



2021 Women in Professional Services: Susan Kahaner, Avison Young

March 23, 2021 - Spotlights

Name: Susan Kahaner

Title: Senior Director, Office Leasing, Associations and Nonprofits

Company Name: Avison Young

Real estate associations or organizations that you are currently a member of:

Real Estate Board of New York,
Women's Media Center,
Animal Rights organizations

In the past year, what project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of?

I was on the Avison Young team that received REBNY's prestigious Edward S. Gordon Memorial Award for the transaction, "The Trinity of Sales." Avison Young named it Best Global Case Study and our team, which included Jennifer Ogden, James Nelson and Jon Epstein, U.S. Client Team of the Year. This complex, "ingenious deal" involved three charitable organizations. Jennifer and I orchestrated Jan Hus Presbyterian Church's acquisition of a 15,000 s/f property at 1745 First Ave. that is now its new church and outreach program, and collaborated with our Investment Sales group to sell Jan Hus' facility at 351 East 74th St. for nearly \$23 million to The Church of the Epiphany. Simultaneously, Epiphany then sold its property to Weill Cornell Medical College for \$68 million.

Why should women consider a career in commercial real estate and related services?

Real estate attracts strong and powerful women because you're able to be your own boss on your own terms. Also, real estate is one of the few professions where there is no glass ceiling.

What steps have you taken to ensure the continued success of your firm?

I've continued to canvas for office leasing during the COVID-19 shutdown, staying in touch with long-time relationships and developing new prospects, which has resulted in new business and closed deals. For me, canvassing is about reaching out to people rather than simply leasing office space. For example, I met Melinda White, CEO of Transit Wireless, years ago through one of my networking organizations, the Women's Media Center, and she invited me to discuss her firm's

space needs. My team and I presented to Transit Wireless during the shutdown in late May 2020 and arranged, completely online, a 32,499 s/f long-term office lease and expansion for the firm at 1400 Broadway. The deal closed in January 2021, a little more than six months after our initial meeting.

How have you adapted and changed in the last 12 months?

I'm using more technology than I ever did before. We're still making client presentations via zoom.

How do you keep your team motivated despite conflicts and obstacles?

I collaborate with a team of terrific women that includes Jennifer Ogden and Nicky Heryet. We motivate each other and also enjoy celebrating our victories. In 2020, we closed an office lease in Manhattan totaling over 20,000 s/f for a client we had been working with for several years. We stayed focused on our objectives and brought the deal to a successful conclusion during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Women have made significant progress in the last year towards equality in the workplace. How do you advocate for your fellow women in real estate?

It's important for women to belong to real estate organizations, but I'd also advise them to network with women in organizations that interest them outside of real estate. I worked with a fellow member of the Women's Media Center, Melinda White, CEO of Transit Wireless, and helped negotiate a lease for her organization. Also, my partner Jennifer Ogden and I helped Beverly Dempsey, the pastor of Jan Hus Presbyterian Church, sell her facility and buy a new building for her ministry. Jen met Beverly some years before while volunteering with the Junior League Montclair/Newark. In both cases, we knew these clients in our private lives from women's organizations and when they needed help, they called upon us to help them achieve their real estate goals.

What books or social media influencers would you recommend to other women?

I listen to Women's Media Center Live with Robin Morgan every Sunday morning. The show also is available on podcast. Robin is an award-winning poet, novelist, political theorist, feminist activist, journalist, editor and best-selling author and always has stimulating observations and guests sharing women's issues from all over the world.

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