

Global Workplace Solutions

**An Interview with Jim Harding,
Division President, CBRE Global Workplace Solutions**

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to joining CBRE, Harding was a management consultant at Ernst & Young. He joined EY from Barclays Capital where he was the Chief Operating Officer and Head of Real Estate for the Corporate Real Estate Services group in the Americas. Prior to that, he was Director of Corporate Real Estate Strategy at HSBC in both global and regional (Americas) roles after having worked on portfolio planning and transaction management across EMEA for General Electric. Harding received his B.S. in Geological Sciences from The University of Leeds and his M.A. in Property Valuation and Management from Sheffield Hallam University.



Jim Harding

COMPANY BRIEF CBRE Group, Inc. (cbre.us), a Fortune 500 and S&P 500 company headquartered in Los Angeles, is the world's largest commercial real estate services and investment firm. CBRE offers a broad range of integrated services, including facilities, transaction and project management; property management; investment management; appraisal and valuation; property leasing; strategic consulting; property sales; mortgage services and development services. CBRE offers strategic advice and execution for property sales and leasing; corporate services; property, facilities and project management; mortgage banking; appraisal and valuation; development services; investment management; and research and consulting.

When you joined CBRE in 2012, what excited you about the opportunity and made you feel it would be the right fit?

It was about coming back home. I had joined CBRE in London straight from university, so I always had an affinity for the company and its leadership team. I left after a few years and pursued client side opportunities, but I was still very close to CBRE and its leadership team. After a time, I was anxious to get back. If corporate real estate is one's passion in life, CBRE is a firm whose mission supports that, and it's the place to be, so it was an obvious choice.

What makes CBRE so special?

Its people. Our leadership team at the very top has always had consistent values, has consistently executed against those values and has been able to drive those values down to the business. The reputation that CBRE enjoys in

the industry also makes it a destination of choice for people throughout their careers. Consequently, it gives us access to the best talent so the bar is very high for those coming in. Lastly, top talent is always relentless in its quest for developing creative solutions, and creative solutions bring an advantage to clients, which bring about the exceptional outcomes we strive to deliver.

We have always had strong people and we've always been known for this, but we also stand out by having

massive scale, which we can deliver on at a very local level. We have compact geographic divisions, each one resourced to bring the benefit of more than 300 corporate accounts right down to that local level. It makes us more agile, nimble, and responsive and allows us to channel our massive global scale very locally.

Will you discuss CBRE's strength within Global Workplace Solutions?

Clients and the services they require continue to expand in an emerging marketplace. Our broad geographic footprint has allowed us to continually service client needs as they've expanded, both functionally and geographically, around the world. Clients also want consistency of execution and the same quality and service everywhere they operate, just as their customers expect of them.

Our outlook for growth is positive because we have positioned ourselves through our M&A strategy to capture it. We have a geographic footprint and we have a full-service capability so we can deliver in every single location across all industry sectors.

We are a natural choice for corporations that have large, complex portfolios.

Are large, global clients the focus for the firm and how much of a focus are entrepreneurial and growth companies?

We have built our business to service large-scale corporate occupiers, and we've built a business that is very capable of servicing any asset class or scale, both domestically and internationally. This has always been a core focus.

That said, we absolutely have a focus around startup businesses. We work with them on a much more local scale. We're focused on delivering the full spectrum of services: we'll guide them on the journey and grow with them.

How close is the geographic coordination from region to region?

The coordination is incredibly tight among the different regions, both across and within service lines, to enable consistent service delivery. Through our account management model, we drive a consistent global service delivery model that is carefully tailored to local statute, culture, and client requirements.

How have you developed the strength of the team and focused your efforts to bring in top talent?

The team strength is really an extension of the culture. It's an unbelievably collegial culture, and part of the collegiality is based on the fact that one won't find a single colleague who doesn't intrinsically know the core values of the company – respect, integrity, and service excellence.

Those values provide a common bond because, if someone can't ascribe something they're going to do or say to those values, it won't work. It drives a high degree of collaboration.

How much of an impact is technology having on the business?

At day's end, we're still a people business and we can't replace people with technology. However, one of the great challenges for the corporate real estate industry is that there aren't necessarily common standards with regard to the technology – yet. There are a wealth of technologies emerging. We can see it coming and we are the only real estate services company that is invested in a specific real estate technologies venture fund called Fifth Wall Ventures, so we can scan the market very efficiently. That gives us a unique, first-mover advantage.

What advice do you give young people just starting in the industry to help them build sustainable careers?

Corporate real estate isn't an obvious career choice for many, but there is much to be learned. Be open minded to opportunity because you may end up running a line of business or an account, or even managing a whole division, at which point you're running a business. If you want a business career, looking through the lens of real estate is a great experience. ●