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## Management Company Interviews: Promoting Fluorescent Lamp Recycling in the Commercial Sector

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### Background

Brief phone interviews were conducted with commercial property managers in order to better understand how these professionals obtain information about issues pertinent to their business. All interviewees were located in the Massachusetts. The property managers represented firms of widely varying sizes. The smallest firms manage a single commercial building. The largest firms are international in scope and have over 100 million square feet of commercial space under management.

Responses to the interview questions did vary somewhat depending on the size of the firm. For that reason, the research results are presented below as a function of company size. Responses also varied depending on whether the property managed was office or retail space. These differences are noted as well.

Because of the small numbers of firms interviewed, the brevity of the interviews and the fact that potential respondents were not always chosen randomly, the conclusions drawn here should not be regarded as definitive.

### Very Small Firms (35,000-400,000 sq. ft.)

Representatives of four firms in this size category were interviewed. Their names are not provided to protect their confidentiality. They were chosen at random from two sources: the Greater Boston Area Yellow Pages and a list of Massachusetts property management firms developed using Boston Public Library resources.

Contact:	Property Manager A	Property Manager B	Property Manager C	Property Manager D
Company:	Abraham Properties, Inc. Boston, MA	Advantage Property Management Newton, MA	ARK Management Company Stoneham, MA	Hampshire Property Management
Commercial Space Under Management:	38,000 sq. ft. (one building)	150,000 sq. ft.	42,000 sq. ft.	400,000 sq. ft.
Type of Space:	Office and retail	Office and retail	Office and retail	Office and retail

### ***Replacement of Spent Light Bulbs***

Building superintendents, or maintenance or cleaning staff replace spent bulbs for management companies of this size. The maintenance staff may be contractual. Major relamping, if it is done, is generally accomplished using the same personnel. The exception to this rule was Hampshire Property Management, which would be more likely to use an electrical contractor for a major relamping project.

Advantage Property Management and ARK Management manage lamps for both their office and retail tenants. Most of Hampshire Property Management's tenants are responsible for changing their own lamps. In the case of Abraham Properties, the two retail tenants manage their own lamps.

### ***Communication with tenants who manage their own lamps***

Property Manager A of Abraham Properties indicated that she communicates with her two retail tenants on an as needed basis, through letters and phone calls. Hampshire Property Management communicates with its tenants similarly. If a tenant suggested a change in building operations, Property Manager A reported that the cost and the degree of disruption to the building tenants would determine if the change were made. Property Manager D mentioned cost and the environmental impact of current practices as the criteria that would determine the response to a tenant request.

### ***Lamp management decision-makers***

When asked who within their firm would make a decision about how lamps are managed, two respondents in this size category indicated that it would be the president or owner of the company. A third said that the decision would involve the company president, the controller and the building property manager. Property Manager D described two possible decision making processes. An individual property manager might take the initiative to research and implement a system for recycling fluorescent lamps in his/her building. On the other hand, if the firm's trash collection vendor took the initiative to propose a lamp recycling program for all of the company's properties, the decision would be made by the company's owners.

### ***Sources of information about laws and regulations***

One respondent in this size category stated that sometimes laws and regulations come to their attention via letters sent to them by state or municipal government. If the management company needed more information regarding a particular law or regulation, they would contact state or municipal officials. On a municipal level, the fire department and building department were mentioned as important information resources.

Two other respondents in this size category both mentioned the Community Association Institute (CAI) as a primary source of information about issues related to their business, including new laws and regulations. CAI provides

“education and resources to America’s 250,000 residential condominium, cooperative, and homeowner associations, and to the professionals and suppliers who serve them.” (source: <http://www.caionline.org/about/index.cfm>). It appears that firms in this size category that manage a small amount of commercial property also manage residential property. Property Manager C of ARK Management Company said, “Condominium board of trustee members read CAI publications, so I have to be sure I’m familiar with the contents, too.” CAI publishes a free monthly online newsletter publicizing the products, services and events provided by CAI. Further, according to the Institute’s website, “CAI’s award-winning magazine, *Common Ground*, and several specialized newsletters provide in-depth analyses of legislative trends as well as practical articles about community association finance, law, and management.” The New England Chapter of CAI encompasses Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Vermont. Its offices are in Wellesley, MA. Complete contact information for the chapter leadership can be found at <http://www.caionline.org/about/chapterdetail.cfm?ChapterCode=NWEG>.

### ***Membership Organizations***

In addition to CAI, the respondents in this size category belong to a variety of other organizations, including BOMA, the Greater Boston Real Estate Board, IREM and local Chambers of Commerce.

### ***Helpful Publications***

In addition to CAI publications, respondents mentioned the local IREM chapter newsletter and *Banker & Tradesman* as being helpful to them in their work. Property Manager B mentioned that the executive director of the CAI New England Chapter, is always looking for articles for chapter publications. Property Manager D specifically mentioned “Condo Media,” published by the New England CAI chapter, as a helpful source of information. Respondents do not use any particular business related websites in their day-to-day work.

### ***Training courses***

One respondent in this size category said that he has taken CAI seminars in the process of working towards CAI’s professional designation.

### ***Conferences/Trade Shows***

One respondent attends CAI’s annual educational conference.

### ***Interacting with Building Owners on Property Management Decisions***

Abraham Properties owns the building it manages. The other respondents collectively mentioned several modes in which they interact with building owners regarding property management decisions. When the property management company signs a contract with an owner, the owner will specify how they want things done. Three of the property managers in this size category all suggest

changes and improvements to their building owners as needed during the year. While much less common, Property Manager D also stated that building owners occasionally suggest operational changes. Property Manager C's experience is that if a change will cost money, it can take months to get approval if it is suggested outside of the annual budget preparation/approval cycle.

***Budget Preparation***

All the respondents confirmed that building budgets are prepared and discussed with the building owner once per year. All of the respondents use the calendar year as their fiscal year, and Property Manager B estimated that this is true of 85% of the industry. Respondents in this size category begin budget preparation as early as August, but more typically in the fall.

***Most Powerful Influences for Change***

Two respondents provided concrete answer regarding the factors most likely to influence them to make a change in the way they manage a building. These factors included tenant satisfaction, cost effectiveness and a better understanding of the environmental impact of current practices. Property Manager D indicated that lamp recycling would be most likely to happen in his buildings if his solid waste vendor proposed a program that could be implemented and carried out with little or no time expenditure on the part of the Hampshire Property Management. An extremely convenient program would be a more powerful incentive than free lamp recycling services, in his opinion.

**Medium Sized Firms (8 million to 9 million sq. ft.)**

Representatives of two firms in this category were interviewed, both as a result of referrals by others. Neither of the individuals interviewed had sufficient time to complete the entire survey. Efforts to recruit other interviewees representing this size category were unsuccessful. The names of the representatives are withheld to protect their confidentiality.

Contact:	Property Manager E	Property Manager F
Title:	Senior Property Manager	President and CEO
Company:	Meredith & Grew	Cummings Properties
Commercial Space Under Management:	8-9 million sq. ft.	8 million sq. ft.
Type of Space:	Office	Office, retail, laboratory, warehouse, physicians' offices

***Replacement of Spent Light Bulbs***

Cummings Properties' in-house construction and maintenance division staff replaces spent lamps in common areas and in vacant suites. Tenants are responsible for replacing spent bulbs in the interior of their suites. The majority of Cummings' tenants have cleaning contractors that handle this task. Meredith

& Grew would use building engineers – some contracted, some in-house – to replace spent bulbs. There was not sufficient time to clarify exactly what was meant by building engineers, but it likely refers to the same type of construction and maintenance division staff that Cummings Properties uses. Property Manager E said that a major relamping project might be carried out in conjunction with the firm that performed the energy audit in a building.

### ***Lamp management decision-makers***

Property Manager E indicated that the property manager would be the sole decision maker on lamp recycling. Property Manager F has 14 property managers working for him. He described a flat decision making structure, in which “whomever had some insight into what needed to be done and was available at the time would be involved in the decision.”

Dennis did provide some insight on waste management arrangements for tenants in his buildings. For mid-rise office buildings, Cummings installs centralized compactors for non-hazardous trash and contracts for trash disposal services. Tenants use the compactor and pay Cummings for this service. In single story buildings, Cummings contracts with a single hauler on behalf of its tenants. The hauler provides dumpsters to the tenants. Each tenant orders the appropriate size container for their business and pays the hauler directly.

Tenants are responsible for handling wastes that cannot be disposed in the regular trash. Dennis indicated that when Cummings is aware of special disposal requirements for wastes, it typically passes this information along to its tenants. If Cummings has information about recycling service providers, it will pass this information along as well. Cummings communicates with its tenants primarily through an electronic newsletter sent out every couple of weeks to those tenants who elect to receive it. About half do.

### ***Sources of information about laws and regulations***

Property Manager F suggested that disseminating information through NAIOP and other professional organizations is the best way to reach property owners and managers

### ***Membership Organizations***

Property Manager F stated that most significant property owners belong to NAIOP. He also mentioned the Greater Boston Real Estate Board as being influential in this area.

### ***Helpful Publications***

Property Manager E mentioned the New England Real Estate Journal, the Boston Business Journal and anything from BOMA as publications most helpful to her. Property Manager F skims “Development,” a newsletter produced by NIAOP, and also skims *Buildings Magazine*, published by Stamats Business Media.

### ***Most Powerful Influences for Change***

Property Manager E mentioned new laws, code compliance requirements and doing the right thing for the environment as major influences.

### **Very Large Firms (44 million – 124 million sq. ft.)**

Boston Properties, Inc., and Equity Office Properties were identified as having potentially willing survey respondents as a result of their past involvement in WasteCap’s Race to Recycle. Brookfield Financial Properties was identified via the list of Massachusetts property management firms developed using Boston Public Library resources. Two of the three interviews with Boston Properties staff were the result of respondents providing referrals to other potential interviewees within the firm who could provide additional perspective on the survey topics. The names of the property managers are withheld to protect their confidentiality.

Contact:	Property Manager G	Property Manager H	Property Manager I	Property Manager J	Property Manager K
Title:	Property Manager	Senior Property Manager	Senior Property Manager For Retail	General Manager	Director of Operations for Boston area
Company	Boston Properties, Inc.	Boston Properties, Inc.	Boston Properties, Inc.	Equity Office Properties	Brookfield Financial Properties
Commercial Space Under Management:	44.1million sq. ft.	44.1million sq. ft.	44.1 million sq. ft.	124 million sq. ft.	46 million sq. ft.
Type of Space:	Office	Office	Prudential Center shopping mall	Office	Office and some retail (in the office buildings)

The responses from Property Manager I, who manages retail space only, were sometimes quite different from those of the other respondents. Where this is the case, her responses are covered in separate sections entitled “Retail Property”.

### ***Replacement of Spent Light Bulbs***

Firms in this size category use in-house janitorial staff or janitorial contractors to replace spent bulbs. Property Manager J of Equity Office Properties used an electrical contractor for a major relamping project. Property Manager K said that the personnel used for relamping varies, but could include electrical contractors.

## Retail Property

According to Property Manager I of Boston Properties, who manages a major shopping mall, Boston Properties manages lamps in the common areas of the mall. Under their lease agreements, retail tenants are responsible for maintaining everything in the interior of their store. Retail chains generally have facilities departments, which replace spent lamps. Other stores have in-store maintenance staffs that take care of this task. However, retail tenants can also hire Boston Properties to replace spent bulbs. The tenant is charged an additional fee for this service. Christine did not know what percentage of retail tenants in the mall use Boston Properties' services for this purpose, but she said that "a lot" do. Property Manager K more or less echoed Property Manager I's comments regarding retail tenants.

Boston Properties carried out a major relamping project in the Prudential Center mall last year. With the exception of lamps that were in the upper reaches of the building, their contractual janitorial staff did the relamping work. To replace lamps that were too high off the ground for the janitorial staff to reach easily, they used the cleaning company that typically cleans their windows and skylights.

### ***Communication with retail tenants***

Boston Properties communicates with all of its retail tenants in the shopping mall through a weekly memo, which updates tenants on special marketing initiatives that are taking place, conventions that are in town, operational issues, holiday schedules, etc. Brookfield Financial Properties communicates with its retail tenants in a variety of ways, including face-to-face meetings, letters and emails.

If a tenant suggests a change in building operations, Property Manager I reported that the potential for cost savings and increased operational efficiency would determine if the change were made.

### ***Lamp management decision-makers***

Property Manager J of Equity Properties said that if a service were to be used in all of the company's buildings, that a regional or national procurement team would be involved. While Property Manager I and Property Manager G indicated that the property manager would be the sole decision maker, Property Manager H suggested that both a general manager and a property manager would be involved in the decision. They would work with a certified waste hauler to implement the decision. (It is likely that the term "certified waste hauler" refers to a certified hazardous waste hauler, but this point was not explicitly clarified with Andrew.) The cleaning contractor would ultimately control what gets separated and what doesn't. Property Manager G alluded to the importance of her waste hauler in the process. Her current waste management company handles everything except lamps and ballasts. She is considering switching to a hauler who can handle everything. (It was not clear if the reference here is to a hazardous waste hauler or a solid waste hauler.) Property Manager K said that he, as Director of Operations, would be the one who would decide if fluorescent

lamps were recycled or not in Brookfield Financial Properties buildings. The property managers who report to him would be involved in carrying out his decision.

### ***Sources of information about laws and regulations***

Property Managers H, J and K all mentioned BOMA as their primary source of information. One described BOMA as the most visible property management-related organization and the best vehicle for disseminating information. BOMA (Boston chapter) was also Property Manager K's first choice for getting information to property managers and building owners.

Property Manager G referred to a number of sources, indicating that the laws and regulations that came to her attention typically dealt with health and safety issues. Code books, and internal and external training were typical means by which such laws and regulations would come to her attention. She mentioned that they do use engineering and environmental consultants, but it is not clear whether these individuals bring new laws and regulations to her attention or simply help her comply with them. Property Manager K clearly stated that while consultants might be called in to help with implementation, they would not generally not be the ones who would bring new laws or regulations to his attention.

Property Manager I said that Boston Properties does not have a compliance officer. She indicated that information about laws and regulations could come from her waste removal vendor, or directly from municipal or state governments. She stated that Boston Properties does use consultants. They might engage a consultant to advise them on indoor air quality issues, for example, and in this context, the consultant might advise them on policy, laws or regulations. It was not her impression that lawyers at Boston Properties played a primary role in bringing new laws or regulations to her attention. Instead, they provide counsel in specific instances where legal advice is needed.

### ***Membership Organizations***

Property Manager J and Property Manager G mentioned both BOMA and NAIOP. Property Manager H mentioned only BOMA. Property Manager I mentioned BOMA and New England Women in Real Estate (NEWIRE). Property Manager K belongs to BOMA. However, he also suggested IFMA as a resource for reaching facilities managers within large companies (for example, Guillette Co. or Putnam Funds would have facilities departments that would care for the firm's properties.) He also mentioned IREM, with the caveat that in areas with a BOMA chapter, IREM tends to pick up a higher proportion of residential property managers.

### **Retail Property**

Property Manager I belongs to the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) and the International Retail Federation (IRF), organizations specific to

retail property management.

### ***Helpful Publications***

Three respondents mentioned the Boston Business Journal. Property Manager I also mentioned a daily email service provided by the Boston Business Journal, which provides updates on issues and events of potential interest. Christine stated that she receives daily email updates from several sources, and tends to read them, since they are “right in my face when I turn on my computer in the morning.” Building Operation Management, Building Management Magazine, the Journal of Property Management, the New England Business Journal, Banker & Tradesman, the Wall Street Journal and BOMA newsletters were also mentioned (although it was not clear whether it was the national BOMA or chapter newsletter). Property Manager J stated that the BOMA newsletter stands out from other publications in terms of its usefulness. “The others are limited,” he said. “I skim them.” Property Manager K mentioned that BOMA Boston will sometimes send out an email to the entire membership.

Respondents do not use any particular property management-related websites in their day-to-day work. Property Manager G mentioned that she simply does a web search if she needs information on a particular topic.

### **Retail Property**

The ICSC publishes “Shopping Centers Today,” and Property Manager I referred to this publication as the most helpful one she receives. She also mentioned “Chain Store Age.” Both the ICSC and the IRF send out daily emails.

### ***Training courses***

Property Manager J of Equity Properties and two of the respondents from Boston Properties mentioned that they receive internal training. Property Manager I described monthly seminars delivered by Boston Properties’ Director of Engineering. “Understanding Your HVAC System,” and “Understanding Your Electric Bill,” are among the offerings that she recalled. Property Manager I turns to external training on topics like marketing and leasing. BOMA and IREM were mentioned as sources of external training opportunities. One respondent has taken BOMA courses on remediation and office operations, as well as courses for the RPA designation.

### ***Conferences/Trade Shows***

Conferences and tradeshow are not commonly attended by the respondents, although Property Manager I attends the ISCS and NEWIRE educational conferences. These conferences do not tend to have an operational focus.

### ***Interacting with Building Owners on Property Management Decisions***

All three firms in this size category own the buildings managed by the property managers interviewed. Therefore, they were not able to provide helpful information on interactions between themselves and the building owners on property management decisions.

### ***Budget Preparation***

Building budgets are prepared once per year on a calendar year. Operational budget planning begins in July or August for firms in this size category.

### ***Most Powerful Influences for Change***

There was insufficient time to pose this question to the managers from Boston Properties, but Property Manager J cited corporate policy, code issues, laws, and tenant demand as major influences.

## **Summary**

### ***Very Small Firms***

For very small firms, CAI emerged as a primary source of information about property management issues, including new laws and regulations. Indications are that letters sent by state or municipal government can also be important sources of information. The most important decision maker regarding lamp recycling is the property management company owner. Building superintendents or maintenance or cleaning staff replace spent bulbs and generally do major relamping for management companies of this size. The maintenance staff may be contractual.

### ***Medium-Sized and Very Large Firms***

For medium sized and very large firms, BOMA was mentioned by three of the seven managers interviewed as their primary source of information about property management issues. Further, three of the seven managers said that BOMA was among the best vehicles for disseminating information on a property management issue. All five representatives of the very large firms belong to BOMA. Three of the seven interviewees also belong to NAIOP. One respondent singled out NAIOP as the best way to reach property owners and managers.

Internal training takes place at both Boston Properties and Equity Office Properties. Instigating company-wide internal training on fluorescent lamp recycling at very large firms may be an efficient promotional method. Waste removal vendors and municipal and state governments were also mentioned as sources of information about laws and regulations. Consultants may also provide guidance on laws and regulations in the course of advising a firm on a particular issue. Daily email updates published by trade journals or organizations may be more likely to get read than print publications. The Boston Business Journal

stands out in that it was mentioned by four respondents. BOMA newsletters were mentioned more than once, and singled out by one respondent for their usefulness. Retail property managers have their own set of organizations and publications.

While it is unlikely that this pattern is unique to medium sized firms, both representatives of firms in this size category indicated that they use construction and building maintenance-type personnel to replace spent bulbs, as opposed to janitorial staff. The interviews suggest that at very large firms, janitorial staff and contractors replace spent bulbs. Electrical or janitorial contractors or ESCOs are used for major relamping projects. Retail tenants are responsible for in-store lamp replacement, but in fact, some hire the property management company to carry out this task for them. Responses indicate that a decision to recycle lamps would be more likely to be made at the general manager/property manager level at the very large firms. If a service is to be used in all the company's buildings, regional or national procurement teams might be involved in implementing the decision. Waste haulers were mentioned as players in the process of implementing such a decision, and the execution of a lamp recycling program may well depend on the janitorial contractor, who ultimately controls what gets sorted and what does not.

### ***All Firms***

None of the company representatives interviewed use property management websites in their day-to-day work. Attendance at trade shows and conferences appears to be less common than would be expected. Budgets are generally prepared on a calendar year basis, with budget preparation beginning in the mid to late summer for large firms and late summer to fall for small firms.

Survey responses indicate that there are mechanisms in place to communicate information about lamp recycling to tenants who are responsible for lamp management. While there was some indication of a willingness to pass lamp recycling information on to tenants, the interviews did not assess how widespread this willingness might be.

Cost considerations (potential savings and expenditures) were most commonly mentioned as a powerful influence on building management practices. Laws, code compliance requirements and corporate policy were also mentioned by several respondents, as were tenant satisfaction and environmental concern.

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