

CORENET GLOBAL'S

# THE LEADER

CORPORATE  
REAL ESTATE  
& WORKPLACE

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## YOUNG LEADER

BY MEGAN MCCANN



Michael Davidson

# “The Running Man”

BANK OF AMERICA'S MICHAEL DAVIDSON

Michael Davidson's introduction to the world of corporate real estate was, as he describes, a 'baptism by fire.' Only a month after graduating Magna Cum Laude from Fordham University in New York City, Rev. Joseph M. McShane, S.J., who is now the President of Fordham University, and Dr. John Kezel, advised Davidson to contact David Arena, a fellow Fordham Alum at Morgan Stanley and now President of Grubb & Ellis New York, for career guidance.

After meeting with Arena and leadership at Tishman Speyer Properties, Davidson was hired as an Assistant Property Manager for 750 Seventh, an office tower in Times Square.

For the next four years at 750 Seventh, Morgan Stanley completed a 365,000 sq. ft. interior fit-out for occupancy by their growing IT Division and as such, Davidson was immersed in Property Management, Engineering, Technology, Design, Construction and Retail Development, essentially from the ground-up. Davidson was promoted to Property Manager two years into the project working for Hines Interests and ultimately participated in the sale/leaseback of the tower.

“There was no formal orientation or training, but I was surrounded by real estate professionals at Tishman Speyer Properties, Hines Interests and Morgan Stanley, who provided the guidance and development that I needed,” he says.

“Interestingly, the harder I worked, while remaining grounded, the more I found mentors who were willing to impart their knowledge and help me build a foundation for my career.”

In 1998, Davidson was subsequently hired by Morgan Stanley's Corporate Services division and participated in the conception, development and construction of 745 Seventh Ave., an office tower intended to house Morgan Stanley's primary lines of business.

It was during this time that Davidson was introduced to global corporate real estate, as he relocated to lead expatriate assignments in Tokyo and London as an Executive Director for corporate real estate with Morgan Stanley, managing a team across Asia, the UK and Continental Europe.

In 2005, Davidson was recruited by Bank of America to be the Senior Vice President and Corporate Workplace Executive responsible for managing the Global Corporate and Investment Banking (GCIB) real estate portfolio, encompassing 20 million sq. ft. (1.86 million sq. m.) with an annual occupancy and capital cost of \$560 million. His team leads the integration of disciplines including transactions and brokerage, design and construction, property management, business continuity, technology and compliance to ensure that strategy, space planning, innovation and execution remain aligned.

Davidson has been directly involved in leading the establishment of GCIB's occupancy strategy in New York City, including the development of Bank of America Tower at One Bryant Park, a 2.1 million sq. ft. (195,096 sq. m.) office tower striving for Platinum LEED certification, to open soon.

Believe it or not, Davidson's personal life has managed to “keep pace” with his career. He has completed a marathon on each of the world's seven continents, including Antarctica, and in so doing has raised \$70,000 toward relief efforts for children with HIV and epilepsy, and for children in India.

Davidson's advice for other young real estate professionals is fairly straightforward. “Gain direct experience and develop your knowledge in each real estate discipline, with a focus on how they relate, other critical interdependencies and the context of how space and occupancy is viewed and managed by the client you are serving. The ability to understand and integrate the traditional silos in real estate, with the multifaceted and evolving requirements of your client, is essential toward establishing a strategy that is a success from each functional perspective,” he explains. “In real estate, as in banking, the ability to fulfill the needs of the client holistically will win the day for teams that truly embrace a collaborative approach and it is increasingly revealing itself as the playing field where clients and their trust, is won and lost.”