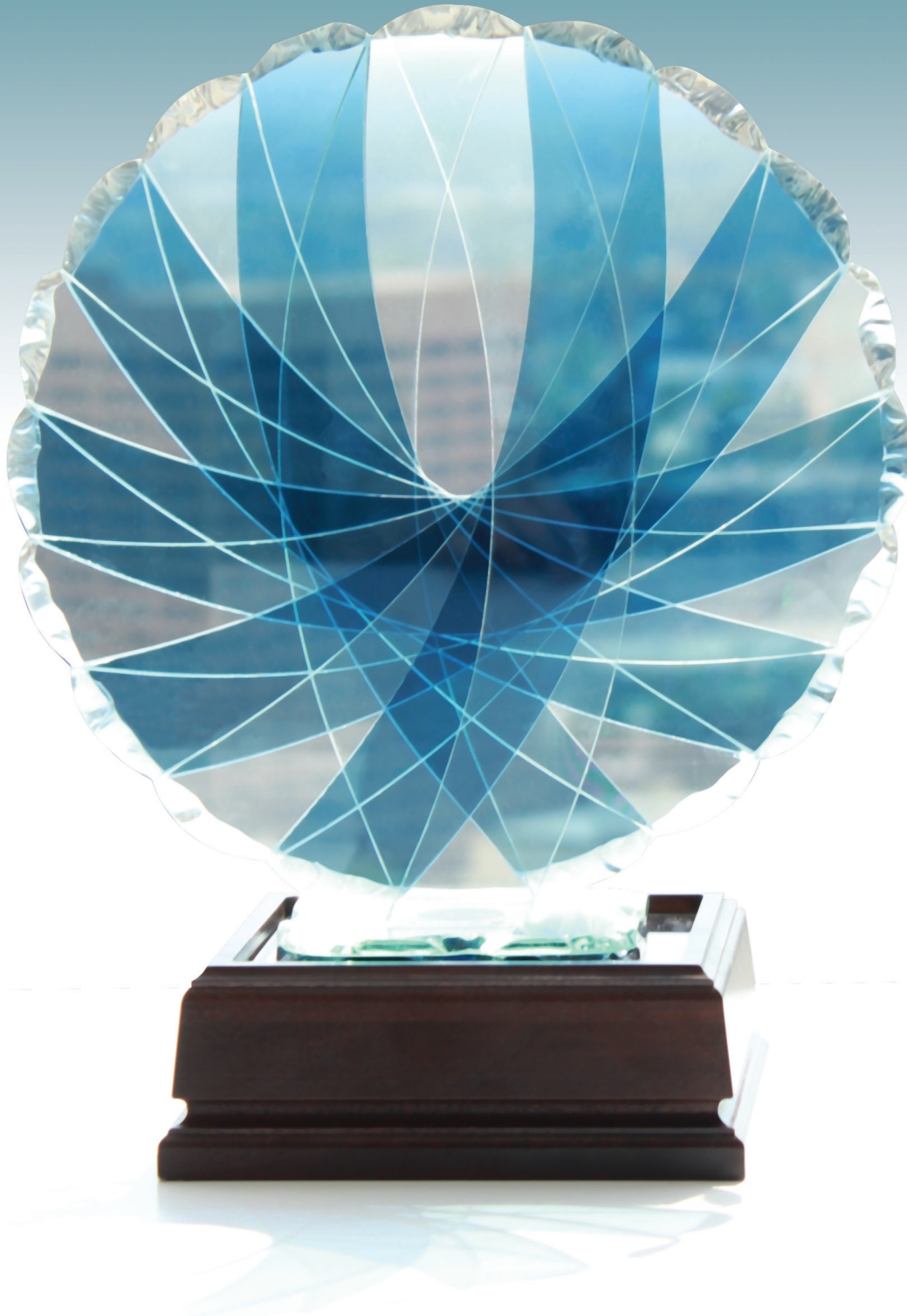


# 2019 DISTINGUISHED LEADERS CIRCLE INDUCTEES ANNOUNCED



Boston, Cincinnati  
members to be  
recognized for  
trailblazing work

Induction ceremony  
to be held at  
Global Summit in  
Orange County

## Two leaders inducted into 2019 Distinguished Leaders Circle

CoreNet Global is pleased to announce its latest inductees into its Distinguished Leaders Circle: Sarah K. Abrams and T. Patrick Donnelly, MGR.h.

These corporate real estate (CRE) thought leaders will be honored in an induction ceremony at the CoreNet Global Summit Recognition Dinner in Anaheim, Calif., on October 22, 2019.

The Distinguished Leaders Circle is designed to pay tribute to those members who have demonstrated a lifetime of leadership that has helped define and shape the corporate real estate profession through their body of work. While CoreNet Global has a number of awards based upon individual or group performance on a particular project or for a given year, the association began recognizing those who have career-long legacies of service and leadership within the association – and the profession as a whole.

This recognition is deemed 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](http://www.corenetglobal.org).



### *Sarah K. Abrams*

*Senior Vice President, Global Real Estate, Iron Mountain*

In any profession, change happens when just one individual does something differently. A better outcome is reached and an effective conduit helps spread the word. The new model takes hold virally, successes multiply, and a new “best practice” is fully engaged.

In the world of corporate real estate (CRE), chalk up quite a few of those new best practices to CoreNet Global Distinguished Leader Sarah K. Abrams.

“If I could only use two words to describe Sarah it would be, ‘human sparkler,’ ” said Cynthia Keliher, who nominated Abrams for the recognition. Keliher, a partner with McCarter & English and co-chair of the law firm’s real estate practice group, met Abrams through mutual friends and interests in Boston some 35 years ago. They remain close friends.

In detailing Abrams’ accomplishments, Keliher noted two examples of Abrams’ efforts that ushered in significant changes to the way CRE functioned at her organization at that time. One, making location decisions based on considerations around available talent or labor rather than real estate costs alone and, two, prioritizing workforce initiatives from both the demand and supply sides.

“(Her) contribution to the profession is so notable because it has become a mainstream approach in the industry,” Keliher wrote. “Her passion for sharing these insights and new approaches has helped change the way economic developers promote their communities, has changed the way companies choose their locations, and has changed the way corporate real estate organizations think about their client-engagement model.”

“She’s been a pioneer in so many ways,” said Chris Horblit, citing Abrams’ groundbreaking approaches, also, to strategic outsourcing, sustainability and wellness. As vice president of workplace services at apparel and home-fashions retailer TJX, Horblit met Abrams when she hired him from Fidelity Investment’s Business Risk group into the company’s real estate division that she led. Ultimately, thanks to the career-development skills Abrams imparts on others, Horblit was next up for the role of president of Fidelity Real Estate when Abrams left that position to join information- and assets-management company Iron Mountain. She now serves as Iron Mountain’s senior vice president and head of global real estate.

### **A trailblazer from the start**

Like most in CRE, Abrams came to the profession in an indirect way; her route began with real estate law. Having earned a BA degree in economics, she entered Cornell Law School to piggyback, in a sense, off her mother’s career as a small-town lawyer and her father’s work in banking. Enmeshed in the lexicon of urban economics, mortgages, architecture, real estate and the like while growing up, Abrams took things to a natural next step. She received her law degree but eventually realized she preferred the business side of real estate over its legal aspects.

In Abrams’ third year at Cornell, the law student spotted a notice in the Wall Street Journal that MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was to start the country’s first master’s





program in real estate development. Keen on starting her career back in Boston, Abrams scheduled a visit to MIT between interviews at law firms. She then applied to the program and became a student of the school's inaugural, 12-month real-estate-development master's program. (She still speaks at MIT today to encourage students pursuing CRE careers.)

"I came out of that program in the midst of a very hot real estate market in the Boston area and I started to work for a small real-estate-development-company," Abrams said. That project-management position lasted four years before she was motivated to go out on her own, joined by an MIT classmate, to develop real estate independently and consult. In another three years she would be wooed by USTrust, a Boston bank, to manage underperforming real estate during the savings-and-loan crisis of the early 1990s. She reached the senior VP level there before Fidelity Investments lured her to work in its corporate real estate division – her first professional CRE position.

After 14 years at Fidelity, Abrams took her second CRE career step over to Iron Mountain, where she has been since 2012. "I tell people I'm a business executive with real estate expertise," she said, putting the proper perspective on the profession. "My North Star is enabling Iron Mountain's business."

It's a modest summation, given that Abrams' work has helped the company, among other things, stop the hemorrhaging of facilities-management (FM) costs, centralize much of its FM operations, implement a massive energy-management and sustainability program, reduce properties' utilities costs, relocate the firm's global headquarters (a project that won several industry design and workplace awards), and absorb global operations of a competitor's assets following its acquisition by Iron Mountain.

### A multi-dimensional role

The current snapshot of her work at Iron Mountain shows Abrams overseeing a real estate portfolio of more than 88 million square feet (8.18 million sq. m.) in over 1,450 locations in 56 countries. In addition to the enormous internal responsibilities such a role entails, however, Abrams also often becomes a consultant to Iron Mountain's customer base, engaging directly with large clients – Aramark, Bank of Montreal, Norton Rose Fulbright, KPMG and Credit Suisse in 2019 alone – to demonstrate how they can leverage her firm's capabilities to enhance their workplace and

use their real estate more efficiently. In this other role – again, pioneering – she has helped create and promote new Iron Mountain product and service offerings targeted to heads of real estate, particularly during times of transformations, relocations or consolidations.

It's an example of real estate's organic influence on a company's bottom line and doesn't surprise the likes of Horblit, who knows first-hand Abrams' passion for providing that type of value-add.

"She's very articulate, very thoughtful and very passionate about moving corporate real estate, and real estate in general, forward, and moving it as far up the business ladder as you can," said Horblit, who gives Abrams credit for "maintaining a strategic seat at the table for organizations to recognize that real estate is closely connected to many things: attraction and retention of your associates, the financial components and what it represents on your balance sheet, and the ability of real estate to have a positive impact on clients."

Sanjiv Awasthi, vice president for global real estate at Cigna, agrees and reiterates why Abrams is viewed throughout Iron Mountain as being a very "commercially minded" leader and a highly effective business partner. "She's very much a visionary in terms of making sure the business needs are what drive the corporate real estate organization – not the other way around," he said.

"Whether it's at Fidelity or Iron Mountain, she has an ability to make corporate real estate not a drain on the company but rather something that can facilitate growth," Keliher explained.

### A professional partner

While clearly focused on the business of corporate real estate, Abrams also is recognized by her colleagues as someone who is equally passionate about developing the skills and careers of those around her, particularly young leaders.

For the New England Chapter of CoreNet Global, for example, she conceived and is now in her fifth year of managing the chapter's professional-development program, which selects 12 young applicants to spend a full year developing their CRE and leadership skills. Another chapter activity she chairs is the University Initiative, which introduces college students to CRE as a profession and to CoreNet Global as the professional organization that can assist them in their efforts. Over the years, Abrams has also contributed tremendously to the CoreNet Global summits by sharing her knowledge via presentations. In fact, she has

## Abrams and CoreNet Global

**A member of CoreNet Global since its founding, Abrams has held many positions within the New England Chapter of the organization:**

- Member, Board of Directors, 2002-2016
- Executive Vice President, Board of Directors, 2007
- President, Board of Directors, 2008-2010; asked by Executive Committee to complete term to 2011
- Member, Board of Directors Executive Committee, 2011-2012
- Member, Board of Directors Legacy Council, current
- Chair, University Initiative, since 2016
- Chair, Young Leader Professional Development Program, since 2015
- Co-chair, Executive Committee, Eastern Regional Symposium; committee member since 2009

**Abrams has held several positions in other professional organizations during her career, including:**

- CREW (Boston and national)
- NAIOP Massachusetts
- Industry Advisory Panel, U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
- Boston Industrial Financing Authority
- Campus Planning Committee, The Fessenden School
- Board of Directors, Cambridge YWCA
- Customer Advisory Board, ProLogis



received the CoreNet Global Luminary award, which is given to top-rated Summit speakers, 8 times.

Further up the career ladder, both Awasthi and Horblit credit Abrams for contributing to their own professional development.

"Sarah has a unique ability to provide lots of positive context regarding the mission of the company, primarily through storytelling," Awasthi said. The approach allows the real estate organization to better enable the company by choosing among options rather than following dictated solutions. "That aspect of providing context and storytelling is something that has stuck with me even to this day when I work with senior management at Cigna," he added, suggesting the skill is as important as the ability to connect real estate with the business in the first place.

Another powerful trait is Abrams' tendency to connect dots – and connect people.

"She'll say, 'I know you're struggling with the same issue I know the leader at X is dealing with; let me help you talk to each other to see if there's some mutual ideas you can share and you can help each other.' That's just how she is," Awasthi said. "She brings that ability to connect the different corporate real estate leaders together and enable both sides to grow and improve their organizations."

"We need to get together" are her famous words," Keliher explained. "But she puts the plan in action and you do get together." But how does someone in such a position have that kind of time on her hands?

"Sarah is truly generous with her time," Keliher said. "She would be the first to have coffee or take the time to give somebody advice, whether you're young and trying to make that career change, or if you're a middle manager and need to transition. Anyone I know who ever needs help I say, 'If you spent half an hour with Sarah, she could set you on course. ... Just an hour with Sarah might change your world and your life and your perspective.'"

## Abrams beyond CRE

With Abrams, it's often hard to tell where work ends and "free time" begins. In addition to her adjunct appointment at MIT, where she teaches an introductory course on corporate real estate to graduate students every year, she is often seen during so-called off-hours volunteering on behalf of CoreNet Global or other professional organizations. Over the past year, for example, she volunteered to lead a multi-million-dollar renovation of the synagogue where she and her family worship.

Abrams and her husband of 20 years, Allan Cole, are adjusting to life as empty nesters. Their son Eli, 19, is a freshman at Indiana University in Bloomington studying sports management. It's fitting, as he has always been a good athlete, playing basketball, golf and, until he aged out of Little League, baseball.

"Some of my most favorite memories are coaching Eli's Little League team for several years, including their AAA year when they won the City Series and Newton Central Little League championship," Abrams recalls. "I also loved helping Allan as he coached Eli's town basketball team." Eli was an AAU player, and from the time he was in the 4th grade until he went off to college, Abrams and Cole spent most of their fall and spring weekends in gyms across New England watching their son on the court.

It's a sports-minded family, and they're particularly fans of the Patriots, Celtics and Red Sox; they hold season tickets to Celtics

and Red Sox games. As for participating, it's the game of golf that Abrams enjoys the most. "Golf is one of my favorite hobbies," she says, "so I have enjoyed having the time to play a lot more golf this fall with my husband and friends." She and Cole also enjoy spending weekend time with friends off the course, as well.

Independently, Abrams holds standing power-walking dates with a few girlfriends, exercises regularly, and gets with a trainer three times a week. Now and then, she even finds the time to read a good book.

## From Sarah Abrams...

### *on leadership:*

"Over the years, I've come to believe that the important characteristics (of a good leader) are courage, intelligence, empathy, curiosity, integrity and, probably most important, the ability to instill confidence and inspire. All of that needs to be wrapped into a way of being in the world that is authentic – who you are as a person. You can't be somebody who you are not. I think the ability to inspire people is very much connected to your ability to communicate in a compelling and engaging way; being able to influence outcomes, whether they're big or they're small."

### *on communication skills:*

"Your ability to communicate in an engaging, passionate and clear way for people is critical to any kind of change management, and it needs to be able to come through even in your writing and how you communicate or when you communicate. When I see what I see, which is poor written communication skills and people that do not work at getting better at communicating verbally, I see that as a big roadblock to effective leadership at the highest level."

### *on the future:*

"I have come to believe this industry, like many industries, is going to continue to evolve in some time periods faster than others but, ultimately, the evolution is going to add choice and it's going to add optionality as opposed to entirely eliminating a class of products or a way of organizing your work. I think that's good. All of these new items give all of us in the corporate real estate business new tools in our tool belt if we're smart enough, creative enough and adaptable enough to actually use them. If you stick your head in the sand it's not going to work, but if you constantly are scanning the horizon for what's out there and how it can improve a product or the way you're doing something or how people interact in their workspace or in their work, then it's going to add optionality."

### *on advice for young professionals:*

"First, you have to be able to learn and continuously reinvent yourself. You don't get to stay relevant in this business over long periods of time by stopping learning new things and not changing, not learning, reinventing. Learning doesn't end when you get out of school. The second thing – and this is really important – you need to decide how you want to be thought of in the world ... and then you need to act in ways consistent with that image. This is really often not easy. You have to be very intentional about it and willing to put in the effort continuously. If people react to you in a favorable way, you are likely to succeed; if they don't, you're not likely to succeed."

### *on being effective:*

"The core of being an effective leader is self-awareness, self-esteem and self-acceptance. By that I mean you don't know everything; you're never going to know everything and you need to feel comfortable with that and you need to be able to ask the questions that you need to ask. You need to ask for help when you need help. Understanding – really understanding – who you are, what makes you tick, and accepting who you are and being comfortable with who you are, to me, is foundational."





*T. Patrick Donnelly, AIA, MCR.h, LEED AP*  
*Principal, BHDP Architecture*

*Attract new employees. Improve work behaviors. Underscore our corporate policy. Encourage more collaboration (communication, innovation, etc.). Mirror our sustainability promise. Strengthen our customer relationships. Facilitate the transfer of knowledge. Provide worker flexibility. ...*

Not so long ago, these types of defined needs – a far cry from specified ceiling heights, desk densities or flooring materials – likely wouldn't have come up in the vernacular of architecture. But today, how things have changed. And one person credited for bringing about such change to the benefit of corporate real estate is CoreNet Global Distinguished Leader T. Patrick Donnelly.

As co-owner, client leader and principal workplace strategist at BHDP Architecture, Donnelly is known for thought leadership – one might even add "... on steroids" – thanks to his solid reputation for being among the first and strongest voices regarding the role that design plays in workplace strategies.

"He's certainly not one to come in as an architect saying, 'I know the answers and if you don't like it, go to someone else,'" said Charles Hardy, chief workplace officer at GSA Public Buildings Service. "We have conversations and he understands what the end-users really need so he can provide solutions and suggestions around that need."

"Patrick is clearly – that's an overused expression, but he clearly is – the thought leader," said Mark Gorman, MCR, SLCR, head of Real Estate and Facilities Management/Americas at Ericsson. "He's very keen to explore the possibility of things and what that actually means; he then connects it to a practical application. He has an uncanny ability to create those connections so that people can correlate words with the physical environment."

Typically, Gorman said, such wants and needs tend to get stuck in theory. "It's always great to get around a bunch of CoreNet Global people that are passionate about workplace, and we talk about theory and everything else and we have lots of big ideas," he said. "And then we go back to our routines of trying to gain inches rather than yards in the evolution of the workplace. And Patrick would always talk about establishing guiding principles, and ask, 'what is it that we're trying to do?'"

It's a timely question to ask, given that corporate real estate itself is largely led the world over by the very generation of executives credited for bringing CRE into the purview of upper-level corporate management. Still, to take it to the C-suite can be, as Gorman once discovered, a dicey proposition.

"I got to finally watch Patrick in action when we hired (BHDP) to do work for the company I was working with at the time," Gorman said. "We got the entire executive team together, locked up for a good afternoon, and we spent probably three out of four hours talking about anything but real estate or space or anything like that. We talked about the company and where the company was, how it had evolved up till now."

The goal was to get to the heart of what the company was all about, but the exercise of dissecting the company – and using sticky dots on the wall to do it – was a new one for his senior management. Only 30 minutes into the exercise, Gorman said, he got a cross look from the chief financial officer. "It was

something like, 'Speed this up or end it.' And I had one of those career-defining moments for myself. I thought, 'Do I take care of what my boss wants to see happen, or do I trust this guy?' I think I made the right decision because I trusted him and where he was going with it."

It paid off. When Donnelly finished the session, Gorman said, the executive team came out of it with a clear, common language for what they were trying to achieve for the project. Gorman's real estate team was then able to take the language and come back to senior management with a plan that translated it all into the physical world.

"Seeing that come together that way and the power of what language could do – how language could turn into an idea and could turn into guiding principles; how it could be the foundation for transformation without getting the letter from the CEO telling the population, 'This is what we're going to do' but, instead, sharing with a population, 'Here are the guiding principles and here's what these words mean and what they look like in a physical environment...' It was one of those things I don't get to do very often," Gorman said. "It was a great experience for me to be part of that process."

The company proceeded with the project based on results of the BHDP process, establishing a new headquarters and, subsequently, a wave of workplace changes across the entire rest of its portfolio.

"What Patrick is able to bring to the table is to let people understand what the picture is they're creating and use that in a way so you're very clear on what the vision actually is," said Gorman. "It speaks to his understanding of the work process and how people engage in space – and that interiors matter."

As Hardy further explained, "He's good at bringing people to understand what culture they're living in and what their needs are – what the requirements are of the workplace – while educating them on the state of the art that's going on in the design world. I think the more Patricks we have out there that are looking to unify the end-user, the designer and the conversation, the better off we will be."

### Immersed in academics, research

In addition to his applied design thinking on strategic workplaces, Donnelly is recognized by the CoreNet Global community for his intense commitment to CRE-related

research initiatives and academic programs, including CoreNet Global's and its predecessor NACORE's Learning programs, which have consistently recognized him as "Top Faculty" since 2000. He is a prolific writer and speaker on the topic of workplace design and has been instrumental in broadening CoreNet Global Learning's programming and capabilities in that arena.

Rex Miller, author and founder of MindShift, a futures and organizational-culture advisory, met Donnelly while conducting research for two of his books, "Change Your Space, Change Your Culture" and "The Healthy Workplace Nudge." Donnelly was a collaborator with Miller and others, including Hardy, on both projects, and the two have worked together on in-depth CRE research projects for MindShift, CoreNet Global and Haworth Exchange, to name a few.

"He's someone I've always gone to as a leading-edge thinker, an incredible facilitator and someone who can generate some momentum around important topics like workplace engagement, and health and wellbeing," said Miller. "He's always a leader, investing time and effort, and seems to be the kind of person who looks at making other people and other organizations better. I think it comes naturally. When we first met, he didn't know me from Adam but when he found out what I was doing he was like, 'Yeah, I wanna be a part of that!' He's been a good sounding board for me, as well."

Miller also gives a nod to Donnelly's commitment to academics as it benefits younger CRE generations, suggesting it's a matter of leaving his mark on the future. "He's at the point in his career where legacy is really important," Miller said, "so he's spending more time at not only his company but, in general, in making sure the next generation can step up." Donnelly's contributions in education, for example, include teaching, lecturing and jurying positions with Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Cincinnati, Miami University and Ohio University.

"I've known a lot of the different CoreNet Global leaders over time. ... I know the caliber of people that get to circulate at that level and I think Patrick is every bit the leader. He connects with this younger generation like most leaders do not. And I think that's the future of the profession, getting these younger leaders inspired to see where the future is going."

### Donnelly and CoreNet Global

#### As a member of the CoreNet Global Board of Directors, 2011-2014, Donnelly:

- Served as voting member, Chair of the Governance Committee and Executive Committee member

#### Among his other organizational accomplishments:

- Chaired Knowledge Advisory Committee following board service
- Awarded top faculty honors for the CoreNet Global MCR designation programs (consistently since joining faculty in 2000)
- Served as founding Knowledge Chair for Workplace Community
- Served as board member for the Ohio/Kentucky Chapter of CoreNet Global and its founding Learning Chair

#### Among his CoreNet Global Summit presentations:

- "Innovation and Design Thinking" (Boston, 2018)
- "A Proven Approach for Creating a Culture of Total Health" (Seattle, 2017)
- "60-Minute Solution" and "Ah-Ha Moment, Creative Engagement" (Washington, DC, 2014)
- "Why Push When You Can Pull: The Workplace Engagement Equation Improved!" (Las Vegas, 2013)





## Donnelly and Work-Life Balance

The second-generation “D” in BHDP, Donnelly follows in the footsteps of his now-90-year-old father, Jim Donnelly, who helped found the company and who once served as its CEO. One of 10 kids, Donnelly makes a point to visit his siblings when he can and to carry on his mother’s legacy of finding “good humor in all things” by way, he jokes, of never letting the truth get in the way of a good story.

A former first grade teacher, Patrick’s wife Patty retired to raise a family and care for her mom. She dedicates her time as community volunteer leader, fundraising for the arts, serving as volunteer chair for the celebrated Walnut Hills High School Choirs, and as secretary and board member of the Albers Family Foundation.

Close to her family, Patty is known for her baking, gatherings with friends and family and surviving the “phased” and seemingly never-ending renovation of the couples mid-century modern house and Patty’s childhood home, located in Clifton near the University of Cincinnati, that comes with a story all its own.

Donnelly and his wife spend much of their free time following the school or career paths of their four active, accomplished and artistic children. Oldest son Nathan, 26, with a degree in electronic media, is a video-, music- and narrative-content creator and is currently writing a book. David, 24, is pursuing his love for Ballet and is currently a first artist with the Royal Ballet in London (making an easy excuse for trips to London for his family.) Daughter Anna, 21, following her passion for music, is a Senior at Indiana University, Jacobs School of Music, majoring in vocal performance, pursuing a career in opera and currently applying for graduate school. And Gabriel, who stands 6’-5” excels in History, Sports (Golf and Basketball) and Music (sings and plays piano and guitar.)

If there’s time left, the couple also enjoys hiking with family and friends, performing community service, attending theatre, ballet, opera, symphony or other musical events (including the occasional family gig), and taking long neighborhood walks.

## From Patrick Donnelly...

### ***on CoreNet Global:***

“Sometimes the things that you do you choose and sometimes those things choose you. I feel like that’s the way it is with CoreNet Global. It’s like a great school that attracts great families and great people and great students. It just attracts ... good, smart organizations and we’ve been the beneficiaries of that. It’s well worth the time and effort.”

### ***on the profession and academics:***

“Corporate real estate is something we’re much stronger at today because of the investment that CoreNet Global, and good leadership, have made in creating stronger bonds with academic institutions and, more important, with students and young people.”

### ***on team performance:***

“We study, as workplace strategists, what enables a team to perform and there’s really only two things that a leader needs to know to get high performance out of a team. One is to have diversity of talent; having the right talent doing the right things. And the second is trust. If you’ve got diversity of talent, those people are going to do different things, think differently; they may not even get along. But if you can get them to trust and respect each other, now you’ve got something.”

### ***on professional transparency:***

“There’s another thing I’m just now starting to feel like we’re getting to. You know, doctors are very transparent; they share what they know and what they learn to help others, right? To save lives, to help others practice their craft. But our profession hasn’t been like that...we like having our competitive advantage. Well now, I feel our industry is beginning to work together (with CoreNet Global as a catalyst) to deliver corporate value, transform our organizations and improve people’s lives. Sharing real estate knowledge, strategy and design to Innovate, deliver results and I think it helps when we like what we do, design for people and want them to succeed.

### ***on innovation:***

“You can’t just walk out the door and be more innovative. You have to get smarter, be humble, stay curious, connect with others so you learn some things you need to know.

Then when you connect them or bolt those new things onto what you already know, you can then transform what you are already doing into something more valuable.

### ***on career success:***

“I try to follow the advice my dad gave me. ... He said, ‘To be successful as an architect, you have to be three things: One, you have to be really good at design because that’s what we do.’ And then he said, ‘You need to know what things cost because many people don’t.’ And then he said, ‘You need to be honest in everything you do and the people you deal with.’ ”





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