APG COMPANIES

Career Field Guide

What Does It Take To Succeed in Commercial Real Estate?

A candid guide for inquiring minds considering a career on one of the world's most challenging, consequential and rewarding industries.

THE SHORT ANSWER Success requires patience, disciplined activity, financial fluency, resilient character and a genuine desire to create value for clients, investors, occupants, and communities. There is no shortcut—but there is a path.

Prepared by APG Companies

Putting God's gifts to work, APG Companies build people and places for better lives.

A Career Worth Building

Commercial real estate is not easy money. It is a long-game profession in which knowledge compounds, relationships mature, reputations travel, and judgment is earned through thousands of decisions. The early years may pay less than other fields because you are investing in a specialized education—learning a language, a market, a financial discipline, and a way of serving people through property.

The industry moves in cycles. Interest rates change. Capital becomes plentiful and then scarce. Tenants expand and contract. Projects stall, deals die, and buildings surprise you. The professional who lasts learns to remain steady through peaks and valleys, tell the truth when it is costly, and keep creating value when conditions are difficult.

REALITY CHECK A commercial real estate career is rarely a straight line. Expect delayed gratification, uneven income in some roles, long sales cycles, rejection, and constant learning. If that excites you more than it frightens you, keep reading.

WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE THIS INDUSTRY

- **Tangible impact**: you can see a building improve, a company grow, a neighborhood change, or land become a place where people live and work.
- **Endless variety**: every property, client, capital structure, problem, and negotiation is different.
- **High ceiling**: strong performers may achieve exceptional income, ownership, and investment opportunities—but only after creating exceptional value.
- **Intellectual range**: the work blends finance, sales, law, construction, design, economics, psychology, and public policy.
- **Meaningful relationships**: success is built with clients, teammates, lenders, attorneys, designers, contractors, public officials, and community stakeholders.
- **Stewardship and generosity**: a successful career can become a platform for responsible ownership, community benefit, mentoring, and philanthropy.

WHAT SUCCESS IS—AND IS NOT

Success is not merely closing transactions or earning commissions. Durable success produces a fair return for the client, a sound outcome for the property, healthy relationships among service providers, and a constructive impact on the surrounding community. Money matters; character determines whether success lasts.

The Commercial Real Estate Ecosystem

Commercial real estate is a team sport. A single assignment may require market knowledge, financial modeling, legal agreements, physical due diligence, design, construction, financing, government approvals, leasing, operations, and eventual disposition. No one masters all of it alone.

PARTICIPANT	PRIMARY CONTRIBUTION
Owners & Investors	Allocate capital, set objectives, bear risk, and make major decisions.
Occupiers & Tenants	Use space to operate organizations; evaluate location, economics, image, and functionality.
Advisors & Brokers	Discover needs, interpret markets, source opportunities, negotiate, and coordinate decisions.
Asset & Property Managers	Execute the owner's business plan and oversee income, expenses, tenants, vendors, and reporting.
Developers	Convert an idea and a site into an approved, financed, constructed, and operating property.
Lenders & Capital Partners	Assess risk and provide debt or equity capital.
Attorneys & Accountants	Structure, document, protect, measure, and report transactions and ownership.
Architects & Engineers	Translate objectives into safe, functional, compliant, and buildable designs.
Contractors & Project Managers	Turn plans into completed work while controlling scope, schedule, cost, and quality.
Public Agencies & Communities	Shape land use, infrastructure, entitlements, taxation, and public impact.

THE ADVISOR'S SPECIAL ROLE **The best advisors become connective tissue: they identify the real need, bring the right people together, translate across disciplines, maintain momentum, and help the client make a sound decision—not merely complete a transaction.**

Where Can You Enter the Industry

BROKERAGE & TRANSACTION ADVISORY

Represent owners, investors, buyers, and occupiers in leases, acquisitions, dispositions, site selection, and strategic assignments. Entry roles include research, marketing, analyst, transaction coordinator, and junior advisor. Compensation often progresses from salary or draw toward performance-based commissions.

PROPERTY & FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Operate buildings, serve tenants, supervise vendors, manage budgets, coordinate repairs, and report to ownership. Administrative, tenant-services, accounting, and maintenance roles can become excellent launching points.

ASSET MANAGEMENT

Think and act for the owner: build business plans, evaluate leasing and capital projects, monitor performance, oversee managers, and recommend hold/sell/refinance decisions. Financial analysis and judgment are central.

CONSTRUCTION & PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Manage tenant improvements, renovations, capital replacements, and ground-up projects. Learn scope, contracts, pricing, schedule, safety, quality, and how buildings actually work.

DEVELOPMENT & LAND

Combine site control, entitlements, design, capital, construction, leasing, and public process. Development offers enormous learning and impact—but exposes every weakness in an incomplete plan.

CAPITAL MARKETS, LENDING & BANKING

Underwrite repayment, collateral, sponsorship, cash flow, structure, and risk. This path gives a broad view of transactions and teaches the discipline of saying both "yes" and "not yet."

ACCOUNTING, VALUATION & ANALYTICS

Turn operating information into decisions. Roles include property accounting, financial planning, appraisal, underwriting, portfolio analysis, and investment reporting.

ARCHITECTURE, ENGINEERING & PLANNING

Design and test the physical and regulatory feasibility of places. These disciplines often lead naturally into project management, development, consulting, or specialized advisory work.

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE LAW

Draft and negotiate leases, purchase agreements, loan documents, joint ventures, title matters, and development agreements. Legal training can become a powerful base for advisory or principal work.

PROPTECH, DATA & MARKETING

Use research, mapping, CRM, automation, digital campaigns, content, and data visualization to improve decisions and client service. Technology amplifies sound judgment; it does not replace it.

Choose a Lane—Then Learn the Whole Road

Early specialization helps you become useful. Broad commercial understanding helps you become valuable. Begin with one role, market, property type, or client problem; then deliberately learn how the adjacent disciplines affect your work.

IF YOU NATURALLY ENJOY...	CONSIDER STARTING IN	BUILD THESE MUSCLES FIRST
Persuasion, pursuit, relationships	Brokerage / business development	Prospecting, writing, listening, market knowledge
Numbers, patterns, risk	Analysis / capital markets / valuation	Excel, accounting, underwriting, presentation
Service, organization, operations	Property / facilities management	Budgeting, tenant care, vendors, follow-through
Buildings, schedules, problem solving	Construction / project management	Plans, contracts, estimating, documentation
Vision, complexity, calculated risk	Development / asset management	Entitlements, capital stacks, scenario thinking
Precision, structure, advocacy	Law / accounting / engineering	Technical mastery, communication, commercial context
Storytelling, design, digital tools	Marketing / research / PropTech	Research, CRM, campaigns, visual communication

PROPERTY TYPES YOU MAY ENCOUNTER

Office • Industrial and distribution • Flex and R&D • Retail • Medical • Multifamily • Hospitality • Self-storage • Educational and institutional • Government • Mixed-use • Land • Specialized and adaptive-reuse properties

DO NOT CONFUSE A TITLE WITH A CAREER

Titles vary by firm. "Broker," "advisor," "consultant," "associate," "analyst," and "manager" can mean very different things. Ask what the person actually does each week, how success is measured, what training is provided, and how compensation changes over time.

The APG Success Profile

No candidate will arrive fully formed. We look for evidence of capacity, character, and trajectory: what you can learn, how you behave, and whether you consistently improve.

QUALITY	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE
Vocation	You see work as a calling to put your gifts to productive use—not merely as a platform for status.
Collaboration	You share information, seek expertise, give credit, and make the team stronger.
Transformation	You are energized by improving people, properties, processes, and communities.
Stewardship	You treat time, money, relationships, property, and opportunity as trusts—not entitlements.
Generosity	You help others succeed and understand that abundance is multiplied through service.
Integrity	Your word can be trusted; you surface bad news early and distinguish facts from hopes.
Curiosity	You ask better questions, study the market, and want to understand how every piece fits.
Resilience	You recover from lost assignments and failed deals without losing discipline or optimism.
Initiative	You do not wait to be managed into usefulness. You see work, clarify priorities, and move.
Coachability	You welcome correction, apply it, and do not repeatedly make the same avoidable mistake.

FOUNDATIONAL CAPABILITIES

- Clear oral and written communication
- Attention to detail and reliable memory systems
- Relationship building and networking
- Love for land, buildings, businesses, and the people who use them
- Arithmetic, accounting, and financial fluency
- Negotiation and constructive conflict management
- Technology, data, CRM, and research competence
- A service instinct: the desire to understand and solve another person's problem

The Technical Foundation

Commercial real estate rewards people who can connect physical reality to financial consequences. You do not need to know everything on day one, but you must become fluent enough to ask intelligent questions and recognize risk.

FINANCE & ACCOUNTING

Rent rolls; operating statements; NOI; cap rates; cash-on-cash return; IRR; debt service; DSCR; leverage; basis; sensitivity analysis.

MARKET ANALYSIS

Supply and demand; absorption; vacancy; comparable leases and sales; tenant migration; demographics; competitive positioning.

TRANSACTIONS

Agency; prospecting; discovery; proposals; letters of intent; due diligence; leases; purchase agreements; closing and post-closing obligations.

BUILDINGS & CONSTRUCTION

Plans and specifications; building systems; condition assessments; tenant improvements; capital budgeting; schedule; change orders.

LAND & DEVELOPMENT

Zoning; entitlements; utilities; access; environmental matters; civil design; yield; infrastructure; phasing; public approvals.

OWNERSHIP & OPERATIONS

Budgets; recoveries; tenant relations; vendor management; capital plans; asset strategy; reporting; hold/sell decisions.

ETHICS & RISK

Confidentiality; conflicts; fair dealing; licensing obligations; documentation; cybersecurity; knowing when to bring in specialists.

A USEFUL HABIT On every assignment, ask five questions: What does the client truly need? What creates value? What could destroy value? Who else must be involved? What facts would change the decision?

LEARN THE LANGUAGE—BUT NEVER HIDE BEHIND JARGON

Technical vocabulary helps professionals communicate efficiently. It becomes dangerous when used to impress rather than clarify. The best advisors can explain a complicated decision in plain language without oversimplifying it.

How to Begin: Your First 90 Days

Your first objective is not to look important. It is to become useful, trustworthy, and steadily more capable.

DAYS 1–30: LEARN THE SYSTEM

- ✓ Master the firm's standards, tools, file structure, CRM, templates, and communication rhythms.
- ✓ Learn the local submarkets, major owners, active projects, key tenants, and recent transactions.
- ✓ Shadow meetings and tours; write down unfamiliar terms and resolve them the same day.
- ✓ Ask your manager what "excellent" looks like in your role and how it will be measured.

DAYS 31–60: PRODUCE RELIABLE WORK

- ✓ Own recurring tasks and complete them accurately before the deadline.
- ✓ Build one repeatable market, prospecting, reporting, or transaction process.
- ✓ Practice property tours, financial analysis, and concise client updates.
- ✓ Request specific feedback: What should I start, stop, and continue?

DAYS 61–90: CREATE VISIBLE VALUE

- ✓ Identify one neglected problem and propose a practical solution.
- ✓ Contribute qualified leads, sharper research, faster reporting, or improved execution.
- ✓ Develop a personal learning plan for the next nine months.
- ✓ Present what you learned, the value you created, and the responsibilities you are ready to assume.

WEEKLY DISCIPLINES THAT COMPOUND

- ✓ Study one property, owner, company, or transaction deeply—not superficially.
- ✓ Initiate purposeful conversations with clients, prospects, teammates, and industry specialists.
- ✓ Maintain accurate notes and follow-up commitments in the CRM.
- ✓ Read market, capital, and construction information; connect it to local properties.
- ✓ Review wins and losses. Ask what actually caused the outcome.
- ✓ Protect time for prospecting and relationship development, even when current work is busy.

The Economics of an Early Career

Compensation depends on the role, market, firm, and stage of development. Salaried positions generally offer more predictability. Commission-based roles offer greater variability and upside, but require a financial runway and a disciplined pipeline. Some training roles combine salary, draw, bonus, or a share of team production.

BEFORE ACCEPTING A ROLE **Understand the compensation formula in writing: salary or draw, commission splits, thresholds, expenses, benefits, lead ownership, payment timing, team allocations, licensing requirements, and what happens to pending transactions if employment ends.**

BUILD A PERSONAL RUNWAY

- Prepare a realistic personal budget and emergency reserve.
- Assume transactions will take longer than expected and some will not close.
- Do not let early lifestyle inflation consume the capital needed to survive a slow market.
- Invest in education, licensing, professional presentation, mobility, and the tools needed to perform.
- Measure leading indicators—calls, meetings, proposals, assignments, and pipeline—not only closed income.

PRODUCTION WITHOUT STEWARDSHIP IS FRAGILE

A large fee does not excuse a poor process. Long careers are built by protecting confidential information, documenting advice, respecting licensing and agency duties, disclosing conflicts, avoiding promises outside your authority, and placing the client's legitimate interests ahead of the temptation to force a transaction.

TECHNOLOGY AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI can accelerate research, drafting, analysis, and workflow. It can also multiply errors, expose confidential information, and produce confident nonsense. Use approved systems, verify material facts, protect client data, disclose limitations when appropriate, and remain personally accountable for every work product bearing your name.

How to Evaluate a Firm—and How We Evaluate You

QUESTIONS AN INQUIRING CANDIDATE SHOULD ASK

1. Who will teach me, and how much access will I have to experienced professionals?
2. What work will I actually perform during the first six months?
3. How does the firm generate opportunities, assign leads, and build teams?
4. What standards govern client service, ethics, data, and documentation?
5. How is performance measured beyond revenue?
6. What have successful people in this role done differently?
7. What happens during a market downturn?
8. Is there a credible path to greater responsibility, production, leadership, or ownership?

WHAT APG WILL WANT TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT YOU

1. Why commercial real estate—and why now?
2. What evidence shows you can persist through delayed results?
3. When have you earned trust through accuracy, discretion, or difficult truth-telling?
4. How have you turned feedback into changed behavior?
5. What have you built, sold, analyzed, managed, repaired, financed, or improved?
6. How do you organize follow-up and prevent details from falling through the cracks?
7. What do you want to learn, and what are you prepared to sacrifice to learn it?
8. How will your gifts strengthen clients, teammates, properties, and communities?

BRING EVIDENCE, NOT ADJECTIVES CHECK **Instead of saying "I am hardworking," describe a demanding goal, your method, the obstacles, the measurable result, and what you learned. Bring a writing sample, analysis, project portfolio, sales results, process improvement, or other proof of how you think and execute—after protecting confidential information. keep reading.**

A Self-Assessment for Inquiring Minds

Score each statement from 1 (rarely true) to 5 (consistently true). The purpose is not to "pass." It is to identify the environment and role in which you can grow—and the disciplines you must strengthen.

NUMBER	STATEMENT	SCORE
1	I can work steadily when the payoff is uncertain or delayed.	_____
2	I initiate conversations and can tolerate rejection without becoming discouraged.	_____
3	I enjoy numbers enough to become financially fluent.	_____
4	I notice details and use systems to remember commitments.	_____
5	I communicate clearly in writing and in person.	_____
6	I am curious about businesses, buildings, land, and markets.	_____
7	I can balance advocacy with honesty and fairness.	_____
8	I welcome coaching and change my behavior when corrected.	_____
9	I collaborate across different personalities and technical disciplines.	_____
10	I manage my time without needing constant supervision.	_____
11	I remain composed when deals, projects, or clients become difficult.	_____
12	I want my work to create value for others—not merely income for me.	_____

REFLECTION: Which three strengths will help you most? Which two gaps could limit you? What evidence supports your scores? What action will you take in the next 30 days?

A Practical Development Plan

FOR STUDENTS AND CAREER CHANGERS

- Interview at least five professionals in different CRE roles.
- Tour properties and learn to describe location, physical condition, tenancy, economics, and risks.
- Complete a foundational real estate finance or Excel course.
- Seek an internship or support role close to live transactions and operating properties.
- Join a credible industry organization and volunteer for real work—not merely attendance.
- Write a one-page analysis of a local property or development and invite critique.

FOR EMERGING PROFESSIONALS

- Choose a market niche where you can become unusually informed.
- Build a written annual business plan with activity, pipeline, learning, and relationship goals.
- Find mentors in both your specialty and adjacent disciplines.
- Track your commitments, conversion ratios, mistakes, and lessons.
- Begin investing carefully when appropriate; ownership deepens understanding, but never outrun your competence or resources.
- Teach what you learn. Clear teaching reveals weak understanding and multiplies value.

A SIMPLE ANNUAL SCORECARD

QUALITY	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE	YOUR ANNUAL TARGET
Knowledge	Courses, books, market studies, credentials	_____
Relationships	Meaningful meetings and new trusted connections	_____
Activity	Calls, tours, analyses, proposals, assignments	_____
Execution	On-time deliverables and error rate	_____
Results	Revenue, savings, occupancy, value creation	_____
Character	Feedback, reliability, service, teamwork	_____
Stewardship	Savings, giving, health, family, community	_____

Why APG Companies?

APG Companies operates at the intersection of property services and investments. That integrated perspective can expose a developing professional to the full life of real estate: finding opportunities, advising decisions, operating properties, executing improvements, structuring capital, developing land and buildings, and stewarding investments over time.

OUR MISSION

Putting God's gifts to work,
APG Companies build people and places for better lives.

OUR CORE VALUES

VOCATION: Work as calling.

COLLABORATION: Better outcomes through shared gifts.

TRANSFORMATION: Improving people and places.

STEWARDSHIP: Faithful care of entrusted resources.

GENEROSITY: Success that overflows for others.

THE INVITATION

We are interested in people who want more than a job title. We want learners who can become trusted advisors, disciplined operators, creative problem-solvers, principled leaders, and wise stewards. You may enter through brokerage, management, marketing, accounting, construction, development, investments, or support. What matters is the trajectory: increasing competence, responsibility, service, and impact.

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT **We pray that you will be led into your God-given vocation—where your unique gifts are developed, tested, and placed in service to your family, your colleagues, your clients, and your community. If commercial real estate is part of that calling, come prepared to learn, work, persist, and build.**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEP: Prepare a one-page "Why CRE / Why APG / Why Me" statement and request a career conversation with an APG professional.

GET IN TOUCH

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