

## LI BUSINESS

# Joseph Gunnar, a Uniondale financial firm, will require staff to get vaccinated

### LI CEO mandates vaccinations for safety, other reasons

BY SARINA TRANGLE

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**J**oseph Gunnar & Co. LLC, a financial brokerage firm based in Uniondale, is one of the first businesses on the Island to announce staff will need to get vaccinated.

CEO Joseph Alagna informed his roughly 100 employees last week that they will need to be inoculated within 60 days of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration giving final approval to COVID-19 vaccines. Outside of health care companies, such as Northwell Health and NYU Langone Health, few local businesses have unveiled similar mandates.

Alagna said he decided to require inoculations so he could protect his team from the Delta variant — and because it puts less pressure on the firm to “police” compliance with mask guidelines and other rules.

“Over 99% of those 600,000 people that have died are unvaccinated people,” Alagna said, referring to the White House’s analysis of American deaths due to COVID-19. “I can have an employee upset with me. I can have an employee mad at me. But at least I have an employee that’s alive.”

After a staffer contracted COVID about



**Joseph Alagna, of Joseph Gunnar & Co., is one of the first CEOs on LI to announce a staff vaccination mandate.**

two weeks ago, Alagna said he is not requiring anyone to report to the office. If they choose to do so, employees must produce a negative COVID-19 test and wear a mask, regardless of whether they’re vaccinated.

Once the vaccines get final FDA approval, Alagna said he expects his team to get the inoculations — unless religious or medical concerns prevent them from doing so — and eventually return to the office.

No employees have said they would leave the firm over the mandate, but Alagna said some, including those in key positions, previously expressed opposition to the vaccines.

“I have to do what’s right for everyone,” said Alagna, of Sands Point.

Joseph Gunnar planned to move its headquarters from Manhattan to RXR Plaza in Uniondale before COVID-19 hit. The pandemic delayed the transition, and Alagna said the 8,000 square-foot space is now slated to be ready for the company in September.

Alagna said he’ll close a secondary office off Route 110 in Melville, and have staff stationed there start reporting to the Uniondale hub. With some Manhattan staff migrating to the new headquarters, Alagna said he’ll likely seek a smaller office in Manhattan when the lease expires on his 15,000 square-foot office there next year. He expects about half his team to work out of RXR Plaza.

But he is already considering expanding the Uniondale space to accommodate new hires, since Alagna has heard from colleagues who want to work for him now that he’s based on the Island.

“Just for a lifestyle change, I wanted to have my office and the headquarters move to Long Island,” Alagna said. “COVID hit, and then it seemed like everyone wanted to move out to Long Island.”