



No Journey to CRE Is the Same:

The Women of Ryan Tell Their Stories



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The Commercial Real Estate (CRE) industry has historically been dominated by men, a challenge that firms such as [Ryan](#) have been trying to set right. While progress has been made to support the advancement of women and other underrepresented groups within CRE, with CEOs such as G. Brint Ryan and others signing the [CRE Pledge for Action with CREW Network](#), we have more work to do.

According to CREW's 2020 [study](#) on Gender and Diversity in Commercial Real Estate, women currently occupy 36.7% of the CRE industry, a figure that has been slow to grow over the past 15 years. Women belong in CRE; across the nation, professional

organizations, such as CREW and its various chapters, Women's Real Estate Network, LinkedIn groups, and more, encourage women to share their experiences, networks, professional opinions, and success, with the goal of making CRE a place where women are visible, valued, and included.

As every woman's journey in the industry is different, the women of Ryan, the world's largest Firm dedicated to business taxes, gathered to share their experiences as inspiration and a reminder that while we all have different paths to the industry, we *all* belong.

Anya Hershenson

Consultant, Property Tax Commercial

"Having grown up in Boston, I developed an interest in real estate, and the different systems that shaped the city. My passion and interest in the industry grew and I pursued a major in Business Administration with a concentration in finance and a second concentration in real estate from Boston University.

After graduating from Boston University in June of 2023, I began working at Ryan. As a consultant on the property tax team, I've been able to explore the intersectionality of the private and public sphere and the way it relates to commercial real estate. As a younger woman beginning her career in commercial real estate, I am excited to further develop my understanding of the industry as the market continues to evolve and new opportunities arise."

Karen Pierre

Director, Client Services

"I have held positions in the commercial real estate field since graduating with my Master of Business Administration from Crummer Graduate School of Business at Rollins College. I have a solid reputation in Dallas as a commercial real estate relationship builder and solutions provider and have been very successful due to hard work and a lot of involvement in the industry over the past 30+ years. I have mentored many young women who enter commercial real estate and have also taught commercial real estate classes to adults as Adjunct Faculty at the community college level.

After starting my career in office building property

management and leasing, I moved into sales and have been focused on sales and business development ever since. My passion for women in commercial real estate has been at the center of my career, and I currently serve as a Director on the CREW Dallas Board of Trustees."

Marie Armstrong

Manager, Property Tax Complex

"My journey in commercial real estate began in 2017. My husband had been laid off, and with four children at home the uncertainty and instability that followed was a wake-up call for our single income household; I decided to re-enter the workforce after 10 years at home. Following 2 short contract positions as office manager, I applied for an admin position at Ryan. During the interview process I was provided a high-level overview of what a career in Property Tax might look like, and I readily signed on. Once I had my "foot in the door" I asked a million questions, carved out a career and education plan, and I've been building my career ever since!

In the 5 years since, I've been promoted through the property tax team up to a management position while working towards my AMAA (Accredited Municipal Assessor of Alberta) designation. My "ah-ha" moment came in one of my early school courses, when I read about the many dimensions of a real estate professional, especially one in Taxation and Assessment. I'd be expected to develop strengths in writing, analysis, negotiation, communication, business development, project management and more. I came to understand that a career in CRE would be dynamic and secure, and I knew I would continue to grow and never find myself bored.

Knowing what I know now, I feel lucky that the career I chose to dedicate myself to ended up being so compatible with who I am, and so enjoyable! My Dad always says “Aptitude and Attitude will get you far!” which I’ve revised to “Aptitude and Attitude will get you far! Throw in some education and you’re unstoppable.”

Noelle Rouhana
Principal, Property Tax Commercial

“When I first started doing property taxes, I was working on a temporary basis in accounting. While working on Valuations and Appeals for Leased Equipment, Furniture, and Fixtures, I discovered that there is also a Commercial Real Estate component to the Property Tax equation. About 20 years ago, I joined Deloitte’s CRE department and worked my way up to partner, where I continued to grow my network, skills in negotiation, and passion for mentorship.

For me, the most remarkable part of this journey was that no one I knew of in Property Tax went to school to specialize in CRE; because it was such a specialized industry, it allowed myself and the fantastic teams I worked with to flourish and prosper on our way to the top. Throughout my years in the industry, I’ve found great value in what I do, particularly as I get to work with other women in the industry and support their growth and career path in a predominantly male-focused industry. I would do it all over again and cannot imagine any other career path”

Suzanne Markley
Principal, Property Tax Commercial

“I accepted an internship with the Property Tax group of Deloitte between my Junior and Senior years of college. At the time, I was a Real Estate major at the University of Georgia, but I didn’t know what area of CRE I wanted to focus on long-term. Ultimately, I took the property tax position not because I felt a calling to work in the business, but rather because I had a fantastic rapport with the team that interviewed me. I have now been in property tax for 20 years, working alongside many of the same colleagues my entire tenure. I have no doubt that the people I work with every day and the culture that we have created and nurtured are the most important factors in both my professional success and overall career satisfaction.

I am a “helper” by nature. Consulting has been the perfect career for me because I spend my days serving my clients and finding ways to improve their professional lives. I also love spending time with our young talent and guiding them as they grow in their own careers. For anyone just starting on their

own journey, I believe that you can find meaning and purpose in any kind of work. The two most important factors for long-term happiness are to find a boss that you genuinely respect and colleagues that you truly want to be around every day.”

Michelle Pink
Principal, Regional Leader, Property Tax Complex

“When I graduated high school, I was 100% sure I was going to be a lawyer. I started a degree in History and First Nations studies carving the path towards law. I even took the LSAT. That all changed in third-year university when I took a part time job as a research analyst for a commercial real estate agent. That was my moment, and I knew then and there that I was no longer going to pursue law school - my future was commercial real estate. I had always appreciated real estate, anything from houses to commercial buildings, but I was wholly unaware of how vast of a career it could be.

I completed my honors undergraduate degree as fast as I could, simply because I could not wait for my career to start. I moved from Vancouver, BC after graduating to Calgary, Alberta, which was in the midst of a boom in 2006. With a little bit of luck and a lot of hard work, I have built an amazing career over the last 18 years. I credit my calculated risk taking, hard work and tremendous network to catapulting me from an Analyst in 2006 for a small research firm to a Partner in 2020 at Ryan where I am now the Principal, Regional Leader for my team.”

Paula Kalogritsas
Principal, Regional Leader, Property Tax Complex

“Like so many others, I had just finished my degree at Ryerson University (now Toronto Metropolitan University) and had no idea what I was going to do with my life. Luckily for me, I had a summer job in the leasing department at the Bank of Nova Scotia and met Iqbal Nasser. I sat across from Iqbal and would ask him “what do you do for the bank”. He let me in on a secret industry called Property Tax & Assessment. Up until then, I had scarce knowledge of what property taxes were, let alone that there was an opportunity to build a career in property taxes. Iqbal directed me to Seneca College where I took a one-year accelerated program that focused on property assessment.

Fast forward 25 years since that summer job at the bank and I am proud to be a Principal at Ryan, leading a team of property tax consultants, appraisers, and paralegals providing value to our clients. I still run into Iqbal at industry events and thank him for the conversations we had that led me to this amazing career in real estate and property tax consulting.”

About Ryan

Ryan, an award-winning global tax services and software provider, is the largest Firm in the world dedicated exclusively to business taxes. With global headquarters in Dallas, Texas, the Firm provides an integrated suite of federal, state, local, and international tax services on a multijurisdictional basis, including tax recovery, consulting, advocacy, compliance, and technology services. Ryan is an 11-time recipient of the International Service Excellence Award from the Customer Service Institute of America (CSIA) for its commitment to world-class client service. Empowered by the dynamic *myRyan* work environment, which is widely recognized as the most innovative in the tax services industry, Ryan's multidisciplinary team of more than 4,800 professionals and associates serves over 30,000 clients in more than 80 countries, including many of the world's most prominent Global 5000 companies. More information about Ryan can be found at ryan.com.



Award-Winning Tax Services

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