

Teams in Real Estate: Who Benefits?

"Teams", meaning *two or more* agents working together, have been around forever. Unfortunately, most of my experiences with teams have been *very* frustrating. Some prospective clients have asked if I was on a "team" before hiring me. They all had had *similar* bad experiences that influenced their hiring plans going forward.

Teams are allowed *although* industry leaders recognize that, while making sense for some agents, they *may* add potential risks for clients. Clients should not be *adversely* affected by working with someone on a team. Poor representation can *harm* clients and **poorly run teams can magnify the potential for problems to occur.**

Real Estate has many different "business models" and different layers of regulation. These include the Code of Ethics, RELRA (the PA Real Estate Licensing and Registration Act) and the law itself. Newer agents, poorly trained and/or poorly supervised agents and some who should not be representing anyone at all can all run afoul of the rules if they do not understand, care or lose sight of WHO IS THE BOSS (hint: it is the CLIENT!).

In my college years and beyond I studied management and teams and understand how *partnering with others can have its benefits*. Together Everyone Achieves More; there is "No I in Team"! Teamwork is essential to operating many businesses. However, Real Estate is *unique*. We work *for* clients who expect us to "**protect and promote**" *their* interests above all others. Real Estate is typically someone's biggest asset requiring their largest investment so clients depend on us to buy and sell it. They *rely* on our experience, training, education, ability and knowledge. **The "client" relationship is "special", making "sharing" them with others a challenge.**

Several clients have told me that they would never work with someone on a team again. They basically told me the same thing: they got tired of talking to different people *every* time they called. Most thought they were hiring one specific agent only to learn otherwise. They felt uncomfortable NOT having an ongoing relationship with the *one specific* agent they thought they had hired. This is a "service business": can you imagine how that feels? I have to wonder about the *confidentiality* aspect of their business relationship: who knew *what*?

While some agents form teams with people they like, others do this when they are too busy to *personally* manage their own business. **I respect that.** Clients may not want or be able to wait and referring them to other agents costs money so they build teams. As long as client service is NOT compromised and the client *agrees* to the terms of the relationship, **there should be no problem.** However, it has been my experience that many teams bring on newer agents learning the business. The team leader may focus primarily on generating business while *delegating* the details to others, perhaps doing little to supervise their group which can be *problematic*. Also, most teams used to consist of two agents. Today, *many* far exceed that number and resemble small offices.

Some brokers seem to hope that "team leaders" will *properly* hire, train, develop and supervise their own team members, making the broker's job easier *especially* if they actively list and sell Real Estate. However, each office has **ONE PERSON** ultimately responsible for making sure that their entire staff is **PROPERLY SUPERVISED**. As I learned years ago, "**delegation without follow-up is abdication**" and giving someone else a job to do does **NOT** relieve the person in charge of making sure that rules and regulations are followed.

Working *for* buyers and sellers *requires* creating an environment of **trust** which typically involves learning *confidential* information. Buyers do not want to share how much they like a property or are willing to pay for it; sellers do not want to share how much they want or need to sell a property or how much they are willing to accept to sell it. What happens when someone on a team has this information? Does a team have agents acting as both listing and buyer agents or agents acting *exclusively* as one or the other all of the time? What *assurances* are there that any individual client's confidences are kept *confidential*? The team concept would seem to allow a greater opportunity to *inadvertently* share otherwise confidential information, *requiring added diligence*.

Again, "teams" are a perfectly legal business model **as long as they are properly run and managed.** They should *not* be an excuse for brokers or team leaders to abdicate their authority or responsibility for supervising their agents or for failing to best represent their clients. I have seen and heard of enough situations to make me wary of them and, apparently, so have some members of the public. How do the benefits compare to the *risks*?

There is no time for inexperience, empty promises or false expectations!

HIRE WISELY: We are not "all the same"!