

Real Estate *Business* For Real Estate Professionals

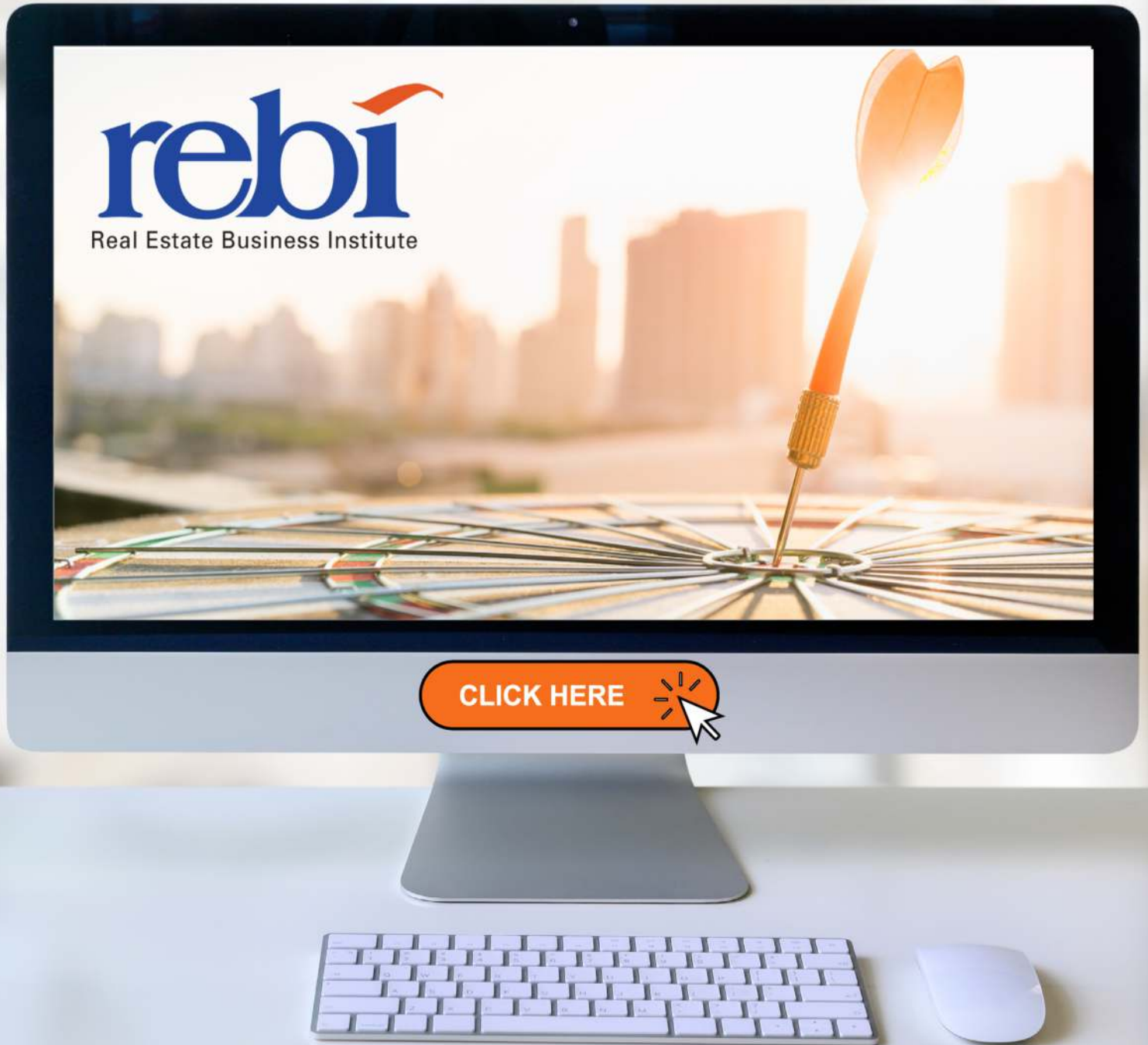


5 WAYS TO **HELP LEVEL** THE Industry's Playing Field

PLUS Dos and Don'ts of
Team Leadership

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EXCEPTIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR
BROKERS, MANAGERS, TEAMS, AND AGENTS

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President's Message



Candace Cooke

ABR, BPOR, CIPS, CRB, C-CRETS, e-PRO, GAA, GREEN, GRI, MRP, PSA, RENE, RSPS, SFR, SRES, SRS

Fall Behind or Plan Ahead?

Even as Fall returns with cooler temperatures, changing leaves and winter at its heels, it doesn't mean we have to throw in the towel for 2021 and just ride out the last couple of months. There are always opportunities for growing, improving, or changing our businesses.

Most business thinkers agree that building sustainable competitive advantage is a critical component – perhaps THE critical component – of creating successful businesses. Many of the traditional competitive advantages are quickly eroding as the information age continues to expand. To remain viable, we must continue to focus on the advantages we can develop today to serve our members, clients and associates of the future.

Our organization has continued to focus on competitive advantage and committed to an attitude that's open to new experiences and new ideas; a deep-seated belief that anything is possible if we work together, and put our hearts, minds, and energy into what we do.

Take some time to re-focus your time and energy this last quarter into assessing the durability of your business and investing in your own professional development. Don't forget about your agents, team, and assistants who also need the skills and tools to be successful. REBI has a portfolio of designation, certification, and certificate programs unmatched in the industry.

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The legendary baseball manager Casey Stengel said -- "There are three kinds of people: those who make things happen; those who watch things happen; and those who ask, what happened?" Which one will you be?

Sincerely,

Candy Cooke

Contents

Sept/Oct 21



features

8

**5 Ways to Help
Level the Industry's
Playing Field**

16

**Dos and Don'ts of
Team Leadership**

departments

26 Listing Strategies

32 Recruiting

36 Sales Strategies

PLUS ...

3 President's Message

7 REBI Advantage



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EXCEPTIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR
BROKERS, MANAGERS, TEAMS, AND AGENTS.

5 WAYS TO HELP LEVEL THE *Industry's Playing Field*



**If equality truly matters to you,
take the time to understand
how you can open up opportunities
in the industry and in homeownership.**

By G. M. Filisko



Help Level the Industry's Playing Field

It seems like a concept few people would disagree with: Everyone should have the same opportunity to succeed in the real estate industry, including in homeownership. The challenge is that it's not clear how to ensure that matches the reality on the ground throughout the country.

That's where the concept of DEI fits in. It's shorthand for diversity, equity, and inclusion, with each leg of the DEI stool having a different definition. "It's all about leveling the playing field so all REALTORS® or people who are qualified have the opportunity to excel," explains JoAnne Poole, AHWD, BPOR, CRB, C-RETS, CRS, e-PRO, GRI, PMN, SRS, associate broker and office manager at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Homesale Realty in Baltimore, Md.

"It's about not having a system where things are so uneven and unbalanced that you can't get to the same place someone else gets to," says Poole. "And you don't have the same resources, opportunities, or people who have the same interest in allowing you to move forward."

In other words, do all qualified people have a shot at becoming an agent or employee at your

company or on your team? And once they're on board, do they all have the same opportunities to succeed? The answers to those questions may not be as straightforward as they seem.



JOANNE POOLE
AHWD, BPOR, CRB, C-RETS,
CRS, e-PRO, GRI, PMN, SRS

**ASSOCIATE BROKER
AND OFFICE MANAGER**

Berkshire Hathaway
HomeServices
Homesale Realty

Baltimore, Md.

Make no mistake: This topic is a difficult one to broach, and it makes many people squirm. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't make a good-faith effort to engage if you believe in equal opportunity for all. "Although there are conversations that are surrounding this now, which I appreciate so much, I still don't think the people having the conversations understand the issue fully because it's so uncomfortable," says Poole. "I've heard people say, 'I'm all in, but don't make me feel guilty.' People can't be defensive during this discussion. They have to fully understand the issues involved."

First, the foundation

Let's start with a statistic to ground the discussion. According to NAR's 2021 profile of members:

- 78 percent of members identify as White
- 9 percent identify as Hispanic/Latino
- 7 percent identify as Black/African American

"The self-interested business reason to focus on DEI is that the REALTOR® practicing-broker population is much less diverse than the population we serve, and the population we serve continues to get more diverse," states Matthew I. Difanis, ABR, AHWD, CIPS, GRI, a lawyer and broker-owner of RE/MAX Realty Associates in Champaign, Ill.

Difanis chaired NAR's Professional Standards Committee as it considered and then adopted NAR's new [Standards of Practice 10-5](#), which prohibits harassing speech, hate speech, epithets, or slurs based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

"If we can't do a better job on that, we'll be out of business," says Difanis. "That's the capitalistic reason for DEI, but there's a moral reason, too." That, he adds, is to ensure the industry doesn't perpetuate [historic policies of segregation and racial inequality](#).



MATTHEW I. DIFANIS
ABR, AHWD, CIPS, GRI

**LAWYER AND
BROKER-OWNER**

RE/MAX Realty Associates
Champaign, Ill.

What DEI means

While it's common to link diversity, equity, and inclusion, it's best to unlink them briefly to gain a deeper understanding of each.

"DEI are just like many other things that are way too often grouped together, and they mean a zillion different things in a zillion different settings in a zillion different businesses," notes Maurice Hampton, ABR, AHWD, CIPS, e-PRO, GREEN, MRP, PSA, RENE, RSPS, SRF, SRS, CEO, co-founder, and managing broker/owner of Centered International Realty in Chicago.



MAURICE HAMPTON
ABR, AHWD, CIPS, e-PRO,
GREEN, MRP, PSA, RENE,
RSPS, SRF, SRS

**CEO, Co-FOUNDER AND
MANAGING BROKER/OWNER**

Centered International Realty
Chicago, Ill.

"For example, diversity means the places you work and frequent and the community you serve is represented by that community everywhere you go," he explains. "It means you don't go into the grocery store and find that the workers are concentrated in one category or another—they're not all women, all men, all Black, all White, or all able-bodied.

Inclusion is about looking at the uniqueness that everybody comes to the table with and saying, 'Hey, I respect you for who you are, and given who you are, how can we work together to achieve the highest goal?'

Equity also has its own definition. "It means that everybody has an equal opportunity to achieve the goals set forth," says Hampton. "That might mean some people aren't just given the interview because you have to interview a certain number of individuals but that they're actually considered for a position based on the skill set they bring to the table."

"This topic spans a wide range of issues, such as how a person's name sounds or is spelled and how that might affect opportunities," he adds. "Is it a 'Jewish' name? An 'Irish' name, a 'Black' name? When we look at equity, we ask things like: Did you remove the names when you were reviewing all the applications for jobs and for sales offers? Where people's home addresses also removed in that process? If you had 25 offers for a home, was there any unconscious bias in making the decision about which offer to accept?"



Real, concrete change

Those steps Hampton raises are just the beginning in creating equal opportunities. Here are other actionable ways you can help achieve DEI:



1 Recognize that your experience likely differs from that of your diverse colleagues.

Difanis has been working hard to understand the experiences of others, and it's changed his life. "I've spent the last few years going from being completely oblivious to obsessed about my industry's role in housing discrimination and plundering Black wealth," he explains. "To me, equity means that while I can't go back and rebuild the generations of lost Black wealth my forebearers directly caused, our policies can eliminate roadblocks for those who come from historically marginalized groups."

He's also beginning to truly understand the different experiences of real estate professionals within the industry. "When I've shown properties, I've never even been asked for a business card," he says. "Yet I've heard of my Black colleagues being cuffed at gunpoint and then asked for a business card later."

Though he's not specifically referring to this incident, the situation Difanis describes happened in August in Wyoming, Mich. An African American agent was showing a property to a 40-something Black man and his teenaged son—and all three ended up in handcuffs. A neighbor called in a possible break-in, despite the for-sale sign in the yard and the fact that the agent, Eric Brown, had entered the home by accessing a key in a lockbox.

"I was in a Clubhouse discussion on race and real estate, and I realized my colleagues had a

justified apprehension of showing real estate while Black," says Difanis. "One Black agent said that when they saw in showing instructions that the lockbox was shackled to the gas meter on the side of the home, the agent thought, 'Great, now I'm going to be Black and poking around the side of someone's house, which means I'm that much closer to someone shooting first and asking later.'"



2 Test for your own built-in biases.

"NAR has stepped up to the plate, essentially saying that you have to understand yourself before you can understand someone else," explains Poole. "Take [NAR's Fairhaven self-assessment on implicit bias](#) to see who you are before you tell someone else that what they're doing is wrong. We're probably all doing something wrong. So let's focus on putting practices in place that are meaningful and relevant."

To me, equity means that while I can't go back and rebuild the generations of lost Black wealth my forebearers directly caused, our policies can eliminate roadblocks for those who come from historically marginalized groups.

—Maurice Hampton,
ABR, AHWD, CIPS, e-PRO, GREEN,
MRP, PSA, RENE, RSPS, SRF, SRS
Centered International Realty, Chicago



3 Evaluate your systems and procedures for unnecessary barriers.

Hampton mentioned removing names and addresses from job applications and offers for homes to ensure you're evaluating all on the same, objective criteria. In fact, check all your systems for steps that could result in different treatment for different groups.

For instance, do you require a college degree for all positions? If so, is it really necessary for every job? Might a person with a high school education do the job just as well?

“Quantify your decisions,” advises Hampton. “Don’t operate by the seat of your pants. Have a formalized system for everything in your business. Your processes and policies need to be objective and related only to the task at hand. Let’s stop choosing the type of tenants we think are best for a particular property. Set your screening criteria and have that across the board; don’t have different perceptions or criteria for north and south side properties. For both, what’s the credit score needed?”

Difanis has been working on that at his company. “A lesson I learned some time ago is that it’s easy for members of the White establishment to say, ‘The door is open; it’s on others to walk through; it’s not on me to drag people through,’” he explains. “That may disregard how your organization looks to potential candidates. I recently looked at my agent roster online, and I saw that my brokerage doesn’t appear to be an organization that welcomes and values people unlike me.

“So in my most recent job postings, right at the front, I state, ‘Our company values diversity, equity, and inclusion and champions increased diversity in homeownership,’” he notes. “That has definitely gotten more people who’d have scrolled through the job listings and said, ‘OK, let’s give this a try.’”

“To every conceivable qualifier for a job, look critically at it,” says Difanis. “Then ask: Is it meaningfully and critically tied to the probability of success in the job or a function of the job? Or will it unreasonably and disproportionately weed out people from marginalized communities?”



Lead or participate in challenging conversations. “I think conversations should be about helping everyone

understand what diversity really means, what inclusion really means, and what equity really means,” says Poole. “You might say, ‘Before we get started, let’s agree to disagree so we can have candid conversations. And let’s agree to not put things so in a box that we’re talking Black and White issues.’ This topic is so broad and includes so many aspects that if you’re seeing DEI as only a Black and White issue, you’ve missed the picture.

“You might also say, ‘We’ll be open and candid, and what happens in here is a conversation for in here since it’s a conversation we’re having with people who want to understand the issues better,’” she adds. “This could be a risky conversation, but the ground rules make it safer.”

Who leads such a discussion? “It could be led by anyone who says, ‘I don’t understand,’” says Poole. “It doesn’t have to be led by someone who’s an authority; just people who want to make a difference.”



Join groups and events outside your comfort zone. “Find a group—it could be a national trade group or a local chapter of a multicultural group—and make a point of patiently listening and watching,”



suggests Difanis. “There’s so much to learn and absorb, and part of it is just being in the room and understanding the organization and what their target audience is.”

Difanis has joined several groups, including the National Association of Real Estate Brokers, a predominantly Black organization formed because local real estate boards wouldn’t permit Black membership decades ago. “I’ve learned that there are many common goals, including a few items that almost all groups would be united behind,” he explains. “But I’ve also developed a pretty nuanced understanding of how a target practitioner and consumer for a Hispanic group would be different from NAREB’s considering the Black homeownership gap.”

In addition, by the time August had rolled around, Difanis had just spent his ninth consecutive Sunday at a local Black church to make friendships and learn about others different from himself. “I was there to observe, listen, and be a part of it for eight weeks,” he reports. “My first act of volunteerism came on that ninth Sunday. I’m an amateur photographer, and the church was hosting an event. I didn’t want to take a volunteer opportunity from someone else, but when nobody stepped up, I said, ‘I’d love to photograph that event.’

People liked my photos so much that someone asked, ‘Could you do some teaching about photography?’” says Difanis. “That’s like a play date in my world, so I’m now setting up a photography clinic.”

But don’t join groups just to add to your resume or to network. “Do it if you have a genuine desire to learn more,” suggests Difanis. “Join because you believe in the fundamental mission. The good news is that you could join and have no idea what you’re getting into but really connect on a deeper level. There’s so much to be learned from people who don’t have the same background you do.”

Why pursue this challenging journey? Because housing is a fundamental human need, and it’s what you do for a living. You can, and do, change people’s lives—and you can lead in making the country better.

“Look at everyone as humans,” advises Hampton. “We’re dealing with the basic human need called housing. Finding housing is emotional, joyful, scary, and more, and we have an obligation to see people for who they are and where they are.” 🍌

G.M. Filisko is a lawyer and freelance writer who specializes in real estate, legal, business, and personal finance topics.





Dos and Don'ts of Team Leadership



**Picture it:
A better-running
team that earns all its
members more money.**

**Here are 8 tips for
upping your game.**

by G. M. Filisko



Dos and Don'ts of Team Leadership

Is your team not where you
hoped it would be by now?

Very common.

Or is it chugging along perfectly fine,
but you're not sure how to
nudge it to loftier goals?

We checked in with three team leaders to hear their
best advice for peers leading teams that aren't firing
on all cylinders. Here are eight dos and don'ts they've
learned from their own personal experience.

1 Check yourself first.

“I think it’s important for the team leader to assess why they’re the team leader,” advises Jasmine Pratt, CRB, C-RETS, e-PRO, GRI, RENE, SRES, SRS, managing broker at Bloc Real Estate Group in Oklahoma City, Okla., and a licensed instructor for all real estate courses in the state. “If you plan to be a producer and the team lead, that’s a different workload and a different financial commitment.”



JASMINE PRATT
CRB, C-RETS, e-PRO, GRI,
RENE, SRES, SRS

MANAGING BROKER
Bloc Real Estate Group
Oklahoma City, Okla.

Pratt has seen too many agents jump into launching a team and then struggle because that role wasn’t the best fit for those agents. “It happens all the time,” she laments, noting that the business model at some companies places outsized value on morphing from an individual agent into a team leader.

“Teams can be glamourized because some agents are identified seniority wise and by power level by the size of the team they lead,” says Pratt. “Assess why you’re being a team leader and whether your lifestyle and expectations fit that role. Also evaluate whether the support you need is in place at your brokerage.”

2 Do recruit very purposefully

This may sound painfully obvious, but it only absorbs deep into the psyche of some team leaders after a rough start. That’s exactly what happened to Steven Pagan, ABR®, AHWD, CIPS, CRB, C-RETS, e-PRO®, MRP, PSA, RENE, SFR®, SRS.



STEVEN PAGAN, ABR®, AHWD,
CIPS, CRB, C-RETS, e-PRO®,
MRP, PSA, RENE, SFR®, SRS

TEAM LEADER
The Steven Pagan Team

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices
Fox & Roach, REALTORS®
Medford, N.J.

“I made my fair share of mistakes in the beginning by hiring someone and letting the chips fall where they may,” says the team leader at The Steven Pagan Team, a 12-person group at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach, REALTORS®, in Medford, N.J., and the broker-owner at Borinquen Property Group in Puerto Rico. “In the second year of running my team, I fired everybody because it wasn’t working.

“There was a lot of conflict among personalities, and I had to do a lot of babysitting, which hindered my production,” he recalls. “The purpose of creating a team is to increase production and leverage your time, and I wasn’t doing either.”

Pagan says he now has candidates complete a personality test and hires people whose personality is the opposite of his. “Hiring people who are just like you never seems to work out,” he notes. “I like to recruit to my weaknesses. Establish what your weaknesses are and hire to fill those—and be humble about that. For instance, I need someone who’s particular in calendaring and individuals who understand cultures I can’t understand.”

Hiring more intentionally can be more time consuming, but Pagan now plays a long game. The last person he recruited to his team was someone he’d had his eye on for 18 months. Pagan watched this agent at industry events and when she was on the other side of the transaction. “Now everybody who has come on the team hasn’t left, and I’ve known and dealt with them for at least a year,” he says. “I know who they are and their reputation in the business. If I make the invitation to come on the team, I make it knowingly.”

3

Do match your leadership style to your team members’ personalities.

“The thing I see most often is team leaders not taking the time to understand different personality types and communication styles,” states Pratt. “I managed more than 40 agents at one time, and I really saw how important this was, especially with me being a female leader managing males.”

In one case, Pratt managed a male agent who’d been an engineer in his career before real estate. Coaching him on one of his early transactions, Pratt told the agent how to handle the situation. “It was clear to me what the issue was, and I thought it was clear that he was going to do what I told him to do,” she recalls. “He concluded with, ‘I’m not going to do that, but thank you.’

“I remember getting off the phone furious and upset—he hit my pride hard,” admits Pratt.

However, after talking through the issue with her own coach, Pratt realized she might have sounded like a parent telling a child what to do. “I realized I’d belittled that agent by saying, ‘You need to...’”

She also realized she needed to invest more time in learning common personality types. Pratt’s conclusion after doing just that: The agent’s personality was one that valued options.

“From that day on, I refrained from using words that insinuated that I thought he was anything less than a mature and competent adult,” says Pratt. “I also started saying things like, ‘I would do’ and add ‘either this or that.’ Going forward, he always took my advice.”



4 Do listen to the toughest feedback.

It's admittedly hard to hear that you're missing the mark. But it's critical as a successful team leader.

"Encourage a culture of proactive airing of grievances," advises Drew Coleman, AHWD, CRB, C-RETS, CRS, e-PRO, GRI, PSA, SRS, principal broker of The Drew Coleman Team at The Hasson Co. in Portland, Ore. "We tell our team members that it's OK to bring things up so we can deal with them, learn from them, and get better. We also promise to have a thick skin. Festering things are destroyers of culture and can really set a team off course quickly."

Recent case in point: One of Coleman's team members "raised the white flag" and said they couldn't keep up with the life-encompassing aspect of real estate "It can be difficult to find work/life balance," admits Coleman. "I haven't seen anyone master it in my friendships and business relationships in the 20 years I've been in the business. I had a team member reach out to me and say, 'I just can't; I need some relief.'"

Coleman adjusted workloads to mend that problem. But he also realized that people often don't come right out and tell you their struggles. But they may hint at them. "People may say something as an aside," he explains. "To us, it's an aside. But to them, it's a shout."



DREW COLEMAN
AHWD, CRB, C-RETS, CRS,
e-PRO, GRI, PSA, SRS

PRINCIPAL BROKER
The Drew Coleman Team

The Hasson Co.
Portland, Ore.

"In the most recent instance, I think I solved the problem," says Coleman. "But in the past, if people asked for different levels of autonomy or an adjustment to the workload, but it wasn't done in a way that was as formal as I'd have thought they'd make that request, I might not have heard them. In hindsight, those situations could have been addressed better."

We tell our team members that it's OK to bring things up so we can deal with them, learn from them, and get better. We also promise to have a thick skin. Festering things are destroyers of culture and can really set a team off course quickly

– Drew Coleman
The Drew Coleman Team,
The Hasson Co., Portland, Ore



"I've learned to listen, and I almost magnify comments," he explains. "It's hard to prioritize every word that hits your airwaves. But when your team member says something to you, listen and follow up. If the comment meant nothing, at least they know you heard them and asked about it."

5

Don't chase shiny objects.

"I run my team on a frugal basis, but my team members have everything they could possibly need," states Pagan. However, that became true only after he took

[REBI's C-RETS courses](#).

"It was the course about positioning your team for profit," he remembers. "I wasn't sure what was wrong with my team, so I took the course and had the aha! moment."

"Too many team leaders feel they have to buy all these systems and programs," says Pagan. "If they just sat back and analyzed what's really needed and what will be used, they could save so much money." Pagan got a nice confidence booster about a year and a half ago when he was interviewing

an agent about joining his team. As he questioned the agent, he learned the agent's current team was spending a fortune on coaching and systems. "The team had a monthly expense of \$50,000-plus," he says. "I learned that the stuff that team was doing, I was doing the same and much more—and we spend \$5,000-\$6,000 a month."

"It's about knowing the value of a dollar and putting money into what you really need," says Pagan. "You have to ask: How much is this system really being used by my team members? If they're not using it much, we cut the system. I've also taken systems my brokerage is already providing and customized a few things here and there to make them work for my team."

"You need to monitor how you use your resources," he advises. "Evaluate what you're spending money on and make sure the rate of return is there on everything you spend on. If you can't establish the ROI, there's no need to spend that dollar."

6

Don't invest more in your team members than they invest.

"Don't find yourself as a mentor, a coach, or a broker wanting your agents' success more than they do," advises Pratt. "It'll put a sour taste in your mouth for people, and it'll take the fun out of things, whether it's real estate or anything else."

"I can usually sniff that out in the first 30 to 60 days," she explains. "I tell recruits, 'This is what you should do in the first 60 days.' I'm giving them things to do based on goals

we set when they came on board, and I expect to see them a lot in those early weeks."

"If I get a lot of cancellations or 'I haven't done that yet' responses, those are signs that while those agents think they want something, their actions say otherwise," notes Pratt. "At the end of that 30- or 60-day period, I'll say to the agent, 'Based on our progress, I'm not sure we're going to make your goal. Should we reset the goal or do something else?'"



7 Do let delegated items stay delegated.

Surely, you've had this happen before: You ask a team member to do something, and before you know it, the task is back in your lap with a shrug and an excuse for not being able to handle it.

Resist!

"Let's say a client is looking for a farm property and you ask a team member to find out more," explains Coleman. "If my team member says, 'Hey, Drew, where do I go next?' that's fine. But if a team member says, 'Hey, Drew, you need to do this,' that's different."

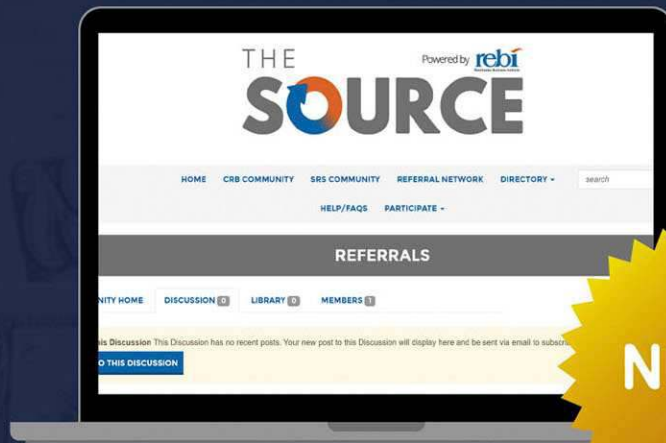
While not a team leadership issue, this can happen with clients, too. "Clients will give you as much of their personal baggage as you'll take," notes Coleman. "I had a client say, 'Our lawn didn't get mowed for the last four weeks.' And I thought, 'Of course, it didn't. What, am I bringing my goat over there?' Rather than taking that on, now we know to ask: 'Are you maintaining the lawn service?' You'd never ask your lawyer to mow your lawn. Yet clients ask their real estate agent to do things like that."

8 Set boundaries for yourself

You'll be much more effective as a leader if you're at the top of your game mentally. "Absolutely set boundaries and teach your agents to set boundaries," advises Pratt. "I think the concept that we're on for 24 hours a day is a fault of our own and of not setting expectations with our clients. People respect healthy boundaries."

"I personally don't want to be up at 10 p.m. unless we're negotiating terms that lead to a contract," she states. "Everyone associated with us is shut down and enjoying their family by then. We could be, too, if we set healthy boundaries." 🍌

G.M. Filisko is a lawyer and freelance writer who specializes in real estate, legal, business, and personal finance topics.



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How to Respond to “We’ve Listed With Someone Else

Ouch! That’s a blow to your pride! Now dust yourself off and respond in a way that leaves open the possibility for new business.

“When I don’t get a listing, I always leave the door open—no pun intended,” reports Betsy Ronel, an agent with Compass in Westchester County, N.Y. “I always leave things on a complimentary note and wish sellers well. If I have a nice rapport with the sellers, I might ask what made them choose another agent over me. I find that helpful because I always want to be the best agent I can be.”

That open-door policy can pay off. “Recently, I got a listing I initially lost because the sellers’ friend said they should use an agent they’d used in the past,” says Ronel. “That agent turned out to have no experience selling in the luxury space, and the listing came to me in the end.”

“There’s enough business for every strong agent,” she says. “And listings are like buses—there’s always another around the corner.”

Ronel isn’t the only agent who keeps business in play with professional behavior after getting rejected. Read on for more income-building tactics from your peers.

Maybe it means nothing

When I find out I didn’t get the listing, I call the sellers to thank them for their time and ask for feedback—not in the way of “why not me?” but so

I can improve my presentation, my process, and how I do business. You can’t improve if you’re not willing to change. Sometimes there’s no reason at all. Sellers just picked a number and went with it. But feedback helps me stay on track, even if I don’t think I need to change anything.—*Nicky Taveras, owner, DNT Home Buyers, Woodbridge, N.J.*

Best of luck

When we lose out on a listing, sometimes it’s out of our control, so we don’t let it drive us up a wall. We usually still text or call the seller when the home hits the market to tell them the home looks great, that we hope to bring the buyer for them, and to send a “best of luck!” This builds good rapport.

If the sellers don’t decide to sell at that moment, about once a month or two, we’ll stay in touch, sending a text or email asking how they’ve been or saying we hope they’re doing well. Just because you didn’t get the listing now doesn’t mean you don’t have a chance to get it in the future. Having “good sportsmanship” goes a long way.

—*Kyle Cioffi, agent, the Kyle & Sam Team, Coldwell Banker Lifestyles, New London, N.H.*

Pout, then move on

When I don’t get a listing, I do four simple things before moving on: pout for a moment, wish the sellers well working with the other agent, offer to

be a resource in the future, and ask what I could improve on to grow my skills for the next listing opportunity.—*Katrina DeWit, agent, Engel & Volkers, Minneapolis*

Leave on a high note

In the spirit of being a life-long learner, I've made it a habit to ask if there was something I could have done differently to have gained the sellers' confidence. There's always some takeaway that will help me be better the next time.

I also highly recommend leaving on a high note. Say something positive about the home and let the owner know you can still help them sell it by bringing prospective buyers. I can't win every deal, but I try to win the moment by being a true professional.—*Cathy Shaw, agent, Falk Ruvlin Gallagher Real Estate Team, Keller Williams Milwaukee North Shore*

Don't give up

I see too many agents who give up when they don't get a listing. My recommendation is to keep track of the property from that moment on. Save your research and CMA. The agent who got the listing may have it priced too low, and you could use your data to help bring in the buyer at a "bargain" price.

It's also possible the listing may not go on the market right away or that the sellers changed their mind. Monitor the property for eventual price changes or improvements. Go to open houses, and stay close to the situation. Give the seller every chance to consider or refer you to others because you did better than the person they hired.

—*Dave Kohl, business development specialist, First In Real Estate, Morton Grove, Ill.*



Listing Strategies

What do you have to lose?

It's worse than a scorpion bite. Losing a listing is painful and a giant kick in the ego. But it's part of the business.

We thank the seller for meeting with us and ask for feedback. Sellers often feel bad for not choosing you, so they're often happy to give you more information. It's an easy way to figure out what your competition is doing better than you. You might say, "Thanks for inviting us into your home, Sally. Although it's tough to hear you chose someone else, we'd love some feedback on what we could do to improve our presentation." That typically results in sellers telling you what the other agent did that you didn't.

Many agents just won't reply to the rejection. But good PR professionals would tell you that this is actually an opportunity since you aren't getting the listing, anyway. What do you have to lose by saying thank you for the opportunity and wishing the sellers the best in their home journey?

And who knows? They may tell their neighbors, "Ryan and Beth didn't get our listing but are worth meeting." There's no sense getting upset. Instead, turn it into potential future business with someone else.—*Ryan and Beth Waller, agents, HomeGroup Realty Inc., Guelph, Canada*

They might realize their mistake

I always ask sellers for the honest reasons I didn't get the opportunity to sell their house. Was it my marketing plan? Was it the commission rate? Was I too aggressive or not aggressive enough?

Sometimes by talking through the issues, sellers mention that they realize that maybe I am the best agent for the job. Maybe in my

presentation, I thought they understood what I said when, in reality, they heard or understood something different.

—*Allan Prigal, associate broker, RE/MAX Realty Group, Gaithersburg, Md.*

Stop communication, but watch

When you don't win the listing, you'll have to cease communication with the sellers since they've signed a contract with another agent. Agents aren't allowed to solicit homeowners who already have an agreement to sell their home in place with an agent. What you can do is keep an eye on the property to see if it doesn't sell, with the possibility of winning the listing when it expires.—*Jason Gelios, agent, Community Choice Realty, Birmingham, Mich.*

Learn to do better

Not getting a listing feels just as painful as being rejected after asking someone to the prom. I can see how that kind of rejection can actually make a new agent change careers. Trust me, it almost happened to me. But I've learned new skills to help win more listing appointments and to win sellers over. And I learned to listen to the sellers by asking why they want to sell, where they're moving to, and their time frame for selling during the listing presentation.

Often, agents talk a lot during listing appointments because they think sellers want to hear all the information and strategies the agent wants to showcase. I've learned that, while sellers do want to hear how you plan to market their home, they also want to make that connection with you.

When you take moments in your presentation to ask the sellers questions, you're not only learning more about the house and about them, but you're also creating that opportunity to build



a relationship and make them feel more comfortable with you.

When you make that connection with sellers, that's it. Done deal. You're in.

—Damian Grass, agent, Grass Tamayo Group, London Foster Realty, Miami

Do they need a referral?

If I know where the sellers are headed after selling, such as moving out of state, I love to ask if they'd like to be referred to an agent in that city. I'm continuing to add value and possibly gaining a referral fee.—Megan Gallagher, GRI, agent, DEN Property Group, Austin, Texas

Protect your reputation

How you react is the difference between possibly getting the listing in the future and

the sellers talking bad about you throughout their neighborhood.

My course of action is always the same, unless I really didn't like the sellers (then I walk away quietly). I congratulate them on listing their home and ask politely what the determining factor was in their decision. I preface the question with something like, "So I do a better job next time...."

I then thank them for the opportunity, compliment the other agent, and tell them that I'll still make every effort to bring a buyer. I don't mention the possibility of the agent they chose not doing a great job.

You win some and you lose some. Sometimes just the way you act gets a seller to rethink, or at least question, their decision. That's all you want at that point.—Tomas Satas, founder/CEO, Windy City HomeBuyer, Chicago

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Back to Basics: Why Do Personal References?

Does anybody still ask for—and actually check—personal references? These real estate pros wouldn't think of skipping that step in the recruiting process.

Some business practices that have been around forever never lose their value. For many team leaders and brokers, such as Bruce Ailion, ABR®, AHWD, CRB, CRS, e-PRO®, personal references fall into that category.

In fact, Ailion goes even further than just asking for and checking references and does a “very deep background check” that includes checking references and beyond, including social media history. “Bad experiences early on with bad hires cause me to be perhaps overly cautious,” explains the REALTOR® emeritus, lawyer, and associate broker at RE/MAX Town & Country in Atlanta.

You'd be surprised what you can learn about candidates when you ask the right questions of the right people.

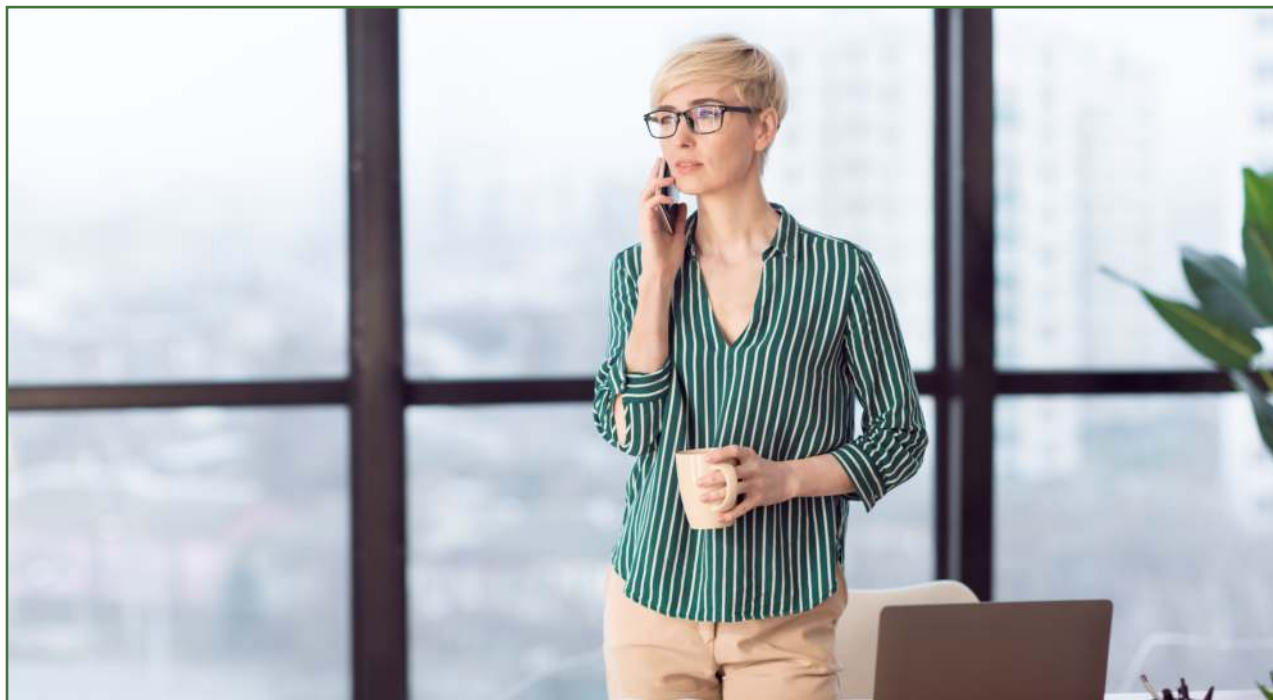
Just getting started

What are the right questions? Ailion has a long list. “I start with the general questions when I contact references, explaining that I'm considering hiring XYZ for ABC,” he says. “I'll ask, ‘Do you mind giving me some background information?’” He goes from there, on to as many of these questions as the reference will answer:

- How long have you known XYZ?
- If the reference employed XYZ, what were XYZ's responsibilities?

- Did XYZ grow in the position or stay where they came in?
- Do you feel XYZ is trainable?
- Did XYZ take advantage of your company or industry training?
- Can you say what XYZ seemed to like and do best in that position?
- How did XYZ get along with co-workers? “I'm looking for them to have been liked, disliked, team players, extroverted, or introverted,” says Ailion.
- On a scale of 1-10, how successful was XYZ at your firm—and how successful do you think XYZ thought they were?
- I'm considering having XYZ do this for me; how successful do you think they'd be at that?
- Why did XYZ leave, and would you hire them back?

If you can't get a supervisor, Ailion says you can ask similar questions of a former co-worker, if you can get in touch with one. “Occasionally, I speak to someone other than an employer or co-worker,” he explains. “For a recent candidate, my sister-in-law knew the person fairly well.”



What about client contact?

Tyler Forte, founder and CEO of Nashville-based Felix Homes, requires references because they provide insights about candidates' performance and personal qualities. "One of the most important questions I ask is, 'How was this candidate's relationship with clients?'" he explains. "I ask this because working in real estate requires you to be personable and trustworthy. I also look for candidates who are genuinely interested in helping others and demonstrate a great attitude."

The responses can be invaluable. "One of the most interesting responses I've heard is that the candidate 'should work in a position in which they're not in direct contact with clients,'" reports Forte. "The reference explained that the candidate was skilled in finding properties and analyzing real estate data. Yet the candidate's way of interacting with clients wasn't typically attentive or considerate."

The result? Forte didn't see the candidate as a good fit as an agent. But he did offer the candidate a position as a consultant providing research and analysis support for Forte's team.

Another question Forte believes is helpful is: Would you rehire this candidate?

"This may sound like a standard reference-check question, but it's extremely important," he says. "Most people will answer this with an enthusiastic yes or a cautious yes. You want to hear the enthusiasm and listen for the reasons the reference would rehire that candidate."

Weeding fakers out

Yes, there are still people who falsify information they provide to you. That's something Stacy Strobl, regional owner at EXIT Southeast, based in Franklin, Tenn., has learned by checking references. "I definitely check references," she says.

Recruiting



“We work with salespeople, and sometimes they can do just that—‘sell’ themselves in an interview. We’ve been burned in the past, so it’s always important to do your homework.

“I always pick up the phone to ask questions because I actually had someone give me a fake email account and a response from a ‘reference,’” she explains. “I also had someone provide a fake phone number with a friend acting as the ‘reference’ on the other end—just like in that episode of Seinfeld!”

Strobl tries to get references to be candid by asking questions that go beyond typical reference-check queries:

- Why isn’t this person still working with you?

- Would you hire this person again?
- Was the person ever involved with any company-related litigation?

“I’ve said to a reference, ‘Since we don’t know each other, please don’t cause me future difficulties, and please let me know what this person is really like,’” says Strobl. “I also ask references: ‘Can this person handle problem-solving, deadlines, and work pressure?’”

As with Forte, the responses can be jarring. “One very notable response was a reference revealing that the candidate might have trouble working a full day,” recalls Strobl. “In another case, after I’d done due diligence with an internet search and social media, the

reference revealed the person had randomly disappeared from the job going overseas for two weeks.”

Consider the source

One more thing: It matters whom you’re asking about a candidate, says Asheville, N.C., broker and property manager Michael Dean Yon, who’s also the co-founder of Pool Research.

“Personally, I do still require personal references when looking for new agents or staff, and I usually check them, too,” he explains. “It’s an important ritual step in the whole process. There’s a lot of insight that references can offer, things that don’t tend to come up through word of mouth or on a resume.”

He’s always sure to ask: What was your gut instinct about this person, and how accurate was that impression? And: On a scale of 1-10, how reliable is this person and why? “If a reference can answer these questions with clarity, I usually feel like I have all I need to know,” he reports.

“But I also love these two questions because they give me an insight into the reference, too,” he adds. “This is something most people don’t think to consider, but it makes sense that if you’re interested in hearing what someone has to say about a potential employee or agent, you’ll also want to know all you can about the reference. Combining their answers about the candidate with the impression they give you of themselves gives you more information.”

How about this for a response?

Of course, you can hear comments that give you pause about a recruit. But you can also hear feedback that warms your heart.

That’s what happened with Dan Belcher, a real estate broker and CEO and founder of Mortgage Relief in Oklahoma City, Okla. “Being a real estate broker isn’t a joke,” he says. “If your previous employers can’t trust you, how can you convince clients to trust you? If you have a bad attitude toward work or the customers, it would be impossible to close a deal.”

So Belcher asks references:

- Do you know the applicant?
- How long did the applicant work for you?
- How was the applicant’s performance?
- What do you think is the applicant’s best asset?
- Would you recommend the applicant to other employers?

“Luckily, most of the time I get positive answers,” he notes. “However, what struck me most was when a reference said, ‘He was our top-performing employee. When he asked permission to leave, we weren’t sure if we would allow him, but we realized that we’d prevent him from discovering new things and growing if we didn’t. So with a heavy heart, we agreed on his resignation.



John D. Mayfield
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e-Pro, GRIsm, RENE, SRS*

Handling Multiple Offers

Category: Motivational/
Professional development

Materials Needed: Flip chart, 3x5 index cards,
and paper

Estimated Time: 15-20 minutes

PowerPoint Available: No

Meeting Objective: To help your team members
identify possible solutions for buyers and
sellers when dealing with multiple offers.

Note: This sales meeting is developed using
resources from the [National Association of
REALTORS® Code of Ethics and Arbitration
Manual](#)

INTRODUCTION TO TODAY'S MEETING

Read the following: Article 1 of the Code of
Ethics says: “When representing a buyer, seller,
landlord, tenant, or other client as an agent,
REALTORS® pledge themselves to protect and
promote the interests of their clients. This
obligation to the client’s interests is primary,
but it does not relieve REALTORS® of their
obligation to treat all parties honestly.”

Standard of Practice 1-6 states: “REALTORS®
shall submit offers and counter-offers
objectively and as quickly as possible.”

STEP 1

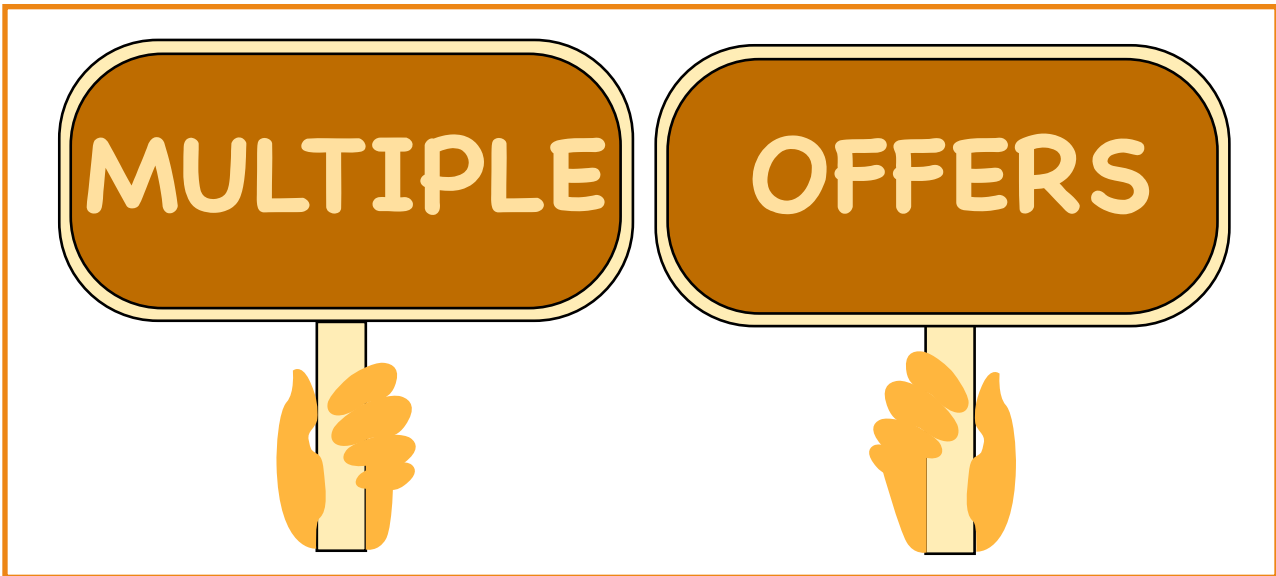
Divide your team into two, four, six, or eight
groups for this exercise. Distribute the 3x5
index cards to each team. Half of the groups
will be working as buyer’s agents; the other
half will be working as seller’s agents. Have
each group list their top three to five
suggestions for their clients when dealing
with a multiple-offer situation.

Allow 5-10 minutes for your group to write
down their responses. Debrief with your
groups allowing each team to share their
responses. List suggestions on a flip chart
(one sheet for suggestions for buyers and
another separate sheet for sellers).

STEP 2

Read any of the bullet points below you see fit
for your group, all from NAR’s REALTORS®
Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual:

- Will disclosing the existence of one offer
make a second potential purchaser more
likely to sign a full-price purchase offer—
or to pursue a different opportunity?
- Will telling several potential purchasers
that each will be given a final opportunity
to make their best offer result in spirited
competition for the seller’s property—or a
table devoid of offers?



- What's fair?
- What's honest?
- Who decides?
- And why isn't there a simple way to deal with these situations?
- Be aware of your duties to your client—seller or buyer—both as established in the Code of Ethics and in state law and regulations. The Code of Ethics requires you to protect and promote your client's interests. State law or regulations will likely also spell out duties you owe to your client.

STEP 3

Read the following: As REALTORS® know, there are almost never simple answers to complex situations. And multiple-offer presentations and negotiations are nothing if not complex. But although there's not a single, standard approach to dealing with multiple offers, there are fundamental principles to guide REALTORS®. While these guidelines focus on the negotiation of purchase offers, the following general principles are equally applicable to the negotiation of lease agreements.

Choose any of the following points below you believe would be appropriate for your group. If possible and time permits, go over each point:

- The Code of Ethics requires that you be honest with all parties. State law or regulations will likely spell out duties you owe to other parties and to other real estate professionals. Those duties may vary from the general guidance offered here. Be familiar with applicable laws and regulations.
- Remember that decisions about how offers will be presented, how offers will be negotiated, whether counteroffers will be made, and ultimately which offer, if any, will be accepted are made by the seller—not the listing broker.
- Remember that decisions about how counteroffers will be presented, how

counteroffers will be negotiated, and whether a counteroffer will be accepted are made by the buyer—not the buyer's broker.

- When taking listings, explain to sellers that receiving multiple, competing offers is a possibility. Explain the various ways offers may be dealt with (such as acceptance of the “best” offer; informing all potential purchasers that other offers are on the table and inviting them to make their best offer; countering one offer while putting the others to the side; countering one offer while rejecting the other offers, and so on).
- Explain the pluses and minuses of each approach (patience may result in an even better offer; inviting each offeror to make their “best” offer may produce a better offer or offers than what's currently on the table—or may discourage offerors and result in their pursuing other properties).
- Explain that your advice is just that and that you can't guarantee what a particular buyer may do. Remember—and remind the seller—that the decisions are theirs to make, not yours, and that you're bound by their lawful and ethical instructions.
- When entering into buyer representation agreements, explain to buyers that you or your firm may represent more than one buyer client and that more than one of your clients or your firm's clients may be interested in purchasing the same property, and explain how offers and counteroffers will be negotiated if that happens. Explain the pluses and minuses of various negotiating strategies (that a “low” initial offer may result in the buyer purchasing the desired property at less than the listed price—or in another, higher offer from another buyer being accepted; that a full-price offer may result in the buyer purchasing the desired property while paying more than the seller might have taken for the property, and so on).
- Explain to the buyer that sellers aren't bound by the Code of Ethics. Sellers, in multiple-offer situations, aren't prohibited from “shopping” offers. Brokers may, unless prohibited by law or regulation, “shop” offers. Therefore, REALTORS® assisting purchasers in formulating purchase offers should advise those purchasers that it's possible that the existence, terms, and conditions of any offer they make may be disclosed to other purchasers by sellers or by sellers' representatives, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law or regulation. Remember—and remind the buyer—that the decisions are theirs to make, not yours, and that you're bound by their lawful and ethical instructions.
- If the possibility of multiple offers—and the various ways they might be dealt with—weren't discussed with the seller when their property was listed and it becomes apparent that multiple offers may be (or have been) made, immediately explain the options and alternatives available to the sellers—and get direction from them.
- When representing sellers or buyers, be mindful of Standard of Practice

1-6's charge to "submit offers and counter-offers objectively and as quickly as possible."

- With the sellers' approval "divulge the existence of offers on the property" consistent with Standard of Practice 1-15.
- While the Code of Ethics doesn't expressly mandate "fairness" (given its inherent subjectivity), remember that the preamble has long noted: "REALTOR® has come to connote competency, fairness, and high integrity." If a seller directs you to advise offerors about the existence of other purchase offers, fairness dictates that all offerors or their representatives be so informed.
- Article 3 calls on REALTORS® to: "Cooperate with other brokers except when cooperation isn't in the client's best interest." Implicit in cooperation is forthright sharing of information related to cooperative transactions and potential cooperative transactions. Much of the frustration that occurs in multiple-offer situations results from cooperating brokers being unaware of the status of offers they've procured. Listing brokers should make reasonable efforts to keep cooperating brokers informed. Similarly, buyer brokers should make reasonable efforts to keep listing brokers informed about the status of counteroffers their seller clients have made.
- Realize that in multiple-offer situations, only one offer will result in a sale, and one (or more) potential purchasers will be disappointed that their offer wasn't accepted.

CLOSING

Remind your group: While little can be done to assuage their disappointment, fair and honest treatment throughout the process, coupled with prompt, ongoing, and open communication, will enhance the likelihood they'll feel they were treated fairly and honestly.

In this regard, take note of the preamble to the Code of Ethics: "REALTORS® can take no safer guide than that which has been handed down through the centuries, embodied in the Golden Rule, 'Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them.'"

When representing a buyer, seller, landlord, tenant, or other client as an agent, REALTORS® pledge themselves to protect and promote the interests of their clients. This obligation to the client's interests is primary, but it does not relieve REALTORS® of their obligation to treat all parties honestly."

– REALTORS® Code of Ethics

John Mayfield, ABR®, CIPS, CRBsm, C-RETS, e-Pro, GRIsm, RENE, SRS, received his real estate license in 1978 and has been a practicing broker since 1981. He earned his Master's degree from REALTOR® University in 2015, has been recognized as REALTOR® of the Year from his local board, and received the 2014 Richard A. Mendenhall Leadership award from Missouri REALTORS®. John has spoken to thousands of real estate professionals in over 22 countries and served as the 2010 President of the CRB Council. He also owns and operates the Global Real Estate School. For more information, visit www.globalrealestateschool.com. Special sales meeting provided for REBI Real Estate Brokers and Managers by Easy Sales Meetings and John Mayfield, The Business Tech Guy - Copyright 2021

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