

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

BROKERS ~ WHO ~ DOMINATE

8 traits
of top producers

AMERICA'S
LEADING
COMMERCIAL
REAL ESTATE
BROKERAGE
COACH



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INTRODUCTION

What you learn from this book will help you achieve exceptional business growth and performance, regardless of your current level of success or experience.

After 25 years in the commercial real estate brokerage business as a broker, owner, manager and executive with local, regional and international brokerage firms, I recognize there are no “silver bullets” for being a successful, top-producing commercial broker. There are, however, better approaches one can apply; I call them “success levers” and, more importantly, supporting habits that ensure these practices are applied consistently and adapt to ever-changing market conditions.

At the Massimo Group, most, but not all, of our broker clients are seasoned and successful.

We’ve proven that through coaching and instruction we can help each of them improve their prospecting, client retention and expansion, use of technology, marketing and teamwork. Ultimately, these improvements lead to enhanced production. Coaching and training are part of the way every great broker has learned to succeed, but there are always additional resources.

Great brokers learned from the advice they received from other great brokers. I wrote this book to share some of that advice.

I also wrote this book to make our coaching and consulting more effective. I know we already do a great job of customizing our work to every individual client, but I wanted to make our coaching even

better by thoroughly understanding the experience and advice of dominant brokers from all over the continent. That's why this book is different from any commercial real estate book you've ever read or seen. Here's what you'll find in the pages that follow.

You'll read the stories of top-producing brokers and what they do to achieve and maintain their level of success. I purposely selected brokers from a wide range of markets, companies and levels of experience. I wanted to be certain the lessons shared would apply to the entire brokerage community. Unfortunately, I could not include every firm or every person I interviewed. Many great brokers and several terrific brokerage firms were not included. The selection was based purely on those stories which I believe provide the greatest insight.

You'll find three sections in this book, based on the experience of the brokers profiled. *Young Guns* are brokers with four to seven years' experience. I know some brokers don't think you can learn from people with that level of experience, but they're mistaken. There are lessons to be learned from each person profiled in this book.

Our second group is the *Dominators*, proven, long-term top producers with 10 to 25 years' experience who have achieved a leading position within their market niche. Our third group is the *Game Changers*: Stephen B. Siegel, Bruce Lauer and Jerry Anderson—three amazing brokers who have created careers that set the standard for the rest of us.

Throughout history, human beings have used stories to share information and teach important lessons. I think the stories within this book do that and more. On a purely practical level, they can take you inside the head of a dominant broker and give you a sense of his or her thought process.

You'll understand why Prudential's Faith Consolo chose not to work for legendary broker Edward S. Gordon, and why it was the right choice. You'll hear why CresaPartners' Sam DiFranco, whose nickname is "Sammy the Bull," moved his family to Raleigh, North Carolina, where he didn't know a soul and where his New York accent was considered foreign. You'll gain insight from the description of Hendrix Partners' Dean Zander as to why he chose his special niche and how Brad Umansky analyzed what to do after

a sudden market change.

Stories can also be a lot of fun. When you read the profile of Marcus & Millichap's Mark Myers, you'll conjure up the image of him dressed in a bear suit and trying to flag down cars on a busy Chicago street on a hot summer afternoon. You'll sit on the couch at 2:00 a.m. with Sperry Van Ness's Bo Barron, a college student, when he decided to join the Marines; and you'll read about Tim Strange's incredible luck answering an ad in the newspaper. Discover how Massey Knakal's Bob Knakal got into the brokerage business because he walked into the wrong door.

I've identified key lessons from each story to help you get the maximum value from each one. You'll find more scores of those lessons. To whet your appetite, here are some brief descriptions of what you'll learn:

- › How the disciplined preparation of Jones Lang LaSalle's John Huguenard results in creative deals.
- › The way Grubb & Ellis's Tom Miller structures his day around Food and Drink Opportunities.
- › The reasons behind the semi-focused marketing of CB Richard Ellis' Jeff Kelly.
- › How Duemeland Commercial's own Jill Duemeland uses "power working" to get the most from her day.
- › What Sperry Van Ness's Tim Strange does to make sure he keeps on prospecting.
- › A winning strategy for social media, as practiced by Collier's Coy Davidson.

You'll also get top-producing brokers' advice, in their own words, on prospecting, developing and working with a team, and using technology. They also share specific advice for a new broker just starting out, and offer many other valuable tips and ideas.

The brokers we have profiled do many things their less successful peers also do. They all work hard, for example, but so do many brokers who haven't managed to turn hard work into exceptional production. What makes top brokers different, what sets them apart, are the eight key traits I identified with the acronym DOMINATE.

Here's a quick overview, after which I'll cover each trait in detail.

- › Disciplined
- › Oriented to the Client
- › Market Presence
- › Industry/Geography Focus
- › Navigate Their Careers
- › Assertive
- › Team Oriented
- › Entrepreneurial

Now, let's spend a moment on each trait.

Brokers Who Dominate are Disciplined. You have to be disciplined to the craft of commercial real estate. It cannot be a hobby, it cannot be a vacation, it has to be a vocation. And it's amazing how many brokers truly are not disciplined. The top producers in this book work long and hard at their craft, and they do it every day. A good example is Tom Miller with Grubb & Ellis in Atlanta.

Tom has a specific agenda from when he wakes up to when he goes to bed—what he's going to do and when he's going to do it. Tom is in the office by 4:30 a.m. He works on the business, reading, reviewing contracts and the like until 7:30 a.m., when he heads to the same restaurant almost every day to begin the “working in the business” part of his day.

John Hueguenard starts a little later than Tom, at 6:30 a.m., which is probably more realistic for most of us. John is a billion—not a million—a *billion*-dollar broker. He's extremely disciplined about the practice of research, application, and client communication. He credits his disciplined approach and thorough preparation for his track record of coming up with creative solutions where other brokers saw only obstacles.

Brokers Who Dominate are Oriented to the Client. It seems so simple and everybody says they're in favor of it; they say, “Of course you focus on the client.” But, so many brokers are so focused on the commission of a deal and the transaction itself (the “deal junkies”); they're not really focused on the client at all. In this book, you'll find

some great examples of what it means to really focus on the client, so you'll know what it looks like and make it your practice.

Start with F. Bruce Lauer of CLW Real Estate Services Group.

Bruce learned early on in his career that if he treats the clients like gold, he retains them and he'll actually be able to expand those relationships for other opportunities. That client retention and client expansion repays Bruce tenfold, and he makes it sound very simple: Just help the client look good, especially to his boss. Another broker who's a good example of client orientation is Mike Davis, one of Bruce's protégés.

Mike is one of the top producers at Cushman & Wakefield, and we call him "The Entertainer" for three reasons. Mike's a fun guy, and he's actually cutting an album as a blues singer/guitarist; but more importantly, Mike has really thought through the process of entertaining clients and saying thank you. Mike lays out what you should do for the client for small deals, medium deals and large deals; how you entertain them, how you focus on them to develop long-term relationships.

Brokers Who Dominate have Market Presence. You must have strong market presence to succeed in today's crowded world of commercial brokerage.

There are three kinds of market presence. First is the personal—that's face to face—and you will learn how Sam DiFranco used networking to create market presence when he moved to North Carolina. Next is the physical, like the newspaper, a press release, or a postcard you get in the mail that you can pick up and you can read. And last but not least is digital. You will see that top performers implement some aspect of all three in their marketing campaigns, which help them stay top of mind. This is exhibited in huge, highly competitive markets like New York, where three very different brokers show you their unique ways to stand out.

No one has a stronger presence in the marketplace than Faith Consolo. I get a press release from Faith, her partner or her company at least once a week. Her specialty is retail, and she makes sure she is consistently in front of her clients with a webcast, her "fashionista" TV show, and appearances on Bloomberg, CNN or

MSNBC. She produces a high-end market report on fashion retail that her clients and the media anticipate and quote. That's one way to go, but Bob Knakal has a huge presence in New York through his newsletter, blog and media appearances and conference speaking opportunities. Bob has also tailored his strategy to reach property owners who aren't in the brokerage business. Also in New York is CB Richard Ellis' Stephen B. Siegel, who's known inside the business and out for his remarkable charitable work.

Social marketing using blogs and social media is just beginning to transform the way we create market presence. Ten years ago, a broker in a small market, like Bo Barron, would have been able to create market presence in his market using traditional tools, but his reach wouldn't extend very far. Today, Bo is known throughout the southeast region of the U.S. and even beyond, because of his use of social marketing. At the same time, Coy Davidson, in the much larger Houston market, has developed effective practices for using social media to differentiate himself, penetrate his home market and extend his reach in the tenant-representation niche to the entire country.

Brokers Who Dominate have an Industry/Geography Focus. Top producers narrow their focus to increase their intensity, credibility, and success rate. They become the expert in something because clients trust experts, seek them out and listen to them. There are no real generalists among the top performers in this book. If you're in a tertiary market, certainly you're going to be more of a generalist than someone who's in a large market like Los Angeles, where Dean Zander is truly focused on nothing but multifamily within a certain range of zip codes. Because of that focus, he knows about every deal, every property, every owner and every transaction, and he can articulate that to his prospect and client base in many, many ways. Because he's the expert in that niche, he gets a lot more deals. There are numerous other examples: Transwestern's Caulley Deringer has been doing flex space in the northern Virginia market now for 25 plus years. Mark Myers is focused on the assisted-living and seasonal-housing niche, but he has a nationwide focus on this niche that's consistently made him a top performer for Marcus & Millichap.

Brokers Who Dominate Navigate Their Careers. Top producers change firms with a purpose, compared to less successful brokers who jump the fence when deals aren't going their way, when they don't get along with their broker or when they think there's an opportunity for higher commissions. Top producers don't change just to change. Caulley Deringer has been with the same firm and has had the same phone number for 25 years. John Huegenard, after 20 years with the same firm, recently moved to Jones Lang LaSalle because it was time for a new challenge. What sets the top producers apart is how they think about each stage of their career growing out of the last stage.

Consider the story of Chris Chornohos, a Canadian broker profiled in our Young Guns section. Chris knew he wanted to get into investment real estate, and he started in the business as an appraiser, where he took all the courses required to become an AACI (equivalent to an MAI in the U.S.). From there he moved into sales, and two years ago he joined Advent Commercial Real Estate Group, where he can focus on investment sales. His story reminds me of how many top producers began their careers. They make a couple of moves to learn the business or find a niche; and after that, the top producers specialize in their niche and only move to another firm for a solid, strategic reason. It's just smart business.

Most people experience a long ramp-up period to a successful career. It's usually pretty tough for the first two or three years while a new broker learns the ropes and discovers what niche is best. For a couple of years after, that business grows slowly because of the length of the deal cycle. It all starts to pay off and the flywheel picks up speed after seven years or so. Once they've achieved that level of success, the top producers adopt a strategy based on relationships, repeat business and referrals. And the longer you stay in the same niche, the more all of those pay off.

Brokers Who Dominate are Assertive. This is one of those things where we actually have some scientific evidence to back up the description. At the Massimo Group, when we begin working with a coaching client or evaluate a possible new hire for a consulting client, we use a psychological assessment tool to evaluate how the

person naturally acts and compare that with the natural behaviors evidenced by top-producing commercial brokers. The history of profiles using the tool, compared to performance in the field, tells us top producers are highly assertive. Assertive people are results oriented; they're decisive; they're forceful and demanding. They actually take charge of situations and they're fearless. Those words would certainly describe NAI Global's Bob Brehmer.

Here's a guy who was orphaned and had to learn life the hard way. The big lesson he took out of that orphan experience is there was nothing to fear because nothing was ever likely to be worse. Losing a multimillion-dollar deal may be bad, but it's nothing compared to being left at the orphanage. So Bob lives his life and runs his business fearlessly. Bob brings that same assertiveness and fearlessness to his business today, when he goes after deals or represents his clients.

Brokers Who Dominate are Team Oriented. All these folks have teams, and the teams are configured in many different ways. Bob Knakal has a personal team of seven, each doing something different, to make it possible for him to concentrate on the things he can do best: promoting the firm and finding and winning business. Tim Strange, in Oklahoma City, has a team of three young brokers, each focused on different niches. Jill Duemeland has a support team in her firm, but she puts together a team for every deal that includes bankers and other important people outside the firm. While every broker we profiled has a team of some sort, the master of teams has to be Eric Northbrook of Cushman & Wakefield.

Because of his unique situation, Eric depends and relies heavily on his team to do a lot more than most of us, and he's the first to tell you that his professional success today is due to his team. Eric has five brokers on the team, and every one specializes in a geographic area and product type where he or she is responsible for business and for knowing everything about the business. Eric has done something many team leaders don't do: He has defined precisely what everyone is responsible for, including himself. He's also thought through other aspects of how his team should work, and in his chapter you'll read his thoughts on what it takes to run a team well.

Brokers Who Dominate are Entrepreneurial. The vast majority of brokers only work *in* the business during the day, doing the transactions, getting on that treadmill like a gerbil and just chasing deals. They think that being a top producer is a 9-to-5 profession, even though the evidence says otherwise. True top performers allocate a portion of every day to working on their business—their marketing plan, their advertising plan, their human capital plan, and their operations plan. They spend part of every day doing the reading, thinking and implementing, and that make success possible.

Brokers who dominate understand they are the CEO of their own business, whether they work by themselves, inside a large team or inside a larger firm. Read the profiles of Faith Consolo or John Hueguenard to see how they shift working *on* the business to a time when they can concentrate on that contract or research ways to make that deal. Another good example is Bob Knakal, who allocates specific times for doing deals as well as times for reading, research and writing his syndicated blogs and articles.

Top performers in every field work hard and use processes, habits and technology to grow their business. You can get that generic advice in many places. One thing that makes this book different, though, is the wealth of advice from top producing brokers about things that are unique to our business. Mine the stories, the “in their own words” advice sections, and my interpretations based on helping brokers just like you.

What you learn from this book *will* help you achieve exceptional business growth and performance, regardless of your current level of success or experience, if you consistently apply the lessons shared by these dominant market players. That’s the catch though; nothing will change if you just read and make notes and plan. To adapt a quote from Zig Ziglar: “The lessons work, but only if you work the lessons.”

Every broker in this book is unique. That means while they all do the same basic things, each one does those things in their own way. They all use technology to leverage their activity, but each one uses technology in their own way. They all work with teams, but no two of them do it exactly the same way. That will be a challenge for you, take what you learn here and adapt it to your personality, your

market, your experience level. To help you do this more effectively, review the chapter “To Dominate – Turning Learning into Action” where you’ll find suggestions to help you develop your own reading and action plan. I added a bonus “Challenge” chapter if you need a little push to get started.

Now, before we get to the three sections, we’ll start with the story of Cushman & Wakefield’s Eric Northbrook. Eric is the master of team orchestration. One of his favorite words is “we.” Once you read his story you will understand why this is not only an attractive quality, but a necessary one. Eric’s story, like many in this book, will inspire you. But his is particularly special. For these reasons I made an easy commitment to direct a portion of the proceeds from the sale of this book to the Head North foundation. Please visit www.headnorth.org to learn more about how you can get involved and/or contribute as well.

This book will not provide you with “the silver bullet” to become a top producer. There is no such thing. However, this book will share with you the secrets of top producers across the continent and provide the opportunity to learn from the best and the choice to apply what you wish.

I hope you enjoy this book. I am confident you will find ideas and practices here that will help you achieve exceptional business growth and performance.