The best advice I've ever received about luxury customer service

As a luxury real estate agent, you play many parts over the course of a day. From the moment you enter this industry, you are negotiating the fluctuating world of luxury markets, networking with a fascinating clientele, and connecting those clients with the most stunning and exclusive homes.

For many agents, a reliable piece of advice can make all the difference when moving into the high-end customer service space. We asked five Sotheby's International Realty agents to look back and share the lessons that gave them the edge in their luxury careers.

Rebecca Schumacher

While immediate personal responsiveness is in my DNA and nothing has proven to be more important, the best advice that I ever received was to create a luxury experience for all our clients at every price point. I have gone so far as to lead conversations with multiple generations of families, evolving their portfolios from first-time buyers to the acquisition of investment properties to eventual retirement lifestyle plans.

Clients purchasing a luxury property often employ a team of professional advisors for estate planning, tax consulting, financial planning, and more. As a real estate advisor, I serve clients best

when working collaboratively with that team on an ongoing basis well beyond any one real estate transaction.

Rebecca Schumacher
REALTOR®, San Francisco, Calif.
Sotheby's International Realty

Casey Flannery

In almost 20 years in luxury real estate, I've continued to follow the advice I was given very early in my career: luxury customer service is all about response time, follow-up, follow-through, and availability. Our clientele can and will pull the trigger on a property in a much different way than a typical customer. We are dealing with well-traveled, well-educated clients who often come into town on a moment's notice and don't have the time or desire to work with someone who isn't willing to accommodate them. I've found that making myself available to my clients on their terms has been paramount. This strategy has been the foundation of my success.

Casey Flannery
Partner Associate
Equestrian Sotheby's International Realty

Debbie Gibbs

All the service you provide should be at a luxury level. Invest time on the front end by maintaining a good grasp of the market at all times and remaining fully engaged in your business. Listen to your buyers so that you have a solid understanding of what they are looking for and confidence that the property you're showing them is a good fit. Your clients are investing a lot of money in their future. You want to make the process as easy and pleasant as you possibly can by earning their full trust in you and, as a result, full confidence in the big decisions they are making.

Debbie Gibbs
Licensed Realtor
The Steele Group Sotheby's International Realty

Donna Burns

Listen slowly, act promptly. Face it, we are all Type A personalities. It takes discipline to slow down and actually listen to clients' needs. But when the decisions are reached, act quickly. Every client, especially luxury clients, want to know that you are "on it".

Donna Burns
Agent of the Year 2018
Kaiser Sotheby's International Realty

John Cain

Buying a home is the beginning of a new journey, and should be an enjoyable, fulfilling experience. I think the best advice I've received in my career is to listen to clients, hear them out, and customize a plan to suit their situation. Then, be constantly available and responsive once that plan is in place.

Don't be so keen to sell a property that you rush your clients through the process, and if you find yourself falling into rehearsed scripts or a one-size-fits-all approach, take a breath and try to change things up. Your treatment of your clients is so much more important than closing a sale because it lays the foundation for a long-term relationship based on mutual respect and trust.

John Cain
Principal, Broker Associate
Pacific Sotheby's International Realty

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Founded in 1976 to provide independent brokerages with a powerful marketing and referral program for luxury listings, the Sotheby's International Realty® network was designed to connect the finest independent real estate companies to the most prestigious clientele in the world.

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