

Developing Capabilities and Talent in Commercial Real Estate

An Interview with Kyle M. Schoppmann, Executive Managing Director, CBRE

EDITORS' NOTE Kyle Schoppmann holds multiple roles at CBRE including Head of Occupier Services and Chief Strategist for the Tri-State Region and Executive Managing Director for CBRE's Midtown Manhattan office. She joined CBRE in 2007 as a Managing Director in Brokerage Services. She assumed responsibilities for Capital Markets as Senior Managing Director in 2009 and was promoted to Executive Managing Director in 2014. Schoppmann was previously a consulting partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers and then IBM.



Kyle M. Schoppmann

COMPANY BRIEF CBRE Group, Inc. (cbre.com), a Fortune 500 and S&P 500 company headquartered in Los Angeles, is the world's largest commercial real estate services and investment firm (in terms of 2014 revenues). The company has more than 70,000 employees (excluding affiliates), and serves real estate owners, investors, and occupiers through more than 400 offices (excluding affiliates) worldwide. 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.

What excited you about commercial real estate and what made you feel CBRE was the right fit?

Prior to joining CBRE, I had a great opportunity to work with many different companies as a consulting professional. In that role, I worked closely with senior executives to understand and address the challenges they were facing. Working together, we were able to make their organizations more efficient, enable their professionals to better sell, and create a better customer experience.

I wasn't necessarily looking to make a change into real estate, but as I explored the opportunity at CBRE, it quickly became clear that I could draw on my consulting experiences across other industries and translate them to commercial real estate. I thought I could make a difference.

Over the past eight years, CBRE has grown dramatically. With this growth comes even greater opportunity to innovate and empower our sales professionals in ways that have simply not been done in this industry before.

What were you looking to develop here and did the brokers get on board quickly?

I was committed to making improvements for our brokers from a sales operations and support perspective. We transformed our marketing function and enhanced our research capabilities to help them better perform for clients and deliver exceptional client outcomes.

Saving time and increasing effectiveness are paramount for brokers – and that meant finding ways to help them execute more efficiently and advance their role as strategic advisors with their clients.

One facet of this was to examine where we could provide enhanced training or tools. For example, while we had great data, there was an even greater opportunity to synthesize and deliver that information from an industry-specific point of view. Putting a different lens on our data allowed brokers to offer a deeper and more relevant perspective on the market – and become more valuable to their clients.

When bringing in talent, is it more about the expertise and knowledge they bring or is it more about the cultural fit?

It is about both. Certainly knowledge is important, and I wouldn't say "cultural fit," but rather it's a matter of perseverance and work ethic. While prior experience and knowledge of the business are important, we are passionate about training young professionals and professionals at all levels, for that matter – to position them for success. Young people have a lot of enthusiasm for the business, but they often don't know how tough it is. Yet the beauty of this business is that you can succeed at a relatively young age because it's about the work ethic and what you put into it. The business requires creativity and drive – and an entrepreneurial spirit.

How critical is it that your people have access to essential technology but not lose sight of the relationship part of the business?

Relationships between CBRE and our clients are of utmost importance. The technology available today should really be viewed as a means to an end, the end being to foster these relationships. While we view technology as a key enabler to new business development and improved management of existing client relationships, the technology supplements rather than supplants relationship building. We continually address how to use technology to define and deliver exceptional client results, maintain connectivity, and sustain business.

Is Midtown still as relevant and how do existing buildings remain competitive with new product coming out?

Midtown continues to be relevant for many of the city's key industry sectors, including financial services and legal. Midtown South has become a locus of opportunity within the tech sector. CBRE has continued to land new companies there, while helping many others develop their business and grow their footprint. Brooklyn is taking off in that regard as well, and will be another exciting chapter for the city – and CBRE, too.

Additionally, we have new development on the West Side and around Grand Central. CBRE is working with the owners of each of those developments – and to have a role in the process of changing the New York landscape is exciting and significant for us.

You work with the marquee names, but is your focus broader than that?

We have more than 200 professionals devoted to the New York market and they work at all different levels. Our services span quite a large range, from the small 1,500-square-foot entry into New York that is trying to get its business started to the one million-square-foot tenant that has a wide variety of constraints to satisfy. The spectrum is there for us, and we have capabilities and a platform that can address each and all of their needs.

Are there things you're concerned about in looking at the market currently?

First and foremost, this is a dynamic business. Client requirements and the market are continually evolving. As the industry leader, we are committed to extending our platform and capabilities to meet the changing needs of our clients.

I'm very focused on our next generation of brokerage talent as well. We want to keep growing that next generation so, down the road, they are poised to make significant contributions to our industry and our city.

Has the real estate industry been what you expected?

It's been better. CBRE has grown over time and we have new capabilities that have never existed before. Employers are using space differently to attract talent so this demands a more strategic partnership with our clients. We are not about a simple transaction but rather about how we can help clients achieve their business strategies and goals.

It's been exciting to see how our organization has grown beyond real estate provider to business partner. In that regard, my background has been a true advantage. I'm looking forward to finding new and better ways to deliver against that promise as we look to the future. ●