

## Ex-CCRE Exec Opens Advisory Shop

Industry veteran **Faisal Ashraf** has launched a brokerage and advisory business to provide capital-markets expertise to borrowers and investors.

Ashraf, who most recently was head of capital markets at **CCRE**, opened his New York shop this month. It's called **Lotus Capital Partners**, after a flower that thrives in adverse conditions. Ashraf, the managing partner and chief executive, is interviewing prospective employees and expects to hire 5-7 by

yearend.

The firm offers investment analysis and advisory services on loan sales and acquisitions. It can perform asset-management duties and work with borrowers to line up capital, including complex, structured financings. Ashraf is in the process of obtaining a broker-dealer license, which he will use to match buyers and sellers of commercial real estate bonds.

Ashraf spent eight years at **Credit Suisse** — first in Europe and then in New York, where he focused on large-loan origination before the 2007-2008 financial meltdown. Afterward, he left and then returned to the bank for a couple of years before joining CCRE in 2013. As a managing director at the **Cantor Fitzgerald** unit, he handled mezzanine debt as well as commercial MBS loans.

After leaving CCRE in June, Ashraf said he began advising a handful of institutional clients, including Korean pension funds that he'd worked with in the past, before formally launching his firm.

"There are a lot of reasons it makes sense to start this business now," Ashraf said, pointing to regulatory changes and uncertainty about the direction of the market. Banks under regulatory pressure to reduce their commercial real estate holdings would be among the clients he expects to sign up.

"We've talked to lenders, including some banks, who are holding mortgage and mezz loans and are looking for us to help them address some of the risks that are starting to surface given that we are six to seven years into the cycle," Ashraf said.

Other potential clients include foreign investors looking to increase their U.S. exposure and pension funds trying to rebalance their debt portfolios. ❖

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