



# REP



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### GREAT EXPECTATIONS

How to advise clients when the market takes a plunge

### HOUSEHOLD NAME

Elton Ash on building the RE/MAX brand in Canada

### MORTGAGE MATTERS

What the latest regulations could mean for buyers



# TOP TEAMS

Canada's leading real estate teams outline the keys to achieving collective success

# SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017



# TOP TEAMS 2017

Despite the long hours and individual effort, real estate is still very much a team game. *REP* went in search of the 100 top-performing real estate teams in Canada to find out what makes them unique and how they've leveraged this increasingly popular concept into blistering success

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**REPTALKS** a lot about “expanding your business,” which is a convenient, slightly more lyrical stand-in for “selling more real estate.” But there comes a point in the life of every successful real estate agent when expansion becomes quite literal: You’ve cracked the code, clients are seeking you out at an intensifying pace, and to maintain the level of service that made you so in-demand, it’s time to build a team.

But not all teams are successful. Some agents have trouble transitioning into a leader-

ship role, coming up short when attempting to train and motivate their team members. Some hire poorly, assembling a disparate group of personalities that fails to synergize. Some simply find that they were more comfortable when someone else was in charge of making the most critical back-end decisions.

Reaching a point in your career where starting a team is necessary is a fine accomplishment, but turning that team into an equally successful entity is even more impressive. That’s

why **REP** has dedicated this issue’s cover feature to Canada’s top real estate teams. The ability of these teams to achieve their goals year in and year out speaks not only to the mentorship and vision of their leaders, but also to the skill and commitment of the indispensable agents and support staff working to build their team’s brand and increase its market share.

No one goes it alone, even in real estate. Looking at the inspiring performances of **REP**’s Top Teams, why would you want to?

## ABOUT THE SPONSOR



RE/MAX Infinite is a thriving, diverse brokerage growing in numbers year after year. We adhere to the premise that our agents are our clients. We are committed to ensuring that they receive consistent, excellent service and support at every level, from our broker of record, Levon Nazarian, who makes himself available to all agents whenever they have a question or require help with their deals, to a top-notch administrative staff that is among the best in the business – knowledgeable, friendly and always willing to go above and beyond to assist our agents with all of their business needs.

The RE/MAX Infinite team is family. We have developed a strong sense of community, and we are very proud of the dedicated, supportive and selfless environment within our brokerage.

We aim to improve our business with the latest tools and technologies available, with a strong emphasis on continuing education and awareness. Weekly meetings to discuss the latest developments in the industry, as well as technical tutorials and occasional guest speakers, serve to equip not only new agents but also seasoned top producers with everything they need to develop and grow their business.

We are currently in the process of opening a new 20,000-square-foot facility in York Region that will incorporate many essential services. We believe the new office will transform the way our agents conduct their business and will allow for more well rounded service for all of our clients.

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# SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017



## PRIME REAL ESTATE TEAM - RE/MAX CAMOSUN - OAK BAY

Victoria, BC

Team leader: Tony Joe

Even in a hot market, patience is a virtue. Tony Joe, leader of the Prime Real Estate Team, says agents looking to start a team need to establish themselves

as more than just great salespeople before taking the next step. "Ensure you have a good reputation within your local industry," he says. "It's hard to recruit when you don't have a solid reputation or background. And if you do [hire new agents], it will be short-term."

Joe also encourages team leaders to take their time and refrain from forcing growth at an unjustified pace. "Each team member needs to find their own footing before adding a new one," he says. "This also reduces the threat of competition within the team, since you should be taking new members on to complement the production of the existing members."

In addition to being one of Victoria's top real estate teams, Joe's squad is actively involved in the community, from Habitat for Humanity and the Telus Community Board to a number of hospice and affordable housing initiatives.



## RE/MAX HALLMARK PILON GROUP REALTY

Ottawa, ON

Team leader: Jason Pilon

Having recently led Pilon Group Realty to the top spot among Ottawa RE/MAX teams, Jason Pilon clearly knows a thing or two about hiring the right agents.

"Most agents beginning the hiring process for the first time try to sell themselves to new hires and end up making costly mistakes hiring the wrong people," he says. "Our interview process can take months, but in the end it's worth the effort to get someone great."

Having a team of focused agents has provided Pilon a greater dose of that most precious of assets: time. "What team leaders do with that time will determine their success," he says.



## TEAM TIM CAMPBELL - RE/MAX PREFERRED REALTY

Windsor, ON

Team leader: Tim Campbell

Clear and constant communication that encourages input from every team member has contributed heavily to Team Tim Campbell's sustained excellence. Recently relocated to its own space and fresh off a year of closing more than 200 deals, Campbell says his team's culture is thriving, enabling each member to "blow through our sales, professional and personal goals." That momentum should only intensify in 2018, which will see the team selling a number of housing developments in Windsor.



## THE CINDY CODY TEAM - RE/MAX TWIN CITY REALTY

Kitchener, ON

Team leader: Cindy Cody

Cindy Cody has been leading her RE/MAX team for most of her 33 years in the business. In

that time, she has seen her role evolve from an agent who needed help with admin and buyers to a mentor and master trainer for 11 agents. As the glue that holds the team together, Cody is still intimately involved with matching her agents to the right leads and running them through weekly training programs.

Cody takes a long-range view of her business, which she says is a philosophy agents looking to start a team should consider. By looking at their teams in terms of where they want them to be in two years' time, Cody says team leaders can bring clarity to their most important decisions, especially those that involve staffing.

"The biggest advice I can give is to hire good people – team players and people you would like to be around for the next 20 years," Cody says, adding that the right hiring choices have resulted in the respect, harmony, happiness and laughter that her team runs on.



## OHS MARKETING TEAM - ROYAL LEPAGE PARKSVILLE-QUALICUM BEACH REALTY

Qualicum Beach, BC

Team leader: Rob Ohs

Starting a team has allowed Rob Ohs to achieve more than he ever thought possible as an individual Realtor. "It has made me think of running a team as less of a job and more of a business that includes leadership, mentorship and constant analysis," Ohs says. "By leveraging talented people and modelling systems and best practices, we have been able to achieve growth each year."

Ohs says staff retention is the biggest challenge a leader faces when attempting to keep a team on track. While financial compensation plays an outsized role, Ohs says finding intangible methods of showing team members they are appreciated is something prospective team leaders need to consider.

"To be honest, I didn't manage that very well in the early years of the team," he says. "But reviewing compensation packages annually, having close communication with every member of the team and really getting to know their personalities helps me understand what they need to be happy, contributing members of the team."



## THE CHARLTON ADVANTAGE REAL ESTATE TEAM - ROYAL LEPAGE MEADOWTOWNE REALTY

Milton, ON

Team leader: Melissa Charlton

When building a team, Royal LePage's Melissa Charlton advises agents to create an environment they themselves would thrive in. "Treat your teammates as an extension of you, not as 'junior' agents," she says. "When you're team leader, your teammates become your clients. Their success is your success, so it's important that you spend time with them, train them and be their mentor."

Charlton says that in the early days of her leadership, she would often take it upon herself to step in and help her agents hit their sales targets. But she has learned that leadership is about meeting agents at the finish line, not carrying them across it. "People need to have a degree of self-motivation," she says. "My role as team leader is to give them all the tools they'll need to hit their goals, tell them the habits and actions they need to take in order to achieve those goals, and keep them accountable. But ultimately it's up to them."



## ST. JEAN REALTY

Ancaster, ON

Team leader: Michael St. Jean

In the last year, Michael St. Jean's team has sold almost 500 homes, launched three new development projects and unveiled a major mass media marketing plan. While the rewards have been considerable, St. Jean says his focus is on running a strong business his agents can depend on. "This is no longer about me; it's about the team," he says.

St. Jean is now preparing himself for a year of 500-plus sales. It's a position he may not have dreamed possible when he first started out, but he says uncertainty is to be expected when forming a team. "There is no business-building or team-building playbook. You have to create your own path and learn along the way. Failure is going to occur, but you must learn from it and move forward."

## ROYAL LEPAGE TURNER REALTY

Gander, NL

Team leader: Michael Turner

Working in a rural area of Newfoundland hasn't stopped Michael Turner's Royal LePage team from becoming one of the company's top performers in Atlantic Canada. One of the reasons behind the team's success has been Turner's approach to hiring, which he does based on the geographic areas he wants serviced. "I wouldn't want too many people fighting over the same piece of pie," he says. "It's much better to expand your scope and make the pie bigger."

Going paperless has had a major impact on his team's efficiency, but Turner says the modernization process was carried out at a deliberately slow pace. "I spent a year going paperless. I spent another year hiring and training. You can't jump into starting a team and try to do everything at once."

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## COOPER MCLINTOCK & ASSOCIATES - RE/MAX OF NANAIMO Nanaimo, BC

Team leader: John Cooper

For John Cooper, whose expertise lies in problem-solving, business growth and mentoring, running a team allows him to spend time leveraging his strengths. Considering the small mountain of awards his RE/MAX team has accumulated over the years, his strengths clearly aren't the only ones on display at Cooper McIntock & Associates.

The last 12 months have been crucial to the group's evolution. Not only did Cooper's six-agent team rack up an astonishing 220 sales, they also load-tested their new team model and solidified their company culture. "This has helped us identify precisely where we can increase value to our defined target markets," Cooper says. "Nobody cares about how big your team is or how many homes you have sold if you can't help them achieve their goals impressively."

Cooper's belief in well defined roles, structure and accountability has been instrumental in leading his team to the top of a scorching Nanaimo market. "Running a 'joe do-it-all' real estate business is totally different than running a team," Cooper says. "Don't get it twisted."



## RE/MAX REALTRON POL SINELLO REALTY Newmarket, ON

Team leader:  
Frank Polsinello

Frank Polsinello has the dual pleasure of running one of RE/MAX's most powerful teams and working alongside his son. "Brandon and I have created a very scalable and duplicable business model that we are now expanding into other markets in Ontario," Polsinello says. His team's success has allowed it to more than double in size in the last year, and resources like one-on-one coaching, a 24-hour support program, multiple lead sources and a simplified selling system have allowed it to close in on its goal of completing 400 transactions in 2017.

## BO KNOWS HOMES/ DESROSIERS-COOK - CENTURY 21 ASSURANCE REALTY Kelowna, BC

Team leader: Dean Desrosiers

Bo Knows Homes/Desrosiers-Cook is, like many of today's teams, a partnership. Dean Desrosiers says having four successful agents, each with their own ideas and skill sets, running the show can lead to the right kind of problems. "It's a challenge to stay focused on simple plans," he says. "The hardest part for us is fast decision-making, which is perhaps a benefit."

Desrosiers says profitability is about more than just staying busy, and that many agents can realize their personal goals by simply hiring an assistant or apprentice. "If you aren't careful," he says, "you'll be so busy you stop making money."

That shouldn't be a concern for Desrosiers and his team. They were ranked 11th among Century 21 teams in Canada in 2016 and are on pace to be near the top again in 2017.



## BRENT MACINTOSH REAL ESTATE GROUP - RE/MAX RIVER CITY Edmonton, AB

Team leader: Brent MacIntosh

Despite an Edmonton market that has grown progressively slower over the past three years, Brent MacIntosh's RE/MAX team has managed to keep increasing its sales. MacIntosh attributes this continued improvement in performance to keeping his staff accountable, organized and immersed in a supportive culture.

"I would like to think we have created an environment that allows our team members not only to succeed, but also to enjoy the business," MacIntosh says. "We all celebrate the good days, and we are there for one another on the bad ones. This business can be a lonely one for individuals who are on their own."

With a goal of improving production by 20% in 2018, MacIntosh says communication between team members will be key. Quarterly meetings, cloud storage and instant messaging have already improved the quality of service and level of customer satisfaction his team provides, and will play even larger roles going forward.



## **EUGENE KAPLUN REAL ESTATE TEAM - RE/MAX INFINITE**

Richmond Hill, ON

**Team leader: Eugene Kaplun**

Eugene Kaplun says starting a team has had a number of benefits, but the most important has been the ability to turn team-wide knowledge into insightful, forward-thinking advice for clients. "The biggest accomplishment for our team was to be able to be on top of market trends and to predict the market shifting ahead of time," he says, "allocating the time to quickly and effectively educate our clients accordingly to avoid setting false expectations."

Still young enough to have been one of *REP's* 2017 Young Guns, Kaplun says one of the early mistakes he made was hiring team members who weren't willing to cooperate. "Every team member has to be supportive," he says, "so if your team does not consist of supportive team members, perhaps the team leader has to change the players in the team in order for it to be successful. A team member always has to give back to the team and not just expect to take."

As Kaplun's team's sales increase, so do the services it provides. Clients now have access to in-house staging, moving and contracting experts. The team has also invested significant time and energy into cultivating relationships with different communities in the GTA, particularly the city's growing Chinese population. "Having people who cater to different nationalities in an extremely vibrant and multicultural city has been one of the keys to our success," Kaplun says.

# SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017



## VERGE REAL ESTATE TEAM - VISION REALTY WINDSOR

Windsor, ON

Team leader: Isaac Verge

Often when an agent begins building a team, there's a choice between creating a dictatorship or a partnership. For Isaac Verge, the latter was the only real option. "It may be called the Verge Real Estate Team, but the idea wasn't to set up a team with a name on it and then pass clients off," he says. "We are a group of equals, constantly collaborating to find new ways to get the work done more effectively and more profitably for our clients."

With their year-over-year sales showing an increase of over 12%, Verge and his team have to make a concerted effort to find much-needed personal time. "We all want to be 100% there for our clients – and each other," Verge says, "but it's healthy to have balance and take time to regroup."

## DAN GEMUS REAL ESTATE TEAM

Amherstberg, ON

Team leader: Dan Gemus

After closing more than 300 deals in 2017, the Dan Gemus Real Estate Team was recently ranked the top team by ends in Windsor-Essex, outperforming its closest competitor by 40%. It's the culmination of four years of rapid growth that has seen Gemus' team triple in size. "With the team in place, we have the ability to master different roles," Gemus says. "Our clients have seen a huge increase in service level."

In the midst of this growth, Gemus says one important lesson he's learned is to not lure new staff by promising them bigger paychecks. "If I were to pick one thing that any new team leader should really be careful with, it would be to make sure to not overpay your sales partners," he says. "If your team doesn't have the necessary funds to operate, you'll be stuck before you start."



## BOYES GROUP REALTY

Saskatoon, SK

Team leader: Jordan Boyes

Having worked on teams before, Jordan Boyes was well prepared to launch his own, which enabled him to get off to an excellent start in spite of the soft Saskatoon market. But Boyes admits that jumping in too soon and not properly laying out expectations might have slowed the company's initial growth.

"That's why it's so critical that everyone be on the same page from the start," says

Boyes, who recently hired his brother. "In the past we always had different goals, and once we started working together, we wanted different things. Knowing this from the start would have prevented a lot of issues."

Those issues appear to be a thing of the past. Boyes, whose relentless work ethic and market knowledge are legendary among Saskatoon homebuyers, has been the city's top real estate agent since 2014.



## ANGIE GOULET AND ASSOCIATES - RE/MAX PREFERRED REALTY

Windsor, ON

Team leader: Angie Goulet

Part of running a successful team is helping agents stay on top of changing market conditions. It's something Angie Goulet has had to dedicate a significant amount of time to over the past year as the Windsor-Essex market has experienced a massive surge in demand.

"Developing systems and strategies that help all team players move forward ahead of a changing marketplace has been a challenge," Goulet says, adding that the team's weekly meetings address the most relevant questions facing their market: Where are the buyers coming from? Statistically, what is changing from month to month? "Using all our ideas and brainstorming as a team has kept us focused and on top of an ever-changing market."



## THE FARIS TEAM - ROYAL LEPAGE FIRST CONTACT REALTY

Barrie, ON

Team leader: Mark Faris

Mark Faris accepted long ago that to succeed as a leader, he would need to be responsible for more than just himself. "You are responsible for each of your team members' success and livelihood," he says. "By always keeping this in perspective, it is very motivating and ensures you are giving 100% to the team."

Faris' motivation is hard to question. His team has been Royal LePage's number-one team in Canada since 2015 and was ranked 131st on the most recent Profit 500 ranking of Canada's fastest-growing companies. The team's constant pursuit of excellence should result in another year of off-the-charts success in 2018. "We are all on the same page," Faris says, "and we're all focused on our mission to go full out for our clients and provide the best real estate experience in the world."



## THE SELLING FORT ERIE TEAM - RE/MAX NIAGARA REALTY

Fort Erie, ON

Team leader: Ray Rosettani

Ray Rosettani started expanding his team five years ago, when he had so many leads he was unable to handle them all. It's a problem any team leader would love to have, but one not every leader would be able to turn into a RE/MAX Titan Award.

The Selling Fort Erie Team's success has also allowed it to give back to its community. "We are very community-based and have many events throughout the year that bring people together," Rosettani says, pointing to the team's recent Corporate Challenge event as an example. "We want to stand out, not for just being successful, but for truly caring about our town."



## SAVE MAX REAL ESTATE

Brampton, ON

Team leader: Raman Dua

With the help of his Save Max team members, Raman Dua has been able to transform a productive independent business into one of the GTA's top real estate brands. With a focus on communication and keeping his agents motivated, Dua led Save Max to more than \$500 million in sales volume and over 1,000 transactions in the last year. Building on those phenomenal numbers is the goal for 2018, when Dua hopes his business plan – and a \$2 million ad budget – will result in more than 1,500 transactions.

Dua says one crucial mistake team leaders often make is chasing numbers rather than nurturing their employees. "People focus more on doing deals rather than developing team members," he says. "It's all about growing every single individual of the team. If all team members are growing individually, the team will grow automatically."

# SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017



## THE GOWYLDE TEAM - RE/MAX REAL ESTATE CENTRE

Guelph, ON

Team leader: Mary Wylde

Even though the Guelph market has tightened significantly in the last 12 months, the GoWylde Team has increased both its sales volume and transaction totals. Mary Wylde attributes her team's solid performance to its members' wide range of specialties. "I'm lucky in that all my team members have strengths," she says. "One has amazing sales skills. One is excellent at prospecting. One is a definite cheerleader. One seems to be able to handle a hundred tasks at once. We are all pretty different, and I love that about my team."

Wylde's considerable investments into staging and marketing have been game-changers – "We outshine our competition in these two areas," she says – and hiring a full-time runner has been a key step in the team's evolution. "As your team grows, it makes sense to make some of the outside roles internal," she says.



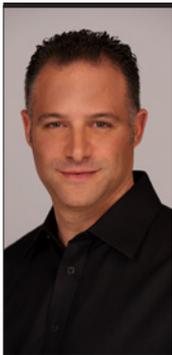
## THE PIKE GROUP - ROYAL LEPAGE ATLANTIC

Halifax, NS

Team leader: Sandra Pike

Teams are often only as good as the systems they're built on. Sandra Pike, who leads Royal LePage's top team in Nova Scotia, says getting agents to believe in those systems is critical to success. "From the day I list to how I list to how I close a deal, each component I created and adapted is all about making life easier," Pike says. "The team's belief starts when they see their GCIs increase."

Given that Pike's team completed more than 150 transactions by mid-October in a flat Halifax market, the effectiveness of her systems is hard to deny. She advises leaders to build systems into the fabric of the team from the very beginning, adding that the first hire should always be on the admin side.



## TEAM ZOLD - ROYAL LEPAGE YOUR COMMUNITY REALTY

Toronto, ON

Team leader: Shawn Zigelstein

Despite the downturn in the Toronto market earlier this year, Shawn Zigelstein's Team Zold has had its best year to date. Zigelstein chalks up his group's accomplishments to market expertise and optimism. "By keeping ourselves in a positive frame of mind, it helps our clients stay stress-free and relaxed as well," he says.

As a market changes, so must a team's approach to selling. Zigelstein says increased mentoring opportunities, an evolving team culture and improved information-gathering technology are all bearing significant fruit.



## THE KIRSTEN MASON TEAM - CENTURY 21 DESERT HILLS REALTY

Kamloops, BC

Team leader: Kirsten Mason

By providing specialized, expectation-shattering service to its clients, the Kirsten Mason Team had already broken its annual sales record of 320 transactions by the end of October. While Mason's crew of Realtors continues to smash targets, she says the foundation of any successful team,

especially at the outset, is a strong administrative staff.

"Before any licensed agents join the team, get a great unlicensed staff member who can keep the ship afloat," Mason advises. "That person can help the leader develop systems, and when new agents are added to the team, it will be seamless. Then the agents can go do what they are trained to do – sell real estate."

Mason's well-oiled machine has not only helped increase sales, it has also increased the pleasure she derives from her work. "I really enjoy having team members I can trust," she says. "We can work together to problem-solve, brainstorm and support each other without worrying about how the business will be affected."



## BENNETT PROPERTY SHOP REALTY

Ottawa, ON

Team leader: Marnie Bennett

“When you find a group of people who work so well together and create a positive culture and environment for success, the joy and sense of accomplishment is incredible,” says Marnie Bennett. “You feel unstoppable.”

Bennett’s success has indeed been hard to contain. Before launching her own independent brand, Bennett Property Shop Realty, she led Keller-Williams’ top worldwide team in both 2010 and 2011, selling close to 1,000 homes in just two years.

Those early triumphs put Bennett on the map, allowing her to attract some of

Ottawa’s best agents. But she says agent retention is still one of her most pressing issues, despite hers earning 250% more than the average Realtor. “Agents move from brokerage to brokerage, thinking the grass is greener on the other side, or they are fooled by a fast-talking salesman who convinces them things will be so much better [at a different company],” she says. “In my experience, the agents who leave our team usually quit the profession within 18 months.”

In her efforts to remain an exemplary leader, Bennett is constantly finding new

ways to keep her agents motivated, and she continues to educate herself on creating and maintaining an optimal team culture. But studying is not the same as experience, something she feels many team leaders are lacking. “Most team leaders are less than three years in the business,” she says. “I think that’s far too early, and frankly, it’s unfair to the agents on the team. Agents are relying on you to educate them, to provide the best technology and marketing systems, so you need a solid foundation of knowledge, education and money to be effective.”

# SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017



## MARK RUTTAN & THE PEOPLE TEAM - RE/MAX OF WASAGA BEACH

Wasaga Beach, ON

Team leader: Mark Ruttan

When you've been in the business as long as Mark Ruttan, finding team members with a similarly comprehensive approach to clients can be difficult. "The biggest challenge is making sure team members who have not been in the business very long are representing me and handling clients the same way I would," he says. "This includes acting professionally and ethically and treating clients as I have successfully over the past 28 years."

Ruttan says team leaders should never assume that a new team member is going to

understand the sense of duty to the business they have built successfully for years. "Anyone can take the course and excel at that aspect, but proper vetting of a prospective team member's personality is crucial," he says. "I cannot stress enough that the team members represent you and all you have worked to build."

## VIEWLETHBRIDGE.COM

Lethbridge, AB

Team leaders: Justin Myer and Jennifer Brodoway

ViewLethbridge.com has earned its spot as Lethbridge's top real estate team by keeping its agents focused, organized and, most importantly, busy with clients. "We have built up a successful system where no one on the team is struggling to get a lead or struggling to know what to do in a day," says co-leader Justin Myer. "Selling almost a house a day means there is always something for someone to be doing."

After undergoing a serious revamping in the last year, ViewLethbridge.com has been able to capture about 10% of the Lethbridge market. "We essentially broke down a good team and built up a much better one," Myer says. "We had to cut away from a few different Realtors and focus on a core group to help us grow into the machine we are now."



## L'ÉQUIPE BÉRUBÉ - ROYAL LEPAGE EVOLUTION

Sherbrooke, QC

Team leader: Jean-François Bérubé

Under the guidance of Jean-François Bérubé, L'Équipe Bérubé has received Royal LePage's Diamond Award 10 years in a row. Bérubé's 20 years of experience have taught him that, especially in a competitive market like Sherbrooke, agents can only be productive if they're happy. "We want our team to feel respected and to equally enjoy our success," he says.

Bérubé hopes 2018 will see increased activity for his agents – to the tune of 15 active listings at all times. "That way, we keep the work going," he says. "We will always have a large inventory and multiple options we can suggest to our clients."



## THE HEAPS ESTRIN TEAM - ROYAL LEPAGE REAL ESTATE SERVICES

Toronto, ON

Team leader: Cailey Heaps Estrin

In a hot market like Toronto, where an agent's day can be filled from sunrise to well beyond sunset with client concerns, communication between team members can break down. Cailey Heaps Estrin, leader of the Heaps Estrin Team, says team leaders cannot allow a full schedule to interfere with meaningful dialogue.

"It's not always easy to take time out of a busy day to communicate as effectively as one should," Heaps Estrin says. "I think it is also challenging in busy markets to step back and take a minute to properly praise and reward

everyone for their efforts. It's important to check in with team members to see how they are taking proactive steps to achieve their goals."

After increasing sales by more than 40% in 2017, Heaps Estrin's team has set a high bar for itself in 2018. By focusing on training, lead generation and marketing, Heaps Estrin hopes the coming year will be another one of phenomenal growth.



## STONE SISTERS GROUP - RE/MAX KELOWNA

Kelowna, BC

Team leaders: Tamara and Shannon Stone

Starting a team is often a way for leaders to claw back some of their time, but for Tamara Stone, co-leader of the Stone Sisters Group, it's also about providing the same perks for her agents.

"We have loved helping agents go from low production to high production while keeping a great quality of life," says Stone, who runs the team with her sister, Shannon. "All of our team members have families and hobbies, and they love what they do, but it doesn't consume their

entire existence."

Stone says leaders need to establish firm, clearly laid-out expectations for their agents around scheduling, prospecting and representing the team's culture with clients, even if that means giving them scripts to work off of. "Salespeople tend to be very free-spirited," she says, "and helping them become successful means implementing systems and programs."



## PAUL RUSHFORTH REAL ESTATE TEAM

Ottawa, ON

Team leader:  
Paul Rushforth

As Ottawa's top-producing Realtor, Paul Rushforth had no choice but to open a second office for his team. He says maintaining a tight-knit team and a consistent culture across two locations has taken extra effort on his part. "We manage it by having guiding principles we run our company by, a common goal we are all moving toward, and we try and keep it light and fun."

As his team charges its way toward 700 sales in 2017, Rushforth is focused on increasing its momentum. "I am now able to focus on training and building," he says. "I can go to conferences, spend time searching out the latest technology and work on the most intricate adjustments to our business that make the most dramatic changes."



## DAN PLOWMAN TEAM REALTY

Whitby, ON

Team leader: Dan Plowman

A top agent as well as a highly respected sales coach, Dan Plowman's knowledge of the ins and outs of running a team is unparalleled. He says that while many agents might feel they are ready to motivate and manage a team, few understand the scope of the financial commitment running a team requires.

"If an agent is getting ready to start a team," he says, "it's very important that they understand the investment required as a team leader – not only from the leadership and personal growth side of things, but also financially. It's a huge responsibility."

It's no surprise that constantly evolving training techniques have played a huge role in the success of Plowman's team members. His systematic approach to training around buyer/listing presentations, scripting and understanding client objectives have enabled his agents to become one of the most dominant forces in GTA real estate.

## THE OP TEAM - RE/MAX PREMIER

Vaughan, ON

Team leader: Nick Oppedisano

Remembering to let go is a common piece of advice for new team leaders. For Nick Oppedisano, leader of the OP Team, that often means stepping into completely new territory. "The most common mistake Realtors make is not understanding the business they're in," he says. "You must be aware that you are not a salesperson."

But Oppedisano's team is still selling a ton of real estate, recently breaking into RE/MAX's top 100. Oppedisano's aim is to lead the team into the top 50 in 2018. "I believe it is my purpose to help them and stand by them, listening and responding to their concerns," he says. "I look at myself as a mentor to them and hold myself responsible to make sure they reach their short-term and long-term goals."

# SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017



## THE ROMAN GROCHOLSKY TEAM - ROYAL LEPAGE NIAGARA REAL ESTATE CENTRE

Welland, ON

Team leader: Roman Grocholsky

Having a team can be a godsend in a market that is seeing a sudden spike in activity, allowing agents to better adapt to record prices and more decisive buyers. Roman Grocholsky, who services the still-hot Niagara market, says his team members have allowed his business to ride the new wave of interest to greater heights of productivity.

"Having a team allows me to provide top-notch service to my clients as quickly and efficiently as possible," he says. "There are fewer scheduling conflicts that delay showings, information reaches our clients more quickly, and offers can be written and negotiated almost instantly."

Grocholsky says the diversity of his team – three generations and five distinct personalities – has been key to its success. "Whenever we face a challenge, we are able to harness five different perspectives and ultimately come up with a solution that would otherwise be overlooked," he says. "Everything is up for discussion, which keeps us open-minded and ready to find the most creative and effective solutions."



## METROCITY PROPERTY GROUP - RE/MAX CORE REALTY

Ottawa, ON

Team leaders: Tarek El Attar and Steve Alexopoulos

For Tarek El Attar, co-leader of MetroCity Property Group in Ottawa, one of the less talked-about benefits of running a team is the emotional one. "Real estate is a lonely career," he says. "Starting a team allows you to share your successes with other people and gives you an opportunity to impact more people's lives by creating careers and having the ability to service more clients. It's more fun to share in this together and build each other up."

MetroCity is positioning itself to double its business in 2018. El Attar says one particular change in approach has made a huge contribution to the company's growth. "One of the biggest mistakes we made was having showing agents and having them focus only on buyers," he says. "Real estate is driven by listings – without listings, it's impossible to grow – so a two-pronged approach is key. Having our agents focus on both groups – buyers and sellers – has created more well rounded Realtors who are actively seeking opportunities."



## TEAM LOGUE - RE/MAX ESCARPMENT REALTY

Burlington, ON

Team leaders: Sarah and Chris Logue

Small but mighty, Team Logue recently broke into RE/MAX's top 50 teams. The team, co-led by Sarah Logue and her husband, Chris, has built its reputation by providing exceptional, personalized service in the Burlington area. Its expansion into the Oakville market will allow another thriving community to benefit from the team's winning approach to real estate.

Sarah Logue warns other team leaders not to over-hire without first establishing and solidifying the processes their business will be run on. At the same time, she says leaders must be willing to hire enough administrative staff to allow them to be more productive and proactive. "Hire for success," she says.

## UNION REALTY

Toronto, ON

Team leaders: Rick DeClute, Rochelle DeClute, Melanie Wright and Lindsey Wright

Both DeClute Real Estate and Wright Sisters Real Estate finished 2016 among Toronto's top five teams. Traditionally great competitors, in April 2017, the two groups combined to form a single powerhouse entity, Union Realty. While still technically competitors, the two outfits have created an innovative partnership that allows each team to benefit from the other's marketing savvy, business systems and substantial client base, while improving the already award-winning level of service each company can provide its clients.

"We have taken the most effective systems, practices and procedures from both teams and combined them into a hybrid teams focused brokerage," says Rick DeClute.

"Having a culture of collaboration and an open, fair attitude has made our office climate a much more successful place to work."

That emphasis on collaboration is something the Union leaders feel can be missing from many of the big brokerages. "Brokerages are often built on numbers of agents in an environment that can be fiercely competitive rather than collaborative. Our focus is on attracting clients, not agents, and we do that by doing what is right for our clients," says DeClute, adding that team leaders, brokers and salespeople have so much to learn from each other.

This move has elevated both the DeClute and the Wright Sisters brands, allowing them

both to take a value-add to their marketplace that has historically been missing altogether. "Although we dominate the east end of the city in market share, we still plan to grow," says Melanie Wright. "We are excited to work with like-minded professionals who share our vision and values."

The Wright and DeClute brands do compete, but it is less often than one would imagine. They appear to attract very different clients to each brand. The power of working together and establishing this new brokerage appears to be just the beginning for this group. They are passionate about real estate and excited to have a new brokerage to call home where teams are the focus.



# SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017



## INSIDER CONDOS - ROYAL LEPAGE REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS

Toronto, ON

Team leader: Eugene Mezini

Big things have been happening for the Insider Condos team. The team closed almost 200 deals during the hot spring market, added a new member and continued to make a splash in the pre-construction sphere, allowing it to attract a growing number of investment clients.

Team leader Eugene Mezini says a team's success is not only about well prepared agents who accept their responsibilities; it's also about

a leader's availability. "You have to train and hold your agents accountable," he says, "but you can't just give them leads and no support. Your agents will require your guidance to know what to do and how you want things done."

Mezini says his team is looking to increase sales by 20% in 2018, which would put it on pace to close up to 360 deals. It's a lofty goal, but an achievement that wouldn't surprise any of Insider Condos' satisfied clients.



## THE KUULA TEAM - RE/MAX CROWN REALTY

Sudbury, ON

Team leader: Steven W. Kuula

Steven Kuula started his RE/MAX team after only two years in the real estate business, at a time when the concept was essentially unheard of in northern Ontario. Judging by his team's impressive collection of awards, Kuula has clearly put the team approach to good use.

Kuula says for team leaders to succeed, they must get past their own egos and be willing to delegate. "Many team leaders believe that the client will only want to deal with them," he says. "This is not the case. If you have a well-trained team, your clients will be happy to work with the entire team."



## THE YERXA TEAM - EXIT REALTY ADVANTAGE

Fredericton, NB

Team leader: Jessie Yerxa

One of Exit Realty's most successful real estate teams, the Yerxa Team is a mix of vibrant personalities. That variety is something team leader Jessie Yerxa credits for the team's presence atop the Fredericton market. "In order to have a fully powered and optimally producing real estate team," she says, "you must have well balanced team members who complement each other's personality types. Too many of the same personality type can lead to conflict. The key is balance."

Yerxa is one of many Top Teams leaders to stress the transformational potential of a strong administrative staff. "Initially, we team members were responsible for the filing of our own paperwork, which took away from our face-to-face time with clients," she says, "so do not underestimate the power of a skilled admin. Invest in this position!"

Yerxa says the team's fun and creative approach to social media marketing and customer interaction have played a major part in their success. She believes that 2018 "will be our greatest year yet."



## POBOJEWSKI REAL ESTATE TEAM - ROYAL LEPAGE SIGNATURE REALTY

Mississauga, ON

Team leader: Tom Pobjewski

While some agents are willing to dive headfirst into building a team and learn on the fly, Tom Pobjewski encourages a different approach. "It is essential to build proper processes and systems that will provide structure for your team to grow," he says. "Lacking the proper structure, and not having that documented properly, will hinder growth and cause confusion."

Pobjewski prides himself on his team's specialization in investment properties and ability to find properties with attractive valuations. "Very often we can present those homes to our investors that are not available in the open market," he says.



## CHIN REALTY GROUP - KELLER WILLIAMS GOLDEN TRIANGLE REALTY

Kitchener, ON

Team leader: Andre Chin

When you manage a team of all-stars, part of the challenge can be ensuring everyone has the ability to thrive. "We are constantly taking training to improve and grow our agents and our organization," says Andre Chin. "We also look for the leaders in our group and give them opportunities to hone their leadership skills and lead within our group."

That opportunity to lead has been key for the agents who make up Chin Realty Group. Because they've all had experience on previous teams, Chin says one goal was to make each team member less reliant on their leader for success.

"We knew if all the agents could use our systems and models to assist in building their business, we would build a team that would work together to achieve huge success," he says. After a year in which his team completed more than 130 transactions, Chin's combination of autonomy, training and room to grow has proven to be a potent one.



## THE BAILEY GROUP - RE/MAX REAL ESTATE CENTRE

Waterloo, ON

Team leader: Steve Bailey

With 14 licensed agents on his team, Steve Bailey inevitably finds himself tending to the needs of agents experiencing different levels of success. "There are months where you do well and months where you get a bit of a reality check," he says, "so congratulating those on top while propping up those who had a bad month can be a challenge." Bailey says his strategy is to pay additional attention to agents having a down period, reminding them of the value they bring to the team and preventing the cyclical nature of the business from getting them down.

Bailey has also cultivated an office culture that encourages agents to let their true selves shine through. "I think we are a genuine and honest group of like-minded people," he says. "Anyone who comes in contact with us can see that."

The Bailey Group's familial atmosphere has not been lost on consumers. The team was recently named one of RE/MAX's top 10 performers in Canada.



## THE RON ANTALEK TEAM - RE/MAX LIFESTYLES REALTY

Maple Ridge, BC

Team leader: Ron Antalek

Ron Antalek has led the top real estate team in the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows corridor of British Columbia since 1993. His success predated BC's real estate explosion, which has allowed him to instill in his team members the fundamentals of selling: honest, professional service in the pursuit of helping families find their dream homes. Antalek's team has helped him become RE/MAX's top Realtor in Canada four times and the company's top BC Realtor 15 times.



## DORIS GEE & PHIL MOORE - RE/MAX CENTRAL REALTY

Burnaby, BC

Team leaders: Doris Gee and Phil Moore

Doris Gee and Phil Moore have been in the top 1% of Greater Vancouver agents since starting one of the area's first teams in 1990. Despite an increase in team sizes over the last 27 years, Gee and Moore have committed to staying small. "With teams of 20 agents or more in our marketplace, we were able to be successful by giving more personal service," Moore says. "We stand out by getting face-to-face with our clients whenever possible."

# SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017



## THE CHRIS MESSECAR TEAM - EXIT LIFESTYLE REALTY

Barrie, ON

Team leader: Chris Messecar

Chris Messecar's Exit Realty team has been on a tear for the last few years. Exit recently named the Chris Messecar Team its number-one-selling team in Canada and number four in North America. Messecar says communication is key on his team, which is why he has refrained from adding too many members. That way, Messecar says, every agent "has a defined role in the transaction, and the client knows exactly what to expect."

Barrie has become one of Ontario's most active markets. To make the most of this, Messecar has invested significantly in marketing, shifting his focus from promoting his team to promoting his clients and their properties. By putting his clients first, Messecar hopes to stay the number-one real estate team in the area, but he realizes that maintaining this position will require constant improvement. "Your team is an extension of you," he says. "Never stop coaching and mentoring your team members to become the best they can be."



## THE GALVIN TEAM - RE/MAX EASTERN REALTY

Peterborough, ON

Team leader: Andrew Galvin

Peterborough's market has seen historic levels of activity over the last year, resulting in new stresses for buyers and sellers. The Galvin Team has been there every step of the way for its clients, earning a RE/MAX Titan Award for its continued excellence. "With a team, our clients get a strengthened pool of expertise and the availability of a team member seven days a week," says team leader Andrew Galvin.

Galvin credits his team's success to its cooperative nature, collective accountability and consistent work ethic. "For a team to be successful," he says, "everyone on the team has to work as if they are the MVP. It's like a cart - if one wheel stops turning, the other three have to work harder."



## THE CRAIG ADAM REAL ESTATE TEAM - RE/MAX CROWN REAL ESTATE NORTH

Regina, SK

Team leader: Craig Adam

Consisting of only three agents and one administrative assistant, Craig Adam's RE/MAX team was recently awarded the company's Team Diamond Award - a true testament to its cohesiveness and level of commitment.

"Our team concept has allowed our business to thrive and excel," Adam says, "not only from a transactional point of view, but also from a client relationship standpoint. We have been able to service our clients to a high standard, which was difficult to accomplish without the team."

Adam feels the habit some team leaders have of comparing their methods with their competitors' is best avoided. "We can only control ourselves and what we do," he says. "We strive to make our team better each and every day and not be concerned with what others are doing."



## CONNECT ASSET MANAGEMENT

Toronto, ON

Team leaders: Ryan Coyle and Matt Elkind

Connect Asset Management has taken full advantage of the condo craze that has swept the GTA, becoming one of the city's leaders in pre-construction sales. But team leaders Matt Elkind and Ryan Coyle are doing more than just throwing product at unceasing demand. By hiring smart and investing in their agents, Elkind and Coyle have built a sales machine that runs on its own energy.

"The best part for us has been watching the

salespeople on our team develop," Coyle says. "When we meet with them, we tell them that our goal is to help them make over \$250,000 within their first year of working with us.

At first they think we're crazy, but we have agents who have already done it and others who are well on their way. Seeing people exceed their own expectations is the most rewarding part of what we do."

Great agents know that the ability to ask

clients the right questions is a key skill. But Coyle feels agents looking to form successful teams must also question themselves about the business they're trying to build.

"The first question they should ask is, 'Why would someone join my team?'" he says. "How will you make them more successful than they would be on their own or working with someone else? You have to be committed to helping people build their careers."

# SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017



## MOORE DECKER DUNN - RE/MAX REALTY SPECIALISTS

St. John's, NL

Team leader: Rob Moore

Moore Decker Dunn has only been up and running for two years, but its list of accomplishments would attract the envy of any long-running real estate team. In 2017 alone, Rob Moore's RE/MAX crew sold 30% of St. John's executive properties, completed St. John's largest commercial and residential sales, and was welcomed into RE/MAX's Diamond Club.

While the team is already known to clients for its marketing acumen, market knowledge and work ethic, Moore admits there have been some growing pains behind the scenes. "We thought it was important to grow the team quickly with all new agents that we could mold to fit the model we wanted," he says. But the team's size didn't allow for a dedicated training person, which meant "endless hours of preparing, reviewing, clarifying and training agents."

Moore now hires agents with at least a year under their belts so he can "tweak and perfect their sales approach to blend seamlessly with our team objectives."



## THE NEAL ESTATE TEAM - RE/MAX ALLIANCE

Victoria, BC

Team leader: Ron Neal

Ron Neal saw the value of running a team the moment he joined the real estate industry in 1991. "In order to provide consistent client service and to live a balanced life, it was immediately evident to me that it didn't make sense to do it alone," he says.

Neal has spent almost three decades leading his team to the upper ranks of the Victoria market, earning RE/MAX's Circle of Legends and Diamond Awards along the way. "It's been over 25 years now," Neal says, "and I feel like we have really found a sweet spot with a group of like-minded individuals who have the shared objective of providing world-class personal service and making a positive difference in people's lives."

That difference extends far beyond real estate. Neal's team was recently nominated as Victoria's Corporate Philanthropist of the Year and has been instrumental in fundraising efforts for the BC Children's Hospital.



## TEAM BÉATRICE BAUDINET - ROYAL LEPAGE HERITAGE

Montreal, QC

Team leader: Béatrice Baudinet

Béatrice Baudinet's team has been one of Royal LePage's top 10 since she expanded her thriving individual business in 2013.

"Group dynamics are key to the success of any team," Baudinet says. "Make sure all team members can work well together and share the same work ethic."

Baudinet acknowledges that in this cutthroat industry, clients have no shortage of other options. "If I am not giving my clients the best possible service, then they have the absolute right to look elsewhere," she says. "If I do not follow through with all the marketing tools, feedback and promises that I make to sell their property, then I am not doing my job."



## MY INVESTMENT BROKERS - RE/MAX REAL ESTATE CENTRE

Mississauga, ON

Team leaders: Michael Jawanda and Hunny Gawri

Michael Jawanda, co-leader of My Investment Brokers, has a somewhat unorthodox measure of success. "For some it's having the most deals completed or the most clients," he says, "but for us, number one on our list is to have the most educated clients, as those will be the ones who refer you to others and will purchase from you again and again."

My Investment Brokers has doubled its client base in the last year, making huge gains in the competitive pre-construction market. "Creating a team has allowed us to have a wider reach and do more than we thought was imaginable," Jawanda says. "And we're just getting started."



## THE TURNKEY GROUP - CENTURY 21 FUSION

Saskatoon, SK

**Team leaders: Ashley Turner and Heather Kehoe**

In their first year operating a team for Century 21, Ashley Turner and Heather Kehoe led their TurnKey Group into the ranks of the company's top-performing teams, finishing the year at number 12.

Turner says the team's success has been a combination of an excellent company culture, a belief in goal-setting and an award-worthy administrative assistant. "Having a great admin assistant is everything," she says.

Turner feels the TurnKey Group's youthful, collaborative take on the team concept has helped it stand out. "Teams are much less about one person now," she says. "I think the public likes seeing a team working together as a unit rather than one individual rock star hoisted above the rest, tossing out leads willy-nilly."

## CENTURY 21 NEVILLE REALTY

Petawawa, ON

**Team leader: Bart Neville**

Bart Neville's Petawawa-based team has achieved either Centurion or Double Centurion status with Century 21 every year since 2005. A family-run team, Century 21 Neville Realty prides itself on its community involvement, which has resulted in an ever-increasing amount of repeat business and referrals. "To us," Neville says, "that is a great accomplishment."

Neville warns that any agent who thinks being a team leader will somehow be easier than being a sales associate is in for a rude awakening. "Being a team leader is more work than perceived," he says. "Don't think it's easy and that others will do the work for you."

## LORETTA PHINNEY TEAM - ROYAL LEPAGE REAL ESTATE SERVICES

Mississauga, ON

**Team leader: Loretta Phinney**

Some agents start teams as a way of freeing up some time for themselves – but not Royal LePage's Loretta Phinney. "I still work as much as ever even after having a team," she says, "because real estate is what I love to do."

That love is clearly mutual. Phinney has been one of the GTA's most successful agents for most of the last two decades, and she has led Royal LePage's top team in Canada eight times since 2004. Her expertise has been instrumental in enabling her team members to guide their clients ethically and knowledgeably through the past two years of real estate insanity, including those unfortunate times when a bid isn't accepted.

"Sometimes buyers have called me and said that although they didn't get the home, if they ever wanted to sell, they would like me to handle their transaction," Phinney says.



## NORTH GROUP REAL ESTATE - KELLER WILLIAMS REFERRED URBAN REALTY

Toronto, ON

**Team leader: Amy Youngren**

When Amy Youngren rebranded her team as North Group in June, her social media mastery was on full display. Her combination of viral video, blog posts, email blasts and countdowns earned her a second nomination for Inman's coveted Innovator of the Year Award.

Youngren's approach to social media mirrors her approach to real estate – agile, effective and comprehensive – but she admits that she has had to learn from her mistakes. One in particular was forcing a rigid schedule of meetings and mandated lead generation on her team.

"Not only was it challenging to produce new, engaging content for multiple meetings," she says, "but we also neglected an opportunity for an agent to be an independent entrepreneur and to foster their own success within our team. By pulling back, we were able to keep our meetings engaged and focus lead-gen mandates only on those agents who potentially needed a boost."

# SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017



## YOUR TEAM PEI - RE/MAX CHARLOTTETOWN REALTY Charlottetown, PEI

Team leaders: Kris Fournier and Linda Anderson

Your Team PEI just celebrated its first anniversary, which means team leaders Kris Fournier and Linda Anderson are still fine-tuning systems. It's an exciting time, but one that comes with inevitable missteps. "One mistake we made was not taking the time to clearly define what our roles were going to be," Anderson says. "We gradually learned that, by knowing and taking advantage of each

other's strengths, day-to-day activities got accomplished quicker – and became more fun."

There's always more to learn in real estate, but as Your Team PEI closes in on sale number 200, it's clear that a number of critical lessons have already been taken to heart.



## THE AXFORDS - ROYAL LEPAGE STERLING REALTY

Port Moody, BC

Team leader: Gord Axford

Gord Axford's Royal LePage team has levels of knowledge and experience that can only be obtained through a significant number of transactions. The Axfords, a family outfit whose growing success has compelled it to expand beyond the bloodline, was ranked eighth in sales by the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver last year.

Axford says his team plans on doubling both its size and commissions in 2018. "It used to be just family – now, with non-family members," Axford jokes, "we are forced to keep the family feuds out of the office."



## DAN COOPER GROUP - ROYAL LEPAGE REAL ESTATE SERVICES

Oakville, ON

Team leader: Dan Cooper

Since 1999, the Dan Cooper Group has been the number-one Royal LePage team in Canada seven times and was named the company's fourth highest-producing team in 2016. That continued excellence is a

testament to Cooper's systems, hiring prowess and ability to keep his team on the same page. "I've surrounded myself with a dedicated and like-minded team who make me proud each and every day," he says. "I couldn't do it without their support."



## RE/MAX ESCARPMENT GOLFI REALTY

Hamilton, ON

Team leader: Rob Golfi

Accountability is a common theme when discussing teams, but few team leaders take accountability to heart the same way Rob Golfi does. One of the reasons behind RE/MAX Escarpment's rapid ascension to the top of the Hamilton market has been Golfi's willingness to hold himself as accountable as his agents.

"I had some difficult experiences transitioning early on," Golfi says, "and sometimes I still find myself working on small tasks that could easily be delegated to my partners. To be an effective leader, you need to lean on the support around you."

Golfi pushes himself to deliver top systems, marketing and training to his agents, fearing the worst if he doesn't. "It's my job to create and generate more business for our team every day," he says. "If I am unable to provide the team with a leading edge, our team would fail. That's the biggest challenge – to do that on a continual basis, day in and day out."



## **THE HEDDLE GROUP - ROYAL LEPAGE STATE REALTY**

**Hamilton, ON**

**Team leader: Mike Heddle**

It borders on cliché, but it's a highly practical step for a team leader to establish the 'why' behind his or her desire to start a team. Mike Heddle, who has led his Royal LePage team to a number of the company's top awards, says finding a 'why' will help pave a path forward in key areas such

as lead generation, CRM tools, database management and even compensation. "Having a 'why' is key to identifying the size of the team and the type of culture you need to establish and will assist in achieving personal and team goals," he says.

While Heddle praises his entire team,

he makes a point of calling out his administrative coordinator for her excellence in an unsung hero role. "Her ability to utilize administrative systems and keep our sales partners on task has increased the quality of their work life and allows them to focus on doing what they do best."

# SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017



## THE AMY FLOWERS TEAM - ROYAL LEPAGE MEADOWTOWNE REALTY

Milton, ON

Team leader: Amy Flowers

"It was always my intention to create a team," says Amy Flowers. "It's a win-win. It allows for specialized focus in each department, ultimately allowing each individual to provide the required skills. It allows us all to do what we love every day."

As the head honcho of one of Royal LePage's top-performing teams, Flowers has excelled as both a sales associate and a leader. But she says being the former does not guarantee success as the latter. "Managing people requires time, effort and training," she says. "Spending time with my coach, not only to build the sales business, but also to continuously learn how to build the team from within, is an area of continued focus."



## THE PLATINUM TEAM - ROYAL LEPAGE PROALLIANCE REALTY

Belleville, ON

Team leaders: Judi Rufo and Doug Peterson

Doug Peterson and his wife, Judi Rufo, have led their Royal LePage team to the upper echelons of the Belleville market, becoming one of the ProAlliance franchise's top four teams in the process. The Platinum Team has had its best year to date in 2017, improving on 2016's incredible performance by more than 10%. "We would never have achieved our current level of success without a team structure," Peterson says. "Starting a team made us a business rather than just real estate agents."

Rather than hiring generously as a way of chasing sales, Peterson says his philosophy is to have agents approach the team instead. "We went through a revolving door period with sales associates and will hire very, very carefully in the future," he says. "We want them to seek us out because of how we do business. They must be attracted to our culture and values."



## ÉQUIPE SIROIS SIMARD - ROYAL LEPAGE VALLÉE DE L'OUTAOUAIS

Gatineau, QC

Team leaders: Fernande Sirois and Martin Simard

Fernande Sirois and Martin Simard's Royal LePage team has been top among the company's western Quebec teams for over a decade. Simard says maintaining the company's philosophy through clear communication and regular meetings has been a major component of the team's success. "When another member does not have the same philosophy or view that you have, it is difficult to change it," he says.

Équipe Sirois Simard's customers have come to expect a high level of service. Simard says that, no matter which member of the team a client deals with, they know they will experience the same level of professionalism, heart and expertise.

## THE EXTRA MILE TEAM - CENTURY 21 ROCKIES REALTY

Radium Hot Springs, BC

Team leader: Scott Sauermann

In a small market where the other teams are all family-based, Scott Sauermann's Extra Mile Team stands out as unique. A partnership of four dynamic professionals, the Extra Mile Team is bonded not by blood or marriage, but by its commitment to provide clients the most reliable service imaginable.

"Operating a team has allowed us to be more successful while being more available for our clients," Sauermann says. "The team atmosphere creates an opportunity to bounce ideas off of one another and to let each team member contribute with their strengths. Ultimately it gives our clients the most professional experience in real estate."



## BRYAN GRANT REALTY - RE/MAX GARDEN CITY

St. Catharines, ON

Team leader: Bryan Grant

To stay a step ahead of the competition in a busy St. Catharines market, Bryan Grant knows where best to allocate his resources. "The biggest challenge of managing a team is ensuring all team members are given the necessary tools to help with their success," Grant says.

Those tools are being put to good use. In the last year, Grant's team has broken sales records, achieved Diamond Award recognition from RE/MAX and seen individual members win a number of awards of their own.

"Each client has different needs and wants," Grant says. "We pride ourselves on ensuring we recognize their specific needs and go over and above to help them reach their goals."

## TEAM BURTON - RE/MAX INFINITY REALTY

St. John's, NL

Team leader: Jim Burton

Starting a team has allowed Jim Burton to build a trusted and respected brand within the St. John's marketplace, one that has been going strong for nearly 20 years. Today Team Burton services residential, commercial and new-construction clients with 15 sales associates. The team has ranked within RE/MAX's top five teams in Atlantic Canada every year.

One of the best motivators in the game, Burton invests a lot in his agents, whom he says he trains "like ninjas" while giving them the skills to build lasting client relationships. "Our model is a relational business rather than a transactional one," Burton says. "When we set our sights on a target, obstacles fall away."



## YC REAL ESTATE TEAM - HOMELIFE FRONTIER REALTY

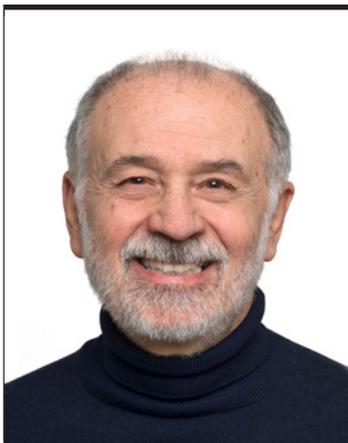
Toronto, ON

Team leader: Mark Lee

After 13 years as a top-producing agent, Mark Lee went looking for new challenges, new solutions and new perspectives, all of which he found after starting the

YC Real Estate Team. Lee's team helped him become HomeLife Frontier's top producer in both 2015 and 2016, and its synergy is only growing stronger. "Running a team is like making wine," Lee says. "It's organic growth, so you can't speed the aging or maturing process. You can only provide the best ingredients and the right environment."

Lee's agents are clearly thriving in that environment. In the last year, each of his agents has seen double- or triple-digit growth in the number of deals they have closed. "All our team members see the big picture and always put the team first," Lee says. "We continue to grow stronger – and so does our business."



## THE PULLA TEAM - RE/MAX LAKESHORE REALTY

Cobourg, ON

Team leader: Tony Pulla

"To achieve optimum service to your clients and best optimize the use of your time, it becomes evident that it's not a job you can do by yourself and maintain number-one status on your real estate board," says 47-year real estate veteran Tony Pulla. "You need a team."

Pulla credits his team's sales prowess, integrity and mutual respect for creating a "Zen-like equilibrium" at the office. "My team not only allows me to function, but to work at the speed and competence I require."

One aspect of leading a team that Pulla says gets too little attention is the physical and mental well-being of the team's leader. He stresses the need for team leaders to commit the time and energy required to stay in top form. "I work at remaining in good health," he says, "as I want to continue to inspire and motivate. I need to lead by example."

## SPECIAL REPORT: TOP TEAMS 2017

# Choosing the right brokerage

**Jila Katirae**, RE/MAX Infinite's top agent, talks to *REP* about the importance of aligning yourself with the right team and other industry insights

**RE/MAX INFINITE'S** Jila Katirae has been in the real estate industry for more than 30 years, winning dozens of top sales awards along the way. Blessed with a natural sales ability, Katirae chose real estate as a profession that was in line with her interests. After earning her licence, she was hired by Canada Trust Realty, earning its Leaders Club and Sales Master Awards, given to the company's top producer, in her first year.

Her zeal to do the best for her clients led Katirae to attend Harvard Law School, where she earned a certificate in negotiation skills. "I learned how to turn a tough situation into a positive one," she says. "I also learned how to break a big problem into manageable parts so I can tackle it one step at a time."

Katirae later joined Prudential Sadie Moranis Real Estate and quickly found herself among the top 3% of agents in North America. But her life changed when she moved to RE/MAX.

## Infinite possibilities

"Choosing the right brokerage is very important to a real estate agent," Katirae says. "A good office can make you, and a bad office can break you. In 30 years, I have changed offices a few times, but RE/MAX Infinite will be the last. Having a team of trustworthy and capable staff who are willing to go the extra step boosts my ability to achieve the results I want for my clients. This is why having the right brokerage to support you is so important."

Katirae credits RE/MAX Infinite's brand

recognition, the integrity of its broker of record and the brokerage's high level administrative support for her ongoing achievements. "We have strong management and support staffs," she says. "Everyone is eager to assist and provide you with that extra degree of care and support to ensure your success."

The continuous education and career development strongly encouraged at RE/MAX Infinite aligns with Katirae's belief that one of the keys to becoming successful in real estate is ongoing education and awareness of what is happening in the market.

"The brokerage does weekly workshops and training sessions so agents and support staff are up-to-date on market and regulatory requirements," she says. "It helps everyone concentrate on their clients. Our broker of record, Levon Nazarian, is incredibly knowledgeable, always available and supportive of his agents at all times. He is truly the best broker of record I have ever had, and I am proud to call RE/MAX Infinite my professional home."

RE/MAX Infinite prides itself on finding the right agents to fit into its rapidly growing





family. “To me, what defines a good agent is someone who is ethical, knowledgeable, understanding and caring, who follows up and communicates with the client,” Katirae says. “If a problem is identified, we have a chance to solve it.”

### Finding an edge

After several decades in the business, Katirae has become known for her strong commitment and attention to detail when it comes to her business. “In the current competitive market, attention to detail can be the key to maintaining an edge,” she says. “Once, for instance, I received a call from a seller whose listing was expired, asking me for advice. His home had been listed for months and was not sold. I went into the house and found many important details that were not described in the previous listing. Even the room measurements were incorrect.

“We improved the listing description, included a detailed feature sheet with a professional virtual tour and raised the price,”

Katirae continues. “Within 24 hours, the seller had two offers, and the property sold for more than the previous listed price. Success is in the details!”

By using these skills, Katirae has been able to generate repeat business from past clients, who have become a continuous source of referrals. Katirae credits much of her success to the art of listening to her clients and letting them know she understands their needs.

“Most of the time, problems in life arise because people feel that they were not properly heard or understood,” she says. “Practicing these techniques has resulted in me receiving the most valuable award I could ever receive, the Lifetime Achievement Award for Highest Standard of Ethics.”

Communication has been a key factor in Katirae’s success. “Buying or selling a home is not just number-crunching,” she says. “It involves a lot of emotion and attachment.”

Accordingly, she advises new agents to work on their communication methods. “When agents first meet someone new, they

need to listen carefully to determine how they can be the most helpful to their clients,” she says. “Every agent needs to understand that they are being entrusted with the biggest investment of their clients’ lives. It’s all about bringing a positive energy and not just closing a quick sale.

“Be sincere, honest and learn the business properly,” she adds. “Provide your clients with complete information and the most relevant knowledge, and then give them the free will to make their own decisions. They will never go to anyone else.”

Katirae says a successful agent must have a winning personality, high energy and sensitivity, that latter of which allows agents to anticipate their clients’ needs – a critical skill for agents looking for repeat business and referrals.

But for Katirae, the ultimate reward is the gratitude of a satisfied customer. “The smile on my clients’ faces and the glow in their eyes after the deal is done is the highlight of my business,” she says. **REP**