



The Human Connection

By Christine Aebischer

Behind every elite real estate agent is a network of trusted individuals that creates an expansive resource capable of catering to a client's every need.

WHEN RELOCATING TO A NEW HOME, whether in the next county or another country, the experience is much more than the sale itself. It's a lifestyle transition. Making this transition as painless as possible often lies with choosing the right real estate agent. Not only is a positive relationship between client and agent important, but also the agent's other relationships — connections and networks, both within the industry and beyond — make all the difference. With the right relationships, an elite real estate agent becomes a resource that exceeds a simple business transaction.

"Real estate isn't just about houses and finance," explains speaker and author Matthew Ferrara. "It's about a transition point in people's lives. Agents whose networks can provide them with insights into more than just inventory, finance and taxes will strengthen their value proposition by expanding their knowledge of design,

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architecture, art, cuisine, horticulture, travel, entertainment and so on. It's about having access to the right people to refer to their clients when the need arises."

Nearly 25 percent of people moved more than 100 miles in 2015, according to Ferrara, and when relocating to a new area, their needs surpass the purchase of their home. "It's not just about finding a property, it's about finding one suitable for the lifestyle they want to live," says Paul Boomsma, president of Luxury Portfolio International. "As a buyer, you need to make sure you're finding someone who understands your passions and can deliver on what those passions are." Agents within the Luxury Portfolio network are encouraged to be open about their personal interests and active in their communities so that they can be a valuable resource for their clients. "We think real estate is very locally focused," explains Boomsma. "Buyers may come from all over, but once they land, they'll be rooted in the community."

Elite real estate networks, including Luxury Portfolio and Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate, also provide members with global connections and resources, allowing them to attract

international interest. "[Sellers] want to make sure everyone in the world knows about their listing," shares John Brian Losh, publisher of LuxuryRealEstate.com. "Real estate, especially luxury real estate, is a people business. Sellers have to be comfortable that the agents listing their homes have connections around the world to give them maximum exposure."

With members based all over the world, these networks also facilitate inter-agent relationships. "One of the most overlooked relationships that is the most valuable is also the most obvious: other agents in the luxury home market," shares Bob Hurwitz, president of Hurwitz James Company. "It is imperative to have a strong, open and ongoing communication with top agents to keep track of the market and hear first about upcoming listings, as well as off-market and pocket listings."

This also allows agents to confidently refer clients to other agents while ensuring that they will be in good hands. "We are founded on the principle of taking care of clients regardless of where their needs take them," says Boomsma. "Most agents who work in the luxury sphere do

work together and they are very friendly with each other because they know anyone who is looking at a property of one of their counterparts could be their potential buyer."

Beyond their counterparts, the relationships elite agents cultivate with other industry professionals, such as attorneys, tax specialists, mortgage brokers and private bankers, provide their high-net-worth clients with the level of discretion and confidentiality that they expect. "A strong network of experienced professionals helps agents refer experts who are both discrete and knowledgeable with the concerns of their high-net-worth clients," says Ferrara. Hurwitz also cites title company representatives, wealth managers and business managers as valuable connections to make in order to go the extra mile for clients.

As Ferrara explains: "What an agent needs to do is answer the question: What service am I really offering to my clients, and who do I need to know to be the best at delivering this service? Once an agent realizes they're in the business of life transitions, not home buying and selling, they can see the need — and value — of having a highly diverse network of resources." **U+I**

