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WOMEN of Influence

Four leading industry professionals share the secrets of their success

The Amenities Issue

From parking to WiFi, find out which amenities appeal most to today's renter

WOMEN OF INFLUENCE

Find out how four determined professionals used their brains, charisma and fearlessness to get ahead in a predominantly male industry

By Erin Ruddy





Property management is a business that's nearly impossible to define. It's about maintaining the nuts and bolts of a building and nurturing relationships with the residents who call it home. It's about keeping up with changing legislation and knowing when to retrofit a defunct boiler. From marketing and communications, to balancing books and mopping floors, managing an apartment building requires having the head smarts to be fiscally responsible yet the emotional intelligence to respect the scores of voices and cultures that exist, often inharmoniously, under one roof.

Whether male or female, the hats worn by the field's top professionals are as colourful as they are varied. But, as Bev Greene (Concert), Kris Boyce (Greenwin), Margaret Herd (Park Property Management Inc.) and Trish MacPherson (CAPREIT) know, the more hats you wear, the further you will go.

Earlier this summer, I had the pleasure of gathering with our four fearless females at Toronto's National Club—ironically, a destination meant for gentlemen only up until as recently as 1992. What follows is a snippet of our conversations; the successes and frustrations, the trailblazing actions that propelled each woman toward her current position of influence. And though each property management professional had a uniquely inspiring story to share, the message at the heart of their stories is very much the same: work hard and love what you do if you want to succeed at this game.

Name: Kris Boyce

Company: Greenwin Inc.

Title: CEO

Number of years in the industry: 29

Number of years with current company: 15

Work philosophy: Nothing is impossible. No matter what the previous day may have brought, wake up excited and prepared to face (and conquer) new challenges.

Name: Bev Greene

Company: Concert Properties

Title: Vice President, Property Management

Number of years in the industry: 40

Number of years with current company: 13

Work philosophy: Put your heart and soul into all that you do. Show up and give everything you can each day.





HOW DID YOU GET YOUR START IN THE INDUSTRY?

BEV: I started as a receptionist for a small family owned company. I did a bit of everything...answered the phone, dealt with the resident managers, did payroll, kept the tenant accounts, banking, and even drove the owner around. As the company grew I was given more responsibility and eventually a portfolio of buildings.

KRIS: After graduating high school, I attended Seneca College's Law Enforcement program. I wasn't accepted as a police cadet. With great luck and timing, I accepted a job in February, 1984, as a Site Administrator for Metro International Inc. at 30/35 Charles Street in Toronto. That's where I was taught the street smarts required to be on the front lines of the real estate industry.



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Name: Trish MacPherson
Company: Canadian Apartment Properties
Real Estate Investment Trust (CAPREIT)
Title: Vice President Sales and Marketing
Number of years in the industry: 8
Number of years with current company: 8
Work philosophy: Build a great team to
support your vision and continue to develop
your vision through constant learning outside
your comfort zone.



Name: Margaret Herd
Company: Park Property Management Inc.
Title: Vice President, Residential Property
Management
Number of years in the industry: 33
Number of years with current company: 33
Work philosophy: Attempt every task given
and never say, 'it's not my job!'



MARGARET: I was hired at Park as an assistant to the accounts receivable clerk. It was all uphill from there.

TRISH: I was recruited to join CAPREIT from my position as the head of marketing with a software and predictive analytics company. I have worked in functional areas from field sales to public relations, training and various marketing areas such as digital, print, and direct. I am definitely a marketing generalist.



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU'VE FACED IN YOUR CAREER?

BEV: Keeping up with the changing business environment and methods. For example, when I started there was no safe work or environmental legislation and everything was done manually. Residential staff was generally made up of retired people or those who did it temporarily while they looked for real work. Changing the mindset of owners and managers to recruiting qualified and career-minded site staff has been an ongoing challenge.

KRIS: Wanting to be the best mother, manager, mentor, and role model—all wrapped up in one body. Property Management

is a 24/7 job. Juggling the demands of family and career has been one of my greatest feats yet. Every day of “doing it all” is just another day in the life of today’s professional woman. I’m cognizant, however, of the importance of switching my cell phone to vibrate every so often.

MARGARET: I can’t quite answer that as challenges in this industry are many and constant. Every time you feel you’ve overcome one, another challenge or obstacle comes along. The OEB order was challenging as was returning to university at the age of 40, raising three children, and working full time.

TRISH: The biggest challenge for me is keeping pace with organizational change and being a part of driving the company forward. There is no downtime and that can be a challenge as well as a motivator as the environment is exciting and fresh every day.



WHAT MOTIVATES YOU THE MOST?

BEV: I love the diversity—getting up and knowing that it will probably not be what I planned. The people who work in this business are wonderful and the interactions

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with them are enjoyable and enlightening. I learn something new every day. Being able to solve problems and see positive changes in the buildings and the growth of the staff is extremely rewarding.

KRIS: I take great pride in delivering the results promised to our owners, clients and employees. Relationships are paramount for any business to be successful. I love watching my team grow and evolve as we hit certain business targets. The happiness and success of my children is, of course, nature's endorphin.

MARGARET: Having amazing and supportive colleagues.

TRISH: We are always innovating at CAPREIT and that keeps every day interesting. I am involved in many more areas of the business than traditional marketing and the exposure to all areas, from international expansion to due diligence, AGIs and sub metering, keep the learning curve fresh. The last eight years have given me great exposure to the residential

business. I also work with a great group of people. We care about each other and that has gotten me through some tough times.



WHAT DO YOU FEEL HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THIS BUSINESS?

BEV: I can't pick out just one thing. Overall it is helping contribute to the success of the companies I have worked for and to the growth of the people that have worked with me.

KRIS: Continuing my education while working full time, on call 24/7, raising a family, and commuting from Durham Region to the GTA for 30-plus years. Let's do the time warp and remember a property manager's job before cell phones—we had pagers, typewriters and long phone-booth conversations between site visits!

MARGARET: Starting as an accounts receivable clerk and working my way up to my present position. Not many companies



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offer advancement of this sort, however I had a great mentor who saw value in my being a pain in his side for constantly asking questions and, it may sound silly, but asking for more work.

TRISH: I like to think that I've helped push the marketing side of this business forward for the industry. Be it in areas of pricing, digital marketing or other areas, we are always looking at ways to innovate and stay ahead of the curve to gain an advantage. I also think that we have built one of the best teams in the industry, be it in the corporate office, field or in marketing. I always say they make me look like good!

WHAT WORD OF ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL WHO WANTS TO BUILD A CAREER IN THIS INDUSTRY?



BEV: Nothing is black and white—there are many shades of grey in between, so it is important to be flexible and

adaptable in this business. Respect and welcome diversity as that creates options and provides insight. You have to be able to think on your feet and make decisions quickly but at the same time make informed decisions. It is about common sense and your gut instinct—they will be the best tools you can rely on.

KRIS: Be humble. Be okay with starting in an entry-level position where you can learn the business from the veterans and experts who are known for best practises. A true mentorship program enriches the mentor and mentee; each person pushes the other to achieve innovation and career satisfaction— without judgement along the way.

MARGARET: I often say it to my grown children. Don't say "no" or "it's not in my work schedule" when asked to take on more duties at work. It only limits your knowledge and opportunity. Read about the industry, ask questions, and, most of all, recognize that you are in an industry that is constantly changing.

TRISH: Getting building experience is a great place to start. Really understand what makes the company, what it is, and what drives profitability. Leasing and sales really are the life blood of the organization. From there you can get a viewpoint on all the facets available to you, from accounting to marketing and purchasing.



DID YOU HAVE A MENTOR IN YOUR EARLY YEARS IN THIS INDUSTRY, SOMEONE WHO INSPIRED YOU?

BEV: Marlene Monk—she managed the company I started at in Calgary and gave me a chance right out of school. She taught me the business and encouraged me to take on new responsibilities. She saw something in me and I am grateful for her trust as it has been a long and successful career because of that chance she took with me.

KRIS: My number one hero and mentor is my father. His last position before retirement was VP, Marketing & Sales for Dempster Bread Canada. One lesson

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A strong foundation starts with the right people. After all, it is our team which brings their passion and creativity to all of Concert's rental communities. And it's talented individuals like Bev Greene, who share our commitment to honesty and integrity in all dealings, that make Concert a property management company 'with a difference'.

We are proud to have Bev, one of Canadian Magazine's 'Women of Influence', on our team.



I learned early in my career to leave the job at work. That has really helped me enjoy longevity in this industry."

- Bev Greene

Park Property Management Inc. is happy to congratulate Margaret Herd

for being one of Canadian Magazine's Women of Influence! We are proud to have you on our team and appreciate all of your hard work and dedication.



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stands out in particular. He encouraged me to remember who represents your brand—your people. Dad would take coffees to the loading bays for the Dempster Bread drivers before they started their daily deliveries and thanked them for the hard day's work ahead of them.

MARGARET: Fred Dobbin, my predecessor. I worked for him for most of my career at Park. He taught me a great deal about the industry and allowed me the freedom to take on initiatives that I felt would be of benefit to our organization. There were no strict guidelines to my job duties, and therefore my position within the company evolved during my tenure. I was truly fortunate to have been given the ability to make my own job.

TRISH: I think everyone at CAPREIT looks to Tom Schwartz as a mentor and a role model. He was instrumental in my hiring, and as the years have progressed, he has made sure that opportunities were open to me to pursue as I wished and was able. My current boss, Mark Kenney, is also a great at letting me develop my skill sets and push the envelope of innovation.



HOW DO YOU FIND BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE?

BEV: I learned early in my career to leave the job at work. That has really helped me enjoy longevity in this industry. I give full commitment and effort to work and when I walk out of the door it does not go with me. I also believe that it is important to have some physical activity to help relieve the stress, so I work out and I love to play golf. Both require your full attention so it is easy not to think of work.

KRIS: I am fortunate to be home again with Greenwin. You won't find a more supportive, family-oriented environment. Work/life balance is one of today's hot-ticket items. Both my team and my family are acutely aware of the importance of both, so when I veer too far toward work, my employees remind me: Balance.

MARGARET: Now that my three children are adults, managing balance is quite



Blaney McMurtry LLP congratulates Margaret Herd of Park Property, Kris Boyce of Greenwin along with the other women of influence on this well-deserved honour and salutes their continued leadership and successes

easy. However, when they were young it was, to say the least, challenging. I could write a book on this question. Both my husband and I worked. Our oldest son has Down syndrome and after he was born I only worked part time. Luckily, Park accommodated me in this regard. After my daughter and younger son were born, I went back to work full time. Not an easy task...but raising a family and working full time makes one a great multi-tasker!

TRISH: I have two kids, 13 and 10, and although I can't be home for them all the time I very rarely miss a school event or extracurricular function. I am lucky to be able to schedule my work and travel to fit with my life the majority of the time, and technology allows me to stay in touch. I use what I have at my disposal—from 'Facetime' to texting with my kids when I travel from coast to coast—and I keep in touch with work when I am home. I do shut down when I take vacation, which I do outside the city at least once per year. That is my time to be dedicated to my kids and refresh my energy for when I return.



WHERE DO YOU HOPE TO SEE YOURSELF FIVE YEARS DOWN THE ROAD?

BEV: Still at Concert. The company has plans to continue building and acquiring property, and I would like very much to be a part of that.

KRIS: I would feel honoured and privileged to continue leading Greenwin for coming years while continuing to mentor and train our next generation of real estate professionals in Canada.

MARGARET: Hopefully with Park and in the same position I currently hold, and if not that—retired!

TRISH: I would like to continue my expansion deeper into other areas of the business, while continuing to push the marketing and sales function forward to obtain more profitability. I also love to travel. As we expand, I hope to experience more cultures and geographies and also improve my French!

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