

## INCENDIUM INSIGHTS

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# THE EVOLUTION OF SKILLS & CAPABILITIES IN CRE

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The future of work is redefining the skills required for Corporate Real Estate (CRE) teams to succeed. As organisations navigate shifting workplace expectations, economic pressures, and digital transformation, CRE leaders are rethinking team structures and where they source skills for the future.

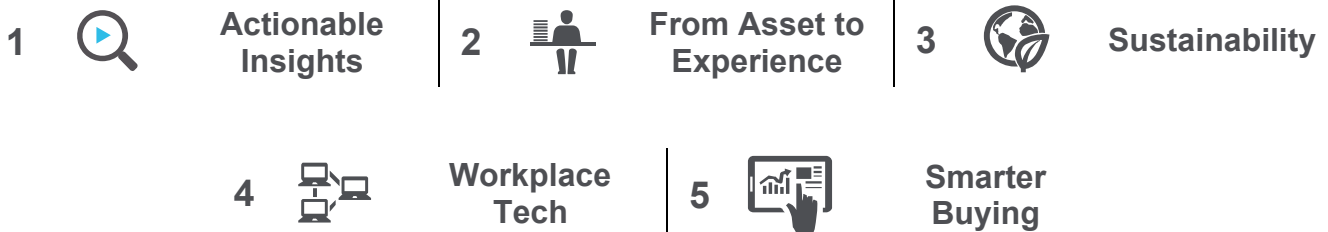
Once viewed as a cost centre, CRE's role has steadily evolved into an enabler for organisations, with more Real Estate decisions gaining C-suite visibility. As workplace continues to influence company culture, productivity, and talent attraction, the skills required by teams are shifting, with the degree of change varying across organisations and sectors.



Following the pandemic, employee demand for choice, flexibility, and digital consumption surged, as employers grappled with empty offices and the challenges of maintaining productivity and engagement among remote staff. While technical expertise in Facilities Management (FM), Real

Estate (RE) transactions and operations remained essential, organisations accelerated hiring in key areas such as data analysis, customer experience, sustainability and digital workplace technology. Some organisations embed these skills in-house, while others rely on external partners, reflecting market constraints and a procurement-driven cycle.

**In this article, we explore these evolved skills and capabilities and how they are shaping the CRE function into an enabler of organisational success across five pillars:**





## ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

CRE teams are under pressure to provide actionable insights that support C-suite decision making. This means moving beyond backward-looking metrics like square foot per desk and transaction costs, to focus more on workplace utilisation, employee preferences, mobility trends and forward-looking scenario planning. These insights help executives justify investments, optimise portfolios and align RE decisions with business goals, particularly as many corporates navigate Return-to-Office (RTO) discussions and strategies <sup>[1]</sup>.

To meet demand, CRE teams are increasingly hiring talent from finance and tech sectors to harness advanced data capabilities, with a growing focus on predictive analytics. As corporate occupiers also turn to external partners for data expertise, the role of analytics remains crucial in driving workplace strategy and improving efficiency, even in challenging market conditions.

## FROM ASSET TO EXPERIENCE

Borrowing heavily from an approach well embedded in retail and hospitality sectors, there is an increased focus on creating exceptional user experiences that improve productivity, collaboration, and employee wellbeing, driven by human-centric design <sup>[2]</sup>. Digital touchpoints, such as workplace apps, are playing a significant role in shaping these experiences by streamlining services, improving accessibility, and personalising interactions.

As workplace expectations evolve, CRE teams must integrate both physical and digital experience strategies, as business leaders recognise their combined impact on employee engagement, retention, and overall workplace satisfaction <sup>[3]</sup>. Supply partners have also prioritised this area, with CBRE recently appointing Industrious CEO Jamie Hodari to lead its Building Operations & Experience business, overseeing their global property and corporate FM portfolio <sup>[4]</sup>. This move reflects the growing importance of user experience design and digital service platforms in shaping modern workplace strategies. The ability to integrate hospitality-driven service models with seamless digital experiences is now a key capability for occupiers and a lasting impact of the post-COVID workplace evolution.





## SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability has become a central business priority, reflecting the increased impact of regulatory requirements, stakeholder expectations, and corporate values in shaping RE decisions <sup>[5]</sup>. Rather than being managed centrally, specialist expertise is now required at the portfolio level to translate group wide ESG objectives into actionable RE strategies, with dedicated roles such as 'Head of Sustainability & Programmes' becoming increasingly common. In addition to data literacy, these positions require strong operational and logistical acumen to manage sustainability efforts across the supply chain, as well as the executive presence to position initiatives as growth opportunities to the C-suite. With sustainability underpinning the future of work, leaders will rely on sustainability experts within CRE teams as strategic partners to lead high impact environmental initiatives and drive competitive advantage through ESG.

## WORKPLACE TECHNOLOGY

Technology is shaping flexible, collaborative and digitally enhanced workplaces. Workplace management platforms, IoT solutions, and AI are optimising office space efficiency, monitoring utilisation and providing real-time insights to improve productivity. As a result, CRE teams are recruiting tech-savvy roles to harness advanced technology and integrate digital tools into workplace strategies. Ultimately, teams that most effectively leverage AI can free up time for higher value strategic work and allocate more capital to business-critical operations <sup>[6]</sup>.

Given the complexities of workplace technology, many organisations look beyond CRE for talent with expertise in digital transformation and systems integration. For occupiers who choose not to take this approach, investments will instead be directed towards digital workplace platforms and external partners capable of providing these solutions.



## FROM DIY TO SMARTER BUYING

Historically, corporate teams developed deep functional skills in areas such as FM, capital programs, and critical environments to manage suppliers who operated similarly. While customers were prioritised, internal CRE teams were viewed as the experts, but their focus was often on execution rather than innovation.

However, much like industries such as travel, transportation, and SaaS, the workplace is evolving toward a more productised model with "workplace as a service." Customers are becoming more demanding, and with the growing strategic pressures on CRE teams, they can no longer afford to create solutions in isolation or refine them over time. Internal teams need to rely on the industry to provide innovative, integrated products and services that can be easily purchased and transparently delivered.

To stay competitive, CRE teams must adopt a forward-thinking approach, outsourcing non-core functions to integrated workplace-as-a-service models and product supply chains.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

As CRE evolves, organisations are combining core technical skills with emerging capabilities, building expertise through the right balance of inhouse talent, partnerships, and outsourcing. As teams increasingly hire from diverse industries, their focus is on adaptability and individuals who can apply their expertise across various contexts, bringing fresh perspectives.

At the same time, firms are increasingly relying on service providers for operational delivery, allowing internal teams to focus on strategy and business relationship management. This includes hiring professionals who can engage senior business stakeholders, communicate CRE's value, and translate complex RE concepts into actionable insights that align with broader business objectives.

To stay competitive, leaders must optimise how they source, develop, and structure their teams to align with the five pillars. In this period of evolution, those who innovate, invest in developing capabilities, and embrace a forward-thinking mindset will position their organisations for long-term success.

## REFERENCES:

1

[UK companies ordering staff back to the office this year](#)

2

[Human-centric design – enhancing employee wellbeing in the workplace](#)

3

[Design an Office that People Want to Come Back to](#)

4

[CBRE Group to Acquire Industrious, Create New Business Segment – Company Announcement - FT.com](#)

5

[Bringing Sustainability Home: How CSR And ESG Programs Can Broaden Impact As Workplaces Adapt](#)

6

[Why Better GenAI-Driven Real Estate Decisions Stem from Better Data Sets](#)

# Incendium

## RETHINKING REAL ESTATE

[www.incendiumconsulting.com](http://www.incendiumconsulting.com)

**Incendium was founded on a rebellious and independent spirit that remains to this day.**

Our 6 founders had built enviable careers and reputations in their respective fields delivering results in senior positions in the Big 4, top Real Estate consultancies and Fortune 100 businesses.

But in 2014, driven by a goal to disrupt how clients accessed innovative and independent CRE expertise, they quit their jobs and Incendium was born. Their passion for sourcing the best talent and delivering transformational results quickly attracted a diverse pool of like-minded rebels.

Combined with a commitment to working shoulder-to-shoulder with clients, the business grew rapidly. Then, on a fateful day in 2018 the founders met the team at **The Instant Group**, and it became very clear, very quickly that they were kindred spirits. Shortly after, Incendium joined Instant and the rest, as they say, is history.



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