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Sullivan continues to win accolades for real estate auction services

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Marianne Sullivan

Sandwich, MA When Marianne Sullivan decided to launch her own real estate auction firm in 2007, she knew she would have to keep things fresh in order to compete with the established players in an already competitive market. Sixteen years later, her firm continues to win fans with their highly personal approach and commitment to constant innovation. The proof of this particular pudding is in the auction house's constantly growing roster of clients and industry-leading attendance at their auctions. Not to mention a string of recent awards, Sullivan & Sullivan has worked their way up from a bronze award in 2021, to silver and finally recognized with gold for 2023 for Best Real Estate Auction Service Provider.

Though Sullivan brought 15 years of experience in commercial real estate to the founding of her company, the long-term success of this woman-owned start-up was far from guaranteed.

"All I really knew in the beginning was that I wanted to do something different from what I had seen in my own experience of the Industry up to that point. I wanted to build a different kind of auction firm, one that was focused on the client's needs from the beginning and throughout the process. I saw value in providing highly professional services in a truly personal way. Whether it's a lender, an attorney, a municipality or any other type of client, we always want them to know that every detail is important and is being accounted for. We want them to know we've got their back and we are there for them. Our phones are always on. When they call, we answer," Sullivan said.

Sullivan largely credits the company's success to the fact that she has been able to assemble a team of like-minded auctioneers, agents and support staff who share that same commitment to delivering highly professional service in a distinctly personal style. "We may conduct thousands of auctions per year, but we know all of our clients and most of our bidders by first name. That's the personal & professional touch we are known for," Sullivan said.

There is quite a bit of actual family involved in the business as well. Marianne's father accounts for the other Sullivan name on the masthead. Though he has retired out of the day to day life of the firm, he still keeps a close eye on the goings-on in the office and the industry at large. Marianne's 'right hand woman/director of operations' happens to be her first cousin, Betty Quinn. Sullivan's nephew, Tyler came on board three years ago after graduating from UMass.-Dartmouth with a business degree and is experiencing first-hand the dynamic industry and holds his auctioneer licensure in both Massachusetts and New Hampshire. As the director of on-site technology, his main focus has been on streamlining our innovative on-site auctions and keeping our staff of auctioneer and bank agents up to speed with the new technology.

The other core value of the firm is a commitment to constant innovation, especially in the realm of technology. Sullivan said that consistently investing in systems and technology has given the firm a competitive edge in the industry. Her company has funded the development of proprietary auction management software that streamlines all aspects of the auction process, facilitates communications and documentation throughout, and ensures adherence to strict compliance requirements. As a result, clients receive a bundled auction package containing all of the relevant data and documents from the auction immediately following the auction.

Sullivan said that data and technology also plays a vital role in their marketing as it enables them to attract the right qualified bidders for any given auction using precisely targeted digital marketing.

Finding that right blend of professionalism and personality supported by robust systems and technology appears to be working well for Sullivan and her team. The company is known as one of the largest, most successful real estate auction houses in the region with several full-time employees, offices on Cape Cod and in Warwick, R.I. along with a sister company, Patriot Auctioneers. Between both companies, they schedule over 150 auctions monthly in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island serving the default services industry.

Sullivan has become even more convinced over the past 16 years that adhering to client-first principles and being able to adapt to surprises is why her organization is able to thrive regardless of commercial real estate market conditions.

Sullivan said “The year after I started the firm in 2007, there was a foreclosure boom and an increase in the need for auction services. We began to build our client base, ranging from local & regional banks as well as private lenders. Based on the needs & requests from our clients, we have been able to maintain our high level of services even during the past few years of COVID shutdowns and limitations.” Sullivan’s main focus has always been about adapting to change and being ready for any surprise that comes her way.

Whether the current or future market is one full of opportunities or unexpected challenges we want our clients to know that whatever may come, we will get through it together,” Sullivan said.

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