

A Holistic Approach

An Interview with Maureen Ehrenberg,
Head of Global Facilities Management for Global Corporate Services, CB Richard Ellis

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to assuming her current post, Maureen Ehrenberg joined CBRE as Senior Managing Director in its strategic consulting division. Previously, she led the Global Client Services business for Grubb & Ellis. She was recently recognized by the Illinois Real Estate Journal's Women in Real Estate with a Career Achievement award for her significant contributions to the commercial real estate industry. Ehrenberg is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and serves on its Americas Board. She is a Counselor of Real Estate, a member of Lambda Alpha International, and a licensed real estate broker in Illinois. She conducted graduate-level research in international economics at The City University in London, England, where she completed her bachelor's degree with joint honors in economics and accounting.



Maureen Ehrenberg

COMPANY BRIEF Headquartered in Los Angeles, CB Richard Ellis Group, Inc. (www.cbre.com) is a Fortune 500 and S&P 500 company. As the world's largest commercial real estate services firm, the company has approximately 29,000 employees (excluding affiliates), and serves real estate owners, investors, and occupiers through more than 300 offices (excluding affiliates) worldwide. CB Richard Ellis 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.

Will you give a brief overview of the Global Corporate Services business for CBRE, and within that business, where does the global facilities management responsibility lie?

Our Global Corporate Services business is fundamentally an approach we bring to corporations, government, and very large occupiers with a global portfolio whose core businesses are typically not real estate, but who use their properties to facilitate their business. We incorporate strategy, facility management, transactions management, project management, and a technology platform that supports the services we deliver. This provides a consistent strategy and service that helps our clients reduce their costs and rationalize how and why they make

decisions about space and place across their portfolio. We can help them in all areas, from deciding the number of offices they should have, to where they should be located, to how their properties should be configured to best accommodate the core business at each of their different business areas. We can even have our consulting group negotiate incentives if they decide to go into a new market or exit an old market. It's a completely holistic approach to occupancy strategy.

Do you find that most of the organizations you work with are effectively coordinating their decisions internally?

This is a very large, growing element of the commercial real estate industry, so over the years, corporations have begun to centralize and integrate those functions. Very often, within a corporation, they may have previously fallen into different areas, or at least into different management streams going up to the CAO or CFO. Corporations and government today are seeing that each one of these decisions impact the other. There has been a drive to integration. In order for us to be effective, if we're not in lock step and coordinated, then we're not delivering the value proposition they're looking to us to deliver as the service provider. So the coordination piece is a key reason organizations retain us, because we've actually integrated our technology solutions to support the deliverables our teams are bringing in.

Would you highlight CBRE's leadership on the technology side and how you've been able to use that as a differentiator?

One thing that sets us apart is our innovation in technology. We've identified best-in-breed, non-proprietary applications, which ensure our clients will have the flexibility they need when changes are required. Through our insight tool and our portal, we provide an integrated technology solution that tracks all the critical data relating to their real estate and presents it via dashboard populated with rich, robust, and accurate data. They can use this info to hone their own business strategy as well as manage decisions regarding their facilities and real estate.

How critical is your sourcing leverage?

Right now, CBRE manages spending of over \$22 billion a year on behalf of its clients, and manages, between GCS and asset services,

about 2.2 billion square feet of real estate. It's not our goal to just squeeze our suppliers. We've recruited career sourcing professionals, and we go to market with anything from P2P processes all the way down to bulk purchasing. We also have master service agreements that give us "most favored" pricing, so we're able to bring tremendous purchasing power and discounts to our corporate clients, and that helps their bottom line and their earnings per share for the shareholders.

Do you see opportunities for growth in 2010 and where will the growth come from?

There will be opportunities for growth. We track the hot trends and our clients' goals and objectives. Some of those at the forefront this year have been cost reduction, followed closely by sustainability and energy, and then looking at different workplace solutions that do away with walled offices and provide a more flexible workplace solution where people can utilize a shared environment.

We have found that many corporations have outsourced in some areas but are now looking for a more consolidated solution. We offer real estate transformation outsourcing that helps our clients fundamentally change the way they manage their real estate using our core competencies. As many companies look at outsourcing their non-core functions, we are the "safe hands" in the industry to go to. We can often take on their existing staff through transitions, and with our brand reputation and ethics, we're a group that many employees would like to work for.

Is this an industry that provides strong opportunities for women, especially at senior levels and, if so, is that message getting across to young women looking to enter the business?

Yes. Over the past several years, women have increasingly sought real estate out as a career opportunity. Real estate can offer women tremendous opportunities even if they want or need a shared work environment or to work from home.

That said, it has often been difficult over the years for women to move up through the ranks in the industry, and that is another thing that makes CBRE unique. There is a strong women's movement within the organization and tremendous opportunity for women throughout. At CBRE, you do see women in leadership positions. ●