2018 Distinguished Leaders Circle inductees announced

Former Coca-Cola, McKesson and United Technologies execs to be honored at Global Summit in Boston
Matthew J. Fanoe

In March of this year, corporate real estate executive Matt Fanoe retired as Vice President of Real Estate at Coca-Cola Refreshments (OCR), the North American Bottling Operations for the Coca-Cola Company. It was his last position in a 36-year career with the world-famous soft drink brand. In the early days on the job, he focused on developing budgets, forecasts sales and analyzing operating expenses for the bottling company in Los Angeles. Then, he headed east to the Atlanta-based headquarters of Coca-Cola, where he rose to Corporate Director of Real Estate and Facilities at Coca-Cola Enterprises, Inc. (CCE). In 2010, he joined CCR, ultimately managing the entry’s 50-million-square-foot (4.64 million sq. m), 600-location portfolio.

Fanoe’s contribution to the corporate real estate (CRE) profession as a pioneer, trailblazer, role model, mentor, thought leader and change agent who has helped shape the profession is defined by one simple yet passionate belief – adding value to the core business. That’s just one of the praises for Fanoe sung by former CoreNet Global Board Director Mary Jane Olhasso, MCR, SLG, Assistant Executive Officer - Finance and Administration for the County of San Bernardino, California, who added, “He always understood that the profession was not solely based on buying and selling real estate, but on fostering sustainable and meaningful relationships.”

Fanoe began his career with Coca-Cola when few real estate departments were centralized. Many real estate decisions were made at the corporate level, brokerage relationships were few and often strained. In the world of distribution, facilities were not the well-oiled, web-linked machines they are today but were small, scattered and undisciplined.

After proving himself in Los Angeles, Fanoe joined a decentralized structure at CCE in Atlanta, which had up to 200 owned and leased properties in its portfolio. In a short time, he developed CCE’s small but centralized in-house real estate group, one of the first of its kind. Olhasso noted, “He understood that the profession was not solely based on buying and selling real estate, but on fostering sustainable and meaningful relationships.”

Fanoe’s skill at relationship-building is emphasized by the highest honor to be bestowed upon a member.

To learn more about the Distinguished Leaders Circle, its selection criteria and application process, visit www.corenetglobal.org.
Frank Robinson, MCR

Frank Robinson, MCR, retired as Senior Vice President of Corporate Real Estate (CRE) for McKesson in 2014. Now, he spends occasional time as an executive coach backed by nearly four decades of highly active leadership and educational roles in CoreNet Global and its predecessor organizations, International Development Research Council (IDRC) and NACORE International.

Among his professional achievements, Robinson counts a remarkable initiative to centralize real estate operations at McKesson while simultaneously introducing the concept of outsourcing, described as a “don’t try this at home” effort in less-qualified hands.

“He is the real deal,” said Jeff Elie, former CoreNet Global Chair and current Vice President, Global Real Estate and Facilities, at Kaplan, Inc. “His contributions to CRE reflect his genuine desire to help promote our industry and individuals.”

He also recalls a certain passion in Robinson’s association leadership efforts, such as the time Robinson forced a stand-up and be-counted vote during the controversial move to change the meaning of the “I” in IDRC from “industrial” to “international.”

Frank understood the meaning of making our organization sustainable by being one step ahead in futuristic thinking,” Elie said. “It was time to move to the next evolutionary step.”

Robinson was instrumental in CRE’s early years of pushing the profession’s association to provide content that “changed the focus from pure tactical discussions in the 1980’s to how to becoming today’s strategic partner with our business units,” Robinson recalls.

Nominated for induction into the Distinguished Leaders Circle by the Northern California Chapter of CoreNet Global and its Chair John Lucas, Vice-President of Global Real Estate and Workplace Services at Juniper Networks, their application noted his stellar professional experience that encompassed many firsts and lasting legacies on the businesses themselves.

At Data General Computers (1975-1983), Robinson created the first CRE department, where his work included expanding the firm’s network of U.S. sales offices during a particularly high-growth phase.

At Tandem Computers (1985-1999), he elevated the role and visibility of the CRE department within the company, where his work also included critical-era expansion as well as strategic portfolio reductions during leaner years for the company.

And, at McKesson (2000-2014), Robinson took on the “perfect storm” challenge of consolidating real estate-related functions and staff within 15 business units into the first centralized CRE department at a time when the company itself existed as a band of independent business units but was already headed toward uniting its siloed operations. Represented independently by a lone real estate operation, each business unit had its own portfolio, processes, strategic visions, staff, etc., three real estate functions within the larger company simply hadn’t been communicating with one another.

Just 18 months into his position at McKesson, Robinson pitched to senior management and won the chance to prove that a centralized CRE function, along with another first – the use of an outsourcing partner to handle day-to-day real estate activities – was the key to ultimately achieving three important milestones: more consistency in service delivery across the entire company real estate portfolio, optimized space utilization, and reduced costs. During the process, he also introduced the “Workplace Business Partners” initiative to better understand business units’ core business as a means for developing and providing better solutions.

Ultimately, the centralized McKesson CRE function would take on responsibility for a 26-million-square-foot (2.4 million-sq. m.) global portfolio. And it was through the consolidation of service providers and leveraged spending that the single department and its strategic structure was able to help the company achieve a $40M annual run-rate savings.

In a 2005 interview with the LEADER magazine, Robinson described five lessons he gleaned from the McKesson experience:

1. Look for and take advantage of an opportunity to accomplish what you want to accomplish.
2. Be willing to fight the good fight to reach your ideal state.
3. Hold yourself accountable for your actions during the journey.
4. Over- rather than under-communicate with others during such a process.
5. Have a passion for why and a strong belief in what you’re doing.

If helping to evolve the profession of CRE isn’t enough evidence to demonstrate Robinson’s unique qualities, colleagues say, there’s one more facet to his make-up that should: he’s also a genuinely nice guy.

“Frank has not only been a leader, a mentor and an educator but, most important, he has been the kindest man to so many professionals, including myself,” said Jeff Flit, PE, CEO of AlfaTech consulting engineers.

“Even after retirement he has continued to be available for those who need him.”

David Nelson, Senior Vice President at Wells Fargo Bank, listed more characteristics that demonstrate Robinson’s leadership qualities: “He is the smartest guy in the room and a great listener,” Nelson said. “Those two attributes in the same person are truly unique. When that is combined with a willingness to share you have a remarkable individual.”

Humbled by the recognition from his peers, Robinson notes: “There are few things in life as gratifying as being recognized for your efforts and accomplishments, especially if it’s for doing something that I truly enjoyed doing, with people who were great to share my journey with, and in a profession that I enjoyed being part of. It’s been a heck of a 46-year ride, with highs and lows, but I wouldn’t trade it for any other journey.

“I have changed jobs many times over my career, but the one constant has been my involvement in IDRC/CoreNet Global. The business relationships and friendships that I developed as a result of these associations have significantly contributed to my personal growth and professional development over my entire career. It became like a family.”
Ronald (Ron) P. Zappile, Sr.

Creative problem-solving might best summarize Ron Zappile’s approach to work. Throughout the four decades of his global career in real estate and finance, he has often been credited with recognizing a need that hasn’t yet been addressed and finding a sure-fire way to address it—and then passing that solution along to others.

His career spanned 30 years with United Technologies Corp. (UTC) where he served in his last role as president of United Technologies Realty (UTR) and Director, Global Real Estate Operations. As evidence of his broad professional skill set, he also spent time at UTC as global CFO of Otis Engineering Centers.

For UTC’s Otis Engineering Centers, his solution was a financial planning and reporting system that helped the UTC unit make more sense of complex and under-supported financial operations. The system that Zappile developed and implemented was so successful in redirecting the financial, administrative, project management and project reporting functions for Otis, it was awarded an Application Technology Award by Computerworld magazine in the late 1980s.

George Gibson, to whom Zappile reported at the time, said, “What struck me was that he had a sense of diligence, of the importance of what he was working on. He knew how to lead to a chain; he was interested in the job. He came as in things were getting complicated; there was a lot involved,” added Gibson, who now is an independent elevator consultant. “Ron dug into it and within a short period he made recommendations on how to come into the 20th century.”

In addition, Gibson said, Zappile’s work ethic was supported by a management style everyone could get behind. “He teaches people,” Gibson said. “He had several clerical and administrative people reporting to him and he mentored them in a way that was productive. And when he left, they were able to continue on.”

Real estate consultant Michael A. P. Casolo, MCR, who worked in a service-provider role with Zappile for about 10 years, describes him as “one of the strongest and most fair clients I’ve ever worked with,” noting the ability to balance these personal characteristics along with a focus on what was important to his own company. “He always put his company’s needs first but treated the service-provider firm fairly and reasonably. He was a fair client I’ve ever worked with,” noting the ability to balance these personal characteristics along with a focus on what was important to his own company.

He left his mark on the association. His leadership style and emphasis on metrics, accountability and business improvement were so informative early in my tenure.”

Previously, Zappile served as the association’s Treasurer and as a Global Board Director. He also held leadership positions within the Connecticut-Westchester Chapter, including Chair, and the Eastern Regional Symposium planning committee.

He is also a founder of Bench Core LLC, a real estate benchmarking and analytics service, where he presently serves as Director of Operations and CIO. In this capacity he collaborated with CoreNet Global in 2014 to deploy innovative benchmarking services for corporate real estate. The service later became BenchCORE, the brand offering of Bench Core LLC. The service allows CIOs to understand corporate real estate portfolios against the world’s best portfolios to promote efficiency, cost savings and strategic value.

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corenet global distinguished leader 2018

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