Connect the Speakers: Therese Antonelli on leading a brokerage through shift

When **Therese Antonelli** first got her real estate license in 2011, the market was still low, and "everybody said, 'if you can do this, you can do anything.'" She worked on a team before leaving to forge her own independent real estate brokerage, **Moving the Mitten** (she's based out of Michigan), which also includes a 17-agent team, so she knows about dealing with shift and how to keep agents happy in times of change.

Antonelli will be sharing what she's learned in a panel discussion about how to get your team ready for dealing with shift along with other experts at Inman Connect New York**, January 28 through February 1 at the Marriott Marquis Times Square**. She shared her strategy for the future and her thoughts about what it means to thrive in a shift.

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

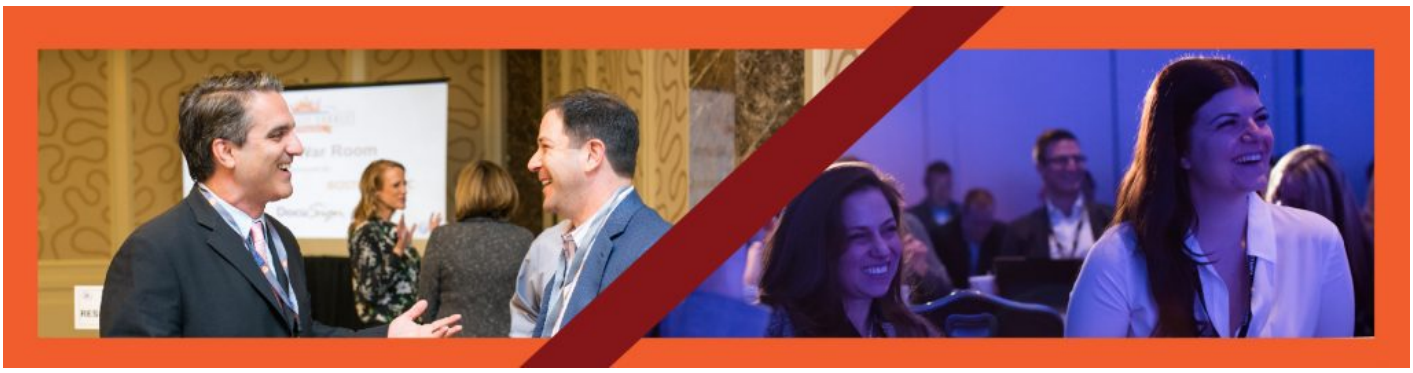
I live by the motto "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em." I know there are a lot of naysayers out there about Zillow, and I'm not one of those naysayers. I believe Zillow is the No. 1 searched website for real estate, not only in my area but in the nation, and I'm not going to be a Zillow hater because I'll be left behind. Zillow has quite a name, and it's helped me build my business and become the person and the business and the broker I am today.

There's a huge technology shift and brokerage shift; so many brokers out there are transforming into the small-cap and no support model. I don't ever want to do that. I'd rather go out of business than be the person who just has a brick and mortar with agents who I don't even know and who

don’t trust me just drop in and give me money. I think there will always be a place for a full service, full team brokerage. You can’t just have uneducated agents running around doing business with one of the biggest financial transactions consumers will make.

And with the market shift — are consumers going to the flat-fee MLS listing brokerages, are consumers going to the iBuyer or instant offers programs because they don’t want the human touch? There’s always going to be a handful of people who don’t want to deal with the stress of marketing their property, getting it beautiful, market timing, but it’s going to be a service that’s always necessary because it’s a service. They’re always going to need that tour guide of an agent talking and walking and teaching them through the process. I don’t care whether they’re millennials or seniors, they want a human who’s going to hold their hand through one of the biggest financial transactions of their lifetime.

We’re in metro Detroit and we’re probably one of the cities that’s far off the radar for those big iBuyer companies because we appear to be too much of a risk for a lot of them. I don’t anticipate feeling much of a hurt even if they did come to our market because in the end, consumers still want that personal touch.



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

I truly believe that the community involvement and client retention, that is just so important. And I think when a brokerage gets too big — for instance, there’s a franchise down the street and this guy was the mayor of our city 40 years ago, and I come to town four years ago and I actually do something. I’m at the finish line of 5K races, sponsoring kids to go to a national robotics convention; I’m giving back. Being involved in the community and a presence, and on top of that I’m using the bread-and-butter of my business, my referral basis and my past clients, and I’m

constantly touching them. There are so many agents who just get too big and forget where they came from, and I never forgot where I came from. I try to infuse that into my agents as well by leading by example.

If I was on a stage and said one thing people needed to focus on, your sphere and your past clients are always going to be your bread and butter. If this market dropped off today and everybody went to a flat-fee brokerage or went to instant offers, you'll still have that connection or trust with people you've done business with before, and they'll probably be willing to pay you or at least call you to get your opinion. Don't sell a house and just forget them. Keep them close. You've got your book of business, and you have to focus on it.

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?

The No. 1 is just having systems and procedures in place. We cannot fly by the seat of our pants in this industry, we have to have tested and proven systems and procedures. From a listing perspective, I have a very systematic release of my listings. We do a detailed pre-marketing launch campaign, from Zillow's Coming Soon to a postcard campaign to a Facebook ad and gain a lot of momentum, so every listing we release on Thursday night at 5 p.m., we're able to hold a three-day average for my sellers. We do Friday, Saturday, Sunday showings with an open house and are able to get enough bodies and interest through to get multiple offers on Sunday.

Having systems and procedures that are tried, true, and tested in place so that you're confident in what you're offering are crucial. You want to underpromise and over-acheive. The second most important thing is trusted referral partnerships, lender and title. The minute we get a file, we send it to the title company, have a pre-title commitment back in 48 hours, and that allows us on the list side to know if there are any red flags that could hold up the transaction. Whether it's an old mortgage or divorce decree, we know what that is. And we have an amazing loan partner that can literally get a loan closed in 12 days. Aligning yourself with other vendors who have tried and tested

the same procedures is also important.

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

I need to recruit, and that's a hard thing to say for me because I've never done it. However, I am not dumb to the fact that there are a lot of moving parts in our market and a lot of brokerages who have popped up offering very low splits, and I will probably start losing some of my top producers to those shiny new objects. So in order to sustain a profitable brokerage that I run currently, I need to downfill the loss, and I'm going to be able to do that by recruiting.

I've hired a coach teaching me tips and tricks that I wouldn't have tried. I love new agents; I don't have to break any bad habits from them, so I love grabbing new agents who have big expectations for what real estate can do for them because I know as long as they have the personality and the hustle, I can teach them the logistics. So I'm truly going to work on recruiting to build my company because I do know some of the outside influencers are going to pull some of my top producers.

Dig deeper into leading a brokerage through shift 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*.*

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