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## ACADEMIC PAPERS

# Corporate real estate in Ireland

Academic papers:  
Corporate real estate in Ireland

## A current perspective on corporate strategic decision making

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**Abstract** Corporate activity in Ireland has experienced a significant growth as the economy has benefited from extensive inward investment. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the role of real estate in corporate decision making within Ireland. Corporate real estate issues are initially discussed as the contextual anchoring for a survey of corporate occupiers within both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Findings indicate a high level of professional and practical experience in relation to real estate but this has not been fully exploited by companies in developing a proactive corporate strategy. Real estate plays a largely traditional role within organisations although it appears that differences exist between indigenous and externally parented companies. Comparisons are drawn with other similar surveys at an international level.

### Introduction

Global competition, technological innovation, business knowledge and the restructuring of local economies are some of the reasons compelling corporate organisations world-wide to transform their real estate portfolios in order to maintain competitive positions, increase market share and enhance shareholder value. Corporate real estate (CRE) value is created by aligning property and business strategies, using capital efficiently, minimising time-to-market cycles and reducing the entry and exit cost for business initiatives (Chirgwin, 2000). Changes in corporate real estate strategy may therefore necessitate the downsizing of organisations, the outsourcing of non-core functions and aggressive investment in information technology. Effective corporate real estate support depends on assisting property managers within organisations to make location and facility management decisions aimed at maximising long-term cash flow as well as reducing costs. In this regard property needs to become not only more physically flexible but also more functionally and financially flexible (Gibson, 2000).



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From a research perspective, various authors have considered the principal drivers that impact on corporate real estate strategies. These include more flexible lease terms to match occupier and investor requirements (O’Roarty, 2001); using the design of corporate real estate to accelerate programmes for new technological change (Duffy, 2001; Worthington, 2001); enhancing financial performance and shareholder value (Hiang and Ooi, 2000; Schulte, 2001); focusing on space management and delivery of corporate real estate functions (White, 1998; Glagola, 1999; McDonagh and Hayward, 2000) and adopting a robust approach to the portfolio management of corporate real estate assets (Krumm *et al.*, 1999; Varcoe, 2000). These studies show that the provision of flexible accommodation in terms of tenure and facilities are fundamental in enabling corporate structures to perform in a more dynamic and responsive way.

The most significant innovations in CRE research have been undertaken in the USA whereas in a European context the concept is relatively under-developed. While there has been some progress in corporate restructuring in the UK and Europe, the type of innovative corporate financing approaches seen in the USA have taken much longer to gain support (Laposa and Charlton, 2001). This paper reports on a survey of the major companies operating within Ireland and their corporate real estate management (CREM) objectives. The research builds on the work of Bon and Luck (2000) and Varcoe *et al.* (2000) which reports on annual survey results of North American and European corporate real estate managers concerning CREM policies, functions, activities and skills. The purpose of this paper is to establish the level of attainment concerning CREM strategies and practices within Irish companies. Specifically the research underpinning the paper considers the profile of respondents, CREM practices relating to company property and behavioural responses to corporate real estate within organisations and at a wider strategic level.

### **Corporate real estate: theoretical perspectives**

Fundamental to implementing an effective corporate real estate strategy is knowledge of the landscape of corporate real estate involvement. Lacking such knowledge of how the corporate real estate function is addressed in the business community, both broadly and within the specific segment of concern to a company, there is no capacity to assess the enterprise’s performance. Thus, an enterprise that wishes to benchmark its performance relative to what other companies may be doing is unable to do so. More specifically, the company has no ability to determine whether its corporate real estate function compares favourably or unfavourably to best in class business practices. While numerous articles and research studies (Zeckhauser and Silverman, 1983; Veale, 1989; Nourse, 1990; Nourse, 1992; Joroff *et al.*, 1993; Becker and Joroff, 1995; Roulac, 1995; Manning and Roulac, 1996; Carn *et al.*, 1999) have drawn attention to the economic significance of corporate facilities expenses and balance sheet accounts, investigative research into the relationship of corporate

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real estate to corporate business operations has been comparably less developed (Roulac, 2001).

Given that real estate plays a fundamental connecting role in the value chain (Roulac, 1999a), knowledge of the corporate real estate function is crucial to understanding an economy's value creation processes of delivering goods and services to consumers. Indeed superior corporate property strategy can be a meaningful source of competitive advantage. In this context, research by Roulac (1999b) has identified seven distinct contributions that superior corporate property strategy can make to an enterprise's competitive advantage namely: competitive advantage of core competency, creating and retaining customers, attracting and retaining outstanding people, contributing to effective business processes to optimise productivity, promoting the enterprise's values and culture, stimulating innovation and learning, and enhancing stakeholder wealth. It is argued that knowledge of the corporate real estate profile of leading companies is a crucial information building block for devising a corporate facility location strategy to maximise shareholder wealth (Manning *et al.*, 1999).

Manning and Roulac (2001) have advanced a model for the corporate real estate management research paradigm, consisting of four quadrants, defined by two dimensions: internal/external and business/real estate. In this CRE management research paradigm, the orientation of the four quadrants is:

- (1) business strategy, both corporate and business units – reflecting the external orientation of the business;
- (2) business operations – reflecting the internal orientation of the business;
- (3) real estate strategies, market analysis, and property decisions (concerning acquisitions, leases, dispositions, etc.) – reflecting the external orientation of the real estate markets; and
- (4) corporate real estate support organisations, including internal vs. outsourced, centralised versus decentralised – reflecting the internal orientation to real estate.

The findings of a study by Carn *et al.* (1999), based on a delphi process, identified 39 proposed research issues that were overly concentrated on quadrants two and four – internal issues – and primarily on quadrant four-internal real estate. Likewise the subject of this study addresses both quadrants two and four, internal business and internal real estate perspectives. The external business environment is expressed primarily through the reports of economic parameters and financial performance of Ireland's leading companies (Roulac *et al.*, 2002). The discussion of the crucial real estate factors within Ireland, the essence of quadrant three – external real estate – provides an important context for evaluating the findings of the research. A further perspective is provided by considering the positioning of the research methodology employed in the context of the model advanced by Manning and Roulac (2001). One of the outputs of this comprehensive study of the corporate

real estate sub-discipline was classifying research by its basic approach – inductive or deductive, and its source of data, primary or secondary.

In addition to the better management of the corporate real estate function and support of the enterprise's overall strategic objectives (Nourse and Roulac, 1993), enhanced information about corporate real estate practices has great relevance to the property community generally. By better understanding the patterns and practices of businesses in their corporate property functions, those organisations involved in developing properties, investing in properties, and providing professional services to properties can make more informed strategic decisions and craft the delivery of services that are more responsive to marketplace needs. To date, property professionals in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland have operated more upon implicit impressions than reliable information concerning the practices of space users, whose decisions, after all, create demand for property goods and services as well as for capital to be invested in property. The degree to which such enterprises choose to outsource their design and development of customised facilities through build-to-suit arrangements, property ownership through leasing arrangements, facilities management through third party contracts, have profound direct and multiplier effects upon property enterprises generally and all those who work in and depend upon the economic productivity of the property specifically (Roulac, 1999a).

In taking a comparatively global perspective Gibler *et al.* (2001) identify differing practices towards corporate real estate with seemingly more innovative workplace policies being adopted in the UK, with service providers seen to be leading in areas such as hoteling and desk-sharing, but at the same time, are more sceptical that Internet based information systems will promote better business decisions in relation to real estate. In comparison, in the USA more emphasis has been placed on technological advances, though the need for strategic planning skills and negotiating/deal making are still perceived as essential skills in corporate real estate management.

### **Methodology and profile of respondents**

A database of the top 150 companies within Ireland classified on the basis of number of employees was established for this research. The database, which forms the sampling frame, is essentially a hybrid compiled from several sources as the information required for the research was not available in one single location. The primary source of company information was the Dun and Bradstreet Market Direct Database for the final quarter 1999, supplemented by information from the *Business and Finance* magazine, the *Belfast Telegraph* "Top 100" (2000), Corporate Northern Ireland (2000-2001) and a listing of companies operating in the Republic of Ireland supplied by the Industrial Development Agency for 2000 and 2001. All companies within this target group were invited to participate in the survey, which was carried out by direct interview. In total 27 completed interviews were carried out, the high number of refusals partly reflecting the relatively low priority or disinterest attached by

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many companies in Ireland to the use of their real estate assets, echoing earlier work by Avis (1990) that most organisations in the UK had difficulty in incorporating real estate into their strategic decisions. The strategy employed in this research was to focus upon senior management within the targeted 150 companies as the respondent group to ensure not only the accessing of information at an appropriate level but also its accuracy and currency in relation to property decision making. The questionnaire was modelled on, but with certain modifications following piloting, that used by IDRC to facilitate comparisons with comparable work undertaken in the UK, North America, Australia and elsewhere.

In terms of expertise, almost half the respondents had over ten years' experience (46 per cent) in CRE, 33 per cent between five and ten years' experience and only 21 per cent with less than five years' experience; 39 per cent had a degree and a further 35 per cent had either a Masters qualification or a doctorate. Professional membership was considered important with 83 per cent belonging to a professional organisation. A significant number of the respondents had either global responsibility (27 per cent) or national responsibility (42 per cent) for property and only 31 per cent had local responsibility. The primary activity at the respondent's workplace reflected the variety of organisations within the sample: 28 per cent were classified as primarily head office and administrative functions, 28 per cent light manufacturing, 20 per cent retail, 12 per cent financial and professional business services and 8 per cent heavy manufacturing. Locational differences were also apparent with 39 per cent freestanding facilities, 30 per cent in industrial or office parks and 26 per cent in larger towns.

A limitation of a sample selected on the basis of employment is that some companies are by nature more labour intensive than others reflected in the large range for turnover and varying portfolio composition. In terms of workforce, 54 per cent of the sample had less than 2,000 employees, 18 per cent of the companies employed 2,000-4,000 people, 9 per cent 4,000-6,000 and 18 per cent with over 6,000 employees. Turnover, expressed in millions of pounds sterling per annum, ranged from £5 million to £4,200 million, with 53 per cent of the companies having a turnover of less than £100 million, a further 29 per cent a turnover between £100 million and £500 million and the remaining 19 per cent turnover in excess of £750 million. A significant number of companies operated in pounds sterling (42 per cent) with 23 per cent using Irish pounds and interestingly 15 per cent using dollars and 19 per cent conducting business in euros[1].

Similarly the number of premises reflects the diversity of the companies, 68 per cent had less than 60 premises with 41 per cent having less than five premises, inferring that a significant number of organisations operated from a small number of sites. Only 9 per cent of the sample had over 450 sites. The area used by companies in buildings ranged from 6,500 sq.m. to approximately 500,000 sq.m. with 40 per cent of companies using between 10 and 20,000 sq.m. of space. A high number of companies (34 per cent) have over 80,000 sq.m. of

buildings at their disposal. No company held less than 50 per cent of their property on leasehold terms and 35 per cent had a freehold interest on their entire property portfolio. Most of the interviewees felt that it was important for the company to be able to exercise a certain amount of control over their land holdings so that they could be flexible to the needs of their business at any particular time. Information technology appeared to be well integrated into most businesses with 96 per cent of the sample having Internet connections and 88 per cent of companies having their own Web site. However only 68 per cent of companies considered information technology and telecommunications very important to their business.

A total of 70 per cent of respondents placed the percentage of property in their annual operating costs as less than 10 per cent with 53 per cent of businesses spending less than 5 per cent per annum on property. These statistics are interesting as 70 per cent of companies responded that property represented at least 15 per cent of their book value, though the percentage of book value attributed to property assets varies considerably from 1 per cent to 98 per cent. Land available within the portfolio for disposal, which was considered surplus to present requirements, ranged from 0 to 60 per cent, however 71 per cent of companies had less than 5 per cent of their land available. The long-term planning horizon for property was mainly considered to be between three and five years (67 per cent) with a smaller percentage planning on an annual basis (8 per cent) or on a ten-year horizon (21 per cent).

Most of the companies (65 per cent) had a specific corporate real estate department although there was no standard terminology. The principal corporate real estate officer did not always report to the same person across organisations but in most cases reported at chief executive level. The number of employees in the property departments ranged from two to 70 with 42 per cent of the property departments employing between eight and 20 people. The majority (59 per cent) were organised by function, 85 per cent had a budget for their corporate real estate department and 93 per cent had a cost centre.

### **Practices relating to company property**

#### *Mission and current objectives for property*

A principal finding emerging from the analysis is that just over one quarter of respondent companies (28 per cent) have a mission statement concerning their business strategy for property. Such a low proportion is rather surprising given the strategic importance of property within corporate decision making. While 72 per cent of firms surveyed do not have a formal mission statement, all respondents were able to identify current objectives for property. The most important property objectives include fulfilling the workplace needs of business growth (39 per cent) and meeting the individual needs of business operating divisions (27 per cent). Maximising the investment/capital value of the portfolio (15 per cent) also emerged as a key objective but less strongly.

### *Strategic policies, functions and activities for business property*

Strategic policies, functions and activities for business property were considered in relation to whether a comprehensive range of particular aspects (32 in total) were already in place, a new initiative under trial or partly implemented, not a policy priority and not done at all. For many of these aspects initiatives were clearly already in place or being currently acted upon. For example four areas of business activity scored highly (88 per cent) with the following systems in place: internal e-mail, in-house purchasing, in-house maintenance-management, and an in-house facilities management function. In addition 80 per cent had a procurement policy in place: 80 per cent intranet facilities, 80 per cent Internet interfacing, 68 per cent in-house move planning/management function, 65 per cent in-house construction management function, 62 per cent formal workplace space standards, 62 per cent disaster recovery plans, 62 per cent in-house design management function, 60 per cent separate evaluation of real estate, 58 per cent property-by-property accounting system, and 56 per cent a computer-based property inventory system. Overall these statistics infer a high level of exploitation of ICT on the part of the respondent companies.

However other factors, some of which stem from the consequences of new technology, either are not as well advanced or not perceived to be a priority area for action. These include property related research (92 per cent not a priority/not done) though 50 per cent have a R&D function, property performance measurement (71 per cent not a priority/not done), hot-desking (62 per cent not a priority/not done), benchmarking (58 per cent not a priority/not done), e-commerce (56 per cent not a priority/not done), property services helpdesk (54 per cent not a priority/not done), serviced offices (53 per cent not a priority/not done), internal rents (50 per cent not a priority/not done), hoteling facilities (50 per cent not a priority/not done) and internal groupware system (50 per cent not a priority/not done). These results suggest that whilst systems are in place companies are not fully obtaining the benefits of ICT and have not always moved to higher level functions such as research, benchmarking and performance analysis. In addition companies are not capitalising on the potential for revenue enhancement through innovative corporate real estate activities such as hot-desking, e-commerce, provision of serviced offices and hoteling facilities.

### **Opinion survey**

#### *Role of real estate and its main characteristics*

In seeking to explore perceptions regarding the role of real estate and its main characteristics, a series of contentions were posed with respondents selecting responses from one of five possible nominal groups. There were two levels of support in favour of a contention (agree and strongly agree), two levels of opposition (disagree and strongly disagree) and the neutral position (not sure). In total, 13 contentions all of direct relevance to corporate real estate both within the respondent's organisation and at a wider level were considered.

From the responses it is clear that the primary aim of property is perceived to provide an appropriate working environment for the least overall cost, 77 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this contention (mean 3.89). In many respects this provides a very traditional perspective with property essentially a factor of production rather than an asset used in a more strategic manner. Real estate is clearly perceived by 85 per cent of respondents (mean 4.07) as only part of the working environment that organisations require and there is a low level of recognition (30 per cent) that any organisation occupying space is in the real estate business as well as their core activity (mean 2.93).

The extent to which real estate information is reported to corporate executives is highly variable, with 42 per cent of respondents considering that such information is provided on a regular basis whereas the same percentage take an opposing opinion. The lack of consensus on this issue (mean 3.00 equates with not sure) may reflect different practices by sector or company origin namely those indigenous to Ireland and those of external origin. A similar picture emerges regarding recognition of real estate as a key corporate asset in organisations with 42 per cent of respondents agreeing with the contention (mean 3.11). Likewise 40 per cent are of the opinion that real estate executives are regularly briefed on corporate goals and strategies (mean 3.08) with a higher percentage (50 per cent) considering that these executives have sufficient information to evaluate the performance of real estate (mean 3.23). The percentage figures are consistent suggesting good practice in relation to CREM on the part of some companies but much lower levels of appreciation regarding the role of real estate from a strategic perspective by other companies in the sample.

Real estate as a capital asset for which organisations seek to maximise return is more widely recognised (56 per cent agreement with the contention) but with a substantial percentage either not sure (20 per cent) or in disagreement with the contention (24 per cent), hence a mean score of 3.42. A broadly similar percentage of respondents (58 per cent) agree/strongly agree with the contention that control over the long-term ownership of the real estate portfolio is important to the organisation (mean 3.56). In contrast a significantly higher percentage (81 per cent) agree that provision for capitalisation of liabilities/obligations generated by the property portfolio (mean 3.74) is an important consideration for corporate real estate.

The opportunities for real estate/property executives to take the lead in their organisation in implementing workplace delivery is perceived to be low with only 28 per cent of respondents identifying such opportunities (mean 2.65). This implies that the role of real estate executives is limited in relation to the core business activity of the organisation supporting the argument that real estate is not utilised in a strategic manner. However a somewhat higher percentage (39 per cent) are of the opinion that real estate executives have responsibility for enhancing workplace productivity.



*Perceptions on future knowledge and skills base*

In assessing perceptions on the future knowledge and skills base required for strategic property decision-making, a Likert scaling technique (ranging from 1, least important to 5, most important) was used to assess the relative importance of 27 characteristics. These included core traditional skills central to the real estate function whereas others are set in a wider, but real estate related, context.

First, concerning those functions traditionally associated with real estate, the highest scoring was attached to negotiation and deal making with 52 per cent of respondents giving this function a score of 5 (mean 4.15) compared with 16 per cent for real estate portfolio management, 12 per cent for real estate development and 24 per cent for investment appraisal. In contrast, skills related to international finance and economics (4 per cent scored at 5), taxation management (4 per cent) and performance measurement/benching (4 per cent) highlight the conservative use/perceptions of use of real estate on the part of the companies within the sample.

Second, in spite of earlier comments, most respondents recognise the important role of strategic planning (mean 4.08) with 88 per cent scoring this characteristic at either 4 or 5. A similarly high percentage (80 per cent) recognise project management as a core skills base underpinning decision making (mean 4.12). Less emphasis is placed upon facilities management (67 per cent), security and safety management (64 per cent) and design and construction management (42 per cent) in a strategic context.

Third, the role of ICT (mean 3.80) and e-commerce (mean 3.40) while clearly recognised as being of importance (scored at a 4/5 by 64 per cent and 52 per cent of respondents respectively) does not attract universal acclaim as part of the skills base. Indeed for both of these knowledge-based activities a significant number of respondents appear uncertain about their impact with 28 per cent and 24 per cent opting for a mid-point score. However management information systems (mean 3.77) are perceived to be of greater importance (68 per cent) in strategic real estate decision making, possibly reflecting a more tangible and applied product.

Fourth, the other important influences upon strategic real estate decision-making include a set of rather disparate factors in the loosely defined area of regulation/management/external relations. In particular governmental controls (60 per cent), environmental management (60 per cent), total quality management (52 per cent) and customer relations (58 per cent) are the most important of these influences but less significance is placed upon community relations (44 per cent) and human resource management (40 per cent). Marketing (28 per cent) receives a low importance scoring (mean 2.96).

*The real estate profession and needs of occupiers*

There is a very strong perception that the property sector is geared to support landlord and investor objectives (78 per cent agree/strongly agree) whereas the profession as structured does not provide sufficient support for corporate

business objectives (25 per cent). These perspectives suggest that a fundamental change is still required by most companies operating within Ireland. The survey highlights the need for both more physical flexibility (92 per cent) and financial flexibility (88 per cent) from the properties occupied. Again there are clear messages in relation to the development of CREM practices. While 46 per cent consider that strategic decisions regarding business property are driven by effect upon the balance sheet, 29 per cent take the opposing view that such decisions are based on workplace productivity.

There is general agreement that the strategic management of business property is poorly developed in Ireland (58 per cent agreeing with a further 21 per cent not sure). This perception is entirely consistent with and supportive of the more specific issues considered in this survey. Paralleling this is the perception that there is a lack of appreciation of user requirements (54 per cent agreeing, 25 per cent not sure). This statistic again highlights the need for the wider recognition and adoption of CREM practices by businesses in Ireland.

### **Comparisons at an international level**

In this section the results from the survey of Irish corporate real estate practice are set in the context of some comparative work at the international level by Gibler *et al.* (2001). This comparison suggests that the findings from Ireland do not differ significantly from similar investigations in other countries that Gibler's work draws upon. Indeed there is close correspondence in the relative ranking of a range of factors on the perceived role and characteristics of corporate real estate within the respondents' organisations and the mean scores for these factors. For example there is clear agreement that real estate is only part of the working environment organisations require (mean 4.07 (Ireland), 4.10 (International)) and that the primary aim of real estate in organisations is to provide appropriate working environments for least overall costs (mean 3.89 (Ireland), 4.08 (International)). In general, the mean scores for the Irish survey tend to be lower but of a similar order of magnitude to the international survey reflecting the less well developed nature of CRE activity in Ireland (Table I). It is significant that both surveys attach relatively low scores to the responsibilities of real estate executives.

A similar correspondence of results are apparent on the future knowledge and skills base for strategic property decision making (Table II). In this respect the highest scores in each survey were attached to negotiation and deal making (4.15 and 4.09) and strategic planning (4.08, 4.21). The Irish survey also placed a high score on project management (4.12) which received less emphasis in the international survey (3.73); in contrast the latter scored organisation's business activity (4.11) more highly than the Irish survey (3.69). While certain differences in scoring exist the relative rankings of the factors show close parallels between each survey with marketing, management accounting, taxation management, international finance and foreign languages receiving the lowest relative scores for both cohorts.

Role/characteristic	Ireland mean score	International mean score	Academic papers: Corporate real estate in Ireland
The primary aim of real estate in organisations is to provide appropriate working environments for the least overall cost	3.89	4.08	<b>41</b>
Real estate is only a part of the working environment organisations require	4.07	4.10	
Corporate executives recognise that every organisation that occupies space is in real estate business as well	2.93	2.84	
Real estate information is regularly reported to corporate executives	3.00	3.56	
Real estate is recognised as a key corporate asset in organisations	3.11	3.38	
Real estate executives are regularly briefed about corporate goals and strategies	3.08	3.41	
Real estate executives have sufficient information to evaluate the performance of real estate	3.23	3.17	
Real estate is a capital asset on which organisations seek to maximise the return	3.42	3.46	
Real estate executives generally take the lead in integrating all aspects of workplace delivery	2.65	3.05	
Real estate executives generally have a responsibility for enhancing workforce productivity	2.93	3.28	

**Table I.**  
Scoring of perceived role and characteristics of corporate real estate

## Conclusions

The performance of the Irish economy with growth rates of between 8-10 per cent has been a contributory factor in stimulating inward investment and generating expansion in the corporate sector in Ireland. The Irish economy clearly has a mixture of progressive, indigenous companies that are performing well but with reliance upon externally headquartered companies. However the key findings from this survey infer that property as a core business asset is under-utilised. At the level of an individual company, the specific department dealing with corporate real estate assets is not fully utilised with property still considered to be a cost of business operations rather than an asset. Although mission statements have not been universally developed, key objectives for property nevertheless are recognised notably meeting the needs of workplace business growth, fulfilling individual needs of business operating decisions and maximising the investment/capital value of the portfolio.

There is a high level of exploitation of ICT, but factors stemming as a consequence of new technologies either are not well advanced or not perceived to be a priority area for action. Hence the significance of issues such as property performance measurement, benchmarking and property research, which are at the core of CREM, are not fully appreciated or acted upon. It seems that although hardware systems are in place companies are not fully obtaining the

Role/characteristic	Ireland average score	International average score
Negotiation and deal making	4.15	4.09
Real estate portfolio management	3.77	4.19
International finance/economics	2.69	2.99
Taxation management	2.85	2.89
Management accounting	2.96	3.18
Real estate development	3.77	3.35
Performance measurement/benchmarking	3.35	3.88
Investment appraisal	3.81	3.36
Strategic planning	4.08	4.21
Security and safety management	3.65	3.39
Project management	4.12	3.73
Information and communication technology	3.81	3.77
Facilities management	3.76	3.57
Design and construction management	3.23	3.30
e-business	3.38	3.59
Organisation's core business activity	3.69	4.11
Government regulation	3.73	3.34
Personnel/HR management	3.04	3.56
Environmental management	3.62	3.58
Customer relations	3.62	3.99
Marketing	2.96	3.16
Community relations	3.23	3.31
Foreign languages	1.85	2.30

**Table II.**

Future knowledge and skills perceived as important to CREM

benefits of ICT and have not always moved to higher level functions. Likewise companies are not capitalising on the potential for revenue enhancement through innovative corporate real estate activities such as hot-desking, e-commerce, provision of serviced offices and hoteling facilities.

The results from Ireland suggest that business has some significant way to go in utilising their real estate more efficiently. In this respect Ireland is not unique. Indeed comparative analysis at an international level indicates that the findings from the Irish survey do not differ significantly from work at an international level and in larger economies. These outcomes stress the need for a much greater emphasis by companies and indeed researchers upon corporate real estate activity.

#### Note

1. The survey was carried out during 2000-2001 prior to the full operation of the euro in the Republic of Ireland.

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