Connect the Speakers: Emily Smith on building a brokerage culture

As the **COO at Wemert Group Realty, Emily Smith** has been laser-focused on the company's culture. She sees her role as **making sure that agents have the resources to live up to their reputation in the marketplace in addition to helping them grow in their roles and do their jobs well** — which is critical to both recruiting new agents and keeping hold of the ones who currently work for her.

Smith will be sharing what she's learned at **Inman Connect New York** in a session about how to combat your churn problem with a culture fix; the event takes place **from January 28 through February 1 at the Marriott Marquis Times Square.**

Tell us a little more about your session. How will it address how the industry can embrace the shifting market?

It's about having a really clear picture of who you are as a brokerage and as a team. You've got to have a clear picture of who you serve, how you serve them, understanding all your value propositions along the way, and knowing how to bring that to the market so consumers hear it and begin to embody it. That's when the magic happens, and it starts to grow out from under you as a ripple effect for what you're creating.

For us, it's about having an abundance-minded culture, learning to stay in front of the shift and not be scared of it, asking the questions of "how do I use this change to my advantage, differentiate myself from everyone else in my market, reduce fear and help the average consumer approach the market with less fear — because if they feel fear they won't make a decision?" You have to know who you are and your market, you have to be an expert. You can't just say you're an expert, you have to actually do the work and become an expert in your market so you become the go-to

source.

What do you think are the biggest opportunities to focus on in the real estate industry right now?

For us it’s all about relationships. We call ourselves high-tech, high-touch, and we believe it really takes both. We embrace technology as it comes and try to stay ahead of it, take the time to do the research and learn how to interact with the new technology coming into the market, and really staying on top of the high-touch part of your business as well. For a brokerage, it’s going to be investing in the team and agents, for clients and staff it’ll be investing in the clients so clients can recommend and bring more into your sphere. We have to have one eye on technology and another eye on relationships and figure out how they simultaneously work together.

To stay competitive, agents, brokers and companies need to execute quickly. What do you feel are key areas where quick execution can vastly improve the customer experience?

From start to finish at least on our end, we look at every point we’re interacting with the consumer, whether it’s the internet, a social media account we’re facilitating, a phone call where they come in as a first lead. Speed is the name of the game in every aspect, we live in an “everyone wants it now” society.

That means leverage — the agents in the field don’t have the ability to pay the speed game if they’re with another client, so we’ve put staff in place to be a second layer, and use clear communication so we know our next step — we always give everyone we talk to a next step. And that’s partially being the expert; if you know the answers and where to find the answers, you can bring a lot more value a lot more quickly than if you don’t.

We have a person who answers the phone 18-20 hours a day, and there's a second person stacked so if the phone rings twice, it goes to another person so our phone will always be answered by a live person. If you call into the office, you will get someone who can help you. When agents are working with a client, they give a secondary contact to the client so they know they can get someone quickly.

What are your hopes for the next 12 months, and what will you be working on?

This year we are working on perfecting our six things with our agents. We always say the average agent has to do 60 things well, be their own marketer, their own prospector, they have to wear all the hats. So we've narrowed that down to six things we think our agents should do well, and we're spending the end of the year kicking off 2019 by giving agents their six things to go out and do their jobs well. And the staff is working on their six things to help fill out their circle.

Our in-house marketing team is doing what they need to do, homing in on their skills, what new ways should they be advertising, should we nix that and try this, figuring out where to spend the money. Client care coordinators, our transaction coordinators, are homing in on telephone scripts, where to find the information they had to scramble for last time. We tend to use Q4 as a way to set up the next year for success.

I think our team has set about doing this in a way that looks different from what I've seen; I feel like we really have to make it apparent that our clients are at the helm of everything we do. We always say it's all about our clients, always has been, always will be, and that's going to be the key differentiator. If agents can remember, whether they're handling a phone call, writing an email, on social media, if they can remember it's all about the client, it shapes how they communicate with the client and how that business gets built.

Dig deeper into building a brokerage culture and discover the opportunities in a changing market at Inman Connect New York, January 29 – February 1. Jumpstart 2019 with tactical takeaways, unlimited networking and thought-provoking speakers. Learn more*.*

Thinking about bringing your team? You may qualify for special group perks! Contact us to learn more*.*

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