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2024 Women in CRE: Julie Freshman, MG Commercial Real Estate

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Julie Freshman
Vice President

What recent project, transaction, or accomplishment are you most proud of? A recent accomplishment that I am most proud of is obtaining a RI Real Estate Broker License. I have had a Real Estate Salesperson License in RI and MA, and over the past couple of years, I completed the required 90 hours of coursework and passed both parts of the RI broker exam in early July of 2024. The most recent commercial real estate transaction that I am most proud of is the sale of a 96,323 s/f industrial building on 16.7 acres in Coventry and Cranston, R.I. The building was sold vacant, and the transaction had many moving pieces/challenges including subdivision, environmental and zoning/use approval components, as well as a seller (group of companies) whose headquarters are in Germany, Switzerland and here in the U.S. in Florida; and an out-of-state buyer from Texas.

What is your vision for the future of women in commercial real estate? I anticipate more and more women becoming an integral part of commercial real estate as salespersons and brokers. I think that Rhode Island tends to lag behind other markets in this aspect. For example, I collaborate with and know many more women commercial real estate brokers in the Boston, Massachusetts market. Additionally, there are now undergraduate programs in commercial real estate. For example, my cousin's daughter is obtaining a B.S. in Commercial Real Estate at Virginia Tech with a second major in Finance to add specialization to her major. Young women being involved in these programs is going to open up opportunities for them that many of us never had.

What challenges have you faced as a woman in commercial real estate? There are not many women in the RI commercial real estate market who are full time salespersons/brokers. Additionally, I focus on industrial sales and leasing (as both a seller/landlord rep or as a buyer/tenant rep), which also tends to be more male dominated. The biggest challenge that I have faced is feeling comfortable and confident in a male dominated industry and with, many times, being the only woman in the room. However, with age and experience this has become less and less of a challenge. Additionally, I was in a male-dominated field (environmental consulting and engineering) for 15 years before switching over to the brokerage side of real estate, so this background and environment helped ease the transition to the commercial real estate industry.

What advice do you have for young women aspiring to enter commercial real estate? My advice to young women aspiring to enter commercial real estate is to educate yourself and know that, whether male or female, a successful career in commercial real estate takes time and dedication. Knowledge and expertise come with experience, being a part of various real estate transactions over time and building a good reputation in the market you serve. Choosing a firm with access to mentorship, training, a good reputation and the potential to be part of a team is very important.