



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION of
REALTORS®
Global



October 2011

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

to local, international & lifestyle real estate

► BUILDING YOUR TEAM

Strength in Numbers



Building a multicultural real estate practice may feel like a daunting task for any single agent. That's one reason many global agents prefer to specialize in a particular niche market. Still, their efforts often rely heavily on building strong networking relationships with other key professionals.

That's why this issue of *Global Perspectives* focuses on the "people" aspect of multicultural real estate. By this, we don't mean your clients and prospects. Rather, we're referring to the various professionals who, like yourself, help clients ultimately reach the closing table.

Inside this issue you'll find tips and insights on two key aspects of building your team:

Within your brokerage. Consider partnering with one or more agents to develop a deep pool of talent, capable of standing out in any global market. This is a common strategy in any real estate practice, but can make even more sense for a multicultural real estate group.

With other real estate professionals. Having a strong network of legal, financial and other experts is important for any agent. But with global transactions, a solid referral network often plays an especially critical role in connecting with clients and resolving unique transaction challenges.

Additionally, we recognize the importance of expanding your global team without expanding your budget. Check out our helpful tips for extending your efforts with several free and low-cost resources. **GP**

Building a Multicultural Agent

TEAM

Agent teams, taking a wide variety of forms, have long played an important role in the success of many real estate professionals. From pairs of family members—husband/wife, mother/daughter, father/son, etc.—to other partners, or larger groups focused on a particular geographic territory, you can find just about every type of real estate team tackling all sorts of markets.



Why form a multicultural team?

There are many compelling reasons to form a real estate team. When it comes to building a multicultural practice, however, the reasons can make even more sense:

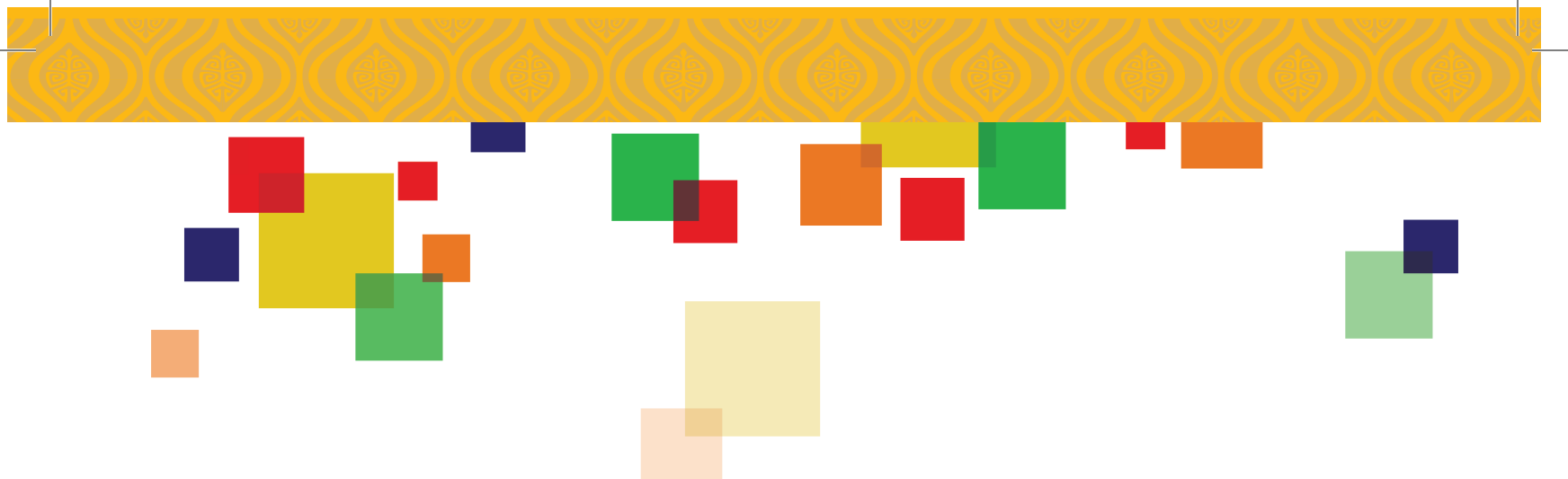
Specialization – Developing a niche market can be a powerful business-building strategy. Most agents prefer a be-all-things-to-all-people approach, for fear of missing out on miscellaneous, general opportunities. But in today’s real estate climate, consumers are especially hesitant to take chances and are more inclined to prefer working with experts.

Some agents who have chosen a niche, and worked it with passion, have enjoyed notable success. And specializing doesn’t necessarily preclude them from picking up an occasional ad hoc real estate transaction, as well as referral opportunities. The aura of “expert” can generate an image of strength, even beyond an agent’s primary focus, that engenders more trust than lesser-known generalists.

In a real estate team, specialization also means you can concentrate on your strongest skills or an area where you have more knowledge, like a particular country or language. But working with one or more people who have complementary skills gives the team greater strength. Examples:

- A Spanish-speaking agent pairs with a Portuguese-speaking agent to cover all of Central/South America and local immigrants from these countries.
- Two China experts pair up, one concentrating on Chinese buyers of owner-occupied properties, while the other shares their expertise in investment/income-producing properties.
- Two agents focus on overseas retirement destinations. One travels to build relationships and scout out the market, while the other concentrates on finding state-side Baby Boomers interested in making an overseas move.

By specializing, everyone may be able to do what they enjoy most and the whole is stronger. Besides, if you’re trying to capture the attention of global buyers and sellers—whether currently in the U.S. or searching from abroad—you stand a much better chance of appearing on their radar screen if you’re part of a specialist team.



Leverage – Obviously one agent can't cover as many bases as two or more. Relying on strength in numbers, agents can extend their reach into more territories or create a stronger presence in one particular market. The result is a bigger pie to be divided among all team members.

Additionally, a team may find it easier to cover business development and administrative expenses than any go-it-alone agent. Teams may also be more capable of providing the "extras" that can make a big difference in attracting multicultural buyers, and sellers, such as materials translated in their native language.

Convenience – If you are in business for yourself, it's extremely difficult to tackle every item on your to-do list, much less step away for personal business. Working with a partner, however, you can divide up responsibilities and have a little more latitude to take time off for various personal appointments, and maybe even cover for one another for a long-overdue vacation.

Case in Point

Carla Rayman, CIPS, GRI, e-PRO and Patricia Tan, CIPS, GRI of Prudential Palms Realty in Sarasota, Florida currently lead a successful team of five agents focused on developing Canadian and U.K. business in Florida, including two buyer's agents plus three part-time assistants. Among the assistants, two live out-of-state and handle basic administrative and technology tasks. The third assistant helps their U.K. buyer's reps cultivate British buyer leads.

In terms of choosing the right partner, Rayman says, "It's critical to find a person you can trust implicitly and who has the same work ethics as you." Rayman is amused that others often assume she and Pat were first friends, then teamed up.

"The truth is that we sat on a committee together and noticed that we were always volunteering to get things done," says Rayman. "We continued bumping into each other and realized we had the same interests in the value of education, along with expanding our business. It was then that we formed a team and really got to know each other. Now we are the best of friends and finish each other's sentences!"

Tips for Building a Successful Team

Building a successful agent team can be tricky business, and there's no perfect formula for success. As Rayman suggests, finding a partner who shares your values and goals is essential. Other important considerations include:

Formalize roles. To avoid confusion or duplicating efforts, make sure everyone knows what their responsibilities are. Does one agent focus inward on running the business, while the other is client-facing? Will you hire any assistants, perhaps part time? Who takes the lead on key activities? Discuss these and other questions to help ensure everyone is on the same page.

Create a written compensation agreement. Even though you and your partner may be the best of friends now, don't invite trouble by skipping this important step. An up-front written agreement, reviewed by your attorney, helps prevent future misunderstandings. It's also a good idea to include a termination clause, or agree to a trial period, so you can make a clean break if your team doesn't work out as planned.

Develop communication systems. Sometimes the trickiest part of working in a team is remembering to keep others in the loop. On the other hand, you don't want to be bothered with unnecessary details.

Define expectations about what needs to be communicated when and how. In a multi-agent team, the lead agent(s) may expect to be apprised immediately of certain important details. Other information may be more appropriate for including in weekly summary reports.

When evaluating how to best communicate, consider alternatives beyond phone, text, or email. Online collaborative tools, such as Google Groups (free) or SharePoint (used with Microsoft Office 365), are designed to help teams share information and work together on key documents (no more confusion on which version is most current). These systems also live in the "cloud," making them accessible wherever you have an internet connection. **GP**

STRETCH YOUR TEAM... AND YOUR BUDGET

Building a successful multicultural real estate practice takes time, skill and business savvy, especially knowing how to grow your business without breaking the bank. Here are three areas global agents may want to explore:

1. Low-cost logos

If you're forming a new real estate team, your first need may be a new logo and business cards. Note that marketing techniques and branding decisions may be dictated by state regulations governing how teams represent themselves in the market and/or subject to review and approval by your broker or corporate marketing department. If you need to develop your own branding, look online for numerous low-cost sources for logo and business card design, including:

99 Designs	LogoSnap
Hatchwise	Logoworks
Logo Design Team	LogoYes

Some of these services offer packages, where you first decide how many logos/designers you want to select from. Others work as contests, where you name your price and designers compete to supply the winning logo. Yet others are 'do-it-yourself' logo sites. Many logo sites also offer low-cost business card design and printing.

2. Part-time assistants

Virtual assistants can serve a valuable role, filling various temporary or ongoing needs, including website programming, design or maintenance, social media support, and various administrative tasks. Numerous sites let you post individual projects for competitive bidding or search for the right freelancer to fill your needs, including:

ELance	Guru
Freelancer	ODesk
iFreelance	Project4Hire

It may also make sense to seek out local assistants who can work part-time with occasional face-to-face contact. If you have a college or university nearby, investigate student interns. If you are trying to forge ties with a local immigrant group, seek out someone from the community who might be able to provide administrative assistance or other types of support.

For example, an assistant who is a member of the local immigrant community can help you forge ties by monitoring upcoming events, new businesses, and advertising/sponsorship opportunities—all of which can be leveraged for marketing purposes, including posts on your blog or Facebook business page. Just make sure that assistants do not engage in any conduct that requires a real estate license, unless you are using licensed assistants.

3. Translations

Any agent with foreign language skills certainly has a competitive edge. But if you don't speak your clients' language, you can still leverage new technologies that will help bridge the gap and demonstrate you are making an extra effort to connect.

Most importantly, buyers from all over the world will soon be able to view listings on REALTOR.com in 11 different languages, providing tremendous opportunities for

non-English-speaking buyers to do business the way they feel most comfortable (See page 8 for more details.) To continue communicating with them in their native language, you can leverage NAR tools like the CIPS Widget. This free resource provides convenient 140-character translations (as well as currency, area and time conversions and world holidays) in an easy-to-use app for your smartphone or placed on your PC desktop. This free resource can be downloaded at realtor.org/global/cips/personal_marketing_materials

For other convenient and free translations, check out Google Translate, which now offers as-you-speak translations for Android phone users. Called 'conversation mode,' the service records a user's speech, converts it to text, translates, then sends an audio recording in the new language to the other phone. While each speaker must hit a 'submit' button, Google's ultimate goal is to provide simultaneous voice translation.

Launched early this year, only Spanish-English translations are initially supported on Android devices. But since Google offers voice-to-text support for fifteen languages, more translation options are certainly on the horizon. And text-to-text translations are now available for 53 languages!

Not surprisingly, all machine translations deliver mixed results. You don't want to rely on them for important documents, like contracts. For this, your local REALTOR® association may be able to help, providing translated versions of standard contracts. Another helpful product is DocuSign®, which allows you to send, sign, track, and store documents from anywhere in the world in over 10 languages. Visit www.realtor.org/realtor_benefits for REALTOR®-exclusive discounts (available to U.S. REALTORS® only, coming soon for international REALTORS®). However, translations of contracts are supplemental information only and do not replace the official agreement written in English. For legal purposes, both parties must sign the same document so your client will still need to sign a real estate contract written in English. **GP**

PROFESSIONAL TEAM BUILDING: A NECESSITY IN GLOBAL MARKETS

Every real estate transaction has its own set of challenges, with outside professionals playing a key role in advising your clients on legal, lending, and other matters. Agents cultivating business in global and multicultural markets may find themselves needing a wider range of professionals in law, finance and tax matters to deal with any special challenges that might arise with multicultural transactions.

Building a wide net of contacts to turn to when outside help is needed not only allows you to enhance your reputation by being an exceptional "source of the source;" a strong professional team also increases your closing ratio, since you know your clients are in good hands, and often brings additional referral business.

One important note of caution: Never refer your customers to only one service provider unless you are willing to assume liability should that professional fail in his or her duties. For this reason, agents are encouraged to have at least three professionals in each category and let the consumer choose whom they want to hire.



Legal Eagles

Real estate law plays a role in every transaction—the review of legal documents and contracts which buyers and sellers must sign to close the deal. The same expertise is needed in a multicultural or international transaction, but it may be helpful to know real estate attorneys who can bring more to the table.

For example, you may be working with a Japanese client who has been transferred to the Bay Area. Though your client can speak English, they might find it easier and more reassuring to work with an attorney who can explain the legalese in Japanese, or draw comparisons to Japanese real estate transactions.

If you are cultivating business within a specific immigrant community in your market area, make it a point to find real estate lawyers within that community. It will help bridge both language and cultural barriers, and give you a resource not only for your clients, but for enhancing your own understanding of your client's culture.

Immigration is another area of law that can complicate multicultural and international sales. Visa status affects how long a foreign national can reside on American soil and what they can do here. For instance, if a British couple approaches you about a second home, an immigration attorney can tell them whether their current visas fit their plans, and if not, advise and guide them on whether it is possible to apply for a different status.

Visa issues can also arise when working with immigrant communities. Be prepared by having a few qualified immigration attorneys on your team to provide your clients any needed assistance.

Financial Wizards

Money is the common denominator of all real estate transactions. But in a global transaction, funds may not start out in a dollar-denominated U.S. account. The time and expense of exchanging and transferring foreign currency can pose risks to clients' transactions.

How should your clients go about choosing a U.S. bank? Should they rely on their overseas and U.S. banks to manage the transfer process? How do they know they are getting a good exchange rate?

Fortunately, there are currency professionals who deal with these issues for international real estate transactions. "Though many banks offer currency exchange and transfer, they charge fairly significant fees for hidden transactions costing the client up to four percent of the funds involved," says Laura McLoughlin, Country Manager at Moneycorp. "A currency specialist can get the best rate, will charge a much lower margin on the exchange, can offer ways to lock in rates for a time, and can transfer funds on a same-day basis."

Lending Lions

These are tough times for obtaining a mortgage. Though you probably have well-established relationships with a number of lenders, their underwriting requirements may not be flexible enough to meet the unique needs of many multicultural buyers. Establishing contacts with lenders who are reaching out to multicultural markets can help solve this problem.

(continued on page 6)



Networking through Global Business Councils

Nearly 100 local associations of REALTORS® have formed Global Business Councils to help provide members with knowledge and connections to develop multicultural opportunities in their markets.

- Join your local Council. If you don't have one, you may want to ask your association about starting one
- Attend Council-sponsored events featuring speakers from other professions (including those hosted by other local associations). Learn about business from their side of the desk and network with them and other global agents.
- Look into your Council's resources. Many search for and reach out to relevant professionals and can help you connect with them.

To learn more about Global Business Councils and their many activities, please visit realtor.org/global/ae/global_business_councils/about.



Also, consider attending the new **CIPS: Global Programs for Associations Course**, which provides in-depth education on developing and growing global member programs that will prepare REALTORS® to succeed in a global marketplace. This one-day course is open to association executives, association staff, volunteer leadership, or anyone interested in understanding the value of global programs at his or her association. Contact NARglobe@realtors.org for more details.

(continued from page 5)

PROFESSIONAL TEAM BUILDING: A NECESSITY IN GLOBAL MARKETS

Many immigrants come to this country with sufficient funds and income to merit a mortgage, but no credit history to qualify for one. Others may mistrust banks or lack an understanding of our lending system and practices. For many major lenders, this represents an obstacle that can't be overcome. Luckily, some community banks and credit unions have stepped in to fill the gap, and have found it to be a niche in which they can grow.

"We have a long-term term commitment to the multicultural and immigrant community in Southeastern Massachusetts," says Leo MacNeil, Senior Vice President of Community Relationships at HarborOne Credit Union in Brockton, MA, a leading mortgage originator in the area. "Our nontraditional underwriting standards allow us to offer loans to many who might not otherwise qualify, and most become very stable loans." (See sidebar on page 7.)

Reach out to smaller lenders or credit unions in your market who may already have a history within the multicultural community. Working with a local lender can help you close more sales and save valuable time in finding financing.

Tax Titans

Capital gains, estate and other taxes play a role in everyday real estate decisions. For these, you probably provide your clients with a list of tax specialists or financial planners. However, just as in the earlier real estate attorney example, your multicultural clients may value the assistance of a professional from their own culture or community. Having relationships with several could help enhance your reputation in and show your support of the immigrant community.

A more complex tax situation confronts foreign nationals who plan to return to their native lands later, especially if they wish to

repatriate funds. Here, a tax professional with international experience can explain possible tax consequences to your clients, and advise them on how best to move ahead with the transaction.

Other Pros to Know

If your focus includes a local immigrant community, look there for other businesses that are involved in real estate sales, including:

- Appraisers
- Home inspectors
- Moving companies
- Insurance agents
- Contractors, remodelers and repair people

You'll show your support of the community if you add them to your resource list.

Finding the Right Professionals

Often, the type of professional you're looking for determines where you look for one:

For professionals within an immigrant community, a good place to start is the local Chamber of Commerce. Some larger cities have Chambers within specific ethnic communities. For instance, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Los Angeles (lachinesechamber.org) provides an online directory by business specialty.

Some professionals don't have to be local.

Currency exchange and transfer specialists do business by phone in all parts of the country, and can be found online. Look to professional associations like the American Immigration Lawyers Association (aila.org) and the Transnational Tax Network (ttn-taxation.net) for specialized law and tax advice.

Leverage networking opportunities. Global Business Councils at the local level and NAR's Global division at the national



level sponsor events offering numerous networking opportunities to help you connect with experienced professionals. (See related sidebar on page 6.)

Who Merits Joining your Team?

What you look for in other professionals depends on the role they play in the transaction. In serving immigrant enclaves and multicultural markets, the players on your team should have strong bonds to the community, solid experience in their specialty, and multicultural sensitivity.

In highly specialized solution providers, expertise and credentials are important. For immigration law and international tax specialists, look online for affiliations with top professional associations, published articles, and past speaking engagements. Feedback from other global agents is also highly beneficial in determining their merit.

What should you look for from an outside professional, and what should they expect from you?

- Professionalism, competence, and expert knowledge.
- Good back-and-forth communication; they should keep you in the loop regarding the client's situation as you should them.
- Sometimes, a more formal relationship. For example, MoneyCorp has a Referring Partnership Program, and assigns an account manager to the agent and the client.

Working Together for Mutual Growth

Part of what makes another professional a good team candidate is that they see opportunities in your market and are interested in working with you to grow them. "We are a great marketing tool for agents involved in global transactions," says McLoughlin at Moneycorp. "Because of our size and international presence, we help clients get the best exchange rates at very low cost, with tools for risk management."

While working together to grow the market, referrals will probably grow too. Buyer or seller referrals may come from local professionals, while larger national firms may become a good resource for finding other specialized professionals. For instance, one immigration attorney may refer you to another specializing in a particular visa category.

A few crucial things to remember when working with other professionals on your team:

- Don't try to provide tax, legal or financial advice to your buyers and sellers—leave that to your experts.
- Ask your clients if they are already getting assistance from someone in these areas.
- Don't steer clients to one professional over another. Remember, try to provide at least three good resources.

Putting together a team of outside professionals will take time and lots of networking, but is well worth the effort. A great team will help you successfully close more global sales, and build your international business. **GP**



Putting down roots in the community

Brockton, MA is a city of about 100,000 residents, many of whom are of Cape Verdean, Haitian and Latin American descent. In 2007, HarborOne Credit Union launched a Multicultural Banking Center promoting homeownership in the community. They have grown their local mortgage market by offering:

- Classes in financial literacy, citizenship and English;
- Credit coaching, foreclosure mitigation and workshops; and
- First Time Home Ownership workshops with multicultural REALTORS® and attorneys.

Small banks in other parts of the country are starting to follow suit, especially in the area of financial literacy education. Look for lenders in your area offering similar programs.

Enhancing Your Global Exposure with REALTOR.com®

The time is (almost) here! At the end of this month, your property listings on REALTOR.com® will be translated into eleven languages, and feature currency and measurement conversion. The site will also feature international property listings.

What this means for you:

- **True global exposure**—The launch of the global site increases its visibility around the world and allows the millions of Americans buying abroad to view property listings in the familiar REALTOR.com® format.
- **Customized experience**—Buyers from all over the world will be able to view properties in their preferred format—language, currency, and units of measurement.

Learn more at REALTORS® Conference & Expo

Visit NAR Global staff at booth #1014 for a one-on-one demonstration of the REALTOR.com® International site. We will also have two sessions taking place at the NAR Theater (booth #439), one for practitioners who reside outside the U.S. and one for U.S. practitioners:

Sunday, November 13, 10:00 a.m.: Take Your Listings Beyond Your Borders:

Benefits of REALTOR.com®/International for Non-U.S. Practitioners

Monday, November 14, 10:30 a.m.: ¡Para Venta! A vendre! For Sale:

How REALTOR.com®/International can Boost your Global Exposure

For more information, visit realtor.org/global/realtorcom_international.



NEW CIPS Course Launching at REALTORS® Conference & Expo

Be the first to take the newest CIPS course, **The Business of U.S. Real Estate**, at the REALTORS® Conference & Expo in Anaheim, California on Wednesday, November 9. **Available in both English and Spanish**, this course teaches the fundamentals of conducting real estate transactions in the United States. This is a great way for practitioners from all over the world to meet new contacts, learn together, and create referral opportunities. Visit realtor.org/conference to register for this class.



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION of
REALTORS®
Official Designation



430 North Michigan Avenue • Chicago, IL 60611-4087
800.874.6500 • www.REALTOR.org