

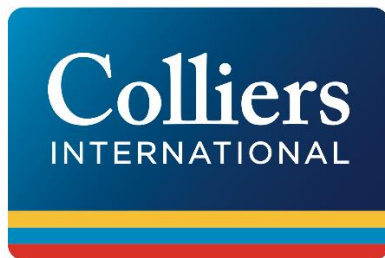


CRE Tech Talks

Episode #20: Generational and Technological Shifts Impacting the CRE Industry



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Rob Brierley, Managing Director of Real Estate Management Services & Executive Vice President, Colliers International



Announcer: Welcome to CRE Tech Talks. This podcast series is brought to you by Building Engines, providing web and mobile property management software to innovative commercial real estate owners, managers, and the clients they serve for over 14 years.

Now, please join our host, the man with more hot air than the MetLife blimp, Building Engines' Senior Vice President, Scott Sidman.

Scott Sidman: Welcome. I'm Scott Sidman, Chief Marketing and Strategy Officer for Building Engines, and your host for this episode of CRE Tech Talks. We're very fortunate to have another local in-studio guest today, someone who is not only a long-time friend, but a luminary in commercial in real estate, not only in Boston, but internationally as well.

Our guest, Rob Brierley, is the Managing Director of Real Estate Management Services and Executive Vice President with Colliers Boston, as well as the immediate former chair and CEO of BOMA International, and a BOMA fellow.

We're going to have a wide-ranging discussion with Rob that focuses on the importance of commitment to the industry, the benefits of involvement, and the balancing of the human element of commercial real estate with the dramatic rise in commercial real estate technology.



Without further ado, welcome to the podcast, Rob.

Rob Brierley: Thank you, Scott.

Scott: You and I have known each other a long time. Every time I say that, I think about the number of years we've been in this industry, so I don't like to think about it too much. For the benefit of our audience, beyond that current long title, can you tell us a little bit more about your background and how you got started in commercial real estate?

Rob: Sure. I started in commercial real estate a little over a year after I graduated college back in the '80s, talking about a long time. I was working for AT&T actually here in Boston, working as an accounts receivable rep. My account was the city of Boston. I knew I was going to get the money. It was a very boring job.

I had a sister-in-law who worked for Gilbane Properties in Providence. They had an opening for a property manager in Pawcatuck, Connecticut. She said, "Would you be interested in the position?" I interviewed for it and got it. That was my start in real estate. It was actually a residential development, low-income, subsidized housing, and elderly housing. Quickly picked up some office properties.

Ultimately, we ended up moving into Providence and ran the Arcade Mall in Downtown Providence for Gilbane, which happened to be the oldest indoor shopping mall, by the way. Then worked with Gilbane for a couple of years.

Then my wife and I were getting married. She was from Massachusetts. Ended up coming to Boston. Worked for Meredith & Grew on the property management side for a third party for a number of years. Then shifted over to the owners side, first working for Beacon, and then would get acquired by Equity Office.

Then I worked for Brookfield Office Properties just prior to coming back to what is now Colliers International, which was formerly Meredith Grew. Back with them for about five years now. Some good-named companies certainly in the New England market, some good experience because I had a mix of residential, retail, as well as commercial product under my belt. It was a lot of fun.

Scott: That's great. For anybody who follows you on Twitter, by the way, Rodyrams is a giveaway.

Rob: Rodyrams1987 is part of University of Rhode Island page.

Scott: Along with that, we always ask for guests to give us one interesting fact or unique thing about themselves that perhaps most people don't know.

Rob: I think most people don't realize that I have a unique accent.

Scott: [laughs]



Rob: It's just not picked up. Seriously, I guess from a unique feature is the fact that I grew up in Rhode Island, lived in Massachusetts. I've been a New Englander through and through. I happen to be a New York Yankees fan. Folks that know me well already know that quite well.

For the listening audience, many of you don't know who I am. That's a unique feature of growing up in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, literally in the home of the enemy, which was awesome up until 2004 when the Red Sox won the World Series. I had a lot of bragging rights, not so much more recently.

Scott: I actually knew that fact. Despite that, maybe you and I can still be friends, right?

Rob: Absolutely.

Scott: Should be lessons for people, political arenas and everything else.

Rob: One quick story because it involves building engines. The Red Sox were playing against the Colorado Rockies in the World Series. That game - Dave Osborn, who was your current board chairman, invited me to the World Series game at Fenway Park. We settled into our seats. I think he was all excited because he knew it was my first World Series.

He said, "You know, you excited? You're ready to cheer on the Red Sox." I said, "Well, David, I have a confession to make," as we literally are sitting in the seats, "I'm not a Red Sox fan. I'm a Yankees fans."

Scott: [laughs]

Rob: His face just went totally white. He says, "But you are rooting for the Red Sox today?" I said, "Sorry, Dave. I just can't do it. But I root for a good game." It turned out that it was actually the best game of the series. It was the two to one game. It was a trip just watching his face go totally blank. [laughs]

Scott: Well played by the way. Let him know at the game. Let's dive into some things. I want to start with you just completed your term, chair and CEO of BOMA. That ended a couple months ago, I think at the end of the conference, the convention that happens in June. You got a couple months now to decompress and reflect on that a little bit.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on that experience and how it's impacted you personally and professionally.

Rob: First of all, it was an absolute wonderful experience. It was really more than one year though. It was probably over a decade in the making because I first got involved with the world of BOMA and industry associations here in BOMA Boston, it's probably about 15 years or so ago.

I worked my way up the leadership track in BOMA Boston, ultimately becoming two-term president within BOMA Boston. Then from there, I worked my way over to the Greater Boston Real Estate Board of which BOMA Boston is a division of and worked my way up the leadership there. Became chairman.



Subsequently then got into BOMA International, working my way first on the executive committee and then becoming an officer, vice chair, chair-elect. Then last year, having the honor of being chair and CEO BOMA International.

It's been a long process. It's such rewarding process for a number of reasons. All the people that I've got to meet over the years. I honestly can say that I have a pretty extensive international network now where had I not been engaged with BOMA International, I never would have met the people that I've been fortunate enough to meet.

I've had a great opportunity to visit some interesting cities, cities that I necessarily would not have visited on my own or had the opportunity to visit on my own, both here domestically as well as internationally. I had a chance to go to China last year with Shanghai and Beijing, which was just remarkable.

Had a chance to go to Mexico which I had never been before, Mexico City and Monterrey. Then domestically, just hitting some cities that again probably aren't glamorous in the grand scheme of things, seeing Cleveland which I had never been to and probably it's not a high list of...Unless I was going to a baseball game, then I would probably not go to visit.

Had a wonderful time. The people, they were fantastic. I think that's probably the biggest takeaway of my experience is the experiences and the people. Certainly, the educational component, learned so much about what's happening in the industry. We tend to live in our own little shell and in the moment of what we're working in on a day-to-day basis.

I think my involvement at the international level really forced me to take a bigger look in terms of have my eyes wide open in terms of what's happening around us, both domestically and internationally. Then the other cool thing is I get to meet some unique celebrities so to speak. I got to open for Jay Leno at one of the conferences when I was the chair of the BOMA 360 council.

I make sure I tell everybody that I opened for Jay. Then one of my last acts as an outgoing chair was I got to interview the Bush sisters at the June conference in San Antonio, which was a lot of fun. They were terrific guests. Just having that experience, meeting them, and experience the process.

Scott: I was there. By the way, I tell people about that. I've told that story several times since the conference. I happened to be there in the audience. I tell people that I was really pleasantly surprised by that interview. I just didn't expect it to be as moving as it was.

The people around me... you had people and the Bush sisters had people, as a result of your great questioning, by the way, laughing and in tears. It was really amazing.

Rob: It's funny, that interview happened on the Sunday of the conference. On the Friday before, we had our executive committee meeting in San Antonio. I was joking with folks that said, "I'm going to be like a Paul Finebaum from ESPN that I'm going to make the Bush sisters cry," just joking.



Of course, Barbara, the first question I had asked her that got the ball rolling was, what was she the most proud of about her dad? Then she talked about the story of President Bush throwing out the first pitch after 9/11. I could see her eyes begin to glisten. I'm saying to myself, "Rob, please don't cry. Don't cry."

Scott: [laughs]

Rob: It was just a very moving statement made by her and how proud she really was of her dad. Of course, Jenna, later on, talking about her grandmother who had recently passed, that was very moving and touching as well.

Scott: That was terrific. That was really, really well done. You talked about the beginning of the role. I think that's something people don't recognize is you don't just become board chairman, CEO. You put in a lot of time before that to get to that point. That represents a significant commitment of time.

I think for people coming into the industry, young, just getting started, everybody's super busy. How did you do it? How would you counsel people who are either just getting started or who have been in the industry for a while and haven't done that yet? Why should they make a similar commitment? How'd you make it work?

Rob: To be honest with you, I think following the leadership track is not for everybody. There some folks that being an industry leader within an association is not on their radar screen, probably never will be, and that's fine.

For those folks who do have aspirations to take a leadership role, or want to learn and educate themselves so that they're positioning themselves professionally in a different light, I think the first thing is, you need to make sure that you have support of a number of groups.

First, your family. My wife had to carry a pretty good load, particularly as I became an officer and had to travel quite a bit. I was very fortunate that my wife was fully supportive of my efforts. Making sure that I had candid, upfront communications with my employer, Colliers, as well as Brookfield and Equity, when I was with them.

Particularly Colliers because I was an officer working for them at the time at the international level. Making sure that they understood what the time commitments were, so that they understood how often I was going to be out of the office, how often I'm going to be on conference calls, and things like that.

Obviously, also explaining to them the positive benefits to them as an organization. Every time I got up and gave a speech, I gave a big PowerPoint up on the big screen, I had the Colliers name right next to my name. If we were promoting an event where I was speaking at, the Colliers name was right there. Obviously, it was an opportunity for me to promote the Colliers brand, but I needed their support.

Fortunately, I had that. Tom Hynes, who is our local CEO of Colliers Boston, has always been a tremendous supporter of folks on the Colliers Boston team to be engaged in the association and



take leadership positions. I was very fortunate that Tom was a good guiding hand for me to help me along the way.

Then, of course, you need a solid team behind you. When you step out of the office, you need the folks to step up and fill in the gaps when you're out and about. My team really stepped up and did a tremendous job, making sure the ship kept sailing while I was out and about doing BOMA stuff.

Scott: That's great. I think you mentioned you don't necessarily have to take the leadership track within BOMA, but just general participation is just a lot of value.

Rob: Absolutely. I've always been a firm believer, if you're going to join an association or a group, you need to be engaged. You're not really doing yourself a great service unless you're engaged. You get more out of it. It's the common cliché, "What you put in is what you get out."

It's true, because if you're engaged, if you're a member of a committee or a chair of a committee, these are all learning opportunities for you. You get to learn about what others in the industry are doing in their day-to-day lives, building those relationships that somebody that's on a committee today can be somebody that you hire tomorrow, or somebody who might hire you tomorrow.

You just don't know what direction life is going to take you. Then just the educational aspect of learning something new. If I'm not necessarily conversant in, say, technology, join the technology committee, because you're going to learn that topic just by being engaged and involved. We've always encouraged folks to make sure that if you're going to be a member, be engaged.

Scott: That's great. Also, we talk to a lot of folks here all the time about mastering your craft. That seems to be part of it. If you're in the industry, this is one of the ways you can do that. That's great.

Good transition to talk about one of the things I've heard at conferences recently over the past couple years, which is this changing demographic shift in commercial real estate property management, particularly even down to engineering.

There's been this aging out of a certain part of the population, which is putting some pressure on real estate firms and organizations to adjust that, attract people into the industry. Interesting to hear your take on that, and how big an issue do you think that is? What have you seen people doing about it? How are associations maybe helping?

Rob: It is a significant issue for the commercial real estate industry. In fact, Henry Chamberlain, who happens to be the President of BOMA and the chair - we would go around the country, and we would do C suite visits. We would meet with senior executives.

As part of that process, we'd give them an update on BOMA International is about, and then we'd ask them, "What keeps you up at night? What are the challenges and issues that you're facing?" Then we'd shut up and listen. Pretty much universally, retaining and attracting talent, and the fact



that the population is beginning to phase out the folks who are going to be retiring and leaving the industry.

How are we able to reposition the industry, and bring in the new talent? That's right up there. If it's not one, it's one-A. I think it's a challenge at the top levels. I certainly feel it in my day-to-day, in terms of running the Boston office, trying to find good, solid talent, particularly on the engineering front.

Today, it's probably more pronounced on the engineering front, I think, than even on the public engagement side. Engineering talent right now, we are trying to turn over every single rock we can to find folks that have the technical expertise that can come in and take over building maintenance tech positions, engineering positions, or chief engineer positions and the like.

Just because many kids today just stopped going into the technical field like they were back in the day. Back in the day, a lot of folks would go into vo-tech. If you wanted to stay on the college track, you went to vo-tech school. That prepped you for a life where you went to a place like the Maritime Academy, or whatever the case may be.

Obviously, they have a tremendous program for training engineers. I think Maritime's still doing very well, but a lot of the vo-techs aren't attracting the same amount of folks. That's put on a strain today on the industry. What we've been trying to do from an industry perspective is tackle it both at the local level as well as at the international level.

A number of the BOMA International locals have identified a university that offers a real estate or a property management program, and trying to partner with them. In fact, BOMA San Francisco has created its own foundation, BOMA Foundation. They're working closely with San Francisco State University to basically provide a mechanism to recruit and train a more diverse field of candidates.

They encourage folks to come into the world of property management. I think from a local level perspective, they're a terrific example of how BOMA is trying to address the situation. At the international level, BOMA International is working with a number of other industry associations, and has just come out.

I'm sorry that I don't remember the name of it, but they've just released a web page. I will get you the information for your follow-up notes. They've introduced the web page to basically encourage folks to come into the real estate industry.

We're not doing it on our own, we're working with the other major real estate trade associations to educate young folks as they are beginning to make decisions on what they want to do for a profession, that commercial real estate is a very viable and exciting opportunity for you.

I think that's really good. Also, at the local level, a number of our local associations. Probably the best at it is BOMA Georgia, developing our educational classes that are geared more towards the entry level folks. That makes an easier transition for them.



BOMA Georgia was actually the group that developed BOMA International's foundation's real estate course that is very popular across many of our locals today, which is terrific. Also, at the international level, this also applies to many of the locals as well, we've developed emerging professional committees within the groups, but at the international level, we've created one.

In fact, we have that in place in a number of emerging professionals committee on our executive committee. That person was actually seated in June at the annual conference.

We're excited to have that alternative voice who can speak to, for a lack of better word, the younger generation and the issues that they're facing, so that as we develop our strategic plans that we're keeping in mind that old radiant folks that sitting around the table now are going to be phasing out. There's going to be a new sheriff in town. It's got a different look.

Just trying to evolve from that perspective, and make sure that we're offering products and services that meet the generational changes that are happening. We're just trying to get out in front of the various colleges that we referenced. In some cases, even, it's time to get out in front to the high schools.

We're finding that we have to get out even earlier, because by the time they get to college, they might have already headed a different direction. It's interesting, because a lot of these kids want to become computer programmers, or they want to go into finance, because they want to be this big stock broker. They don't realize that commercial real estate is such an exciting industry to be in.

They don't realize the fact that on any given day, you're a lawyer, because you're looking at leases. On any given day, you're a project manager, because you're building a tenant's suite out. On any given day, you're an accountant, because you're reading the financial reports and things like that.

What makes commercial real estate unique, and I think, what we need to continue to do a better job of communicating is the fact that it is so multifaceted, that you wear so many different hats, and you can make a pretty good living at it. You're probably not going to get rich, though some folks can, if you want to start your own company down the line.

You're going to be able to make a good, solid living that you probably are going to make more money than some of these other industries that some of these folks are looking to go into. Hopefully, we'll be successful in continuing that effort. Time will tell.

Scott: That's great. I think there's a lot of validity in what you said there. I think particularly, I liked the things about adding some young people into the BOMA membership. I have a friend who's an executive recruiter, and they call that coaching up. That's one of the things she helps with companies with, is getting young people into leadership roles, and help executive leadership.

Rob: Actually, one of the other things that BOMA International rolled out last year is, we have a group called the BOMA Fellows. The BOMA Fellows basically are folks that have been actively involved with BOMA International, have committed that they are going to continue to support



BOMA International, and be a resource for BOMA International to promote the industry and the association.

We have developed a leadership development mentorship program within that program. We basically went with a small group. Each year, there's about 10 people that they select who are young emerging professionals coming into the industry. They pair them up with a BOMA Fellow, who is typically a more experienced member in the real estate community.

They team them up to provide coaching and mentoring. They have ongoing discussions during the course of the year. There's a full curriculum that they follow in terms of trying to identify certain topics that they need to hit. We've completed one class. We just kicked off our second class. We'll be doing it in January. I might be off.

The first class has already proven dividends from an association perspective, where I believe we just brought everybody on that came through that cycle, is now on some community or a vice chair of a BOMA International committee.

Just by going through the process, we've been able to pull them in. We're hoping at some point in time to be able to replicate that process, push it out to the locals, hopefully support them in terms of pulling people both into the industry, and also to get them more engaged at the local level.

Scott: That's great. Another great program benefit. If there's a link to that as well, that's something else we can add to the show notes.

Rob: Absolutely.

[crosstalk]

Scott: ...point people to as well. That's great. A little bit of a transition now. Let's talk about us, [laughs] and just vendors in general. Building Engines, we've been long-time members and supporters of BOMA. We've obviously realized value from it. I don't think it was quite apparent early on, but we're certainly at the point now in our evolution of the company where it's a no-brainer for us.

For vendors and service providers who are maybe on the fence about participating, this is a little bit of a softball question but I'm going to throw it to you, anyway. Talk a little bit about the benefits of participating in BOMA.

Rob: Again, I go back to a similar statement that I made on the industry professionals. If you're going to join, you have to get involved. The first benefit is probably the stuff that you have to take. That is to actually be an actively engaged affiliated member. Once you plunk down, you check to become a member, whether it be at the local level, or if you're becoming an international.

I think being engaged is critical. Making sure that the folks on your team, once you sign up, get involved by joining committees, and interacting with the membership. Again, just plunking down your check is not going to drive business your way. Real estate is no different than any other business, we're all about people and relationships.



The only way you're going to build those relationships are by interacting with folks, finding common themes and things that they can rally around. By joining these committees, you get to work side-by-side with folks. You get to roll up your sleeves. You get to see what they're made of. They can see what you're made of. Over time, you build a relationship. That's the way you drive your business.

It's not rocket science, but it's amazing how many companies don't necessarily follow that practice. They'll just literally give their check, and then ultimately think that business is going to flow their way. They get disappointed at the end of their first year, because they didn't generate a lot of business. I also think you have to be patient, too, because that business is not going to flow right off the bat.

There are a lot of tremendous opportunities for you as an organization to promote your own brand. Get involved in the committees. There's locals always looking for subject matter experts to be able to across content, programming, and things like that. Whether it be a brown bag lunch, that you're giving a speech on a particular topic, you can go do that.

If ultimately, there was a special topic that you picked out of a panel. You could bring your own slant in associated with that particular topic. It's a great opportunity to promote your brand and leverage your membership as an affiliate member.

Be a BOMA supporter. As you're out and about, and you're interacting with other BOMA members, the industry members, make sure that you're letting them know of some of the programs. Educate yourself, understand, and be able to promote some of the programs that BOMA International has to offer.

If see an exceptional property manager or building engineer, put their names in, or nominate them for property manager of the year or engineer of the year, and things like that. You're making other connections in a multitude of way. I think that in and of itself is the ultimate benefit.

Just like us, you're building lifelong relationships that are going to carry forth with you regardless of whether you're with that company or not. Hopefully, from your company's investment perspective, you're going to see the growth in your business because the relationships are going to be able to build.

Scott: 100 percent truth. Again, we can attest to that as long-time members. Also, a shameless plug. We just participated in a joint project together with the 2018 Technology Survey that we worked together with BOMA on. I don't think we would have been asked to do that and participate in that if we hadn't made the long-term commitment to develop those relationships and trust with the members.

Rob: Absolutely. Thank you very much for all your support and leadership on that issue. You're absolutely correct in the sense that there are opportunities that, whether it be in research or whatnot, that you can also provide your expertise and guidance, help shape things, and leverage to BOMA network to find out information that will be valuable for you in your particular business.



You might be able to lead a research project that has some benefit to you, isn't necessarily just driven because of the benefit to BOMA. You might want to learn about a certain technology, or you might want to learn about people's behaviors as it relates to making buying decisions and things like that.

We actually host focus groups at the annual conference on a regular basis. Member partners have focus groups. They are able to actually leverage the fact that everybody's together in one location at a conference and pull information out us. I think that's a huge benefit.

Scott: Absolutely, that's great. You just mentioned a couple things that lead into my next question, technology and relationships. Certainly, as a technology company, we have an agenda. We just promote the use and value benefits of technology to help optimize and improve the way that commercial real estate operates, and the buildings are run.

How does that align with your thinking in an industry that's still dependent on people and relationships?

Rob: Scott, from a technology perspective, we are probably in the most exciting period of technology evolution for commercial real estate than we've ever been in. Real estate historically has always been a relatively slow adopter of technology. Right now, it is moving at the speed of light plus X.

Depending upon which technology guru you listen to, whether it be our friend Steve Weikal at MIT or Jim Young at Realcomm, or whoever your tech guru of choice is, there are anywhere between 2,500 and 4,000 companies that are developing apps directly related to commercial real estate as we speak.

Really exciting, really cool stuff. Certainly, there are going to be some significant game changers that come out of this. We'll start listing some of them as we speak. At the same time, it's crazy, because there are over 4,000 [laughs] new technology applications that are coming out here at once.

Probably this number two item will be our C suite visits, as we talk to the executives, is the, how do I sort through all the technologies that are out there? They're trying to get their head around it. We'll talk in a minute of how BOMA is hopefully trying to address this.

It's a scary time, because there are so many technologies. In some cases, they're very costly. Nobody wants to make an incorrect decision after investing a significant amount of money in a particular application or product, and then find out that it fails, or the next-best thing just replaced it after you've made that significant investment.

I think that has left a lot of owners and managers on the sidelines, because they're afraid to dip their toe into that work. At some point in time, most of them are going to have to do it. Some folks are just more risk tolerant, and will actually do it.

The other issue that a lot of the executives have, too, is with all this technology coming at us is, how do you adopt it and adapt it to the legacy systems? Most owners and operators do not want



20, 30 different systems doing different things to the extent that they can narrow down that list and minimize the number of applications that they have, it makes life a lot easier.

I know of at least one company who, they had 15 to 20 different applications within their commercial real estate operation as the owner. They are in the process now of going through a consolidation process, and selecting vendors to whittle that list down to a more manageable group.

Probably at the end of the day, it'll be anywhere from five to seven technology providers, providing the baseline services, and then some enhancements on top of that. I think that continues and will continue to be a challenging. Then certainly on the legacy systems, for technology solutions that drive energy or BMS systems, and things like that, making sure they're able to tap into.

In some cases, older building mechanical equipment, and whether or not it actually can function as it was designed to do. I think that's sort of the fun pot, and the scary pot at the same pot at the same time.

Scott: I think that's consistent with what we see and hear in the industry. The other thing I think I'd add to that is you have this 2,500 to 4,000 new applications, technologies, and products available to you.

Fundamentally, you have the same number of people with the same skill set trying to evaluate, understand, absorb, and then if you make the decision to go forward, something to implement. That's challenging right here when you're still trying to do your day job.

Rob: In your initial question, you talked about the people piece. Technology is a wonderful thing when it works, right, but when it doesn't work sometimes. You can't become too reliant on technology, because when it does break down, you still need to be able to do from a people perspective. The hands-on effort still has to come into play.

Plus, you also don't want to become so reliant on technology, where you lose that people aspect in terms of building those relationships, getting out, touring the properties, visiting with your clients, physically looking around and seeing what's happening in your properties.

How many stories have you heard over the years of the chief engineer literally walking through his mechanical room, and he hears a sound, and just listening to that sound tells him that there's a problem with the system.

Scott: That's a great point.

Rob: In some cases, some of the technology is going to be rolled out might pick up an issue, but in other cases, it doesn't. That human element still plays a huge factor in terms of how you're going to operate a living building, whichever they are.

Scott: That's a good point. We're all trying to find the right balance there, which is kind of a mutual and shared goal.



Rob: The other challenge Scott, and I touched on it, is making sure the staff has the training and the capacity to be able to work with that technology. I can be the big CEO, the CFO, or the CIO, and say we're rolling out this technology.

If I don't take the time to make sure that my staff is trained on how to utilize it, that they understand what the intent of that technology is and what it's going to do to benefit the company and the property, I'm probably setting myself up for a disaster.

I think making sure that if you're going to implement a technology, a solution, you need to make sure that you budget time and money to make sure that a team is, in fact, trained properly to utilize that.

Scott: That's a great point.

Rob: On the technical side, we talk about the challenges of bringing new folks into engineering and what not. Back in the day, you had a building engineer that's skill set was fixing a breakdown in the rotor and putting the rotor back together again.

Today, it's break down the rotor, put it back together again, but also it's so heavily reliant on computer and technology. The skill set has changed significantly from what it was 10, 15, 20 years or so ago. That's another factor that is a challenge in terms of trying to pull folks into the industry...

[crosstalk]

Scott: The automobile industry had the same issue. Remember mechanic with the computers now taking over car operations? Mechanics have to develop a whole new skill set. Same thing. Great point.

You touched on something briefly, as well, which kind of brings up back around to BOMA. We've seen, and participate in other industry events and conferences too, dedicated and focused on commercial real estate technology.

We've seen them rise up to tech, etc. How is BOMA responding to this? What do you think BOMA feels their obligation or commitment is to helping their members?

Rob: A couple years ago, we actually formed a technology committee within BOMA International. I touched on it a little bit earlier. It really was in direct response to those that I talked about in terms of trying to get our arms around all the changes happening in the technology, and what's going to be happening in the future.

We're in our infancy in terms of that committee, trying to really figure out what's our best approach in terms of tackling some of these issues, and what's our capacity to be able to address some of the technology challenges. I think it's still a little bit of a work in process, but I think we took the first step.

The first step was, let's get everybody together and start thinking about how we can help and what we can do in that regard. We also think there's an opportunity for that technology committee to



team up and partner with the BOMA International Research Committee, do white papers and other research that might be technology related.

We're having discussions with a number of industry leaders to possibly bring in some CIOs and what not to serve out in an advisory capacity, because most of our members aren't necessarily IT guys, per se. By bringing in some CIOs to provide some guidance, to help direct us in a technical direction, I think that's be pretty important for us as well.

Scott: That's great. Those all are good steps, and great to see you guys take that first step. I think I've seen the output and some of that effort already. You're heading in the right direction, which is great.

As we wind our way down, I want to make sure we spend some time talking about you and your current role at Colliers Boston. That's your day job, right?

Rob: Yes, absolutely.

Scott: Tell us a little bit about what you folks are doing these days, and maybe some general observations about Boston International, certainly marketing, etc., out audience might find interesting.

Rob: Since I passed on the reins of chair and CEO at BOMA International to my good friend Brian Capelli, I really have just been full guns blazing trying to re-engage on the day-to-day here that Colliers here in Boston, and Rams team.

My biggest priority right now is new business development. I've been out and about, meeting with owners, investors on a regular basis, trying to explain to them why Colliers International should be their advisor of choice when it comes to management services.

Trying to build those networks and relationships so that is someone is making an acquisition in the Boston market, that they keep us mind, and they hopefully engage us early in the process, whether it be for due diligence, expense analysis, and things like that.

Outreach is probably my number one focus right now. Certainly, working with the team trying to help support them, even being successful in terms of their day-to-day management of the properties. Doing my own analysis of technology applications that might potentially help us on the local level, although a lot that happens really at the leadership level within Colliers International as well.

I think those are certainly some of the priorities out of the gate. From what am I seeing? I think right now the economy in commercial real estate is still pretty robust. I think most folks are pretty optimistic that things will continue in the near future.

One of the benefits of me being on the chair of BOMA International was that we also had a seat at the real estate round table in DC, which is basically for all the top CEOs and leaders within commercial real estate. They do an investors sentiment survey every quarter.



For the most part, while I think there's some trepidation of things slowing down a bit, most folks are pretty optimistic that we still have some running room left in this economy, and the benefits to commercial real estate. I anticipate that, probably, we'll continue to do pretty well until 2020, barring an economic situation, which given the political climate today, you never know.

Short of that, I think we're in pretty solid shape. The real estate cycle, will continue to do well, so I'm pretty excited about that.

Scott: That's great news, at least for the next couple of years.

Rob: Exactly.

Scott: Outside of rooting for the second-place Yankees to make some progress over the next...

[laughter]

Scott: ...what else have you got going on?

[crosstalk]

Rob: First of all, as a Yankees fan, we are experienced, so we know that nothing matters except for October...

[crosstalk]

Scott: Fair point.

Rob: I'm not going to be enjoying the Red Sox success right now, because it'll be even more satisfying...

Scott: [laughs]

Rob: ... to the White House, but we'll see.

I'm excited right now to help grow Colliers International at the local level. On a personal level, I'm just excited that college football and NFL seasons are about to start up. I think the fall, particularly in New England, is probably the best time of the year. Otherwise, I think it's certainly terrific and outside of the addition of football is always a great time.

Scott: I completely agree, and you are a Patriots fan, which is...?

[crosstalk]

Rob: I am a New England fan all the way except for the Yankees. The only other team that I go out of state for is college football as I'm a big fan of Clemson and Clemson Tigers. I don't mention the chagrin. I was at the University of South Carolina fan, but that's because my daughter went there, so I'm heavily invested to...

Scott: Literally.



Rob: Exactly.

[laughter]

Scott: This has been a great conversation. I've really enjoyed it. Again, you and I have known each other for a long time. We don't necessarily always have this amount of time to spend talking and chatting, so it's just great. Great having that conversation, great insights as always, really enjoyed it.

Rob: Scott, it was my pleasure, and I thank you so much for having me.

Scott: Finally, what's the best way for people to reach you and learn more about Colliers Boston?

Rob: You can email me at rob.brierley@colliers.com.

Rob: It's probably a lot easier than me trying to spell out my last name.

Scott: [laughs] We'll make sure that's there. We'll have all the information in the show notes, along with package, kind of Rob Brierley's top five takeaways, and have it available for folks as well. With that, I want to thank our guest, Rob Brierley.

[background music]

Scott: Thank you for listening. I hope you join us on the next episode of "CRE Technologies."

Rob: Thanks.

Announcer: Thank you again for listening to this broadcast of CRE Tech Talks. We hope you found today's session valuable. Remember to visit our podcast page at www.buildingengines.com/CREtechtalks to download today's transcript and key takeaways, as well as listen to other sessions and share with colleagues.

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[QUESTIONS FOR THE HOSTS?](#)

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