

THE RELATIONSHIPS BUSINESS

When I was still in college, I had plans to put my degree in economics to good use by starting a career in financial advising. However, a wise older friend who worked in the commercial real estate industry told me something that really struck a chord: “When you’re young, not many people will trust you with their personal finances, but they *will* trust you with their real estate needs.” This friend became the first in a long line of people who would help me navigate the career I ultimately chose post-graduation: commercial real estate.

There is a popular adage in our industry: **Commercial real estate is all about relationships.**

Relationships between owners and property managers. Relationships between property managers and tenants. Relationships between service providers and building teams. But what I consider the most significant relationship in our industry is the one between a mentor and a mentee.

Those of you who know me know that I am exceptionally passionate about mentorship. I believe it is the single most important way for commercial real estate to attract, retain and nurture the best and the brightest young talent.

When I was in college, I incorrectly assumed a job in commercial real estate consisted of little more than adjusting thermostats and dealing with angry tenants. Of course, I now know that job descriptions in our industry are much more complex, and no two days are exactly the same for a property professional. So, our first task as an industry is increasing awareness. College outreach is important, especially to those students in commercial real estate programs. Offering

internships with your company can be a great way to help students discover what makes a job like property management exciting.



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And the learning shouldn’t stop after an internship ends. Many commercial real estate companies have formal mentorship programs, but some of the best mentorship relationships often spring up organically within a building or through interactions at BOMA events. Companies without formal training or mentorship programs also can rely on outside help from BOMA International, which offers unparalleled industry education, and their BOMA local associations, many of which have Emerging Professionals Committees. My BOMA local association, BOMA/Orange County, hosts “speed networking” events that pair industry veterans with young professionals for short conversations about how to grow in a commercial real estate career. As a mentor myself, I often find that I learn as much from the young professionals I advise as they (hopefully!) learn from me!

My career has benefitted so much from the guidance of so many supervisors, peers and colleagues I met through BOMA, and I’m sure yours have, too. Commercial real estate truly is the relationships business—and our people are our best assets! ■