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 (CCR), 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, forecasting 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.

“Matt’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,” said Robert Farrar, a real estate broker and consultant who would ultimately represent Coca-Cola for more than three decades. “What impressed me about Matt in those early years was his humility, his ethical compass and intellect, his drive to learn, and his team-building and problem-solving skills.”

“Over the next decade, CCE grew to have some 400 owned and leased properties in its North American portfolio,” Farrar added. “During Matt’s long tenure with CCE, he not only developed a remarkably capable and diverse team within CCE, he also forged relationships with external resources that lasted decades.”

Fanoe’s skill at relationship-building is viewed as one of his greatest strengths. “He was a great negotiator,” said Celeste Burr, who worked with and for Fanoe at Coca-Cola for 22 years. “He didn’t use the power of the brand name to bully his way into getting what the company needed in a lease or purchase negotiation. Instead, he knew the important points Coke had to have and traded on these items. This way, at the conclusion of the deal, Coke got what it needed, landlords got what they needed, and it was the beginning of a good and often-long-term relationship between the parties.”

Similarly, Fanoe’s dedication to building strategic relationships with internal groups proved to be a forward-thinking strategy for positioning the company well during the evolution of technology’s impact on operations, Olhasso noted. Reaching even more broadly, Fanoe saw the company as having an obligation to be better-equipped workspaces.

“During Matt’s long tenure with CCE, he saw the company as having an obligation to form positive relationships with the public at large by making sound, mutually beneficial corporate decisions. He worked under the belief that sustainability, for example, is a key best practice for CEC, not a public-relations gimmick or fad. Creating a smaller carbon footprint, he reasoned, provided cost-containment advantages for the company while creating more responsible, more efficient and better-equipped workspaces.”

“I believe that Matt’s success in business, as in life, has been his ability to self-assess, to be humble while leading others, to think strategically, to innovate and encourage the contribution of others, to inspire excellence in execution, as well as commitment to the mission and to the team,” Farrar said. “Above all, Matt is a man of integrity with an unwavering ethical compass.”

Upon hearing the news of his induction into the Distinguished Leaders Circle, Fanoe said the following in his quintessential, understated style. “I am humbled and honored to be inducted into the Distinguished Leaders Circle. To be recognized for this distinction by my peers is among the top achievements of my career. During my 38 years in the Coca-Cola system, I was surrounded by incredible talent and I owe much of my success to their hard work and support.”

His time at CoreNet Global was equally memorable and rewarding. During his tenure as Global Chair, he focused on strengthening the association’s value proposition as well as the governance and strategic focus that led to significant membership growth. Working with CoreNet Global’s Chief Executive Officer Angela Cain, Fanoe led a major association initiative to introduce a chapter dues-sharing model that fostered a “membership matters” culture within the organization. He also encouraged greater global diversity and leadership from women in the association and was instrumental in selecting its second female Global Chair, Kate Lang of ANZ Bank in Australia.

“I have many wonderful memories of my time working with Matt as Global Chair from 2011-12,” said Cain. “His positive energy and sense of humor while at the helm were much needed during a time of important change for the association. From his guitar playing in the ‘CoreNet Global’ band at a Summit to his stellar representation of the organization across Asia and Europe, his thoughtful, approachable leadership style brought people together.”

2016-2018 Global Chair Randy Smith of Oracle adds: “Matt is a tireless advocate for the power of networking with peers and continuous learning—a true champion for CoreNet Global.”

Like so many who’ve crossed paths with Fanoe, MCR faculty member Sherri S. Parman, MCR, and Partner, Capstan Advisors, agrees: “Few executives can match Matt’s passion to advance the CRE profession. His tremendous leadership effort led to increased member value, and he is always willing to promote and mentor young leaders.”

Fanoe, who notes that his retirement status is only temporary, added: “CoreNet Global has been my professional home for many years and I have the utmost respect for the staff and membership. My years on the CoreNet Global Board were among the most fulfilling of my career. The friends and professional contacts I made at CoreNet Global are something I will carry with me forever. I am very grateful to those who nominated me for this award and would like to thank the judging panel for recognizing me for this honor.”
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 predecessororganizations, 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.

“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,” he 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 to 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 $60M 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 Fun, PE, CEO of AEA/Tech 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 40-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.”

2018 Distinguished Leaders Circle Inductees

• Nearly 40-year career in corporate real estate at McKesson, Tandem Computers and Data General Computers
• 38+ year member of CoreNet Global and its predecessor organizations
• Holds the MCR professional designation and was instrumental in its development
• IDRC Global Chairman, 1993-1994
• IDRC Board Director for nine years
• Active in IDRC’s NACORE International District and Northern California chapters, including serving in a Chapter Chair
• Frequent and award-winning instructor and speaker at IDRC seminars and capture course
• Frequent host, presenter and speaker of Executive Leaders Council roundtables, Global Summit breakout sessions, forums and Young Leaders programs
• Participant in the IDRC Corporate Real Estate 2020 Futures initiative and CoreNet Global Corporate Real Estate 2010 project
• Instrumental in association chapter and Global Summit development in Asia and Europe
• Married to wife, Fran, for more than 52 years; father to 2 children and grandfather to 5 grandchildren
• Enjoys traveling, especially cruising. He’s at 38 and counting. Golf, scuba diving, and playing with the grandchildren are amongst his other hobbies.
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 Real Estate (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 (Computerworld) 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 he had to report to a chain; he was interested in the job. He came in as 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 that he had to report to a chain; he was interested in the job.

During the first three years of implementation, from 2001 to 2004, his team performed 37 consolidations and eliminated 11 million square feet (1 million sq. m.) of space, just in North America.

In addition to his credentials in financial management and CRE, Zappile is considered a subject matter expert on process management, quality control and innovative global sourcing. He has extensive experience in teaching and mentoring, and has been a lecturer for New York University’s Schack Institute of Real Estate, for Auburn University, and for The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey’s International Studies Program.

His career has taken him around the globe with work to Europe, from Portugal and Spain, to France, Italy, Germany and Russia. He also lived in Singapore for five years and traveled extensively as part of his responsibilities throughout the Asia Pacific Region, including to India, Nepal, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Korea and China, amongst others.

After his retirement from United Technologies Corp., Zappile formed an independent consulting group and served briefly as CoreNet Global’s interim CEO.

“When I retired from UTC and was asked by the CoreNet Global Board Chairman at the time if I would be willing to step into the role of interim CEO of CoreNet Global, there was no hesitation,” Zappile said. “This request was my opportunity to give back to CoreNet Global, for the staff, and the members that helped me in my journey at UTC. It was a privilege to be asked and I gladly accepted.

Zappile stabilized the organization through tough financial controls and by restructuring project- and process-management and reporting. ‘Ron was passionate about CoreNet Global’s success and took the interim helm of the association following the Global Financial Crisis,” said Lee Jake, MCR, Partner, Roseview Group LLC., and former CoreNet Global Chair at the time. ‘We needed a steady hand to keep the organization going at a difficult time in the association’s history. He was instrumental in helping hire a new CEO and providing the board with a clear assessment of challenges and opportunities for the future. It’s members like Ron who epitomize the spirit of volunteerism and leadership that has pushed CoreNet Global forward.’

Current CEO Angela Cain adds: ‘It was clear upon assuming the position that Ron had 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 CRE professionals to benchmark real estate portfolios against the world’s best portfolios to promote efficiency, cost savings and strategic value.

Now positioned to continue going back to the CRE profession and association, Zappile says: “During my 40-plus-year career, CoreNet Global was a significant partner in helping me reach career goals and successes during my tenure at United Technologies Realty (UTR).

Upon assuming the CEO role at United Technologies Corporation (UTC) and establishing UTR, I immediately turned to CoreNet Global for insight, knowledge, networking and counsel. CoreNet Global was an invaluable asset in my achieving the success I did in the real estate role at UTR, and overall in the corporate real estate profession.”