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Leading Real Estate
Companies of the World®
is Local and Global

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Leading Real Estate Companies of the World® is Local *and* Global

by Paige Tepping

At a time when a lot of people talk about being “global,” Leading Real Estate Companies of the World® truly lives it—having built a powerful international presence long before being global was in fashion. At Leading Real Estate Companies of the World® (LeadingRE), it’s not just about having it in their name; it’s about connecting market-leading real estate firms through an approach that is world-wise and globally aware.

Real Estate



Participants from all five LeadingRE Conference Week events enjoy a laugh during the general session.

With a reach that extends to 52 countries with over 500 firms, LeadingRE is home to some of the world's premier independent real estate brokerages, providing the business resources and global connections of a franchise while allowing its members to build their own brands rather than someone else's.

Already a powerhouse in the U.S., LeadingRE is building connections to all corners of the world, with some of the newest destinations including Sydney, Auckland, Dubai, Johannesburg, Istanbul, Venice, and more.

While each member firm is a leader in the markets they serve, they value being internationally aligned in this world of global connectivity.

"We want to make sure that the values that characterize LeadingRE agents and brokers are accessible to everyone, everywhere in the global marketplace—values like local insight, global world-view, community orientation, trusted experience and high performance," LeadingRE President/CEO Pam O'Connor says. "It's this motivation that has fueled our phenomenal growth in recent years."

LeadingRE's world-wise approach can be seen throughout its operations. The organization has corporate offices in London and Singapore, in addition to its headquarters in Chicago and multiple field offices in the U.S. and abroad. Its Vice President of International Operations Chris Dietz represents the organization at international real estate events around the world. RELO Direct®, its corporate relocation company, manages employee moves for major clients on virtually every continent. Luxury Portfolio International®, its



Brokers representing major companies across the U.S. gather at LeadingRE's recent conference (left to right): Hoby Hanna (Howard Hanna Real Estate Services, Ohio); Dan Elsea (Real Estate One, Mich.); Harold Crye (Crye-Leike, REALTORS®, Tenn.); Pat Riley (Allen Tate REALTORS®, N.C.); William Watson, Jr. (Watson Realty Corp., Fla.); and Ron Peltier (HomeServices of America, Minn.).

award-winning marketing program for affluent properties, was launched over a decade ago and was among the first to feature property listings in nine languages and 60 currencies. And its events consistently draw a distinctively international audience.

"I have been coming to LeadingRE meetings since our company affiliated in 2001," says Benedetta Viganò, owner of Giorgio Viganò Real Estate in Milan, Italy. "The relationships created at those meetings are unparalleled by any other real estate organization, and I greatly value the personal and professional connections I have made," Viganò says.

In fact, 23 countries were represented at LeadingRE's recent Conference Week held at Wynn Las Vegas, an event that attracted more than 2,000 attendees who came together to learn, network and connect with fellow members. While Conference Week is the network's signature gathering, LeadingRE continues to add new international events to its calendar each year.

Last October, the network's International Symposium took place in the beautiful city of Dubrovnik, Croatia, where attendees absorbed the ancient culture while learning and networking for future business opportunities. This year, the group heads to Berlin in October to jointly

experience the creative center of Germany and continue the dialogue on global real estate trends. Also on the horizon is the Asia Pacific International Property Awards show in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia this May, an event that brings together leaders from all facets of the real estate industry from around the region, sponsored by LeadingRE and Luxury Portfolio.

Understanding the significance and impact of the Asian market, Luxury Portfolio International® hosted its Asian Immersion Conference in Shanghai last summer, which presented a unique opportunity for luxury real estate specialists who work with Chinese homebuyers and sellers to gain knowledge of Chinese culture and traditions and, specifically, how they may impact decisions relating to real estate. The event was part of Luxury Portfolio's strategic outreach to Asian consumers, which also includes a deeply expanded online and print presence in the region through Chinese partners.

"The Immersion Conference was such an enlightening experience for all attendees. For example, we learned that the Chinese have a saying, 'One should live near enough to family that if you were to hand-deliver a bowl of soup, it would still be warm when you arrived.' So it's no surprise that we are seeing investors from

China more likely to purchase in the same building or neighborhood as another family member," comments Luxury Portfolio President and LeadingRE COO Paul Boomsma.

Gaining a deeper understanding of how culture drives decision-making is critical for real estate professionals across the board, whether they are assisting a buyer from another country or working with someone who is buying in their native country, but may be influenced by his or her heritage or by increased global awareness. LeadingRE strives to foster this understanding not only through its meetings, but also with its online professional development program, Institute, which includes globally-focused topics and shares insights on differences in real estate practices around the world.

To ensure its offerings are relevant to the diverse membership, LeadingRE enlists its International Advisory Board to provide feedback and direction as the network grows its global footprint. The board consists of an accomplished group of real estate leaders from far-reaching locations: Chairman Ron Stader (CIR REALTY, Canada), who succeeds immediate past Chairman José Ribes Bas (Inmobiliaria Rimontgó, Spain); Marco Argentieri (Cofim-Immobiliare, Italy); Frank Morrice Arias (Siuma Realty, Panama); Steve Burson (H&R Consultants, Japan); Philippe de Beer (Park Lane, Mauritius); Claude Ginesta (Ginesta Immobilien, Switzerland); Jeremy Hurst (International Realty Group Ltd., Cayman Islands); Charles-Marie Jottras (Daniel Féau Conseil d'Immobilier, France); and Codrin Matei (Crosspoint, Romania).

With its growth, the network has seen a dramatic increase in members doing business across borders. Last year alone, referrals were placed in 87 countries—and activity continues to expand each year. These figures, paired with industry-leading referral activity within the U.S., mean

that LeadingRE members are placing a referral somewhere in the world every four minutes—over 30,000 in total.

“We’ve seen extraordinary growth in the number of members who are making client introductions to other affiliates around the world,” notes O’Connor. “Much of this success stems from the support of our Cross Borders Referral Team, which helps our members navigate the issues that are often involved with this type of business, such as different time zones, cultural and language barriers, various legal systems and vastly different market realities. This helps them make the best introduction for their clients. The impersonality and overwhelming choice on the Internet is actually driving more personal recommendations, and this is a core competency of our network.”

Examples of LeadingRE members sharing cross-borders referrals abound. One recent instance involves a sales associate from Willis Allen Real Estate in San Diego, who was working with a client purchasing a high-end home there. The client had a son studying in Berlin and a daughter practicing law in London. When the Willis Allen agent learned that they had several homes around the world, she mentioned her global capabilities through LeadingRE, thinking they might wish to buy a property for their son in Berlin. Ironically, even though the husband is actually German, the couple was referred to LeadingRE affiliate Zabel Property Group in Berlin by their U.S. agent. In the end, they bought three units: one for themselves and two others that will be used for rental income.

“This and other stories are great illustrations of how clients may be looking for real estate on the other side of the world,” O’Connor explains, “and by being mindful of global real estate needs, our affiliates are tapping into our network to build business and, even more important-

ly, extend the service they offer clients for an expertly-managed experience. This would not be happening without LeadingRE’s frequent global events that allow our members from around the world to meet and develop relationships. Our members are not just dots on a map; they are true colleagues.”

“We see great opportunity through LeadingRE to build business relationships with clients around the world,” comments Charles-Marie Jottras, owner of Daniel Féau Conseil d’Immobilier in Paris, France. “The organization’s brand, Lead-

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ing Real Estate Companies of the World®, appealed to us because of what it implies, and we have not been disappointed in the quality and business acumen of our fellow LeadingRE affiliates.”

In the U.S., while the influx of international buyers is certainly more prevalent in some parts of the country—particularly New York, Miami, L.A. and San Francisco—the global influence is not just a coastal phenomenon. Recently, West Virginia member Old Colony Real Estate sold a farm to a Chinese buyer, and given the propensity for Chinese middle-class buyers to purchase condos for their children being educated abroad, college towns across middle America are also seeing foreign real estate investment.

Even for markets that are not strong destinations for cross-border activity, the global influence can be felt. As Boomsma explains, “The multicultural world we live in requires a greater understanding of different customs. It’s not just about people relocating to or from different countries; it’s about trying to understand the cultural influences of first-generation Americans. Real estate may



Right: Rob Sibcy, Pam Sibcy, Robin Sheakley and Susan Knabe of Sibcy Cline REALTORS® (Ohio) gather at the recent Luxury Portfolio SUMMIT Soirée Bianco at Neiman Marcus, held during LeadingRE Conference Week.



Socializing at the Performance SUMMIT reception at Tryst Nightclub are Ricardo Cabaleiro, Rodrigo Arauz, Eduardo Aleman and Frank Morrice Arias (Siuma Realty, Panama), along with Carla Lewis (Intracoastal Realty, NC) and Pam O'Connor (LeadingRE, IL).

be local, but buyers are increasingly global, and today's sellers demand that their homes be exposed around the world."

While LeadingRE has built an unmatched global presence, the uniquely local character of each of its member firms remains paramount to the network's distinctive personality—succinctly conveyed in a theme popular with its members: "I'm local. I'm global."

As Boomsma explains, "We have achieved a healthy balance between supporting our members' independence and providing them with a tangible global experience. Ten

years after adopting our name, Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®, we have truly lived up to it. Our members are leaders in their individual markets, and collectively we are leaders in the global real estate market."

LeadingRE has the numbers to prove it. The network has a higher sales volume than any other—with over one million transactions valued at \$314 billion in annual home sales. Affiliates within the top 500 U.S. companies out-performed all other networks by 18 percent last year, and members' local brands have the No. 1 marketshare in more

of the top 100 cities across the U.S. than any national brand.

As noted in a 2014 NAR survey, independent brokers—firms not affiliated with a large franchise brand—are more prevalent now than they were a decade ago. And in another industry survey, 97 percent of indie brokers say they aren't considering joining a franchise brand, while 71 percent of franchise brokers report that they have at least thought about going independent. LeadingRE has helped many former franchisees make the "soft landing" to independence, which is more appealing today because the Internet has changed the way consumers search for real estate firms, and millennials are attracted to the personality and community roots of local brands. LeadingRE's mastery in the independent real estate space has positioned it to attract strong players for years to come.

O'Connor shares her thoughts on what creates this remarkable success. "Our brokers are known for their agility, expertise and superior knowledge of both local and global markets. We help strengthen them even further by advocating on their behalf and offering targeted services, resources and support—connecting them to broader markets, both nationally and globally. It's a formula that works." **RE**

For more information, please visit LeadingRE.com.

On the cover: Members from around the world at LeadingRE's 2015 Conference Week at Wynn Las Vegas:

Back row, left to right: Paul Reynolds, Reynolds Propiedades, Argentina; Jim Bernard, Bahamas Realty, Bahamas; Leslee Farrell, Macdonald Realty, Canada; Javier Herrera, Grupo Actúa Properties, Dominican Republic; Frank Morrice, Siuma Realty, Panama; Louise Remillard, Profusion Realty, Canada; Chris Dietz, LeadingRE, United Kingdom; Eduardo Aleman, Siuma Realty, Panama; Ricardo Cabaleiro, Siuma Realty, Panama; Paul Boomsma, LeadingRE, USA; Florian Davier, Cano Immobilier, France. Second row from back row, left to right: Ilaria Meani, Meani Real Estate and Business, Italy; Pinar Ayikcan Tuna, Ayikcan Emlak Pazarlama, Turkey; Paul Antonas, Bahamas Realty, Bahamas; Stuart Halbert, Bahamas Realty, Bahamas; Monica Knowles, Bahamas Realty, Bahamas; Silvina Andrews, Bahamas Realty, Bahamas; Larry Roberts, Bahamas Realty, Bahamas; Jason Wong, Bahamas Realty, Bahamas; Rodrigo Arauz, Siuma Realty, Panama; Brian Austin, Bahamas Realty, Bahamas. Third row from back, left to right: Judith von Hasselbach, Allgemeiner Grund & Boden Fundus, Germany; Zarek Honneysett, Sibarth Real Estate, Saint Barthelemy; Berry Everitt, Chas Everitt International Property Group, South Africa; Ásdís Ósk Valsdóttir, Husaskjöl, Iceland; Benedetta Viganò, Giorgio Viganò Real Estate, Italy; Ignacio Artañoitia, Inmobiliaria Rimontgó, Spain; Jose Ribes, Inmobiliaria Rimontgó, Spain; Peter Rabitz, Zabel Property Group, Germany. Second row from front: Jessica Valasquez, Aruba Palms REALTORS®, Aruba; Thomas Zabel, Zabel Property Group, Germany; Pam O'Connor, LeadingRE, USA; Chantal Perlet, Cano Immobilier, France; Fiede Clausen, Zabel Property Group, Germany; Cecilia Campbell, Reynolds Propiedades, Argentina. Front: Valerie Cano Outy, Cano Immobilier, France; Jan Falcone, Aruba Palms REALTORS®, Aruba