

Deep Dive
Q2 2025



FOUR REAL ESTATE LEADERS REVEAL LESSONS ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CONFIDENCE

Through conversations with four accomplished leaders, this Deep Dive showcases case studies and personal stories that reveal how these experts have driven progress—both in their own careers and across the commercial real estate industry.

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**By: Ella Krygiel
for BOMA International**



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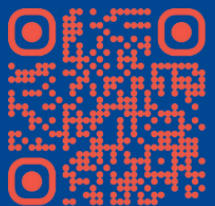
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A leader's ability to build strong relationships with their team, network and stakeholders is often what truly drives sustainable success.



Emotional intelligence isn't always the first trait that comes to mind when we think of leadership—qualities like being driven or results-oriented often take the spotlight. In today's fast-paced world, outcomes tend to matter more than the how behind them. But in reality, a leader's ability to build strong relationships with their team, network and stakeholders is often what truly drives sustainable success.

In this quarter's Deep Dive, experts from the commercial real estate industry share their insights on leading with emotional intelligence—and offer practical tips for projecting confidence, navigating transitions and communicating effectively during high-stakes presentations.

This Deep Dive is divided into three key sections:

- Techniques for Projecting Confidence: How to Communicate With Impact During High-Stakes Presentations and Meetings
- Leadership Lessons in Action: How Industry Experts Navigate Change, Align Stakeholders and Guide With Purpose
- Fostering Emotional Intelligence: How to Build Resilient Teams and Manage Effectively Through Uncertainty

Through conversations with four accomplished leaders, this Deep Dive showcases case studies and personal stories that reveal how these experts have driven progress—both in their own careers and across the commercial real estate industry.

PART 1: Techniques for Projecting Confidence: How to Communicate With Impact During High-Stakes Presentations and Meetings

One of the elements that often comes with leadership is possessing high-quality presentation and public speaking skills. You want to come across as confident, prepared, but at the same time, engaged and self-aware with your audience. When discussing the techniques that our experts find to be the most effective when conducting high-stakes meetings, overwhelmingly “preparation” was the number one strategy they recommended and to no surprise. A research study found that deliberate practice, intentionally repeating an activity to improve performance, is a necessary behavior for reaching experts' levels of skill. Read below to learn more advice for reaching preparation perfection:

- Preparation Unlocks Confidence – But There’s More to It: While preparation was the most cited strategy the experts emphasized, it’s not just about memorizing content. It’s about knowing your material so well that you can be present in the moment—ready for curveballs, free from notes and able to focus on your audience instead of your script. As **Shelby J. Christensen, BOMA Fellow, LEED-GA, Director of Operations, Hayden Real Estate Investments LLC** discussed, it’s important to hone the purpose of the meeting, the audience and the key messages. “I try to think about the questions I might get or concerns that might be raised,” Christensen says. Andrew Merrill, VP of Energy Services, Trane echoes this point, noting that knowing your material inside and out allows you to speak with authority and handle unexpected questions with ease. He encourages leaders to rehearse their presentation multiple times to build muscle memory and reduce presentation anxiety. However, **Marc Fischer, BOMA Fellow, CCIM, CPM, LEED-GA, RPA, President & CEO, InspiRE Commercial Real Estate Services** warns against over-rehearsing, which can lead to a robotic delivery. He found a balance that works for him: “I rehearse 2-3 hours for every 1-hour keynote session. I make sure I have ‘sound bites’ for the important information I want to convey – and that the opening and closing are succinct and memorable.”
- Authenticity Over Authority: Confidence isn’t about pretending to have all the answers—it’s about being real. Experts emphasized the power of authenticity: speaking honestly, showing vulnerability when needed and focusing on connection rather than performance. This builds trust and makes a lasting impact. Fischer discusses this point in more detail:



"I am a BIG FAN of Brene Brown and the concept of being vulnerable in all aspects of our personal and professional lives. Her research has genuinely changed my life for the better." Dr. Brene Brown, for those unfamiliar, is a renowned speaker best known for her 2010 TED Talk on vulnerability, which has been viewed 58 million times. Through her discussions, she teaches audiences that vulnerability is a superpower – and that when you shut down vulnerability, you shut down opportunity. As Fischer points out, "audiences connect with speakers who are willing to say, 'I don't know, but I'll find out,' more than someone who pretends to have all the answers."

- Command Presence Through Delivery: Body language, tone and presence play a crucial role in how a message is received. If you attended last year's BOMA International Annual Conference, this likely resonated with you. Dr. Amy Cuddy, a social psychologist, NYT bestselling author, award-winning scholar and lecturer served as the Tuesday Keynote Speaker. She explained how "power posing" can boost confidence, drawing on her extensive research in behavioral science. According to Dr. Cuddy, holding just two simple poses for one minute can help you embody a sense of power and experience its real, actionable effects. Fischer shares advice that aligns with this science: "Make eye contact, speak conversationally, and remember you're there to serve the audience, not just showcase your expertise." Keri Taylor, BOMA Fellow, Building Services Sales Leader, North America, Trane adds, "Remember to smile, as your audience wants you to succeed!"

While preparation is essential for any speaker, there's another key challenge: how can you capture your audience's attention? Your listeners might be property managers, building engineers, or tenants—and each will be asking, "What's in it for me?" Beyond knowing your material, it's crucial to communicate clearly and tailor your message to diverse audiences, especially in an industry where priorities and perspectives can vary. Below, our experts share their tips for presenting with impact:

- Understand the Audience Through Empathy and Active Listening: First, effective communicators begin by learning who they're speaking to—understanding their roles, concerns and motivations. Taylor echoes this: "To connect with diverse audiences in industry settings, understand their makeup and tailor your message to be relevant, authentic and impactful." Christensen and Taylor share some questions to brainstorm while you are preparing your presentation or meeting. They suggest that speakers' draft responses to the following questions:
 - Why is this happening?
 - How is this going to impact me?
 - What's in it for me?

Additionally, Forbes recommends that speakers take time to understand three key aspects of their audience:

- Business context: Has the company gone through recent turnover? Are they in a highly competitive industry?
- Cultural context: What communication styles or body language are appropriate for their region or background? Is a direct or more nuanced approach better?
- Personal context: Consider factors like age, gender, role and experience level. Will this group respond better to a message that addresses a challenge they're facing, or one that highlights a new opportunity or benefit?

Thinking through these factors can help ensure your message lands. As Christensen points out, every audience—whether vendors, owners, or tenants—comes with different priorities. Understanding their goals is a strong first step.

- Adapt Language and Style to Fit the Audience: A key part of the "get to know your audience" step is adjusting both your content and tone. Merrill, for example, uses industry-specific terminology and detailed explanations when speaking to technical stakeholders, but simplifies complex ideas and leans on analogies when addressing non-technical groups. Fischer adds that while simplifying is important, it's equally critical not to over-generalize. "While it's tempting to categorize people, individuals are complex," he says. "Instead of stereotyping, focus on identifying shared values and common ground. This is especially important in a large, diverse organization like BOMA." Merrill also shares a practical part of his prep process: "I find it useful to bounce the content off a trusted peer or colleague who understands the audience I'm going to be speaking with—to gauge how it lands and make tweaks to ensure the message comes across as intended."



- **Structure Messages Clearly and Test for Impact:** Capturing your audience's attention hinges on one thing: your main point. If your point gets lost, so will your audience. That's why having a clear, logical structure matters. For example, Merrill highlighted the Minto Pyramid Principle, which suggests leading with the bottom line upfront—also called the “BLUF”—then supporting it with key points and data. [BetterUp](#) provides some great examples of how this might look in a presentation:
 - **Bottom Line:** Company X will increase revenue by \$100 million over five years by investing \$30 million in marketing to target the 11–26 age demographic, otherwise known as Gen Z. Tailoring marketing efforts for this age group can increase interest and boost total revenue.
 - **Key points:**
 - Market insight: Gen Z is entering adolescence and young adulthood, making their purchasing power and potential for brand loyalty especially high.
 - Strategic action: Company X should invest \$30 million over five years to market through the channels Gen Z typically uses to discover clothing brands.
 - Business impact: Shifting focus to Gen Z may require changes in inventory and advertising, potentially resulting in a 2% loss of millennial and Gen X customers.
 - **Data:** To support this recommendation, Company X should present relevant market research, customer profiles, sales projections and year-over-year financial data. This evidence helps clarify how the conclusion was reached and gives stakeholders the confidence to act on the proposal.

Merrill shares how the Minto Pyramid Principle has proved effective for him: “With technical audiences, it’s really important to ensure that your presentation or argument is clearly structured and supported by relevant details and evidence. Technical audiences may expect detailed explanations and industry-specific terminology, while non-technical stakeholders benefit from simplified concepts, analogies or visual aids.”

Visual aids can help a message resonate and stick. [Research](#) finds that approximately 65% of people are visual learners, and that most learning happens through what we see. When communicating your main point, Fischer stresses the importance of avoiding jargon and being mindful of different communication styles. He advises speakers to stay adaptable and respectful. Merrill echoes, this adding: “Respecting different communication styles—whether direct or collaborative—is also key to making sure the message lands effectively.”

PART 2: Leadership Lessons in Action: How Industry Experts Navigate Change, Align Stakeholders and Guide With Purpose


Now that our speakers have shared foundational preparation strategies, they turn to the timeless leadership lessons they’ve learned throughout their dynamic careers.

- **Leading With Integrity:** We’ve talked at length about authenticity, which is undoubtedly a valuable quality—especially when introducing yourself to a new audience. However, integrity is foundational to effective leadership. One source offers a helpful distinction between the two. While authenticity is the act of being genuine and true to yourself, integrity is about having strong moral principles and adhering to them consistently—even when faced with challenges. Christensen emphasizes the importance of integrity: “Values matter if you want to lead. You need to be honest with strong moral principles that people can rely on.” Fischer adds: “Integrity is non-negotiable. Your word is your bond. Always be honest, transparent, and ethical, even when it’s difficult. This builds trust and fosters a culture of accountability.”

- **Learn and Adapt Continuously:** Part of being a leader is pushing your ego aside, as several of our experts emphasized. Christensen noted the importance of surrounding yourself with people who are smarter than you. A key part of that mindset is actively seeking suggestions and feedback. By doing so, leaders can learn from their mistakes and move forward. Christensen offered practical questions to invite feedback, such as: “What did I do well?” and “What could I improve?” Asking for help is a vital part of adapting and growing as a leader. According to [Gallup](#), managers who provide frequent and continuous feedback are 3.2 times more likely to have employees who strongly agree they are motivated to do outstanding work, and 2.7 times more likely to have employees who are engaged. Continuous learning also plays a critical role in leadership development. As Taylor puts it, leaders need to “get comfortable being uncomfortable.” This might mean pursuing additional training, taking a course or asking a trusted colleague to serve as a mentor—all steps that push leaders beyond their comfort zone and support growth.
- **Empower Others and Play the Long Game:** The phrase “progress, not perfection” is a common phrase — a reminder that lasting success is built on steady, consistent effort. It’s not just about reaching goals quickly, but about showing up, doing the work and allowing growth to unfold over time. Fischer breaks this down further: “A timeless lesson, and perhaps a contrarian one in a results-driven industry, is the importance of patience and long-term vision. Actual progress takes time, and leaders need to be willing to invest in relationships and development, even if the payoff isn’t immediate.” Fischer says that playing the long game can be particularly helpful when thinking about BOMA International as a whole. He expands: “BOMA committees, task forces/forums, the executive committee, officers, etc., are short-term (1-2 year) leadership positions. Most of our strategic projects run longer than any one person’s term of office, so consensus building is particularly important.”

When reflecting on the specific tactics that these leaders have implemented to drive progress within BOMA International or the broader commercial real estate industry, they share their insights:

- **Resilience in Crisis: Christensen on Guiding Through Uncertainty**
 - “I’ve had many opportunities to lead through challenges or change, but one that stands out is how BOMA responded during the pandemic. I was Chair of BOMA International at the time. When the world first shut down, I couldn’t believe it—never in my lifetime had I seen anything like it. Like everyone else, I had questions: What does this mean? How long will it last? What should I be doing? Very quickly, the BOMA community came together. With support from Henry, BOMA staff, the Officers and the Executive Committee, we tackled COVID-19 challenges in impressive ways—ramping up advocacy, creating guidance documents, offering virtual training and education and launching a COVID resource center on the BOMA website. The site was full of updates from the CDC, BOMA vendor partners and members. The work we did during that time was extraordinary. It reinforced for me the unique leadership and value BOMA provides to owners, managers and partners. When we work together, we can accomplish so much.”
- **Bridging the Divide: Fischer on Finding Common Ground**
 - “Over my career, I have facilitated strategic planning sessions for several CRE clients and BOMA local associations. It is relatively common that factions within the organization have differing views on the path forward. In cases where there is dissent (or, more commonly, a lack of a shared vision for the future), my approach is to facilitate inclusive dialogue, ensuring that every voice is heard and respected. Instead of dictating a solution, I focus on identifying shared goals and values. When there is dissent, seeking out and dissecting dissenting opinions is essential. By understanding the root causes of the disagreements, we can then craft a unified strategy that addresses the needs of all stakeholders.”



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Effective leadership is not just about giving directions but also about understanding the needs and concerns of your team and clients

- **Listening to Lead: Merrill on Empathy and Adaptability**

- “One of the most valuable lessons I've learned is the importance of listening. Effective leadership is not just about giving directions but also about understanding the needs and concerns of your team and clients. This lesson has shaped my approach to management by making me more empathetic and responsive. Another lesson is the value of continuous learning. The HVAC and building management industry is constantly evolving, and staying updated with the latest technologies and best practices is crucial. This mindset has led me to foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement within my team. [BK1] Bringing together both active listening and a culture of continuous improvement, I've found that being open to changing my point of view when presented with more compelling information is a key enabler of effective leadership. The industry continues to evolve rapidly, so effective leaders need to be adaptive in their approaches to stay relevant.”

- **Leading With Purpose: Taylor on Community Impact**

- “During my second term on the BOMA International Executive Committee, I helped establish the Community Service Committee to give back to local communities where BOMA International conferences are held and highlight the philanthropic efforts of BOMA locals. As Chair, I leveraged my extensive BOMA network to unite principal and allied members around our mission, set ambitious fundraising goals, and created engaging challenges. These efforts culminated at our International Conference in Kansas City, where we achieved the largest-ever donation to a local charitable cause by BOMA International members, exceeding our goals and resulting in the donation of a fully furnished tiny home for a veteran.”

PART 3: Fostering Emotional Intelligence: *How to Build Resilient Teams and Manage Effectively Through Uncertainty*

Our commercial real estate experts share impactful lessons that highlight the qualities of togetherness, unity, empathy, and community-mindedness essential to successful leadership. Among the traits that propel individuals to the next level in their careers, a common thread woven throughout their stories and advice is the importance of fostering emotional intelligence. Bringing this full circle, emotional intelligence is a skill that can be developed and practiced, and research shows it drives positive outcomes—not only in achieving results but also in shaping how others perceive you as a team-builder. Before diving into the detailed insights from our subject-matter experts on building emotional intelligence, let's first define what it means.

First, what is emotional intelligence? Emotional intelligence is the ability to navigate one's feelings and understand others' emotions. First coined by Daniel Goleman, American Psychologist, NYT Bestselling Author and Science Journalist, he introduced it in his 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence*, which revolutionized how we think about intelligence. [Harvard Business School](#) identifies four core competencies that define emotional intelligence:

1. Self-awareness: According to Harvard Business School, self-awareness involves understanding one's own strengths, weaknesses and emotional impact on others. Despite its importance, research by organizational psychologist Tasha Eurich reveals that while most people believe they're self-aware, only 10 to 15 percent truly are. This disconnect can significantly affect team dynamics and performance.
 - a. Self-awareness often means recognizing when you're trying to control outcomes too tightly and choosing instead to lead with trust and humility. As Merrill shared: "I was leading a group of leaders through a high-stakes strategy process, and the team was frustrated by how long it was taking. I wanted to show confidence and guide every step—but I realized I needed to listen more and let our functional leaders take ownership. We created a new framework where they led key parts of the strategy, while I stayed focused on the big picture. It improved our speed, alignment and engagement across the team."
2. Social awareness: Social awareness is a person's ability to consider the perspectives of other individuals, groups or communities and apply that understanding in their interactions, as described by the HR Exchange Network. A key component of social awareness is empathy, which research has shown to be an essential leadership skill. According to the Center for Creative Leadership, managers who demonstrate empathy toward their direct reports are rated as higher-performing by their own supervisors. Empathetic leadership also enhances interpersonal relationships, leading to more effective communication and positive outcomes in both professional and personal settings.
 - a. Social awareness often shows up in subtle but powerful ways—like anticipating how your team will interpret silence. As Christensen recounted: "You can never communicate too much during times of transition. When leaders go quiet, people fill in the gaps—and usually imagine something worse than the truth. During Liberty's acquisition by Prologis, I had to stay silent for weeks. Some team members sensed something was happening, but they also trusted that if I wasn't saying anything, I couldn't. That trust only exists when you've built a pattern of transparency. Whenever possible, I explain the 'why'—why something matters, the bigger picture and how people contribute. When leaders connect the dots, teams are better equipped to navigate change."
3. Relationship management: Relationship management is the ability to influence, coach, mentor others and resolve conflict effectively, skills outlined by Harvard Business School (HBS). While some leaders prefer to avoid difficult conversations, research shows that unresolved conflict can have a significant cost. According to HBS, every unaddressed workplace conflict wastes approximately eight hours of company time through gossip and other unproductive behaviors, undermining both morale and resources. Addressing conflict directly and respectfully is essential for maintaining team cohesion. In a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, 72 percent of employees identified "respectful treatment of all employees at all levels" as the most important factor in job satisfaction.
 - a. Relationship management also involves intentionally building trust and empathy within teams. As Taylor explains: "To foster emotional intelligence within leadership teams, especially during times of transition or challenge, I encourage team members to connect on a personal level by getting to know each other's hobbies, interests, and unique skills. This personal connection helps build a foundation of mutual understanding and appreciation, allowing team members to respond to each other with empathy and insight during stressful times. Embracing change becomes easier when the team is united by strong, human connections."
4. Self-management: Self-management is the ability to regulate your emotions, behaviors and actions effectively to achieve personal and professional goals, according to BetterUp. In other words, self-management empowers employees to understand their individual goals and responsibilities, what it takes to achieve them and when it's time to seek additional help or input.
 - a. Resilience is one of the most important outcomes of effective self-management. Merrill described how he helps his team navigate challenges: "Cultivating resilience and adaptive decision-making skills within my team involves creating an environment where learning from failure is encouraged. I lay the foundation with a clear strategy and operating process that provides the 'North Star' to guide decisions. I emphasize viewing setbacks as opportunities for growth and innovation. Regular training sessions on industry trends and technologies help the team stay adaptable. I also encourage open communication and collaboration, allowing team members to share insights and solutions. This collective problem-solving approach builds resilience and enhances the team's ability to adapt swiftly."

Our four experts shared invaluable advice for leaders in the commercial real estate industry on how to effectively lead through high-stakes meetings, presentations and challenges. They described foundational preparation techniques essential to boosting confidence, alongside leadership lessons that have helped shape their dynamic careers. Finally, they highlighted a core tenet that distinguishes a good leader from a great one: emotional intelligence. It goes beyond simply being “nice” to your teams—it involves embodying the four competencies defined by Harvard Business School: being self-aware and socially aware, while effectively managing both your relationships and yourself. When these four attributes are developed and practiced, they do more than earn the respect of colleagues; they drive positive results and improve job performance. To learn more about these topics, register for our 2025 BOMA International Annual Conference, taking place June 28 – July 1 in Boston, MA. Three of our speakers will describe these leadership skills in more detail during the sessions “Own the Room” and “Trailblazing Leadership.”

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