Connect the Speakers: Steve Weiss on delivering value through relationship-building

Steve Weiss at **Coast & County Brokers** has been building relationships in the town of San Luis Obispo in California for more than three decades — he even has third-generation buyers whose grandparents were among his first clients. **So when it comes to forging a connection that lasts, he's got it down.**

Weiss will be participating in a panel discussion about focusing on **relationships as a brand proposition** as part of the week-long programming and networking at **Inman Connect New York**, January 29 through February 1 at the **Marriott Marquis Times Square**. He told us about one of his lead generation strategies that's been serving him well and much more.

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

The disruption in my brokerage is **my agents themselves getting in their own way** — **forgetting about customer service and retooling themselves**. The market was so brisk for so many years, and now we're going back to a more traditional market where the basics are going to have to come back into play, and they need to over-deliver. I'm not worried about the iBuyers or disruption, but **I'm worried about my agents and myself not following through and doing what I said I was going to do.**

After 34 years, I've got a pretty good program — I'm working with third-generation buyers right now; the grandparents were my first clients in the business in 1985, then sold several children homes, and now their children's children. It's just reaching out to these people and remembering that I'm just another agent. They can find me anywhere, but I'm reminding everyone that this is purely a relationship business, and you have to continue touching these people because if you don't, they're just going to go away.

The other thing is a simple database; I don't know how many agents I know who don't have a database. **How can you not have a database today?** You have your phone list, your iPhone with all your contacts in there — why wouldn't you have one for your clients?

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

I think what's right in front of you tends to be overlooked, **your sphere of influence.** If you're not reaching out to everyone you know to let them know what business you're in, then you're simply a secret agent. **Don't be a secret agent!** There's always a reason to call someone, a client of yours, whether it's a holiday, a birthday, an anniversary, whatever it may be, but there is a definite shift in the market. When you know people are having babies, too, that's a time to reach out to them.

Reward your loyal clients, don't become complacent with them. Sometimes agents can become too focused on bringing in new clients. Be free with expressions of gratitude and find ways to say thank you for your valued business. It's very common to think "OK, I'm done with them for a number of years," but you're never done with them because they're still a referral source. That's the best way you can thank any agent.

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?

Here's an example: Thursday nights are the farmer's market here. We average about 10,000 people, it's incredible. My brokerage is located within the downtown association, so we're one of the few who are allowed to have a booth at the farmer's market. My brokerage is the only brokerage that's actually connected, and we've sold maybe 40 homes through that connection.

People don't come to the farmer's market buy a house, but they're visiting and they see us and they're looking for information; **we're connected.** So when they come and see us, before they get home, they have an email from us and they're already on the MLS portal. They give us their

information and parameters, we sign them up, and before they get home, they're ready to rock and roll. We don't pass out anything; we have information posted, and we do that for a reason: **We want them to stop and look, so we can start a conversation.**

And the other thing is, everything is so digital these days — everything we do, whether it's the transaction itself or signatures; I'm still aware of several brokerages that have paper files.

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

I'm cautiously optimistic about the next 12 months. I'm a little concerned that our inventory is growing, and interest rates are rising, and **sellers aren't listening to their brokers**. The reason why the inventory is growing is because things are sitting on the market longer, so my hopes are that the consumer will listen to their trusted advisors.

On the opposite side, when the market was brisk as can be and you meet these people and you tried to tell them, "Here's this house, I know you want it really badly and you're going to have to offer $10,000 over asking if you want it" — and they look at you like "are you crazy?" **You have to create this urgency**. But until they lose the home that they wanted, they don't listen to you. So I'll be trying to get my sellers to understand that it's time to rethink this process.

I'm also looking to expand my brokerage, add another office in wine country. That's my goal next year: to expand, but still have my hub here in San Luis Obispo.

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*.*

Source: click here