

The Case For Networking

Why that endless stream of cocktail events, seminars, and holiday galas deserves to be on the list of things brokers do.

In last week's column, I wrote about 10 things commercial brokers can do to maximize their productivity. While an all-inclusive list would contain dozens more, I highlighted those that I thought were the most important. The response to that column was tremendous and produced many emails with questions and comments.

Interestingly, a few readers questioned the importance of, and benefits derived from, networking. In this week's column I will go into further detail about

my perspective on networking and why I believe it to be a critical component of a commercial broker's recipe for success.

These comments questioning networking's inclusion on the list were surprising to me given that real estate brokerage is a relationship business and relationships are greatly enhanced by face-to-face contact, perhaps more than any other kind of business.

Typically, a broker will attempt to develop a relationship with a

principal through cold calls and mailings. Most property owners are deluged with phone calls from brokers every day, particularly if that principal owns a property in a neighborhood that is considered "hot" or owns a particularly attractive property. Many of these phone calls fall on deaf ears, as owners may find it difficult to differentiate between the many calls they receive. I believe that getting the owner on the phone, regardless of the duration or quality of the conversation is somewhat beneficial, as that point of contact gets the owner to know the broker's name. Cold calls made regularly have a positive impact

on the relationship-building effort between the parties.

Mailings of pertinent information to a property owner also help develop that relationship. Having the owner see the company name, and the broker's name, in regular mailings creates a familiarity that can also help the broker make inroads with that principal. Good old-fashioned hard mailings make a far better impression than emails, which can be easily deleted with a quick keystroke. While a strategy of mixing both hard mailings and email blasts is probably best, hard mailings have a more positive impact on relationship building.

While these two techniques are essential, neither phone calls nor mailings are typically enough to develop a close relationship that is going to lead to regular business opportunities. A basic premise of sales—and that goes for all sales, not just commercial real estate sales—is that people work with people they know well and like. Yes, likability is a key variable for a salesperson. In fact, likability, under certain circumstances, may trump capability. I'm not saying the you can be an incompetent salesperson and regularly get business because someone likes you. However, if you are



*Robert
Knakal*