

**Regional Director
Opening General Session
Welcome Speech
Feb 9, 2012**

Once again welcome to Victoria and our Annual Western Canada Conference.

We view this conference as the most important Western Canada event each year. It gives us the opportunity to communicate to you new programs and services.

It gives you the opportunity to build referral contacts and take in presentations and sessions put on by professional speakers and your peers. All of which combines to increase the bottom line profitability of your personal businesses.

And equally important it gives all us all the opportunity to celebrate our personal and collective successes achieved over the past year.

I want to thank each of you for your commitment and enthusiasm for taking part in the conference.

As you know we have substantially changed the overall format this year. And so far from a general point of view it has worked very well as we have experienced a record number of full registered delegates. Next year's conference will be different yet again as we look to revitalize and build on each year's event.

We have always been very proud of the fact that we are a grassroots driven organization. Over the years the majority of the programs and services offered, are a result of input from our membership. We will continue to look forward to your input to develop and present the best events possible.

Many of you will remember our early days when all we had was a yellow pad of paper to describe what a REMAC was; it was very exciting. We were the renegades of the industry, pushing the envelope and doing things differently.

We promoted ourselves which in turn promoted the Brand. We were indeed the Top Producers in our communities and we had to work hard serving our customers and clients as economies changed.

In my time, recessions have come and gone, prices have gone up, down, up, down, up, down but over the long term there has been far more up than down in real estate values.

The Competition Bureau has always been there. From the Prohibition Order of 1989 to the RE/MAX Advertising Prohibition Order in 2004 to the 2010 CREA Accord now to the Toronto

Real Estate Board investigation and charges; all of this over a perceived lack of competition in our business.

Do any of you feel you are not out there competing each day? It simply baffles me. The Commissioner obviously lives in a nether world and has not ever really taken the time to understand our world.

But despite that, I really don't feel the Bureau and any decision made by the upcoming Tribunal will really change our business in any significant way. However, there is a large concern I have that will affect our business more than any other situation out there.

That concern is in the way we each view our role in assisting consumers in selling and buying their homes. Our success in real estate sales is not based on being the keeper of the mls and home sales data.

Our success is in the interpretation of that data for the consumer and in delivering a valuable service in pricing, marketing, negotiating, consulting, due diligence to completion and after sale service for the seller.

Getting the home owner, the best price, in the shortest time, with the fewest problems.

For the buyer it is understanding their needs and desires. Demographics, neighborhood information, mortgage requirements, market activity, social interactive dynamics, negotiating, due diligence to completion and after sale service.

None of these services have anything to do with protecting the data. They have everything to do with the true value a consumer is looking for, and the true value, you as sales associates, bring to the consumer.

Later this afternoon Elaine Langhout, our Director of Regional Advertising will be presenting to you some very interesting information from a consumer survey we conducted this past fall.

The consumer direct survey certainly proved to us that the Canadian consumer views RE/MAX as the leading real estate organization in the country, by a huge margin. And more importantly they value the experience you bring to the table. The highest values consumers look for in selecting an agent is

1. Reliability
2. Trust
3. Knowledge; in that order.

In all three categories you as RE/MAX Realtors® blew the competition away. Over the years our Brand image building combined with your ethical and professional approach to business has developed the Most Trusted real estate brand in Canada.

Having said that... Are we starting to take some of these things for granted? I am witnessing some disturbing work habit trends in our membership. The main one being a lack of customer face to face relationship building exposure.

We have really experienced this in the type of consumer complaint we receive in our office. The majority of complaints involve a situation where something was communicated over a telephone or by email, not fully understood by the customer and not followed-up by the sales associate.

This has been especially true when dealing with contracts, whether that is a listing or sale agreement. We are seeing way to many instances of sales associates sending a contract by email, expecting the consumer to review it, sign it, then send it back, maybe with a telephone conversation.

This is simply unprofessional and purely bad business.

I see too many sales associates using technology in the mistaken idea of being more efficient by replacing belly to belly relationship building opportunities.

Yes, it can be done, but in a time when consumers are looking at and questioning full service brokerages and the fees that come with that. You had better well be justifying the fees you are receiving, by providing a customer experience that is second to none. At that point any internet based mere posting, no service Realtor®, will not last long, go out of business, or at the very least come and go as they always have.

When it comes to competing with mere posting discounters, we as a full service brokerage offer much more value. In all of this, the debate often rages around "The Data". As I mentioned earlier, we offer so much more than data or web advertising to sell a home.

Last October, I was interviewed by a reporter out of Toronto asking me "if commissions are negotiable and that we must be losing business to some of these new discount companies". I responded to him by giving an example of the kind of service a RE/MAX sales associate provides.

The example I gave....Mr. and Mrs. Home Seller call me to come by and discuss selling their home. I prepare for the appointment by doing some preliminary work based on what information I have available at that time.

Later sitting at the kitchen table Mr. Seller may ask me if I will reduce my commission to get their business? I respond I would consider it but to do so I would have to reduce some of my service to them.

1st there is the interpretation of the data for sales, solds and expireds to together, determine the best price for the home to be competitive in the current market place

2nd is the marketing plan; which would include web advertising, including our new mobile technology with Augmented Reality, mls, highlight sheets, social media presence, virtual tour development, open houses, newspaper ads, home staging using our RE/MAX Fit to Sell program, buyer viewing coordination, enrollment into our exclusive RE/MAX Tranquilli T program.

All the while communicating to you what the results of our advertising program has been along with the feedback from home showings and Realtor® previews.

3rd negotiation when an offer is received. My skill and experience in handling the negotiations will get you the best price and terms.

4th due diligence after an accepted offer with mortgage approval, appraisal, property inspection coordination.

5th after conditions are removed, follow-up with conveyance instructions to your lawyer, liaising with buyer's agent, coordinating buyers visits and questions such as window or appliance measurements, and assisting with your move out procedures.

6th possession, delivery of keys on the assurance all monies are received from your lawyer.

7th after sale follow-up with you, as the seller.

Now Mr. Seller, which one of these groupings of services or specific services, would you not want me to do? Understanding that if I don't do them, your home will likely sell for less, or you get someone else which may mean yourselves or you will have to pay someone to do them.

After I explained all this the Reporter had no debate over the value of a full service Realtor®.

Now, back to customer relationships, I am in no means saying social media, email, web forms or any of those tools aren't good. They are tremendous aids in developing and serving your business.

But the key to this, is do not let yourselves fall into the trap of less is more. Use those tools effectively, but at the same time never forget what makes us all successful as sales people.

1. Sales skills to close the deal and help our customers realize that this is the right home for them.
2. Negotiation skills that sell or get them the home they really want.
3. Human relation skills that develop customers for life and the referrals that will bring.

Bottom line, we will have great economies and we will have recessions. We will have Competition Bureau investigations and there will be Accords.

There will always be low fee competitors out there.

We are ultimately in control of our own success. Keeping your attitude positive and constantly honing your business skills will keep you and us as the Brand at the top of the Real Estate Profession.

Our brand will continue to dominate. Smart integrated planning and execution will place us at the forefront of the consumer's and the Realtor's® minds.

We will continue to be the innovator and unquestionable leader in the real estate profession.

You are each a leader in our industry. Thank you for everything you do in providing the superior service and achieving the sales success the consumer has come to expect of the RE/MAX organization.