

JANUARY 2005

Top Service Providers Know:

The Customer
Is Always Right

by MARK AREND

This year's crop of client-service award winners had two features in common: a demonstrated ability to exceed corporate real estate clients' service expectations and a profound understanding of how those expectations are evolving. The *Site Selection*/William Dorsey Service Provider Awards, now in their sixth year, recognize those organizations that not only claim to be client-focused but can demonstrate a consistent track record of delivering more than was expected. Several dozen service provider firms took the challenge, most of which deserve some recognition for the commitment they bring to client service. But seven stood in a class by themselves, and four deserve an honorable mention (see the box on this page for a list of the winners).

Award submissions were evaluated according to thoroughness of responses to questionnaire topics, clarity, ability to quantify service results, client verification of service benefits and a contribution to the evolving definition of client service in the context of the corporate real estate industry.

To the latter point, the common denominator in the winning organizations' notion of how client service is evolving is twofold: seamless integration between client and provider and investment in technology on the part of the service provider to meet and surpass service expectations in the future. Consider this excerpt from The Amend Group's award application - and whether your current service providers share this definition:

"Clients will demand streamlined operations from service providers with service offerings that are strategically aligned with their wants and needs - all at less project cost and under tighter schedule requirements ... Clients will expect a commitment to technology and innovation encompassing R&D budgets from their providers ... New technology applications powered by the Internet will become the core of doing business in commercial real estate."

CRESA Partners sees the definition evolving in this way: "Corporate space users will move away from service provider-client relationships to corporate infrastructure partnerships, from transaction-oriented to solution-oriented. Corporate clients are going to be looking for service providers with solid track records of working with both the real estate and finance departments to positively impact their clients' bottom lines."

Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) puts it this way: "Service providers that cannot guarantee high quality service on six continents, tied together by common procedures and real-time technological tools, will not be able to compete as effectively. Seamless integration will be an increasingly important concern not only along geographic lines but across all real estate disciplines, as clients realize the benefits of working with a single provider for all analytical, transactional and management activities around the world." But JLL adds another dimension to the client-service definition. "Increasingly, clients are asking service providers to take on a larger share of liability associated with real estate activities."

The 2004 Client Service Award Winners

The Amend Group

CRESA Partners LLC

Jones Lang LaSalle

**McCallum Sweeney
Consulting, Inc.**

Real Estate Strategies Corp.

Trammell Crow Company

The Walker Companies

Honorable Mention

Hickey & Associates

Location Management Services

NAI

Purdue Research Park

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Companies making the Class of 2004, as have winners in past years, did so by delivering results that exceeded expectations, and they do so as a matter of principle. Surpassing client expectations is the rule - not the exception to the rule.

Under intense pressure from state and local government, land owners and other service providers to disclose the identity of a client, The Walker Companies refused to do so out of respect for the client's interest in preserving its competitive edge and avoiding disruptions to existing operations. The client wished to remain anonymous well into construction of a 600,000-sq.-ft. (55,740-sq.-m.) distribution center. The land purchase agreement, legal agreements on incentives, contracts for due diligence and the construction contract all were entered under the client's code name. "The 'we've never done this before' attitude of the parties across the negotiating table did not deter us from concluding a very successful project," explains Raymond Walker, president of The Walker Companies. "The identity of the client was not revealed until eight months into facility construction."

Among several examples CRESA Partners cited to illustrate its approach to client service was the case of a client about to move into new office space when the space was damaged from a sprinkler on the floor above. The CRESA project manager, when informed of the problem, reacted so quickly that she arrived before the building manager, the tenant - even the fire department. Twenty percent of the space was damaged; carpet in the furniture-staging area was ruined and drywall had to be replaced. The project manager had less than six days to fix the situation. Before the end of the same day, the project manager had reorganized the move schedule, resolved insurance questions and notified all relevant parties that the damage would be paid for by the tenant above the new space. The project manager saw to it that the carpet was replaced, the walls were repaired and painted and the furniture was salvaged such that the tenant could move in on schedule with no evidence of the damage of a few days previous.

In the context of industrial client service, it's hard to get more industrial than The Boeing Company, which assigned McCallum Sweeney Consulting the task of locating a suitable site for the 7E7 Dreamliner final assembly plant. Here, too, client confidentiality was a key requirement. But more daunting was the sheer volume of proposals coming in from all over the United States and the "intensely data-driven" process of narrowing down the finalists. McCallum Sweeney's use of GIS technology and other systems helped Boeing complete the process on schedule.

Dozens of other anecdotes were supplied by service providers participating in *Site Selection's* annual competition, and some of them will be explored in more depth in future issues of *Site Selection*. In the meantime, the editors salute these winning companies and all service providers committed to exceeding client expectations.

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— Jones Lang LaSalle



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