



The Eurobuild Awards 2011 – Business Achievement of the Year and Non-Business Achievement of the Year

Challenges met, inside and outside the office

THIS YEAR AWARDS ARE TO BE GIVEN IN TWO NEW CATEGORIES: BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT OF THE YEAR AND NON-BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT OF THE YEAR. WE PROFILE THE FIRST CANDIDATES AND LOOK FORWARD TO FURTHER NOMINATIONS. WHO WILL WIN? THAT'S FOR THOSE ATTENDING THE EUROBUILD AWARDS GALA TO DECIDE

■ **Richard Stephens**

Before the crisis of 2008/9, Orco Property Group's iconic Libeskind-designed Żłota 44 luxury residential sky-rise in the heart of Warsaw symbolised the dynamism, promise and optimism of Poland and its Central and Eastern European neighbours. Pretty soon, however, its empty skeletal structure, on which work ground to halt, came to epitomise the crippling effects of the credit crunch on the CEE region, despite the fact that Poland itself withstood the crisis far better than the rest of the region and in fact better than most other EU countries. This year, however, construction work on the project has restarted, gladdening the hearts of Varsovians, and Orco has high hopes. "Neither the economic turmoil, nor the stoppage of construction influenced our



architectural project,” commented the company’s CEO, Jean-Francois Ott. “From the beginning of this year, almost 30 storeys have been added. Now we are erecting the structure at an impressive pace – every week a new floor is added.” Although admittedly tempting fate a little - the building not having been completed - the re-commencement of construction on Zlota 44 is one of the nominees for ‘Business Achievement of the Year CEE’, one of the three categories of the Eurobuild Awards 2011 to be voted for on December 8th by gala attendees in what we’re calling ‘the popular vote’ (to go with the tenants’ vote and the jury vote). The other two categories are ‘Non-Business Achievement of the Year CEE’ and ‘Architectural Design of the Year Poland’.

Swallowed whole

So far the other nominations for Business Achievement are Jones Lang LaSalle’s acquisition of King Sturge and MGPA’s retention of the Ernst & Young lease in Rondo 1. The King Sturge acquisition by JLL is nominated because, although it was on a global scale rather than just a regional one, it

PICTURES

Richard Walker (left) and Sherpa Zangdu (far left) at the top of Mt Everest’s North Cole, with the summit in the background

Orco Property Group’s Zlota 44 luxury residential project (above), back under construction in 2011

Warsaw in winter was no preparation. As we got higher, sleeping became impossible.

Everything in the tent froze and you couldn’t leave your sleeping bag

had major repercussions in the CEE market. After all, a leading brand disappeared overnight, swallowed whole by another major agency leaving (at least seemingly) far less turbulence in its wake than might have been expected. No deal of this size, however, can leave everyone untouched, as Brian O’Brien of PwC points out: “JLL in the region appears to have managed the integration process well, identifying key resource strengths and moving on with business. However, as with any merger or takeover there have been casualties”. The Ernst & Young deal is put forward because signing a ten-year, 11,000 sqm lease extension in current market conditions is quite a feat, but more impressively, it was done in the face of strong competition. At one point it looked like the heavyweight international consultancy’s move to Ghelamco’s Warsaw Spire project, on which pre-construction has started next to the Hilton hotel, was a done deal. “People like it in Rondo 1” explains James Foley, real estate group partner at Ernst & Young. “It’s where the employees want to be. We’re happy with the building, its location and the management.”

If you know of any business achievements in the region’s property and construction market which you think should be nominated, please let us know.

On top of the world

Moving away from business, several people in the CEE region’s real estate community are doing amazing things, and it is these achievements which we want to recognise with the ‘Non-Business Achievement of the Year CEE’ category. To date we have the following nominations: Richard Walker of Bywater Properties’ ascent of the North Col of Mt Everest in May this year to raise money for the fight against early-onset Alzheimer’s; Danny Kambo of GSE’s library project in The Democratic Republic of Congo, and, as a collective nomination, all those who have run marathons this year to raise money for charity.

Richard Walker – whose company operates in the UK and Poland – and his father Malcolm reached the 7,200m summit of the North Col on May 3rd this year as part of the Iceland Everest Expedition (Iceland being the UK frozen food store, of which Malcolm is the founder and CEO), after being invited to do so by the British explorer David Hempleman Adams. Preparation



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took about a year. “We were total novices, so we did a crash course in rope work and Alpine climbing, and we climbed to the summit of Mt Kilimanjaro to get some high altitude experience.” When he reached the top of the North Col (to put it into context, the highest mountain in Europe, Mont Blanc, is 2,390m lower at 4,810m), Richard had mixed feelings. “Physically I felt more than capable of pushing on to the summit, which was only 1,000m from where I was, and I could see the route clearly to the top. It would have taken me another two days if I’d have ascended straight up, but this is impossible and the routine is to go all the way back down to base camp to recuperate before making a final push back up again. In all it would have taken me another three weeks to climb the extra 1,000m.” How did it feel during the ascent and coming down again? “Bloody cold. Warsaw in winter was no preparation. As we got higher, sleeping became impossible. Everything in the tent froze and you couldn’t leave your sleeping bag. Blood circulation becomes less efficient so oxygen isn’t sent round your body properly and your body stops digesting food.” In all, the climb raised a total of GBP 1.2 mln for research into early-onset Alzheimer’s. “It is an unfashionable charity and therefore more difficult to raise money for. That’s why we did it. It is a cruel, incurable disease and research is the only way to help. Early-onset Alzheimer’s can affect people in their 30s, not just the elderly.”

Raising money for books

Danny Kambo was inspired to set up the ‘Bibliothèque Albert Mpassi’ project in his home country of The Democratic Republic of Congo in memory of a priest he had known well who had made it his mission to improve education there,

PICTURE:
John Duckworth of JLL about to reach his goal... the finishing line of the Warsaw marathon

but tragically died in a car accident in 2008. The aim of the project is to encourage progress in education in northern Congo and then extend it to the rest of the country. The current focus is to build a library in the town of Gemena, population 50,000. “Gemena has primary, secondary and high schools, but there is no library,” says Danny. “We have collected more than 5,000 books. The aim is to raise enough money to allow us to equip the library with solar panels as a source of electricity and to introduce internet access through satellites. We also still have more than 15,000 books to be transported to Congo.” The library is intended to give basic access to education to children whose parents don’t have enough money to send them to school. Why does he do it? “I think it is my duty to bring help where people really need it. I’m very lucky to live here in Europe where I had a good education and have a good job which allows me to have a decent life. It is normal to have a look back and, as small as it is, to bring help and hope to others.”

Tired but happy legs

Every amateur marathon runner knows about hitting the dreaded ‘wall’. For John Duckworth of Jones Lang LaSalle, who ran the Warsaw marathon in September, raising over PLN 50,000 for the Litewska Children’s Hospital, it lasted 10 km: “It’s all true about hitting the wall. It was one of the more grim experiences I’ve ever had. At 25 km the legs began to really die. At 35 km my legs were telling my brain to stop. At that point the physical and emotional pain got interesting, but the pleasure of finishing and the sense of personal achievement is something I’ll never forget.” Grzegorz Żochowski of REAS was in-



PICTURES:
The DTZ Echinox running team from Romania (left to right): Razvan Sin, Bogdan Marcu, Evelina Necula, Marius Grigorica, Senior Flavius Pop

Danny Kambo (far right) is helping to improve education in DR Congo by raising money for a library

spired by John to do his first marathon, also raising money for the children's hospital, specifically for a hybrid incubator which keeps low-weight babies warm even when the incubator is open. He started training nine months before, running 10 km at weekends and completing two 35 km runs in the preceding two months. "I hit the wall at 35 km and felt powerless at that moment. It was tougher than I expected because it was hot and sunny." Will he do it again? "Yes" he replies without hesitation. For John, finding time to train was the biggest problem. "Early morning runs became a necessary evil." His wife Celine was surprised that he decided to do it, but at the same time not surprised at all: "He's sporty and competitive, but he's not exactly the right build for running a marathon. He was given a very useful book called something like 'Three Months to a Marathon' and he followed it, but not to the letter. Afterwards he said that if he had followed it to the letter it would have made a big difference. At the end he was completely exhausted, but Professor Bożena Werner from the hospital was there to greet him, so he had to finish!" Both John and Grzegorz were bowled over by the support they were given. "The support from family, friends and colleagues was overwhelming," said John. "Litewska Children's Hospital is a tremendous organisation, which provides care to critically ill children. They have wonderful ambitions to grow and develop their facilities."

Over in Romania, following the example of their MD Tim Wilkinson, who ran the New York marathon in 2008 to raise money for the Casa Speranței hospice in Bucharest, ten DTZ Echinox employees have run marathons in the past two or three years, raising over EUR 11,500 for the hos-



pice, which provides palliative care to terminally ill patients. The most recent effort was on October 9th when one employee ran the half-marathon at the Bucharest International Marathon and four others ran a marathon relay of 10.5 km each. Evelina Necula was one of the four: "Running 10.5 km is extremely fun, especially if you're doing it as part of a team and for a good cause. It is as contagious as it is addictive and I'm certain more colleagues will join in the future," she said, adding that the weather hadn't been "quite peachy". "As I was running through the rain, with the chilly wind on my face, I was thinking about whether I would do it again next year. The doubt only lasted for a moment, though, because when I finished the race I was so happy that I was already planning future challenges."

Richard, Danny, John, Grzegorz and the DTZ Echinox team are not looking for any personal recognition. They simply want to raise awareness of the good causes they support. If they inspire others in the region's real estate market to challenge themselves to achieve remarkable things, so much the better. If you know of anyone like them in our property community who you think should be nominated, please let us know. ■

The Eurobuild Awards is supporting the Fundacja Mam Marzenie ('I have a dream foundation'), a Polish charity which fulfils the dreams of children with terminal or life-threatening illnesses.