



NATIONAL RELOCATION & REAL ESTATE

Recruit, Select, Train: An all-in-one new agent game plan

By Lesley Geary

The old saw for making it in real estate has always been, “location, location, location.” But more and more according to longtime Raleigh, North Carolina Realtor, Kathy Baker, it’s “people skills, people skills, people skills.”

Baker runs three of the six RE/MAX real estate firms in the Raleigh-Durham area and she says finding new people who are “people people”—and therefore likely to do well in the business—is no easy feat. In the last year, however, the RE/MAX general manager has been using an online assessment tool called The Real Estate Simulator that has helped her more effectively recruit and select “great new agents.” The Simulator, which takes less than an hour to complete, has, according to Baker, “really helped take a lot of the heartache and heartburn out of hiring the wrong people.”

Available from Upward Motion, The Real Estate Simulator simulates what an agent can expect from a career in real estate and has helped hundreds of firms recruit, select and train new agents. And, unlike other assessment tools, the Simulator comes with extensive Human Resources support as well as marketing templates, tools and guidance to ensure brokers cost-effectively achieve a competitive advantage.

For Baker, the easy-to-use tool has been especially helpful selecting new Realtors in this age of corporate downsizing. “There are literally floods of people who have been laid off and want to get into real estate,” she explains, but adds that RE/MAX typically does not like to bring in agents without experience in the business. In fact, the average RE/MAX new hire has about 12 years of experience. With rampant downsizing in many of Raleigh’s old-line industries, however, Baker felt that her company might be missing out on some excellent—albeit new to real estate—prospects.

So far, The Real Estate Simulator has prompted Baker to select 16 new agents in the last year who would normally not have been considered by her company due to their lack of real estate experience. Of those 16, Baker reports that 12 are doing very well, and that four of the 12 will make over \$100,000 in their first year.

The advantages of The Real Estate Simulator go beyond recruiting and selecting good agents, however. According to Baker, the Simulator's test results allow brokers to target training areas, as well. The Simulator clearly identifies any weakness—such as the need to deal with people better. Once a weakness is identified, brokers can offer agents training in that specific area. Agents can also take the test again to see how their scores have risen in those areas. According to Baker, agents get great satisfaction knowing they are learning as they watch their scores rise.

For Kevin Keller, senior vice president of Touchstone Real Estate Group in Bakersfield, California, the Simulator has helped him grow his new firm from zero to 67 agents in just five months. “Oh my gosh,” he says of the Real Estate Simulator, “to join our company, it is absolutely mandatory for agents to take the Simulator.” For Keller the tool “is the foundation for understanding our agents’ strengths and weaknesses,” and enables him to train agents in the areas in which they scored poorly. In fact, he says the service has been invaluable helping him recruit, select and train his agents: “I was so enamored with all that the program could do to help us, I paid two years in advance.”

For example, says Keller, the Simulator has a section about meeting and greeting people. “I would never have thought to develop a class about social skills and people skills, but highly technical people need those skills to do well in real estate and you would be surprised how many are simply socially inept.”

“It’s a tool that I’m not sure we could do without,” he continues. “It has allowed us to pass on agents who would not have been a good fit...it’s just a wonderful experience, we’re in fact married to it.”

For Sheila Gunderson with Medford, Oregon-based, Exit Realty Group, the Real Estate Simulator has also proved invaluable. According to Gunderson, Exit is the only franchise that gives a “true residual, a ten percent over-ride on every new recruit they find for life.” So besides helping Gunderson find good new recruits, the Real Estate Simulator also allows her to get leads. Exit advertises the Simulator and people try it out online. “They see it and have fun with it, and it will evaluate how they did against how other successful agents in the business do.”

So far Sheila Gunderson and her husband Gary Gunderson who run the Medford-Ashland brokerage say they have earned \$65,000 this year just on the over-rides they have made on their new recruits taking the Simulator.

The Gunderson’s report that the only challenge has been managing all the leads they receive. That said, the couple says that the Simulator “has allowed us to really attract some dynamic young agents into the business.” Sheila Gunderson says she is finding that these great young people bring with them a tremendous amount of technical skill and energy. She hopes to grow their Oregon business from No. 10 in the market to No. 1 in the next two years. What’s more Gunderson says she is counting on the Simulator to make those growth targets a reality.