

MANNTM REPORT

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THE FORMULA FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS

Massey Knakal Realty Services

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We sat down with some of the best and brightest in the industry to see why they chose a career at Massey Knakal, a firm that recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. A mix of seasoned and new agents were interviewed including, Michael Azarian and Jill Lovatt from the firm's thriving retail leasing division; Ben Efraimov and Rob Shapiro from the investment sales division which has held the #1 ranking by CoStar for 12 consecutive years; Preston Flammang and Roger Kapsalis from the growing finance division; and Partner James Nelson and COO Neil Heilberg.

In 2013, Massey Knakal was named one of the best commercial firms to work for by The Real Deal. What sets it apart from other firms?

Azarian: It's our Territory System™ and exclusive owner/landlord representation. Working in a company where the owners are accessible and generous also distinguishes us. We have many company events where we're encouraged to have fun and invite our own families too. It's a perfect work-life balance.

Kapsalis: We're a full service firm. It's a powerful thing. We all collaborate on each transaction and it makes us stronger as a team and a firm.

Efraimov: What really gave me the sense that I landed in the right place was the feeling that I was now part of a family. Paul Massey and Bob Knakal are not your typical behind the curtain bosses. These are genuine guys that want nothing more than for everyone in the company to succeed.

Shapiro: We spend a lot of time together outside the office, not because we have to but because we want to; we've been roommates, traveled together, been in co-worker's wedding parties and some are even their children's god parents. We're truly a family.

What is it like to work in an open floor plan given that the firm doesn't believe in private offices?

Lovatt: It's great because we all have the opportunity to learn by listening. It is amazing to hear Bob and other great brokers navigate difficult situations and come up with creative solutions.

Azarian: I'm not going to lie, when the phones are buzzing it can be a bit hectic. But to hear your colleagues on the phone is an excellent learning experience. I can turn around in my chair and ask anyone anything. It makes cross-selling with our sales and finance teams easy, which creates a real competitive advantage.

Efraimov: This is the best work environment. The energy, the motivation...it boosts confidence and brings out the best in us.

Shapiro: My first cubicle was right in between Paul and Bob. For two years I was able to absorb their discussions and problem solving which were paramount in forming who I am today.

How is Massey Knakal's Territory System an advantage to an agent or client?

Azarian: Anytime I sit down with an owner in my territory, it's my market knowledge that sets me apart. You learn the story of every single block, building and owner in your area. It undoubtedly helps secure business and enables our leasing agents to identify the proper tenant and price and sales agents to justify the highest value of a building. No other firm's model delivers this level of knowledge. It unifies the brokers. We're all experts with a responsibility to each other to be the most informed broker in our submarket and trade.

Flammang: For our capital services division, the Territory System provides the most comprehensive property information and comparables, which translates into higher proceeds and more aggressive terms for our clients.

What keeps clients coming back?

Shapiro: It's simple...superior execution. We get the best prices and provide the best client services.

Nelson: Besides our neighborhood focus, it's our policy of only representing owners/landlords. If we are handling a sale, retail lease, or finance, the owner can be confident that we are acting in their best interest.

You recently started at Massey Knakal, what attracted you to the firm?

Efraimov: Where else would I want to be? Simply put, I went after the best.

Heilberg: I wanted to be part of something special and saw an unbelievably solid foundation here. The word around town was that this was a "hand-shake firm," meaning they deliver what they say they will. There's a level of integrity here that is unmatched. It was also clear that this was a family-oriented firm, which was important to me. I knew I could call this place home.

Kapsalis: For a commercial mortgage broker to work side-by-side with such successful brokers is priceless. Plus, name recognition is a powerful thing.

We understand the firm has an extensive training program. Can you tell us about it?

Flammang: The education and support is a never ending process. It begins with Initial SuccessSM training and continues throughout your tenure. Every employee is encouraged to ask questions, be proactive in developing their business, and communicate directly with top producers and management.

Heilberg: The commitment to success starts on day 1. Agents can't begin conducting business until they are experts in both their respective territories and the Massey Knakal approach. We never stop training...it continues throughout an agent's career. We have Continued SuccessSM training every week and host industry conferences, like the Massey Knakal Multifamily Summit, which provides a tremendous wealth of knowledge for our agents and the industry overall.

Kapsalis: This is a full service model that clearly works. It's proven. Our agents have been at the top for decades. You follow the blueprint that's laid out for you and build a great business.

Efraimov: They say you are only as good as the tools you have to work with; I am armed with great tools.

How does Massey Knakal give back to the community?

Azarian: For the last two years I've been a board member of the Massey Knakal Charitable Foundation. The foundation encourages everyone at the company to donate their time and give back to the communities we live and work in. It's in our DNA. In 2013 we sent a dozen people to help reconstruct neighborhoods destroyed by Super Storm Sandy.

Lovatt: The firm is so supportive of personal charities. I ran the 2013 ING Marathon and my colleagues were unbelievably supportive, interested and enthusiastic. It was heartwarming.

Massey Knakal has recently launched MKRO I, LLC, a real estate fund with RiverOak Investment Corporation, tell us about it...

Nelson: For years, we have recognized the need for an organized capital source concentrating on small to mid-size transactions. Typically, sponsors for these opportunities will reach out to friends and family to raise money piecemeal. Now, they have a direct source to proceed in an expeditious and effective manner.

The firm opened its retail division in 2011 and has already made a name for itself, having recently been identified as an 'up and coming player' by The Real Deal. What does this mean for the division?

Lovatt: Our business has really grown, both in number and size of transactions. I think we are about to hit a meteoric rise.

What changes have you seen in the investment sales business?

Shapiro: Institutional clients now make up about 50% of my clientele. These clients require a certain level of analytics and enhanced marketing capabilities that have helped improve the service model for our clients.

You've been with Massey Knakal Capital Services since the beginning. Can you talk about the evolution of your business?

Flammang: It's exciting. We have doubled our volume every year since inception, increased our average deal size by 50%, and developed a system of managing the financing process that separates us from our competition.

With the three disciplines in place (investment sales, retail leasing and capital services), how has cross-selling benefited your business?

Flammang: Cross-selling has increased deal flow for everyone. The different platforms have also been a huge help to our clients who love working with us...we are now a one-stop shop.

Lovatt: Owners love working with us and I can count on any member of the team to handle any assignment flawlessly.

Shapiro: It gives us up-to-the minute knowledge of current retail, financing, and sales values which is a fantastic resource when providing values.

What's in store for Massey Knakal over the next few years?

Heilberg: Over the past 18 months, we have significantly expanded our management team and infrastructure to deliver the best resources to our agents and support our new business initiatives, like our New Jersey expansion. Our goal is simple; we want to build on our proven track record to do what we set out to do: lead our markets, inspire our people, transform our industry. We are very optimistic about the future mostly because the people we hire are committed to excellence. At Massey Knakal, we focus on winning championships both personally and professionally, and have fun in doing so. In my career, I have never been more excited about the future. It's going to be a thrilling ride for us all.

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