

# REAL ESTATE WEEKLY

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## PROFILE

### Stepping Up

Some of NYC's most influential leaders credit author Tim Dobbins with helping them do the right thing. **Page 8**

## PROFILE OF THE WEEK

Tim Dobbins, executive coach, founder  
Leadership Technologies Inc.

### Industry's decision makers Stepping Up to the plate

BY DANIEL GEIGER

In his recent book, *Stepping Up*, the executive coach and author, Tim Dobbins, outlines a philosophy that has increasingly made him a favorite consultant among a small but influential list of clients in the real estate industry.

The title of Dobbins' book refers to the action it prescribes for those who want not just professional success but also the kind of deeper gratification that comes from finding meaning in their lives.

"You drank your morning coffee on the way to work, had lunch at your desk and stayed late," Dobbins writes at the beginning of his book. "Yet as you close your eyes and try to think back on the day, you may not be able to single out anything you did that mattered. You may ask yourself, 'Is this all there is?' String enough days like this together and soon you're feeling hollow. And string enough seemingly purposeless years together and you're convinced your work, and perhaps your life, is insignificant."

The internal crisis that Dobbins seems to highlight is one of the age-old conundrums inherent in the human condition, just told from the perspective of how it manifests in the life of a modern-day executive. But Dobbins' advice, nonetheless, on how to go about curing the feelings of meaninglessness and insignificance that are endemic to the workaday world, appear both accessible and effective.

"I truly believe that, on some level, we almost always know what the right thing to do is in any situation," Dobbins' writes. "Stepping up is all about doing the true, just and loving thing. It's about choosing to do what's best for the other person, for the company, and yes, for yourself, too. I don't think those are competing goals. You see, by doing what's best for the company, or what's best for your coworkers, you help yourself, too. By stepping up, you will bring meaning to your work and your life."

Dobbins, who is an Episcopalian priest, shows how actions both big and small can constitute stepping up and that such opportunities present themselves many times a day to those who are attuned to them. Whether it's saying hello to the man who makes your coffee in the morning, giving a coworker or employee credit for doing a good job, taking responsibility for a failure, or resisting the urge to

pay back a rival's slight, stepping up is to act within a moral framework that aspires to selflessness and compassion with the understanding that those things, more than qualities, are also potent in the pursuit of success.

"Business is almost always portrayed as a zero-sum game: for one part to win, the other must lose," Dobbins says in *Stepping Up*. "While that may be true for most (but not all) of the interactions between individual companies and organizations, I don't believe it's true of most of the interactions between individuals within companies and organizations. Just because your company's goal is to take market share away from your competitors, that doesn't mean your personal goal needs to be to take responsibilities and power away from your coworkers."

Because stepping up is a way of articulating a concept that can be executed in so many ways and stymied by a myriad of behaviors, Dobbins wisely articulates his ideas through personal stories and those of his clients, which make his nearly 200-page book an easy read. One of Dobbins' stories involves an incident in which he breaks his neck in a freak accident, but despite the pain from his injury, continues to perform his duties as a priest to avoid the depression of ill health.

"I was sorely tempted to crawl into a hole somewhere and hide," he wrote. "I was feeling awfully sorry for myself. It would have been easy to take a leave of absence from my parish work and go off somewhere to wallow in self-pity. But I decided I needed to ask myself how I could step up and stay alive. I delayed the surgery for a week to preside at the wedding of two friends the next weekend. And I had the surgery scheduled for a Monday so I could be back in the pulpit the following Sunday. Sure, I had to cope with a great deal of physical pain, but by staying involved as much as was possible in life and work, I avoided something far worse: emotional and spiritual pain. Staying involved was my way of not only coping, but also avoiding the pitfalls of self-pity."

Gary Green, CEO and founder of Alliance Building Services, which handles security and other services for many Manhattan office buildings, consults with Dobbins and credits his advice with helping him create a better work environment for his employees. "I feel like Tim has led me to become

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— GARY GREEN,  
ALLIANCE BUILDING  
SERVICES

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## RE decision makers step up

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the kind of company executive who works to serve his employees," Green said, noting that Alliance is building a special service desk where employees can go with questions.

Robert Lapidus, a principal at the well-known Manhattan real estate investment firm L&L Acquisitions, works with Dobbins as well and praised him for helping to make the company a place where Lapidus' staff can thrive. "We work on building the company's culture," Lapidus said. "It's so easy for an executive to have

a to-do list and just go through all the tasks and get them done and just be absorbed with that," Dobbins told REW in a recent conversation.

"If you can make your company the kind of place where your workers feel like they can advance, where you facilitate and support their professional development, rather than just talk to them about increasing production or performance all the time, that's when you achieve real success."

*Stepping Up* by Tim Dobbins is published by Harper Collins. ■