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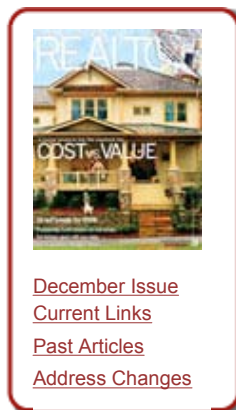
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**FOR BROKERS: Recruiting**

## Attract Your Town's Top Talent

Unless you have a good idea of your strengths and weaknesses, you could end up trying to attract the wrong people.

**BY G.M. FILISKO**

One proven method of taking your sales volume to a higher level is convincing your competitors' top talent to jump ship for a better deal with you. But given the reluctance of many professionals to uproot their practice, boosting your business in this way requires a long-term approach. The key is keeping your name in front of associates so that, when the waters turn choppy at their brokerages, you're the one whose lifeline they'll want to grab.

### 1. Look Inward First

Start your recruiting efforts by defining your own company culture and market position. Unless you have a good idea of your strengths and weaknesses, you could end up trying to attract the wrong people.

“Highly productive people are attracted to highly productive offices,” says Carol Johnson, president of The Recruiting Network Inc., a Schaumburg, Ill., consultancy. “Often, brokers think that if they say just the right words or have just the right mailer, they’ll attract top producers. But unless you have a productive, energetic environment and attitude, you can send thousands of letters and do thousands of interviews, and nothing’s going to work.”

So, if your highest producer generates \$2 million in gross commission income, you can forget about attracting an associate whose GCI is \$10 million, for example.

That makes your marching orders clear. To attract megaperformers, you first have to focus on making your

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existing crop of associates more productive. Then, your company will start looking like the kind of place a top performer would find attractive, says Johnson.

## 2. Look Outward Second

Once your own house is in order, learn everything you can about the associates you'd like to attract. "How many homes did they sell last year? What was their sales volume? What's their price point?" says Bob Corcoran, founder and president of Corcoran Consulting & Coaching in Swansea, Ill. "If your price point is \$200,000, it doesn't make sense to recruit associates who sell \$400,000 houses, because they won't understand your brokerage culture."

Gathering data on associates not only helps you know whom to pursue, it impresses them in meetings. "Recruits will think, 'This guy must really want me if he's studied me and is still interested in me,'" says Corcoran.

You can gather key intelligence on the associates you want, like whether they're at a natural point for making a change, by examining competitors' MLS statistics, says Johnson.

"At what production level are associates entering that office, and at what level are they leaving?" she says. Knowing that a competitor's associates typically jump ship at about \$5 million GCI helps you know when they're hitting a plateau and might be open to your plan to boost their production.

## 3. Make Contact

Once your intelligence is in hand, you need to create a plan.

Fran Stiakakis, director of career advancement at the 3,500-associate Metro Brokers GMAC Real Estate in Atlanta, has her team of four recruiters begin a series of calls to a list of targeted top performers.

"They try to arrange appointments, and the dialogue is straightforward," says Stiakakis. "They say, 'Let's get together when it's convenient at a place that's convenient to you, and let me explain what we can do for you.'"

When they're successful in arranging appointments, recruiters handle the meetings. "It's not a hard sell," she says. "We just lay out the benefits and let associates make the decision."

Metro Brokers' recruiters attract about 30 experienced associates each month to the firm, says Stiakakis.

#### 4. Identify the Discontent

Johnson says there's no universal script to use when you meet with top producers. "Just listen very carefully to what they say," she says. "There's nothing — absolutely nothing — that doesn't apply to recruiting and retention. It's the rock in the shoe. The rock could be that the copier or phone system conks out, that the company has a terrible Web site, or a personal issue."

For one top associate recruited by Mark Jenkins at Prudential California Realty in Valencia, Calif., the rock in his shoe was a minor increase in desk fees. "His broker was going to raise his desk fee \$100 a month," says Jenkins, whose office doesn't charge desk fees. "He said, 'I've been here 20 years, and you want to raise my rent? That's enough!'"

Though some might conclude the associate left because of a money dispute, that's not the lesson that Jenkins draws. Rather, Jenkins says, in cases like this one there's typically a deeper discontent. "Often, associates feel they're not wanted or appreciated," he says.

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