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2025 Women in CRE: Ellie Fantini Cullinan, Freudenheim Partners

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Ellie Fantini Cullinan
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What has been the most rewarding project or deal you've worked on in your career, and why? Two projects stand out as especially rewarding. Restructuring Coverys' lease at One Financial Center gave them stability and flexibility, supporting a changing workplace strategy while reducing costs. Helping The Little Cocoa Bean Co. secure space within the Boston Children's Museum was equally meaningful, aligning two mission-driven organizations. For me, the most rewarding part is seeing how the right space empowers organizations to thrive and expand their impact.

What's a challenge you faced early in your career, and how did you overcome it? Early in my career, I often competed against more experienced male brokers for tenant rep assignments. I overcame this by seeking client feedback and focusing on relationships. In one pivotal pitch to a public company, I was the only woman among nearly 20 brokers. We won, and when I asked why, the client said I was the only one who focused on his priorities instead of myself. That reinforced the importance of listening and delivering personal attention.

What drew you to commercial real estate, and what keeps you passionate? I was introduced to commercial real estate by my dad, who worked in real estate finance. Early on, I loved the fast pace and variety of clients and projects. Over time, I developed a passion for working with nonprofits, helping them overcome unique challenges in securing space so they can focus on their mission. What keeps me passionate is knowing each deal – big or small – can shape how an organization grows, supports its people, and serves its community.

What advice would you give to a woman considering a career in commercial real estate? Find your voice, lean into your strengths, and don't be afraid to carve your own path. Commercial real estate is a relationship-driven business, so investing in trust and authenticity will take you far. It's also an industry where persistence pays off – every challenge is an opportunity to learn and grow. Most importantly, remember that there's no one formula for success; your perspective and approach can be exactly what sets you apart.