

## **Positive attitude can influence others around you: sell what you have, don't dwell on what's been lost**

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Unless you come from a family tree branched with agents, developers and brokers, one doesn't usually foresee working in today's world of commercial real estate, especially lending. But after that first deal, the realization hits, the harder you work the more you gain, financially, intellectually, and personally; how many occupations can boast that? When talking to someone seasoned in the business, you will find that they had a little guidance in the beginning, a mentor to help build their confidence and knowledge base. More often than not, your first deal will be with the little guy; that client turns out to be your biggest in the long run. It's about what you know and how you use that information to benefit your client; the best business is repeat business. Aside from the financial gain, commercial real estate is comprised of people who love what they do and choose to accept the challenge everyday.

When starting in commercial real estate, working under a mentor is invaluable; it is always better to learn from others mistakes, or have someone around who's been there and can tell you that it's not the end of the world-everyone comes to this conclusion at least once. There are many ways to go about finding the right person for the job, but ultimately it needs to be someone who embodies your goals. When asking around, generally the same names will come up; from that list meetings should be made. Commercial real estate is all about the relationships; if you tarnish those relationships in the beginning you'll spend the rest of your career working to gain them back.

A piece of advice that has always stuck with me is never turn your back on the little guy; in many cases he or she winds up being the major player or the source of many of your future deals. If you can, take on the hard deal; once it's done, it is no longer hard and you have just created your niche. You should be well versed in the environment surrounding the real estate market; clients not only want good deals, they want to be consulted on why it's a good deal, how the current economic situation effects their position. Most clients are knowledgeable about the financial market and expect that you are more so. For me, it's how the economy effects their interest rates, for an agent/broker, it's how the economy affects their after-tax cash flows and potential appreciation.

The best advice I give clients is to make sure that he or she is comfortable with their decision. From a lenders perspective, that means advising them on all aspects of their loan and giving them the right tools to make that decision. For example, when it comes to rate locking, in such a volatile market, I always ask my clients what is their realistic rate; what payment is he or she comfortable making, what rate allows them the return they are looking for on their investment? Because finding the bottom of the market is nearly impossible, the next best thing is finding their comfort level.

Starting in real estate as most in the industry did, I fell in. Once you're in, it becomes an addiction.

Under 30 and over 5 years experience in the commercial real estate industry, I literally started from the bottom. In college, to pay the bills, I worked for WaMu (then formally called Washington Mutual) on their night team drawing loan documents for their residential mortgage unit. From there I was picked up by a local commercial real estate broker to coordinate their deals and to process the loans for their in-house mortgage broker. Quickly realizing that sales was more my speed, I earned my real estate license and started to originate commercial loans. For the following two years I originated loans and went to school full time. Upon graduation, I forwarded my resume to WaMu Commercial where I was taken under the wing of my mentor. My mentor is one of WaMu's top senior loan consultants for the previous 10 years, the experience was priceless; we were top 3 for # of transactions, handling more than 220 loans and funding a nearly quarter billion in volume.

Though I have never worked through such an economic hardship as we are about to face, I feel fortunate to be put through this test and know that everyone who survives will prosper in the upswing. A positive attitude can influence others around you; sell what you have and don't dwell on what's been lost. It is time to get our hands dirty. Calling is key, but this challenging economy requires diversification of marketing strategies; office visits, meetings, advertising, attending networking events, hosting seminars, exhaust every resource. Right now is the time to lay the tracks.

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