a familiarity with the market In-Rel didn't have.

"You really have to understand the dynamics of that market, and that would be very difficult for us to do and oversee from South Florida," Stein said. "We'd have to have local people and the ability to bring local people on staff, hire them, and get them indoctrinated."

Trammell Crow was an obvious choice as it had leased and managed In-Rel's other two office properties since In-Rel entered the market with the Poplar Towers purchase two years ago. Trammell Crow senior vice president Steve Guinn had been the listing agent for both properties when they were purchased.

Trammell Crow planned to lease 11,000 square feet in Clark Tower.

Stein says In-Rel never saw the relationship as long-term and felt it was unfair to Trammell to have them move into the Tower and handle leasing for 12 to 18 months, only to have In-Rel exercise its "blow out" clause and bring the leasing in-house.

"At the end of the day, I didn't want anything to be hidden as to what our agenda was and that is to be in control of our own destiny," Stein says.

Trammell Crow area director Tom Morgan wouldn't comment on his company's understanding of the timeline of the leasing deal. He says he recently had a good meeting with Stein and understands In-Rel is simply executing the same strategy it's used in South Florida for nearly 20 years.

"We intend to sell them more property," Morgan says. "They are really good, stand-up guys. We did a great job for them, as evident by them hiring Ron Riley."

Riley says he left Trammell on good terms after just five months on the job. Riley had previously been with Parkway Properties for 3 1/2 years and says owner-representation is a good fit for him.

"One of the fun parts and negative parts of working for Trammell Crow, a third-party representative, is you have multiple owners and they all expect full attention to be given to their inventory," Riley says. "There are only so many man-hours in a day. It's nice to only focus on three properties every day and how I'm going to impact those."

Clark Tower is 80% occupied. Lynnfield is 87% full while Poplar Towers is 90% leased.

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