

# CRAIN'S

## CHICAGO BUSINESS®

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## TRANSWESTERN

### CHICAGO'S BEST PLACE TO WORK

**W**hen John Marquardt arrived at Transwestern three years ago, he was new to the commercial real estate field, having spent a year at a rival firm after more than two decades in media sales.

"I've learned the business through the process of working on deals with a number of brokers here," says Mr. Marquardt, 50, a vice-president in the tenant advisory group.

The emphasis on employee development is a big part of Transwestern's allure. Entry-level employees have moved on to areas such as media relations and marketing. Brokers have switched, too, for example, moving from leasing to tenant representation, says Robert Bagguley, president of the Midwest region for the Houston-based commercial real estate firm.

In addition to luring brokers from other firms, Transwestern nurtures its farm system by offering a summer internship that exposes college students to all areas of the company. Of the half-dozen students a year who take part in the program the summer before their senior year, three or four typically join Transwestern after graduation, Mr. Bagguley says.

Once there, they are mentored by senior staff.

"If you're under 30, you know that there are a number of people over 50 who are going to retire, and you can learn from them," Mr. Bagguley says. "We're very cognizant about succession and of giving them the ability to . . . see a career path."

The firm encourages employees to seek training, reimbursing them for classes to attain Certified Commercial Investment Member accreditation (a designation of

expertise in commercial and investment real estate), Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design accreditation (indicating knowledge of environmental building practices), and real estate broker licenses.

In 2007, two-thirds of employees enrolled in an external training program. Transwestern also brings in experts to give presentations in areas such as bankruptcy law.

Initiative is rewarded. Employees who identify a business opportunity can put their own money into the venture and reap rewards along with the firm, sometimes netting millions for themselves, Mr. Bagguley, 57, says.

Mr. Marquardt praises the firm's collaborative culture. "It's a very flat organization. There's a ton of information-sharing, and I can go to whoever I think has the best experience and pull them into an assignment."

*Kevin McKeough*



**2009**

**TRANSWESTERN COMMERCIAL SERVICES LLC**

200 W. Madison St.

**What it does:**

Commercial real estate services

**Year founded:** 1978

**Local employees:** 161

**Worldwide employees:** 1,500

### TOP 20 COMPANIES

1. Transwestern Commercial Services LLC
2. Microsoft Corp.
3. McTigue Financial Group
4. Infinium Capital Management
5. Digitas
6. Impact Networking LLC
7. Google Inc.
8. Assurance Agency Ltd.
9. True Partners Consulting LLC
10. Resources Global Professionals
11. Clune Construction Co.
12. Upshot Inc.
13. Sentinel Technologies Inc.
14. Bryan Cave LLP
15. James Hotel
16. Robert W. Baird & Co.
17. Avande Inc.
18. West Monroe Partners LLC
19. Perkins Coie LLP
20. Donlen Corp.