

## A Disciplined Platform

An Interview with Robert A. Knakal,  
Chairman, New York Investment Sales, Cushman & Wakefield, Inc.

## A Vision for New York

An Interview with Paul J. Massey, Jr.,  
President-New York Investment Sales, Cushman & Wakefield, Inc.  
and New York City Mayoral Candidate.

**COMPANY BRIEF** Cushman & Wakefield ([cushmanwakefield.com](http://cushmanwakefield.com)) is a leading global real estate services firm that helps clients transform the way people work, shop, and live. Their 43,000 employees in more than 60 countries help investors optimize the value of their real estate by combining their global perspective and deep local knowledge with an impressive platform of real estate solutions. Cushman & Wakefield is among the largest commercial real estate services firms with revenue of \$5 billion across core services of agency leasing, asset services, capital markets, facility services (C&W Services), global occupier services, investment & asset management (DTZ Investors), project & development services, tenant representation, and valuation & advisory.



Robert A. Knakal

**EDITORS' NOTE** Previously, Robert Knakal was Chairman and Founding Partner of Massey Knakal Realty Services. He graduated from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics in 1984. He started his real estate career at CB Richard Ellis where he met Paul J. Massey Jr. They both left CB in 1988 to form Massey Knakal. To date, Knakal has been personally responsible for the sale of more than 1,700 buildings and over \$14.5 billion in sales. On December 31, 2014, Cushman & Wakefield acquired Massey Knakal. Most recently, Knakal was ranked the number-one investment sales broker at Cushman & Wakefield, globally. In 1998, at the age of 36, he was named to Crain's

New York Business's *Forty Under Forty/New York Rising Stars* list.



Paul J. Massey, Jr.

**EDITORS' NOTE** Paul Massey graduated from Colgate University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics in 1983. After graduation, he began his career at Coldwell Banker Commercial Real Estate Services in Midtown Manhattan as head of the market research department, then as an investment sales broker. Together with Partner Robert A. Knakal, whom he met at Coldwell, he founded Massey Knakal Realty Services, becoming Chief Executive Officer and Chair of the firm's Executive Committee. In December 2014, Cushman & Wakefield acquired Massey Knakal and Massey was appointed to his current post. Paul Massey is now a candidate for Mayor of New York City in the 2017 race.

### Massey Knakal is now part of Cushman & Wakefield. What made you feel that would be the right fit?

The thing that really differentiated Massey Knakal was its platform. It probably has the simplest but most disciplined platform that existed in the brokerage industry. We only represented sellers and only worked on exclusive listings, and each broker worked in a specific geographic territory.

That platform required tremendous discipline from management and from all of the agents but differentiated us from other people and gave us a distinct competitive advantage. This is why for the past 14 years, the company has sold about four times the number of properties as the number-two firm in the market. The history and heritage of the firm really was defined by its platform.

We thought that Cushman & Wakefield would be a great fit for us given the tremendous Cushman & Wakefield brand, which is probably the best in the industry.

With the world becoming an increasingly smaller place, we felt that having a global platform within which to work would benefit our people significantly.

### Have the type of skills that a broker needs to be successful changed?

The nature of the brokerage business has changed and given how readily accessible data is today, the thing that is more illustrative of separating the top brokers from the rest of the pack is relying more heavily on their negotiating skills, their ability to help clients achieve objectives, and the relationships they have.

With regard to young people who want a career in real estate, what I tell young folks is they have to find what area of the business they truly love. There are so many aspects of real estate: investment, development, finance, and even in brokerage, there is sales brokerage, office leasing brokerage, mortgage brokerage – there are so many different things to do so young people should get exposed to as many different aspects of real estate as possible to find out what they gravitate towards, because having passion for what one does will really help one succeed. If one has passion, they will put in the time and if they put in the time, they will likely succeed and continue to improve themselves.

The folks who are most passionate about what they do tend to be the best people in their particular industry, so people need to try something they love and learn as much about that aspect of it as they can. ●

### What has allowed Massey Knakal to consistently work so well and what were some important reasons for becoming involved with Cushman & Wakefield?

Massey Knakal was highly disciplined in terms of its focus on geographies and what we call a territory system. We had people burrowed into submarkets and a sharing mechanism so the agents could execute together as a team. It was a big competitive advantage.

We were also only seller representatives, which takes a lot of discipline, but the clients absolutely love it, so we had a disciplined strategy but we also had a culture of collegiality and fun – work hard but play hard.

### There has been talk about your focus on running for Mayor of New York City. What makes you feel the timing could be right for this opportunity?

We had 20 years of great leadership that culminated with Mayor Bloomberg. It was a great run for New York City with strong leadership, but now we are headed in the wrong direction.

I fell in love with the city as soon as I came here from Boston in 1983. My two oldest kids are now living and working here full time and our whole family loves New York. This city gave me everything and I see a chance to deliver leadership that works with a real strategy to make housing affordable, to radically improve our schools, and to keep our streets safe.

The job of running New York is a CEO job, but a CEO gets nothing done by him or herself. I'd look to build a team of great managers that I know has the capacity to get things done.

I believe it's a huge advantage for New Yorkers to have a mayor with an understanding of the way business gets done. For starters, businesses create the jobs, so understanding the challenges and opportunities they face is critical for a mayor. Second, business instills a managerial discipline that is crucial to running the City well and making this a great place to live. ●