

All the world's a stage for Global Real Estate manager

BY CAMERON MARTIN

Michael Davidson's desk faces a wall-length map of the Earth, which is appropriate because his role as head of Global Real Estate for the Corporate & Investment Bank is world-encompassing.

It's an early Monday morning in February, and Davidson is between meetings. In the morning he was working with the Global Commodities Group in support of its real estate planning, and as head of the New York region real estate team, he was also monitoring snow removal efforts and dropping by the recently renovated cafeteria at 383 Madison Ave.

In the afternoon he'll be focusing on the firm's upcoming departure from 1 Chase Manhattan Plaza.

Davidson and the real estate team developed the strategy that led to the \$725 million sale of the Downtown site to Fosun Property Holdings and is now overseeing the building's exit and decommissioning — a massive effort that involves moving approximately 4,500 employees to new accommodations in the New York area.

He's a man of several hats and his job allows him to interact with people at every level of the company, and that is exactly why he loves it, he says.

"When you think of real estate and the space that people occupy, it touches and impacts everyone in the company. On any given day, I may have reason to speak with any person in the company," Davidson says.

"Anyone who sits at a desk, uses technology, passes through a turnstile, takes the elevator, feels cool in the summer and warm in the winter, dines in our cafeterias, hosts meetings with clients — they're all interacting with the work we deliver and maintain all over the world."

In his dual roles, Davidson oversees 15 million square feet of property across 500 locations in 54 countries. He reports to Corporate



& Investment Bank Chief Administrative Officer Lou Rauchenberger and David Arena, head of Global Real Estate.

Davidson, who lives in Piermont, N.Y., says there's no typical day in his job, and he enjoys the unpredictability.

"I could be moving the office of a member of the Operating Committee or working with a manager as they decide who is going to sit next to whom when a group moves to new accommodations in the Corporate & Investment Bank," Davidson says.

Davidson, who joined the firm in 2010, says the perception of global real estate has evolved during his career. In the past, employees in his sector might have been seen as order-takers, he says. Now the real estate team is seen as a partner with the company's lines of business.

In his responsibilities to the Corporate & Investment Bank, Davidson is an integrator and has to stay closely attuned to developments within the group, he says.

"To have a well-informed real estate strategy, you must have the right information and assumptions regarding people and technology, and these areas must co-exist and incubate in unison. Bad real estate is not being aware of what the left and right hands are doing at all times."

Davidson helped oversee the firm's large consolidation at 25 Bank St. in London's Canary Wharf, a \$328 million project that

brought together the London-area's Corporate & Investment Bank and involved moving more than 7,000 employees.

"25 Bank St. as a location has not only facilitated the realization of line of business synergies, but has symbolically unified our people and culture in London."

Davidson and his team also have to be ready to react quickly to unpredictable events such as Superstorm Sandy, which flooded 4 New York Plaza, closed the location for nearly a year and spurred the rapid displacement of 4,800 staff to other locations in the New York region.

Global Real Estate handles more than 50,000 employee moves per year, driven by new hiring and organizational changes.

"Every move for us is important from the senior leadership of the company to the interns and analysts we host each year," Davidson says.

Seamlessly transitioning any employee — be it an Operating Committee member or a recent college graduate — can have profound effects on the company, he says.

"The space that we occupy, combined with the notion of moving, is a combination that can be very emotional, thus how well we plan, communicate and partner with thousands of colleagues each year can have a compelling impact on the person, the team and the firm itself," Davidson says.