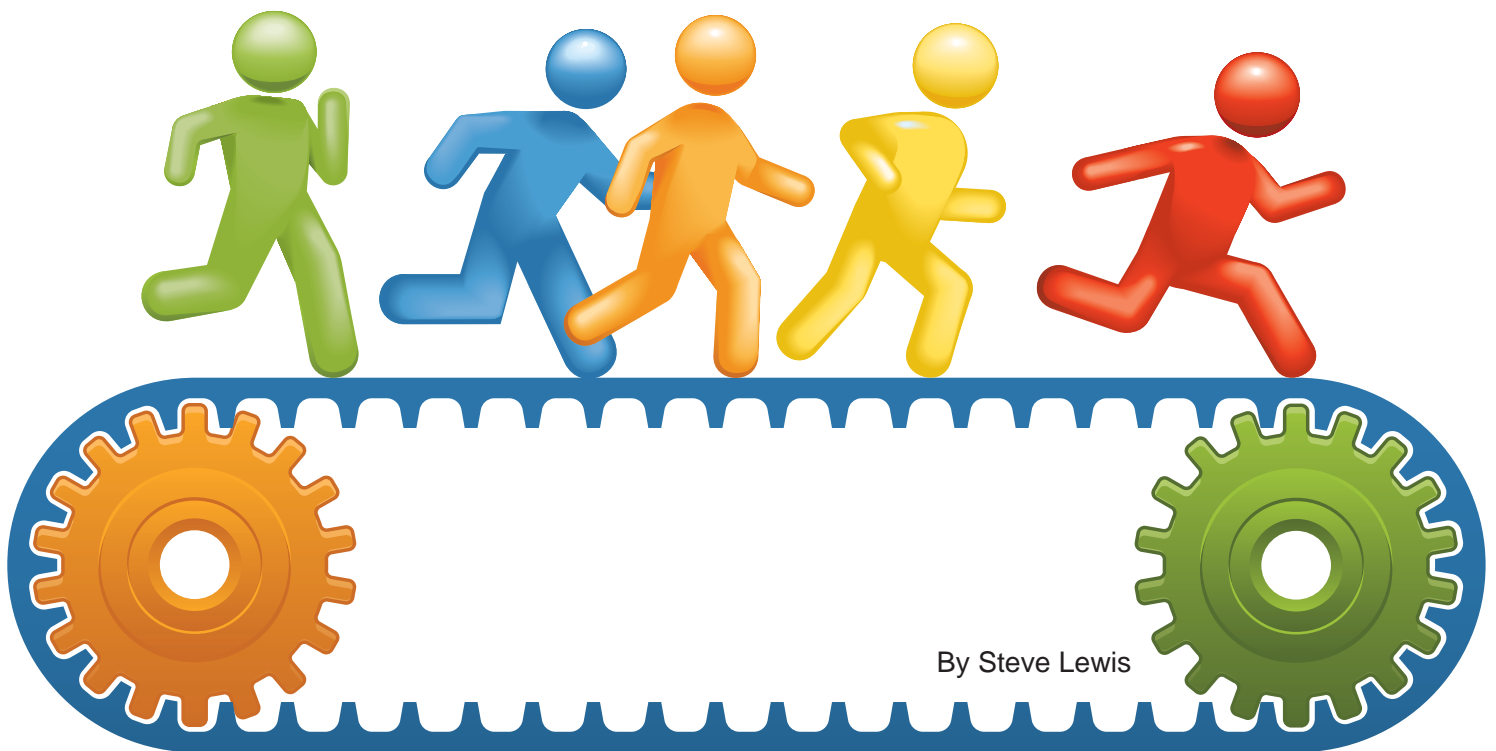


HOW TO HIRE, TRAIN, AND MOTIVATE YOUNGER BROKERS



By Steve Lewis

It has always been a challenge to assess the talents of younger brokers with little or no previous experience, and the challenge today is perhaps even greater than ever as the “younger generation” has become more focused on technology and perhaps less focused on “personal contact.” Many are also more dedicated to balancing life and work hours than some of their “boomer” predecessors.

However, SIORs seem more than prepared to deal with these challenges. “I’m always about attitude before aptitude,” says **Mike Warner, SIOR, CCIM**, vice president at Industrial Sales and Leasing with Cushman Wakefield in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. “The really good ones have dedication, discipline, and motivation. We’re in sales, so you constantly have to use communication and connect with people; I’m not necessarily looking for degrees.”

Robert G. Thornburgh, SIOR, CCIM, CPM, president and CEO of Heger Industrial in Long Beach, Calif., agrees. “We firmly believe in the concept of hiring for the right attitude and then training for skill,” he says. “You really need to focus on finding those individuals who are passionate about and believe in what they are doing as a professional.”

“I like a person who has a good sales background; I’m not so particular about the product or service, just the fact that they have three to five years experience selling something,” adds **Greg Gunn, SIOR**, an office specialist with Coldwell Banker Commercial NRT in Salt Lake City, Utah. “I also like someone who not only was in sales, but who also was on the proactive side of asking for the order instead of being an order taker.”

“I look for superior technology skills,” says **Maribel Koella, SIOR, CCIM**, director and principal of NAI Knoxville, and

the only female SIOR in the state of Tennessee. “A cheery personality is also important, and someone who is motivated and receptive — which to me means coachable. They listen and want to learn, and end up engaged. I appreciate thoughtful questions when appropriate, but not in a rebellious way.”

“I look for someone who is motivated and driven; they need to be confident, but not arrogant,” says **Chad Boddez, SIOR, BComm, CCIM**, senior vice president, Office Leasing and Sales with Jones Lang LaSalle in Edmonton, Alberta. “The person needs to show they want to be in this business and that they are willing to work hard to succeed. I think the mentality is if you were smart enough to get into a university program and complete four years of school, you must have some underlying work ethic and be motivated. Previous work experience is definitely an asset. I look for those who were previously in retail or who worked in restaurants. The candidate has to be likeable, approachable, and easy to talk to because if they are not that way with you, they likely won’t be with others.”

LOOK FOR RED FLAGS

SIORs say that during the interview process they look for “red flags” that warn them away from certain candidates. For example, Koella cites entitlement, contempt, and impatience. “Some Gen-Xers and Millennials were born on third base and believe they hit a triple,” she notes. “They do not have the patience required. Some want to turn it off at 5:30 p.m. and don’t want to work after hours — which is what it takes.”

“We probably won’t hire right out of college unless they’ve been an intern with us,” she adds. Other concerns include loyalty, which she believes is less predominant in the younger generation. To help in the weeding out process, her firm uses profiles. One in particular, she notes, “gives me an indication of whether they’ll succeed in sales or not, and whether they are coachable or not,” she says.

“I suggest this is not a 40-hour a week job; if they make a negative comment, they may not be the best candidate for the position,” says Boddez. “Another flag is someone who focuses too much on their salary and asks when they will be making ‘big money.’” They should view their time as a junior broker as a time to learn the industry and to prove to their senior that they are capable of moving to the role of a full-time broker.”

Warner agrees. “We need someone who understands they will not get rich on a deal, but on relationship building,” he says.

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“The number one response I look for is that they love to do cold calling; in that respect, the business has not changed much in the past 25 years,” says Gunn. “I also like to hear that their spouse doesn’t expect them to be home by 5:30 p.m. every night.”

“It is critical for a company to get a sense of how that individual will interact with clients and colleagues,” says Thornburgh. “We have found that taking candidates and spending time with them in the market provides a

great deal of insight you won’t normally find during the traditional interview setting.”

TRAINING FOR SUCCESS

The training process, SIORs agree, is key to ensuring the future success of new brokers. “When they start out they are, green, green, green, so I set the rules up front; it’s very hard to change traits once they’re in the ring, so early habit formation is the key,” says Warner. “When my newest guy started, I said ‘you’ll be in the office at 7:30 a.m. every morning; I don’t care if you have a hangover.’ He only had one suit, so I told him to go get five new white shirts and wear a suit and tie every day.”



CHAD BODDEZ,
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GREG GUNN,
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SIOR, CCIM, CPM



MIKE WARNER,
SIOR, CCIM

This is new to Millennials, he continues, “But I tell them you never know who you’ll meet today. If you haven’t shaved, go home, shave and come back. Work as long as I do. Start to learn the inventory and where the buildings are.”

Follow-up is also key with Millennials, he says. “If they take a landlord to lunch, they immediately have to send a follow-up,” Warner shares. “Nowadays people do not say thank you, especially their generation.”

“I like to give them a script and let them make it their own and give them a short leash and let them call for a while and then give them feedback on how they can improve their performance,” says Gunn. “I also like to do role playing with them; I pretend I am receiving the call and he/she is calling me asking me for the business. There is a real art form to getting past voice mail and getting to the gate keepers to actually engage in a conversation with them.”

“What I’ve done is have them shadow me and be their mentor,” says Koella. “It does work to an extent, but there is a sense of independence and some do not necessarily appreciate experience; they would prefer to go out and do it on their own versus having an older person go with them.”

Like Warner, Koella believes dress is important. “I tell the young trainees to think about the person you are going to meet and how they are going to be dressed,” she says. “Some get it and some do not, because they are used to dressing casual.

There have been times I have not hired people based on the way they were dressed.”

Because of the difference in generations, she continues, when she asks a young broker to contact a client she has learned that she cannot assume they will call them rather than texting or e-mailing them. “So now I say they need to pick up the phone and call, because they really do not want to do it,” she shares.

“Developing new real estate professionals takes a great deal of time and dedication,” says Thornburgh. “However, when done properly, a company has the unique ability to design its own in-house training system and instill the right values and methods to successfully conduct business today. Having a year round, well thought out series of educational forums and assigning a senior level salesman to serve as a mentor are critical factors in this process.”

“We spend a tremendous amount of time and energy dedicated toward sustaining a unique corporate culture,” Thornburgh continues. “It is not uncommon for our company to host monthly educational trips and social events outside of our office to keep a fresh perspective, share ideas and increase collaboration amongst our team.”

“We bring our younger brokers on tours to help them get a better understanding of the market,” says Boddez. “We have our younger brokers complete surveys of options for tenants, writing offers, listing agreements, preparing marketing materials and being the main point of contact for general information when calls come in from other brokerages.”

Since many of these younger brokers have relatively little prior experience, SIORs say it’s important to teach them the critical skills that will help them succeed as part of the training process. “We constantly focus on integrity and the importance of holding true to one’s core values,” says Thornburgh. “They define careers and companies; they are the cornerstone upon which legacies are either built or broken.”

“After they have a sound script that they can make their own, more than anything else, I emphasize the consistency,” adds Gunn. “Studies have proven that the most important thing you can do that trumps everything else, is making lots of calls consistently day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year.”

“We emphasize good listening skills, and good response that takes into account the communication style of the person you are trying to reach,” says Koella.

“A lot of people are capable of completing deals once a deal is found, but not everyone has the ability to actually bring business through the door. We emphasize prospecting and cold calling, networking, getting involved in the community, joining professional organizations, etc.,” says Boddez. “One also must be assertive. If they are told ‘no,’ they must have the tenacity to be able to try again. The art is to be assertive but to also be professional and likeable in your approach. Attention to detail and the willingness and ability to learn will assist with a junior broker’s success.”

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“As long as it is ethical and professional, it does not matter how a junior broker brings in new business,” Boddez continues. “It could be by cold calling in person, by e-mail, through social media, through internet searches, etc.,” he says. “However, I do not believe most senior brokers will be teaching newer methods to the younger brokers. Younger brokers will need to understand what is required of them and determine the best way to achieve the desired results.”

MOTIVATING YOUNGER BROKERS

Is the potential for big earnings sufficient motivation for these younger brokers? Not necessarily, say SIORs.

“I think it’s not just money,” says Koella. “This generation has a sense of giving back to society, and to the environment.”

“This is an entrepreneurial business; you’ve got to make it on your own, but I believe having a strong mentor is helpful, if not essential,” adds Gunn.

“But ultimately, the talent has to be able to motivate themselves. External motivation is only short lived.”

“While pay and benefits are certainly very important, it’s not the only way to gain meaningful engagement,” says Thornburgh. “People want to be a part of something unique. What is it about your company that leaves a lasting impression — what makes you different? When a company and its purpose are not viewed as being authentic, you lose trust and credibility. People inherently want to support brands they believe in.”

“We’re in a 100 percent commission business; it is a meritocracy,” says Warner. “I’m the top dog; I’ve worked out a scenario where out of every single deal a chunk goes to me and a smaller chunk to him. Big or small he gets a piece, and feels involved. Also, I incent him to bring in business; I say, ‘if you go out and find people you get a bigger share.’” With young people, he adds “you have to have it in writing. If it’s not spelled out up front, you will have problems.”

“Here is a motivating factor: If you do not produce, either you do not eat or you will eventually be let go by your firm,” says Boddez. “There has been a lot of talk about the different motivational factors of the younger generation. I think those studies break down when you are examining jobs where you do not have a salary.”

Boddez feels it’s important that recognition is given and compensation is fair. “My senior broker and I had a relationship that was set up to fail,” he shares. “If he completed the



transaction, he received a higher percentage than I received if I completed the transaction. What ended up happening is he started to claim he ‘knew’ the people at the companies when I was getting leads. Our relationship broke down because of it. I suggest that every member of the team receives a certain percentage of every deal and this percentage can be renegotiated each year if required.”

RECOGNIZING DIFFERENCES

Gunn says that as these young brokers are developed, it’s more than just generational differences the senior broker must recognize. “I think you have to treat each developing agent differently, after all every person is different. What may motivate one may not motivate another,” he says.

“SIORs need to realize that technology is taking a greater and greater role,” says Boddez. “Younger people have grown up with technology and SIORs should use the opportunity of younger people training them on the new technologies in place. Although many older brokers view technology as a burden and time consuming, they may find it actually saves time and allows them to be more productive.”

But, adds Koella, “It’s true they can do so many more things better than we can, but that only equates to being smarter. They don’t have the soft skills. Think of a seasoned SIOR — what it has taken to get to this point in relationships.” However, she adds, “When our generation goes out and it’s all theirs, it will not be a problem — I assume they will communicate in the way they are comfortable.”

“I am confident that by virtue of its innovative approach to real estate, SIOR and its highly skilled members will continue to positively impact our industry and meet the challenges created by today’s rapidly changing business climate,” Thornburgh concludes. ■