

## COVER STORY: HOT LIST 2017

# HOT LIST 2017

The real estate industry does not run on agents alone. These 75 industry heavyweights are helping shape the industry from every possible angle

**AN EDITOR** at a major Canadian business publication once said that every story they ran could be about real estate and they would never run out of material. The inherent breadth that captures readers' imaginations is a reflection of just how much activity goes into making the industry as powerful as it is. Agents may be the smiling, indispensable face of real estate, but the heart, blood, bones and nerves of this mammoth business are the developers, brokers, executives, government officials and countless other professionals who create the products

and the environment that make an agent's job possible.

*REP's* 2017 Hot List is a collection of 75 of the most influential individuals/partners working in Canadian real estate today. Many of these faces will never appear on a billboard, but their efforts, innovative thinking and dedication have pushed them to the forefront of their chosen areas of expertise. From stagers to CEOs, disruptive tech companies to the country's leading brokerages, the men and women driving Canadian real estate are as diverse and vital as the industry itself.

## SPONSOR PROFILE



RE/MAX Infinite is a thriving, diverse brokerage growing in numbers year after year. We adhere to the premise that our agents are our clients. We are committed to ensuring that they receive consistent, excellent service and support at every level, from our broker of record, Levon Nazarian, who makes himself available to all agents whenever they have a question or require help with their deals, to a top notch administrative staff that are among the best in the business – knowledgeable, friendly and always willing to go above and beyond to assist our agents with all of their business needs.

The RE/MAX Infinite team is family. We have developed a strong sense of community and we are very proud of the dedicated, supportive and selfless environment within our brokerage.

We aim to improve our business with the latest tools and technologies available, with a strong emphasis on continuing education and awareness. Weekly meetings to discuss the latest developments in the industry, as well as technical tutorials and occasional guest speakers, serve to equip not only new agents but seasoned, top producers with everything they need to develop and grow their business.

We are currently in the process of opening a new 20,000sqft facility in York Region that will incorporate many essential services. We believe that the new office will transform the way that our agents conduct their business and will allow for more well-rounded service for all of our clients.

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## MARK RUTTAN

RE/MAX of Wasaga Beach

Wasaga Beach, ON

### How's the market in Wasaga Beach in 2017?

Amazing. I've been doing this over 28 years now, and I've never seen it like this.

### How has that interest changed how you approach the market?

I've had to work harder this year just to get listings. I always carry a large inventory of listings, but this year people have no place to move to, so if they sell their property they have nowhere to go. But I've had a good client base over the years, and they still stick by me, so that's good.

### You had a massive jump in business from 2015 to '16. What accounted for that increase?

I base it on my database. I finally created a database which, when I list or something new comes up, it automatically goes to everyone who's signed on to it. I'm finding that people who I haven't talked to in five to 10 years are getting it and are saying, "Yes, that's the one I want." My database has finally gotten to the point where I have so many people in there that I can contact a lot more people who are coming to buy.

### What have you been doing to keep your business evolving for almost 30 years?

I've always been out in the public. I sponsor soccer teams, baseball teams. I was involved in politics for nine years. It's not that I go out looking for business, it's just that I'm part of the community anyway. People see you, so they come back and call you.

## HARRY STINSON

President, Stinson Developments

Hamilton, ON

Harry Stinson has made his name by being about 10 steps ahead of his competition. With the Candy Factory Lofts, Stinson not only brought the idea of residential loft living to Toronto, he also sparked a rebirth in what is now the trendiest part of the city. His 1 King West project, once considered impossible to build, is now one of the most revered properties in Toronto, while the High Park Lofts are reasonably credited with helping enliven Roncesvalles Village.

But Stinson's foresight has taken him further from his native Toronto. Three of his current projects are located in Hamilton; the other is in Buffalo, NY.

"The entry costs for doing development in Toronto are close to prohibitive," Stinson says, "unless you're an established player or bringing in massive amounts of money. I keep my eyes open, but right now where would you find an empty, old, grand building to be restored in Toronto?"

While Stinson's multiple forays into a revitalized Hamilton market are looking to be predictably enrapturing, it is his planned redevelopment of the long-abandoned Buffalo Central Terminal train station that is raising the most eyebrows – a \$100m revitalization project, replete with lofts, 300,000sqft of office space and a sprawling convention space. The success of the project will largely depend on the city's economic rebirth, but Stinson sees in Buffalo the same potential once hidden under layers of grime in Hamilton. Based on his decades of success, one thing not to be doubted when it comes to Harry Stinson is his foresight.

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## PAUL MARANGER

Sotheby's International Realty Canada

Toronto, ON

For top producing Sotheby's agent Paul Maranger, selling luxury real estate has always appealed more to his personality than to his bank account.

"It's not a question of commissions," he says about his motivations to sell some of Canada's most exclusive properties. "It's a function of quality over quantity. Some people are just driven by nature to quantity and some are driven by nature to quality – and complexity as well."

Maranger, who has been with Sotheby's International for almost six years and is the company's senior vice president of sales, says the most challenging aspect of working the luxury market is exceeding the sky-high expectations of clients used to enjoying the very best.

"What they're accustomed to is their average, not my average, so the level you have to perform at is what they experience all the time – and above that."

Maranger did just that when he sold Integral House, one of Toronto's most exquisite properties, in September 2016 for just under \$15m. Privately built and fully customized properties like Integral House have become Maranger's speciality.

"The complexity of the luxury level is selling that homeowner's dream and vision and lifestyle to a new buyer," he says.



## BRAD LAMB

Lamb Development Corp

Toronto, ON

In a city that has gone condo crazy, Lamb Development Corp is about as hot as it gets. The company is set to launch four new developments in the Golden Horseshoe this year – including an ambitious 700-unit project at the old CHCH building in Hamilton – while completing or breaking ground on another four in Toronto and Ottawa in the next several months.

Lamb is also investing heavily in Alberta, where the next five years will see more than half a dozen major developments introduced.

"I'm optimistic now," Lamb says about the Alberta market. "I certainly was pessimistic two and a half years ago. We're just out of the bottom, so we're in the early days. But it's bright skies ahead."

Lamb is a little less optimistic when surveying the current development landscape in Ontario. He considers the purpose-built rental industry to be "dead and buried" and the single-family market to be virtually non-existent in Ontario "unless there are major policy changes. Homes within an hour of Toronto will continue to go up by double digits as long as the government doesn't do something to increase the amount of land available for single-family homes."

All good news for Lamb, who is better positioned than anyone in the industry to take advantage of the increasing demand for condos in Toronto.

"It's almost insatiable," he says.

## KEN YEUNG

Century 21 Leading Edge Realty

Toronto, ON

When Ken Yeung started targeting the Toronto pre-sale condo market over a decade ago, it was simply a strategic move to sell more units in the city's downtown. But as more and more buyers – new immigrants, young first-time purchasers – find themselves squeezed out of the single family market, Yeung has found himself poised to reap the considerable benefits. In 2016, he was the No.1 Century 21 agent in the world.

Despite finding himself at the top, Yeung says he still regularly puts in 10-hour days before returning home and tending to emails and marketing initiatives long into the night. While he hopes to one day add more licensed staff in order to help him spend more time with his family, one can only assume that there will be more long days – and many more sales – in his future.





**LORENA MAGALLANES & ERICA SMITH**  
The Condo Chicks

Toronto, ON

“We recently sold a condo – one bedroom plus den, 800sqft,” says Condo Chicks co-founder Erica Smith. “We had it listed at \$549,000 and sold it for \$755,000. We had 19 offers.”

In a city where condos are generating unprecedented interest, the Condo Chicks are perfectly poised to reap the benefits. While Smith, who started the brokerage with Lorena Magallanes in 2012, is focused more on helping clients navigate the ever-widening pitfalls of getting into the condo market than she is on driving profits, she says the key to accomplishing both goals is preparing her agents.

“What we train our Realtors to do is really qualify their buyers and educate them that market value is one thing but it really doesn’t mean anything in the market now,” she says. “It really comes down to who’s going to pay.”

Smith and Magallanes started Condo Chicks as a way of combining their talents for selling pre-construction units – they met while selling Canderel’s Aura at College Park – and have leveraged their experience into rapidly intensifying success. They recently landed their first development site, a church conversion near High Park, and have been making waves in the commercial, single family and resale condo markets.



**AJAY SONI**  
Canadian Mortgage Brokers Association

Vancouver, BC

Only two years old, CMBA has already made tremendous strides in its attempts to bring increased understanding, accountability and consumer advocacy to the mortgage industry. CMBA’s trademark distinction, its own version of REALTOR, is already seen as a mark of legitimacy and its president, Ajay Soni, was recently invited to act as an expert witness in the federal government’s parliamentary Finance Committee hearings around new mortgage regulations, in February.

In addition to enhancing the public’s perception of what his industry does, Soni is also determined to improve the symbiotic relationship between mortgage brokers and other professions, not just limited to real estate agents, who may see a broker’s job as nothing more than finding the lowest rate for their clients.

“The spectrum of the services of a mortgage broker is very broad and very encompassing, which really works in favour of a Realtor,” says Soni. “You don’t want anything to go sideways when your real estate deal is dependent on financing. We’re going to come up with the appropriate solution that is best for that client, which will work in the favour of the Realtor.”



**SERGE NORMAND**  
Century 21 Nord-Sud

Riviere-du-Loup, QC

Serge Normand has been selling for Century 21 for over 31 years, servicing the tiny riverside community of Riviere-du-Loup. He is a multiple award winner and has showed no sign of slowing down since being named Century 21’s Sales Associate of the Year in 2009.

Normand, known to his neighbours, associates and clients for his honesty and integrity, says listening to his clients has been key to his decades of success, and that opening his “eyes and mindset” have had the most recent impact on his business.

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**CASEY WEEKS**  
Colliers International Canada

Vancouver, BC

In six years with Colliers International in Vancouver, Casey Weeks has become known as the local expert in transit-oriented development in areas near Vancouver's Sky Train lines. While this distinction may sound obscure, especially since Weeks has accumulated a great deal of experience in helping clients buy and sell a variety of income-generating commercial properties throughout the city, he feels honing in on a specific part of the market – "narrowing the focus of the business, not trying to do

too many things" – is critical for a commercial agent looking to make a similar splash in the industry. Weeks says differentiating oneself comes down to "specialization in sales, and within that sales category specializing within specific geographies and markets so you become known as an expert in those areas".

Weeks says referrals are the lifeblood of a commercial agent's success – as in residential real estate – and that to generate those referrals an agent must "deliver on your commitments and exceed your expectations. Over the long run, that's going to separate you from the pack."



**STEPHEN CHOW**  
Century 21 Atria Realty

Richmond Hill, ON

In 2004, Stephen Chow left his first brokerage to open Century 21 Atria Realty. Making the jump from a bare-bones operation to a company with an extensive support network opened Chow's eyes to how much difference a well-run brokerage can make to its agents' early development.

"Coming from a small brokerage without any support or technology, I realized that an owner needs to provide a lot of guidance, support, training and technology for your team to help them succeed a lot faster."

To foster his agents' evolution, Chow spent nine months creating a 12-week

training program that includes a 180-page manual, homework assignments, videos and one-on-one training that touches on every aspect of the agent experience.

As the number of Realtors in Ontario reportedly inches toward 60,000, Chow says new agents, more than ever, need this kind of intensive training.

"Many of these agents, they don't know what they're coming into," he says.



**BEATA CARANCI**  
TD Bank

Toronto, ON

Few of Canada's major financial institutions have been as willing to go on the record about the potential fallout from runaway home prices in the GTA as TD. Beata Caranci, TD's chief economist since 2015, says the bank's forthrightness is the natural result of its thorough, industry-leading research.

"We consider ourselves almost as a think tank with the objective to make sure we're staying in front of the curve in terms of where the risks are evolving," Caranci says. "Our view is, if it's important to the bank, it's important to our clients."

TD has been vocal in its support for government intervention to stabilize a market in which increased speculation has led to instability and unpredictability. While Caranci says a significant hike in interest rates would be an unfairly applied and potentially ineffective "blunt tool", she does encourage more active government policy to counter sales activity that is divorced from economic drivers and population figures.

"The sales are too high," she says. "They're looking like they were in the mid-'80s."

## EVAN SIDDALL

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Ottawa, ON

The three years since Evan Siddall was named president and CEO of CMHC have been tumultuous to say the least. Taking the reins of CMHC at a time when its purpose and effectiveness were constantly being debated, Siddall moved quickly to make the organization more relevant and agile: hundreds of employees, many of them middle management, were laid off; its technology underwent a complete overhaul; and a flood of new employees with backgrounds in risk management were brought in to produce a constant flow of critical, publicly available data.

But Siddall's attempts to increase CMHC's credibility, not to mention his willingness to speak bluntly about the issues facing the Canadian housing market, have led to controversy. Many in the mortgage industry have questioned CMHC's recent changes to lending rules, some deigning to call them "decrees", and more than one Canadian politician has referred to Siddall as "arrogant" for professing his views. He has publicly questioned the racial bias at the heart of the Vancouver foreign ownership tax and has made no secret of his worries around a potential debt-fuelled financial crisis – for which Siddall and CMHC have encountered an avalanche of criticism.



## BRAD HENDERSON

Sotheby's International Realty Canada

Toronto, ON

When Brad Henderson became the new president and CEO of Sotheby's International Realty Canada in 2016, he was joining a company with a 273-year history in satisfying clients with extraordinarily high expectations. But Henderson felt no pressure taking over what is the largest Sotheby's real estate franchise outside the continental US.

"I see it as unbounded opportunity," he says. "Every day brings a different idea, a different avenue to explore."

Henderson has been aggressive in his efforts to improve the company's performance at every level. He has imbued the company's management with a new sense of pride and purpose, confident that it will be passed on to individual agents. He has encouraged those agents to spend time at other Sotheby's offices in order to find innovative solutions and strategies. Henderson has also implemented new methods for measuring success at the company, from revenue growth to agent performance, proving "that which gets measured gets done" is more than a cliché.

"We've always said that luxury's an experience, not a price point," Henderson says. "And our people truly live it."

## KATHLEEN WYNNE

Government of Ontario

Toronto, ON

Kathleen Wynne dropped a long-in-the-works bombshell on the GTA housing market in April, when she announced a 16-point Fair Housing Plan to stabilize prices and assist consumers in finding affordable housing. A Non-resident Speculation Tax and increased rent controls were the highlights, but a tax on vacant homes, a crackdown on assignment clauses and an end to double-ending by agents will also have an impact on multiple layers of the real estate industry.

Wynne's plan has hardly been the recipient of universal praise. It does little to bolster supply in the GTA, and its rent control measures may actually lead to fewer purpose-built apartments as multiple developers have already announced the cancellation of projects in the area. In addition, the foreign speculation tax does nothing to curtail the exploits of homegrown speculators, who have been snapping up properties beyond the Golden Horseshoe in an attempt to preserve positive cash flow.

Whether Wynne's Fair Housing Plan will go down as a piece of progressive legislation or a desperate campaign ploy remains to be seen.



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## **RAZA KHAN & KOSTA PANAGOULIAS** web4realty

Oakville, ON

A growing number of agents in North America are using web4realty's marketing software and custom websites to manage their businesses, but what put the company on *REP*'s radar was the April announcement of its Newcomer and Refugee Realtor Education Grant, which will provide \$5,000 worth of tuition and software subsidies for newcomers to Canada looking to start a new life as a real estate agent.

"We are proud to help newcomers to Canada in a way that will help build and fuel their future," says web4realty co-founder Raza Khan. "The value of such individuals is tenfold – with fresh eyes on our country, and a unique perspective that only they can provide. We are thrilled to help welcome them into a profession I am so proud to have a deep history with."

The grant is a passion project of web4realty's multicultural staff, itself made up of refugees, second-generation Canadians and immigrants. As there are more and more new arrivals to Canada looking to provide their families with a better future, web4realty has positioned itself both intelligently and compassionately.



## **MIKE AND WILLEMINA MONTGOMERY** Renzo Real Estate

Calgary, AB

"We really want to explore the technology side of real estate," says Mike Montgomery of Renzo Real Estate. "We were a little bit unsatisfied with the standard model, so we broke off and did our own thing with Renzo."

Renzo Real Estate is the only brokerage in Calgary using virtual reality with 100% of its listings, providing clients with their own VR headsets so they can explore properties on their own time. Rather than visiting every home on their list of potential buys, clients can now cut back beforehand, saving them time and frustration.

While their business model might appear to reduce the role of agents, Montgomery says it "ups the game that the Realtor needs to play" by forcing agents to learn more about the value of the homes clients know they want to see.

"It changes the role of the Realtor," he says, "but it changes it for the better."



## **MARTIN CHARLWOOD** Charlwood Pacific Group

Vancouver, BC

When asked about his proudest accomplishments in the two years he has been CEO of Charlwood Pacific Group, Century 21's parent company, Martin Charlwood speaks with obvious pride in the strides the company has made in its technology. By leveraging RealSatisfied, Century 21 became the first real estate company to allow its customers to rate their agent experiences, a step that Charlwood hopes will appeal to both millennials and those potential clients skeptical of an overcrowded industry. Charlwood is also excited about the company's use of BombBomb's online video streaming service, which allows agents to enhance their listings with short, sharp video presentations.

Charlwood says convenience is a major concern when it comes to the technology Century 21 provides its agents. Its integrated platform, which the company has been investing heavily in for over a decade, is one of the industry's best, combining a reliable customer facing website with a powerful back-end CRM system.

"We have a system whereby you are able, as an agent, to join Century 21 and have all the tools at your fingertips that allow you to best market a listing for a customer," Charlwood says. "We want the agents focusing on knocking on doors and getting listings, and not having to fuss with the technology needed in today's competitive environment."



**JOANNA LANE**  
Staged for Upsell

Halifax, NS

Joanna Lane turned a background in marketing and trade show management into one of Atlantic Canada’s most successful home staging companies, Staged For Upsell. While staging madness has yet to hit Halifax with the same intensity as it has Canada’s larger cities, Lane has still been able to build a highly successful business. After four short years, she has already had her work seen on HGTV’s *Humble Home Hunters* and has been named one of the top 10 vacant home stagers in Canada by the Real Estate Staging Association.

“People think it’s very glamorous,” Lane says of life as a well-known home stager, “but it’s very physical, demanding work. You have to be a really good multitasker. You have to run a business, not just stage.”



**RALPH STEPHEN**  
Royal LePage Atlantic

Halifax, NS

Ralph Stephen, owner and CEO of Royal LePage Atlantic, oversees the work of 350 agents across four Atlantic Canada markets – Halifax, the Nova Scotia Valley, St John and Moncton. Despite the sluggish economies in both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Stephen has managed to drive his company to new heights year in and year out. He attributes the remarkable growth to making the company a destination of choice for the best talent in the industry.

“Ultimately, that’s what we strive to do every day,” Stephen says.

Once agents are hired by Royal LePage Atlantic, Stephen says they pass through a thorough four-step preparation process that includes onboarding, training, an in-house mentoring partnership and in-house coaching, which helps agents develop a business plan and be held accountable to it.

“That’s a differentiator for us,” Stephen says. “I don’t spend too much time worrying about what my competitors are doing, but I do know, for the most part, everybody out there is doing less. We try to do more.”



**ROBERT GOODALL**  
Atrium MIC

Toronto, ON

As founder of CMCC, Atrium MIC’s managing organization, Robert Goodall rarely deals with Realtors, but he has overseen the financing behind billions of dollars in developments. Between 1996 and 2011, CMCC arranged financing on over \$6bn of real estate in Ontario alone. Goodall is also the trustee of two sizeable REITs, Dream Office REIT and Dream Industrial REIT.

Atrium has grown to become one of the top five MICs in Canada, with a reputation of servicing not only large-scale developments and real estate investors but also individuals, including new arrivals to Canada who have yet to establish a credit rating.

“Atrium does not compete by providing a larger loan amount,” Goodall says. “It tends to lend to select groups that have more difficulty getting that type of financing from the banks.”



**DOMINIC MANCHISI**  
Your Home Sold Guaranteed Realty Brokerage

Milton, ON

**Your average sold prices are close to \$16,000 over asking, which is tops in the GTA.**

**What is your team doing differently to get more money in your clients' pockets?**

I think it's because of some of the unique ways we market the properties. As well, I have a really unique database. We have over 7,000 registered buyers looking for homes. Most agents are just holding back offers in the GTA, and we're holding back offers as well, but we're doing a lot of pre-marketing even before a property hits the MLS. Just throwing a sign on the lawn and putting a home on MLS is an antiquated way of doing it, so we're trapping our own buyers before they even know we're going to list a home.

**You started your own independent brokerage last year. What do you provide your agents that one of the big three might not be able to?**

Normally, what you're buying when you buy any franchise is a system. But the problem with real estate franchises is that they really have no system. All they have is a brand. The way the big box real estate companies are set up, they're really just rental companies – they rent you space; they let you use the brand, but then you're allowed to do whatever you want with it, whereas we've always been system-oriented.

We provide scripts and dialogues. We practise our listing presentation every week. We also have a presentation for when we're meeting with a buyer, which I think a lot of Realtors lack. I sit with the agents at the end of the year and we make an annual schedule for them, which they have to stick with, and my wife meets with them once a month to discuss performance.

**It sounds like you have a built-in coaching structure.**

I'm actually one of Craig Proctor's coaches, so I take everything he's taught me in the last 15 years and implement all his sales training and systems into my business. If it wasn't for Craig, I'd just be an average agent.



**TASIS GIANNOUKAKIS**  
Century 21 Leading Edge Realty

Toronto, ON

As owner, broker and manager of Century 21 Leading Edge Realty, Tasis Giannoukakis oversees a veritable army of 700 agents. In 2016, Giannoukakis' team racked up more sales than any other Century 21 franchise in Canada and cracked the company's worldwide top five.

Faced with inventory in the GTA rapidly drying up, Giannoukakis says he has had to shift his agents' priorities.

"The demand is so high now that it's the supply that you really need to focus on," he says. "Agents need to be concentrating their efforts on prospecting for sellers and not so much for buyers."

Giannoukakis' in-house training also helps prepare his agents for the inevitability of multiple-offer situations and strengthening their offers.

"That could include convincing clients they should have a draft with their offer instead of just upon acceptance, or offers being firm instead of conditional," he says.

Giannoukakis says his goal for 2017 is to further increase Leading Edge's market share in the GTA and attract more of the area's top agents.

# COVER STORY: HOT LIST 2017



**DEBRA BAIN**  
RE/MAX Hallmark Realty

Toronto, ON

Prior to purchasing RE/MAX Hallmark Realty with her business partner Ken McLachlan, Debra Bain had been a top producing agent for 25 years.

That experience has shaped how she supports her team of over 1,100 agents at the No.1 RE/MAX brokerage in the world. Bain says the technological tools and training Hallmark provides its agents is critical, but so is accountability and availability.

"I think we're really good at connecting," Bain says. "We're not sitting behind glass doors someplace. We're in the offices; we're in the field."

Bain credits Hallmark's leadership team – Barbara Brindle, Gurinder Sandhu and Steve Tabrizi – with building the brokerage and, through their own ongoing development, leading by example.

"It's always said, 'So goes the leader,'" Bain says. "We're always encouraging our agents to grow their business. If we're not growing our business, how do we model that for our agents?"



**CHRISTINE RAE**  
CSP International Staging Business Academy

St Catharines, ON

Over 5,000 students have graduated from Christine Rae's CSP International Staging Business Academy since it opened in 2009. With offices in Canada, Australia and the US, CSP is the only organization in the world offering recognized certification in the burgeoning staging industry.

"When you offer certification in a non-regulated industry," Rae says, "it offers quantifiable evidence that you have received education and training and it helps separate you from those who don't have it. Really, it's an endorsement of integrity and competence."

While CSP's curriculum includes design and decorating, it is far more concerned with helping new stagers come to grips with the breadth of their new business – the marketing, billing, pricing and contract processes that can overwhelm anyone new to the industry.

"You can have all the talent in the world, but if you don't know how to sell your services, if you don't know how to price or communicate a message to the seller, you're not going to have a business," Rae says. "There's more to it than fluffing cushions."



**HARPREET HANS**  
Grunding and Hans LLP

Milton, ON

When Harpreet Hans co-founded Grunding and Hans in 2007, real estate law was just one of her areas of expertise. But when the market in Milton and its surrounding areas exploded a few years later, Hans knew where to concentrate her efforts.

"The market's exciting; the clients are amazing," she says. "It's fun to be part of something exciting and to be a part of their lives."

Hans is arguably the go-to real estate lawyer in the Halton region, helping her clients close over 1,000 deals a year. While half of her clients are repeat customers – a ringing endorsement for her team's systematic, pressure-free approach and unmatched accessibility – the other half comes from a trusted and carefully curated group of referral

partners Hans says are "dedicated, detail-oriented people who don't drop the ball".



## DENNIS MORTENSEN

x.ai

New York, NY

In writing this year's Hot List, *REP* had multiple dealings with Andrew and Amy Ingram, who were instrumental in setting up interviews with multiple listees. Both were polite, efficient and lightning quick. They're also both machines.

The Ingrams are the brainchild of Dennis Mortensen, who, after counting the number of meetings he had scheduled for himself in 2012 (1019), wondered if that was what he was meant to do with his time.

"What was even sadder," he says, "is I had 672 reschedules in that year and I did all of them myself. This is what pretty much everybody in many positions will do every year."

The result is x.ai, a constantly evolving personal assistant platform that schedules meetings through email. While Mortensen has no illusions about x.ai replacing indispensable admin staff, agents not yet ready to shell out for a full-time assistant can leverage either Amy or Andrew's talents to remove one of their most menial tasks. In the future, x.ai will be able to speak multiple languages, communicate through text and Facebook messages and schedule more than just meetings, including Uber pick-ups and restaurant reservations.

"You can't find a single friend of yours who will tell you, 'You know what? I really like setting up meetings,'" Mortensen says.



## URMA MOLLEMA

Mortgage Architects

Vancouver, BC

Urma Mollema was the first mortgage broker to grant a non-bank mortgage in South Africa. After building her company into a 128-franchise juggernaut, she sold it off and moved to Canada in 2011. Three years with CENTUM saw Mollema become the company's national franchise director of business development, but leadership changes at the company inspired her to leave in 2017 to become Mortgage Architects' national director of business development.

"I had to reconsider my growth potential as a businesswoman," Mollema says. "I did not think I could grow in the company as much as I wanted."

Mortgage Architects funded \$7bn of deals in 2016. Mollema hopes to increase that figure considerably in 2017.

"My goal is to grow this brand as much as I can with everything I've learned over 20 years."

Mollema is highly appreciative of the relationship between mortgage brokers and real estate agents. She encourages her franchisees to ensure that 35% of their business comes directly from Realtors.

"They're the people who meet the consumers first; they're the people who know what the clients need," she says. "I don't see a future in this industry without Realtors."

## ADO TOPUZ

Agent Locator

Mississauga, ON

"The conversion rate off internet leads is 1.5% for a typical agent," says Agent Locator founder Ado Topuz. "But a team who knows what they're doing these days is converting about 5.5-6%."

Agent Locator has become an indispensable tool for over 1,800 agents across Canada looking to expand their business. The company's proprietary software not only generates leads, it also helps convert them by tracking visitors' browsing activity, automatically creating a prospect match and sending listings to prospective clients, continually bringing them back to an agent's website. Topuz says 11.5% of the traffic to the company's sites is converted into leads.

Agent Locator, which enjoys the highest level of Google partnership in Canada, will soon be making a foray into AI capabilities, adding autonomous lead responses to its CRM system. This spring, SMS messages will begin being automatically sent to clients, offering them the opportunity to have a prospect match devised for them. Topuz says 36.6% of all the leads they generate end up responding to that first message.



## EFFI BARAK

RE/MAX Integra

Toronto, ON

When Effi Barak first joined RE/MAX Integra as the company's COO in 2014, his professional past included tech start-ups, KPMG and Whirlpool, but no real estate. His natural curiosity attracted him to the opportunity with RE/MAX, and he soon found himself enamoured.

"When I lifted the hood and started looking inside the industry, I was fascinated by it," he says.

In his relatively short time with the company, Barak has been instrumental in leading the company toward its major goals: burnishing the company's vision, increasing its market share and further improving the performance of RE/MAX's agents through training initiatives and new technology, which Barak hopes will also enhance "the experience of clients at the moment of value creation – when the true business activities happen. That's where we spend a lot of time investing our efforts."



## BILL BROWN

Matterport VR

San Francisco, CA

Years before Bill Brown became CEO of Matterport, he was director of marketing for bamboo.com, one of the world's first virtual tour companies. While bamboo.com introduced Brown to both the real estate industry and the game-changing potential of virtual reality, the technology was, and remained for years, anything but an immersive experience. Matterport changed all that.

"It wasn't an evolution," Brown says. "Matterport was a quantum leap forward in terms of both the technology and the ease of use for people capturing and experiencing the content."

Tens of thousands of North American Realtors have already exposed their clients to Matterport's VR technology, and with the functionality expanding to include embedded multimedia content, Brown's goal of a 30-40% adoption rate seems within reach.

Brown says there has been little pushback from agents worried that VR will rob the industry of some of its tactile humanity. He compliments the industry for its willingness to implement new technologies and says agents have been able to use Matterport to differentiate themselves by demonstrating their expertise in leveraging a new tool for their clients.

"There's only one person who's going to be the first one to introduce you to virtual reality," Brown says.

## SCOTT CONLY

Colliers International

Toronto, ON

Scott Conly quickly made a name for himself after joining Colliers in 2009. He spent several years toiling at the brokerage level – being named the company's Office Leasing Rookie of the Year for Toronto in '13 – and is now an associate vice president and one of Colliers' office leasing experts.

Just as supply is an issue for residential agents, Conly says commercial agents in the GTA are facing a definite supply shortage, too.

"I work a lot in the downtown east and the downtown west markets of Toronto, and those areas are having the same issues in terms of supply. There's very little space available, so it's challenging to complete deals, especially when you have clients looking for larger space – or smaller space."

Conly says one of the only ways around this lack of product is for agents to build relationships with landlords and tenants with inside information about what spaces might be coming available.

Conly is highly complimentary of Colliers' training program, Colliers University, as well as its heavy investment into CRM and the company's strong, approachable management team.

## COVER STORY: HOT LIST 2017



**DAN GEMUS**  
Dan Gemus Real Estate Team

Amherstburg, ON

If being ahead of the curve makes a broker worthy of a Hot List nod, few are as deserving as Dan Gemus. His team is known throughout the Windsor-Essex market for its media savvy, which has resulted in the area's best-marketed properties. Gemus is the only broker in the area employing a full-time media production department, developing video series for not only the team's properties, but also Windsor-area businesses and charities.

Gemus is also proud of the systems he has put in place, which organize the team's processes from top to bottom.

"From the moment a lead comes in, whether it be a sign call or an online lead, there is a checklist and a system for it," Gemus says. As exhaustive step-by-step processes are in place for both listings and buyers, agents know exactly what is expected of them."

"Nothing gets missed," Gemus says.

**MIKE CARTWRIGHT**  
Main Street Realty

Newmarket, ON

Mike Cartwright prides himself on running a technology-focused real estate company. Main Street Realty, which Cartwright founded in 2010 and built into the 130-agent, six-office powerhouse it is today, is 100% paperless and on the leading edge when it comes to marketing its properties.

"The average TREB agent sells two properties a year," says Cartwright. "And when they go to market a consumer's home, they put it on the MLS, they put a sign up and pray another agent will sell it. We teach agents to spend money on marketing and exposing the property."

Each Main Street listing receives its own custom website and is seen by over 100,000 potential buyers on Facebook and Twitter and countless more on Rogers TV. Cartwright says Main Street also reaches out to two of its biggest consumer groups, Chinese and Persian buyers, and markets to them in their native languages. Main Street even manages to get around Chinese censorship of western websites by listing their properties on top-ranked sites in Asia.



**PAUL TAYLOR**  
Mortgage Professionals Canada

Toronto, ON

As president and CEO of Mortgage Professionals Canada, Paul Taylor leads the Canadian mortgage industry's largest professional development and public advocacy group. The significant changes to lending rules unveiled by the government in October have raised the organization's profile and intensified its drive to alleviate the pressures the new guidelines have placed on consumers.

"Our members have really made our presence felt and really tried to bring the story of the first-time buyer – and the pressures these additional changes have made – up to government," Taylor says. "And they certainly seem to understand. What is their appetite for change? That remains to be seen."

In addition to consumer advocacy and government relations – which have taken the form of public testimony before government committees and the group's first ever Parliament Hill Advocacy Day, held in March – Taylor is also focused on maintaining the strong bond between real estate and mortgage professionals.

"We're absolutely tied together," he says. "A good number of mortgage brokers and Realtors have reciprocal arrangements. I think there's a really good level of trust between the folks and I think that is phenomenally good for consumers in general."



**JOSEPH RICHER**  
Real Estate Council of Ontario

Toronto, ON

As the registrar of the Real Estate Council of Ontario, Joseph Richer is one of the organization's most visible and accessible members. Richer is an active writer whose Ask Joe column has been a major hit in the *Toronto Star*, but his primary duty is enforcing the rules governing the province's real estate professionals – no small task in a delirious market.

Richer says two of RECO's main goals for 2017 are improving customer service and enhancing consumer outreach. The former includes streamlining and bolstering the organization's complaints process, while the latter involves more face time with Ontario's buyers and sellers.

"This year, we're visiting more communities and engaging new audiences, including first-time home buyers, up-sizers, downsizers and new Canadians," Richer says.

RECO will also be endeavouring to ensure its educational programs remain relevant and effective. Richer says a review of RECO's continuing education program is scheduled for later this year.



**GEORGE BAMBER**  
Century 21 Bamber Realty

Calgary, AB

George Bamber oversees the work of 180 agents at one of Calgary's best-known brokerages. Century 21 Bamber Realty, despite the softness of Stampede City's market, has been posting significant annual gains since 2015, culminating in a 35% year-over-year increase in sales in the first quarter of '17.

While Bamber admits some of the gains are the result of an improving Calgary market, the brokerage's solid reputation has played the greatest role, attracting both clients and competing agents.

"We've built a really good name and reputation over 30 years in a location we own," Bamber says. "People know that we're solid financially. In a tough economy, Realtors want to know that."

Bamber is deeply ingrained in the day-to-day performance of his agents, even dropping in on their showings to give them feedback and advice.

"We're not one of those companies that train a lot of new agents right out of class. But will we do anything and everything to support our agents? Absolutely."

"If you know what you're doing," Smith says, "everything falls into place."

**RICHARD ROBBINS**  
Richard Robbins International

Markham, ON

"I've always believed that success is not just knowing what to do, it's also doing what we already know," Richard Robbins says.

His commitment to lifelong learning has served him well. By pushing himself to stay ahead of the highly competitive real estate coaching market, he and his growing team have built Richard Robbins International into an industry leader.

"It is all about enriching lives," Robbins says.

2017 will be a big year for RRI. The company will be launching its new masters Academy Real Estate Conference and building on the functionality of its virtual training system, RRI On Demand.

"Coaching inspires action," Robbins says, "which leads to success."

# COVER STORY: HOT LIST 2017



## **ROGER LEBLANC** RE/MAX Avante

Moncton, NB

When asked what recent changes he has made to his business that have had the most impact, Roger LeBlanc says it was returning to RE/MAX after an extended stint with Royal LePage. LeBlanc says the tools, both real world and online, the company provides its agents are unmatched.

"The exposure that RE/MAX gives to our buyers and sellers is amazing," he says. "The best in the world."

Despite the lasting softness of the Moncton market, where the average time on market for a property is more than 160 days, LeBlanc is one of RE/MAX's top agents in all of Canada. He credits his team of five licensed agents and four administrative staff and their systematic approach to client service for his success.

"In a soft market, [selling] takes longer, so you need to have systems in place to keep your clients abreast of what's going on so they're a partner in the game," LeBlanc says. "People need you whether it's slow or not."



## **KIM CRAIG** Sotheby's International Realty Canada

Vancouver, BC

After nine years with Macdonald Realty, Kim Craig made the switch to Sotheby's International in January of 2016. Six months later, she and other Vancouver area luxury specialists were facing the fallout of the BC government's new foreign buyer's tax.

"There was definitely a step back, a collective holding of breath," Craig says, "but to be honest with you, I think we're starting to see a little boredom with it. People are starting to get back in."

The Vancouver slowdown has had little effect on Craig's business. She has recently sold properties in West Vancouver for \$9m and \$15m and is currently looking for a buyer for a \$20m home on a 23,000sqft lot.

Craig was drawn to Sotheby's because of the company's revered marketing capabilities, but she realizes that selling a high-end property ultimately comes down to agent expertise.

"The purchasing public has become very sophisticated, especially at the luxury end," she says. "You have to be an expert on that house. You will be asked the questions and you have to be prepared to answer them."

## **DAVID PAYNE** Invent Dev

Toronto, ON

In 2009, David Payne and his wife were sorting through a mountain of floor plans, trying in vain to select the perfect preconstruction condo.

"I found the whole process very draining and frustrating," Payne says. "I could not base the biggest investment of my life at that time on something I couldn't comprehend or visualize."

The couple eventually bought a resale property. A year later, Payne had launched Invent Dev, a piece of virtual technology that allows buyers to not only look at a space in 3D, but to walk its floor plan, fully customize it and even experience its view.

"We've really evolved to the point where our experiences are so photorealistic and lifelike that most people, when they actually see them, think they're real spaces," Payne says.

While Invent Dev has had its greatest impact on the preconstruction sector, where buyers can experiment with different colors, finishings and fixtures, Payne says the company's next step will be to provide the same customization for buyers wondering what existing properties might look like post-renovation or with different furniture layouts, allowing them a glimpse of what their homes could one day be.

"There are a lot of applications and opportunities in the market still," Payne says. "We have a long way to go. And that's partially what's so exciting about real estate – that as an industry there's a lot of room for innovation and improvement. That's why we really like working this space."



**DEANNA HORN**  
British Columbia Real Estate Association

Langley, BC

In addition to her role as immediate past president for BCREA, Deanna Horn also runs a Langley, BC-based RE/MAX Treeland Realty team with her husband and daughter. Horn says her double duties come with a significant perk.

“It takes time away from your business, but it also allows you to be very informed with what’s going on and completely up to date with what’s going on with the profession.”

Horn was president of BCREA until March of 2017, meaning she

led the organization through a tumultuous 2016 that saw a failed attempt to amalgamate the province’s 11 real estate boards and the appointment of a new superintendent to oversee the industry in BC. In addition to BCREA maintaining its goals of education, advocacy and upholding professional standards, Horn says the group is still adjusting its footing to a shifting landscape.

“We’re now looking at where we go from here,” she says. “We’re looking at the potential to build on last year and how we work with the new superintendent. I wouldn’t say we’re dealing with fallout, but we certainly want to build on what we learned the last couple years and move forward.”

Horn was recently honoured with a RE/MAX Special Services award for her many years of community and industry involvement.

**GEORG GERSTENFELD**  
DocuSign

San Francisco, SF

Prior to becoming the vice president and GM of global real estate solutions for DocuSign, Georg Gerstenfeld was introduced to the real estate industry by improving lead quality for US-based Realtors while working as a VP for Trulia. Gerstenfeld says those years spent working on customer-driven innovation with real estate agents and observing their needs helped him adapt quickly when he arrived at DocuSign, the unquestioned leader of the e-signature industry.

“My goal when I joined DocuSign was to completely transform the real estate transaction, from lead to close,” Gerstenfeld says. “We’re within months of completing our first fully digital experience. And when we’re done, the transaction will go from 45-60 days down to two weeks. That kind of speed, transparency, compliance and collaboration will transform the experience for everyone who touches a real estate transaction.”

DocuSign was far and away the most popular piece of industry-related tech mentioned during our Hot List nomination process, as it speeds up transactions and removes at least one layer of complexity. Gerstenfeld says agents impressed with DocuSign’s current functionality should be in store for some surprises.

“We’re on the cusp of delivering the next transformation,” he says. “Our engineers are already looking five years ahead to lead the next wave of innovation today.”

**JASON BINAB**  
Engel & Volkers Binab Group

Victoria, BC

A robust Victoria market allowed a number of Island-based agents to have career-defining years in 2016, but few had a year like Jason Binab. Binab was Engel & Volkers’ No.3 agent worldwide in volume and its No.2 agent worldwide in sales in ’16.

“I just keep trying to raise the bar and make it more uncomfortable for people to keep up,” Binab says. “More advertising, more marketing, constantly changing so it’s tough for other people to imitate.”

A major component of Binab’s marketing strategy is video, which he uses not only to place his properties in the best light, but to communicate to his clients a sense of authenticity.

“I try to get in front of the people, so they see that I’m actually a person and not just someone in a magazine. When they see you on camera, clients can see what type of person you are. If you’re cheesy or salesy on camera, what are you going to be like in person?”

As inventory in Victoria is drying up at an unprecedented rate, Binab has adjusted his sales goals for the year. By concentrating on moving fewer properties at a higher average sales price, Binab hopes to generate more revenue while creating more time to spend with his family.



# COVER STORY: HOT LIST 2017



**SAM MCDADI**  
Sam McDadi Real Estate

Mississauga, ON

Five short years after leaving RE/MAX to form his own brokerage, Sam McDadi is now running Toronto's most successful independent real estate company. In that time, McDadi's team has sold a staggering \$4.2bn of real estate.

Key to McDadi's success has been the service he provides his clients. Sam McDadi Real Estate was among the first brokerages to begin populating its staff with in-house experts – stagers, writers, designers – and its multinational, multilingual staff is fine-tuned to the needs of Toronto's endlessly diverse market. The company's website boasts fluency in 25 different languages.

The immense success of McDadi's brokerage has allowed it to support a number of charitable organizations, including Toronto's SickKids Hospital, the Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation and the Mississauga Food Bank.



**JOHN DIMICHELE**  
Toronto Real Estate Board

Toronto, ON

In the face of a historically hot GTA market and with 48,000 area Realtors to look after, John DiMichele, TREB's CEO since 2014, has a relatively full plate. Whether intensifying the group's lobbying efforts or enhancing the professionalism of TREB members, DiMichele sits firmly in the eye of the storm.

As market research is a key cog in the TREB machine – the group recently commissioned an Ipsos survey that concluded foreign buyer activity in the GTA is actually quite low – it is no surprise that DiMichele encourages government officials to take a similar approach to housing policy, especially in light of Kathleen Wynne's recent 16-point housing plan.

"In considering solutions, it is important that all levels of government choose to adopt and implement policies that are founded on solid empirical evidence," DiMichele says. "For instance, the flat to declining listings trend we've seen over much of the last two to three years provides clear evidence for more of a focus on the supply side of the market."

**CHRIS NICHILLO**  
Magnetic Mortgages

Oakville, ON

Magnetic Mortgages recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary, a period that has seen the company become a major player in the private lending space.

"Essentially, we're boutique in size," CEO Chris Nichilo says, "but we play a little larger."

By focusing on consumer education, Nichilo not only garnered himself the 2016 Canadian Financial Literacy Award from Mortgage Professionals Canada, he has also turned countless clients on to the investment potential of private mortgages, which provides an intriguing opportunity for Realtors whose clients are having trouble securing financing.

"We provide a real solution for them," Nichilo says. "By teaching Realtors how they can teach their customers to invest through real estate lending, it becomes an alternative for them."

## CHRISTIAN TWOMEY

RE/MAX Landan Real Estate

Calgary, AB

In his 17 years of selling real estate in Calgary, Christian Twomey has provided expertise and assistance to clients from across the city, but it is the assistance he provides those in need that brought him to REP's attention.

Twomey was recently awarded RE/MAX's Community Care Award for his extensive work with multiple charities. His Revving Up For Kids motorcycle ride for Kids With Cancer, now in its 12th year, has raised over \$2.2m for the charity. Twomey has also been making annual home building trips to El Salvador with Shelter Canada since 2011, and recently worked the radiothon put on in support of the Children's Hospital Foundation.

"I believe that entrepreneurs have a social responsibility to give back to their community and support the people who support us," he says. "I have a real soft spot in my heart for children, because often they can't advocate for themselves. I feel like it's my responsibility to stand up for those people that don't necessarily have a voice."



## CONRAD ZURINI

RE/MAX Escarpment Realty

Stony Creek, ON

By building a business based on customer education and selfless service, Conrad Zurini has perfectly positioned RE/MAX Escarpment Realty to take advantage of an awakened Hamilton market. Escarpment was the No.1 real estate firm in the Hamilton-Burlington region in 2016, moving as much property as the remaining top five companies combined. Escarpment was recently awarded the city's 2017 Consumer Choice Award – its fourth consecutive win.

Zurini, whose family founded RE/MAX Escarpment in 1980, knows that maintaining the company's reputation depends both on client satisfaction and the potential for agent success. In 2016, 37 of Zurini's agents placed in the top 100 of Hamilton-Burlington area Realtors, more than triple the number of the second-ranked brokerage.



## DAVID FLEMING

Toronto Realty Blog

Toronto, ON

In addition to being one of Bosley Real Estate's top performing agents, David Fleming is known to many for the no-punches-pulled *Toronto Realty Blog*. Fleming has made a name for himself by speaking frankly, and often controversially, on any topic related to real estate – shoddy developments, public policy, selling strategies good and awful – an approach that has proven to be a double-edged sword. Fleming says all of his new business is generated by the blog, but it has also cost him.

"If I write about a building that has a problem, I'm never going to get a listing in that building," Fleming says. "But it needs to be said and I need to educate people."

In addition to providing what might be arguably the most honest and relevant real estate writing in the GTA – and perhaps the busiest, with 230,000 hits a month – *Toronto Realty Blog* also benefits from the active and informed community that has grown up around it.

"The calibre of the comments from the readers is unparalleled," Fleming says. "If you look at your average *Toronto Star*, Yahoo or TMZ story, the comments are from the lowest of the low. I am so blessed to have this following. They create content; they stimulate discussion and it's unbelievable."

# COVER STORY: HOT LIST 2017



**GEORGE HEOS**  
Royal LePage Canada

Toronto, ON

As the senior vice president of business development for Royal LePage, George Heos has been instrumental in increasing the company's reach across Canada. Heos says he has seen first-hand how being the No.1 company in a particular market results in better agent performance.

"Our goal is not to have growth just for the sake of growth. We know that the success a brand has in a market has a direct relationship to the success of our individual agents. Our goal is to be No.1 in every market that we operate in."

One of Heos' main duties is acquiring and converting brokerages, bringing them under the Royal LePage banner. He was recently responsible for the company's purchase of Prudential – and for retaining the majority of its more than 1,300 agents. While continued growth is a must for Heos, he says he is only interested in acquiring brokerages that are a fit for Royal LePage's unique culture.

"The key thing is the model that they operate. We look for people who have the same philosophy and belief in how a business should be run."

**JIM BURTON**  
RE/MAX Infinity Realty

Conception Bay, NL

When Jim Burton purchased his RE/MAX Infinity office in 2014, it employed six Realtors. It now has 32 agents and is housed in a gorgeous new building. Burton says the key to the brokerage's success has been inspiring his new hires to "not be comfortable unless you're uncomfortable". Most of these new hires are agents just landing their first jobs in the industry.

"One thing I tell the young agents is that we're nesting in the gale. Our economy is going through a little bit of a storm, but when the sun shines, you guys are going to be extremely productive because you weathered through a tough economic time. There are great days ahead."

Those days may be near at hand. As the Newfoundland market is down 18% this year, Burton says his team's unit sales are up 50% compared to last year, with dollar volume up 30%.

Burton keeps his brokerage firmly in the public eye – and ear. In addition to printing its own province-wide magazine and supporting a number of charitable causes, RE/MAX Infinity is behind one of Newfoundland's most popular weekly radio shows, which Burton hosts.

"We're very diversified," he says. "And that would be a big word for any entrepreneur today."



**MIKE STEWART**  
Century 21 In Town Realty

Vancouver, BC

Mike Stewart, who has been the top agent in his office for most of his 12 years with Century 21, is quick to share the credit with his team of eight licensed Realtors.

"We have a great team of people who are super focused and motivated," he says.

In addition to his team's motivation and customer service, Stewart says one main component of their success – they completed 228 transactions last year on the way to becoming Century 21's No.4 team in Canada – is a concerted effort around lead generation, which brings in an enormous amount of business.

The costs associated with bringing in external lead gen specialists have been more than worth it.

"You've always got to hire the best if you want to be the best," Stewart says.



**DEBBIE COSIC**  
In2ition Realty Brokerage

Mississauga, ON

Since founding In2ition Realty in 2008, Debbie Cosic has been involved in the sale of over \$15bn in real estate. In under a decade, Cosic has built In2ition into a one-stop shop for developers in need of innovative project marketing, land assembly, design, leasing or property management services.

In2ition's broad range of expertise is the result of concentrated, outside-the-box hiring.

"We really picked from what we felt was the best and brightest," Cosic says. "We went outside the industry." In2ition's team currently consists of advertising, human resources, retail and architecture specialists. "We mixed them up to create this perfect storm of talent that can be showcase-able when you're project marketing for developers."

Even though In2ition is already selling 2,500 units a year, Cosic says aggressive growth is in the company's future. In2ition will launch 20 projects in the next seven months and will be opening two more offices in the next year.

**CRAIG PROCTOR**  
Craig Proctor Seminars

Toronto, ON

When you ask most real estate coaches what sets them apart from their competition, you don't get much for an answer. Not so with Craig Proctor.

"Most of the coaches today have either never sold real estate or they haven't sold real estate in 20 or 30 years," he says. "That's what makes me unique. I actually made millions and millions of dollars every year selling real estate. I did it for a long time and I've done it very recently."

Proctor was RE/MAX's top agent worldwide for most of his 22-year career in real estate, a legacy that has helped him amass an army of disciples.

His wealth of experience has allowed him to create more millionaire real estate agents than any other coach out there working today.

"What these other coaches and trainers will do is call upon top agents to come to their seminars and endorse them, but that coach didn't create their success," Proctor says. "They may have more agents attend their conferences, but nobody's done more of making agents rich than I have."



**BILL MORNEAU**  
Government of Canada

Ottawa, ON

As finance minister at a time of excitement and uncertainty for the Canadian economy – marijuana legislation, trade disputes with the US and a tepid oil industry will all have an effect in the next 18 months – Bill Morneau has devoted much of his attention to the Canadian housing market.

While the March 22 federal budget did not mention the eroding affordability in either Vancouver or Toronto, Morneau has publicly committed to making billions of dollars available for social and affordable housing across the country. He was also instrumental in rolling out the changes to nationwide mortgage guidelines in October 2016, which appear to have removed a number of first-time buyers from the market.

If the Canadian economy slips and the amount of mortgage debt being carried by Canadians threatens to send the country into a tailspin, it is ensured that housing will become an even greater concern for Morneau.

# COVER STORY: HOT LIST 2017



## SHAWN ZIGELSTEIN Royal LePage Your Community Realty

Toronto, ON

The leader of Team Zold, Shawn Zigelstein has been among the top 1% of Royal LePage agents for five years running. It's a level of success that Zigelstein says has only made him more driven.

"When you get to that point you're more and more driven to do better each year. I think a lot of people, if they were to hit that level, it would change their mindset and change the way they want to do business, because they would see what the possibilities include, such as building relationships with other top producers and raising one's profile in the eyes of potential clients."

While Zigelstein has embraced the expanding role of technology and social media in selling real estate, he knows where to concentrate his efforts.

"I am not a techie," he says. "I hire people to be the techies. I want to be the person that has the opportunity to talk to my clients on a regular basis. That's been a big part of my business – that building of those relationships."



## SCOTT PREDENCHUK RE/MAX Joyce Tourney Realty

Regina, SK

Most consumers don't think of commercial real estate when they think of RE/MAX, but Scott Predenchuk has helped make RE/MAX Joyce Tourney Realty – which has long been one of the company's most successful residential teams – a juggernaut in the commercial space as well.

But being named RE/MAX's No.1 commercial agent, both in Canada and worldwide, is not the only recognition Predenchuk has received. He was recently awarded the company's Spirit of the West award for his extensive community service and ceaseless fundraising for groups such as the Children's Miracle Network, the Red Cross Imagine No Bullying Program, the Arthritis Society – for which he ran the Great Wall Marathon of China – and the YMCA, where, for the past 35 years, he has been a member, volunteer, instructor and coach.

"I've always believed success isn't about personal gain," Predenchuk says, "but about how much you can give back."



## JOE SAMMUT Mortgage Architects

Toronto, ON

One of the co-founders of Mortgage Architects, Joe Sammut brings 26 years of experience to almost 400 deals a year. Sammut has built a reputation for resuscitating dying deals; a role he plays, but not one he generally asks for.

"I'd rather be involved with the deal right from the beginning," he says. "But if I do get that call, we're able to do things more creatively than some of the banking reps can because, as a broker that's been in the business as long as I have, I'm able to make sense of a deal."

Sammut has long been known for his ability to educate clients and demystify the constantly changing and ever more regulated mortgage industry. It's a skill set that made him an obvious choice when Bosley Real Estate went in search of an in-house mortgage broker 16 years ago.

"Our main focus has always been that the Realtor's not disrupted and the deal closes on the day of closing as expected," Sammut says.



**BARBARA BRINDLE**  
RE/MAX Hallmark York Group

Aurora, ON

Barbara Brindle is a busy woman. In addition to being the broker of record for RE/MAX Hallmark York Group and part of the management team of RE/MAX Hallmark, the largest RE/MAX franchise under the Integra banner, she is also a single mother of four.

"I'm pretty accustomed to multitasking," she says.

Brindle is a former instructor for both OREA and the National Association of Realtors. Her expertise when it comes to preparing agents for the industry is unquestionable.

Brindle has launched a successful initiative that places agents in peer-to-peer "accountability groups" and she often finds herself in three different office meetings a week, keeping track of agent concerns and developing specific training programs around them.

"I think we are incredibly unique in that we have the ability to be that adaptable," Brindle says.



**ALEX PILARSKI**  
RE/MAX Realtron Realty

Toronto, ON

Co-owner of RE/MAX Realtron Realty since 1985, when he purchased the company with his brother Richard, Alex Pilarski has introduced a number of innovative strategies to help his agents create a better service environment.

One of their most successful moves was to open an appointment centre, where, rather than use the services an external answering service, Realtron staff man the phones from 8am until 10pm, resulting in approximately 200 calls a day being answered. Pilarski has also instituted a central lockbox system for his agents, which he feels has significant advantages for consumers.

"What has happened in the past with the lockboxes everybody else uses, there is no security for the sellers," Pilarski says.

"An agent can come in and decide to come in again a few days or a few hours later. We've had instances where agents have given the lockbox code to clients and the clients have gone in by themselves. There was no real control."

Pilarski says the system, which he has lobbied TREB for years to adopt, is more labour intensive than what agents have become accustomed to, but the benefits for clients and agents are worth the extra effort.

"Those agents who have embraced it are having great success," he says.



**SCOTT RUSSELL**  
Sutton Group Seafair Realty

Richmond, BC

In his 30 years in the industry, Scott Russell has spent a great deal of his time working for both the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver and the British Columbia Real Estate Association.

Even though he will be stepping away from BCREA after spending the past two years as president and immediate past president, Russell says participation in such a group is something agents should consider.

"There's always a discussion – are we an industry or a profession?" Russell says. "And if you want it to be a profession, then we have to act like a profession. And a lot of that is engagement."

Russell is now focusing 100% of his attention to his duties as general manager at Sutton Group Seafair Realty, attracting and retaining agents with competitive costs and excellent support.

"We try to run it more as a boutique type operation," he says. "I think the difference is more personalized service. We certainly have a higher level of support staff than organizations of similar size and that's been really important to us."

# COVER STORY: HOT LIST 2017



**DON KOTTICK**  
Peerage Realty Partners

Toronto, ON

Don Kottick's experience in real estate management is extensive. His 24 years in the industry have seen him shape Royal LePage, Right At Home and Peerage Realty Partners, where he is executive vice president of corporate development for a group of companies that includes Chestnut Park Real Estate, Street City Realty, Baker Real Estate and Fifth Avenue Real Estate Marketing.

But Kottick's involvement in the industry goes much deeper. He is currently a director for both CREA and TREB, president of the Real Estate Institute of Canada and the Canadian director for FIABCI, the International Real Estate Federation. His purview at each

organization is distinct – from technology at CREA to government relations at TREB – but Kottick says his main focus for 2017 is professionalism across the industry, which is central to his duties at REIC.

"The industry has been very good to me," Kottick says, "and I've enjoyed giving back to the industry."



**KEVIN GRIMES**  
RE/MAX Affiliates Realty

Ottawa, ON

In 2015, Kevin Grimes was running one office with a staff of 14 agents for Century 21, watching RE/MAX gobble up market share in the area. Impressed with the company's growth and "seeing the writing on the wall", Grimes switched his affiliation and purchased RE/MAX Affiliates Realty, which is experiencing its own incredible growth. Grimes now oversees nine offices and a staff of over 120 agents.

In adding agents to the Affiliates team, Grimes eschews the commonly demonstrated belief that more agents automatically means more revenue.

"We're very careful with who we bring in, which is a little bit different from a lot of models I see in my business," Grimes says. "We're just as happy to say no to an agent that doesn't fit our culture as bring in an agent that does. The agents we currently have like knowing we're very selective, that we're not just recruiting anybody with a real estate licence."



**SAMANTHA BROOKES**  
Mortgages of Canada

Toronto, ON

Prior to founding Mortgages of Canada in 2014, Samantha Brookes cut her teeth at several other mortgage brokerages, not only learning the ins and outs of the business, but also studying best practices.

"I looked at how different companies were structured – what worked for them, what didn't work for them – and with Mortgages of Canada I implemented what worked with my own company," Brookes says.

Just as an elite real estate brokerage will bolster its ranks with extra admin staff, Brookes has made agent support the bedrock of Mortgages of Canada.

"A lot of agents get training, but they don't actually get support, and when that support is missing their closing ratios are very low. But if you have support in the office, where somebody's there to help with underwriting and placing the files, the closing ratios are much greater. And it helps to build the self-esteem of the agents."



**AMANDA MAGEE**  
Stewart Title Guaranty Company

Vancouver, BC

Amanda Magee left a career in lending to join Stewart Title, one of the world's leading title insurers, 13 years ago. As the director of business development for Western Canada, she has been instrumental in not only growing business in the region but also educating legal and real estate professionals about the insurance issues facing them and their clients.

"When we started offering title insurance, not a lot of people knew what it was or how it could be used to facilitate closing a deal," Magee says. "Now, 20 years later, our Canadian clients have come to rely on our expertise in the industry and the coverage our policies provide."

Title insurance has become an issue for real estate agents who find themselves involved in unique or challenging transactions, many involving title or survey defects. Magee says Stewart Title is able to step in and provide guidance when these situations arise.

"We excel at working creatively to come up with underwriting solutions to assist in getting those deals done, big or small," Magee says.

**AL ORLANDO**  
Royal LePage Real Estate Services

Toronto, ON

After selling real estate for 16 years, Al Orlando was ready for a change.

"I just wanted a little bit of stability," says the manager of Royal LePage Real Estate Services. "I wanted to be in training and mentoring and running a brokerage. I was more interested in that at that point in my life."

Orlando was recently named Royal LePage's Manager of the Year, an honour bestowed for his success in improving per-person productivity among his group's 1,000 agents and increasing the company's market share. Orlando, a former TREB vice president deeply involved with the group's work around professional standards, says increasing professionalism and market knowledge among agents has been central to enhancing their performance.

Orlando says community involvement has been critical to increasing market share. One successful initiative has been an annual golf tournament, which has helped raise over \$95,000 for the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation over the past six years.



**SANDRA WEBB**  
Royal LePage of Canada

Toronto, ON

Since 2005, Royal LePage has doubled the size of its business and tripled its revenues. Instrumental in that staggering growth has been Sandra Webb, the company's senior vice president of marketing and communications. Her public relations strategy in 2016 generated 2.3 billion impressions, 60% more than Royal LePage's nearest competitor.

Under Webb's guidance, Royal LePage has grown in the eyes of the Canadian public to become an industry thought leader. Whether through its various market reports, media appearances or the ubiquity



of its CEO, Royal LePage has become synonymous with education and advocacy.

"That's the cornerstone of what we do," she says.

Webb was at the forefront of Royal LePage's first foray into providing web tools for agents and consumers almost two decades ago. She is now tasked with strengthening the profile of a 104-year-old Canadian institution.

"We are now the stewards," she says, "the people who have to continue building this great brand."

# COVER STORY: HOT LIST 2017



**BRETT TURNER**  
Redline Real Estate Group

Calgary, AB

Brett Turner co-founded Redline Real Estate Group in 2009, establishing a comprehensive one-stop shop that provides sales services, an in-house mortgage brokerage and property management solutions. Redline posted significant gains in transactions and sales volume in both 2015 and '16, and is poised to have a banner '17.

At the heart of the brokerage's growth is a commitment to agent productivity, the impetus

for its recently rolled out high-service model.

"We're having the brokerage provide a level of support to our Realtors that they will not find at any major franchise or any small brokerage," Turner says. Redline now offers a pioneering drop-and-go system, where, once a Realtor has a listing contract and an agreed upon price, the company's marketing department and listing coordinators take over and do everything else to get the property on the market. Redline also deploys a buyer concierge to any agent with a deal under contract, further helping to remove minimum-wage tasks from their Realtors' workflow.

"The clients win, our agents become greater professionals and all of the smaller details that can slow Realtors down – we've got the support to provide that for them," Turner says.



**ETTORE CARDARELLI**  
President, OREA

Toronto, ON

When the Ontario Real Estate Association chose Ettore Cardarelli as its new president in March 2017, it acquired a Realtor with over 30 years of experience and one who had been intimately involved with both OREA, TREB and the Mississauga Real Estate Board.

"You build up some expertise over the years that hopefully contributes to the health of the organization," Cardarelli says.

Cardarelli is eager to dedicate even more of the organization's energies to public advocacy. OREA's recent victories in increasing the land transfer tax rebate for first-time buyers and removing the double land transfer tax from every Ontario municipality except Toronto should provide fuel for its current battle over allowing Realtors to incorporate.



**FRANK LEO**  
RE/MAX West Realty

Toronto, ON

There are few agents in Toronto more recognizable than Frank Leo. In addition to having what is undoubtedly the best hair in the industry, he is also one of the world's most successful Realtors. He was RE/MAX's No.1 agent in Canada in 2015 and was the company's No.2 agent worldwide for sales volume in both '15 and '16.

"The Lion" has made his mark by being one of the most aggressive marketers in the GTA. His guaranteed home selling system has proven wildly attractive to clients.

Leo has also been presented with some of RE/MAX's most illustrious awards. He has been an annual recipient of the Diamond Award since 1995 and was named a Luminary of Distinction by the company, recognizing his 20 years with RE/MAX and the more than \$20m he has earned in commissions.



**MARK FARIS**  
Royal LePage First Contact, Faris Team

Barrie, ON

Since founding the Faris Team with his wife Joanna in 2007, Mark Faris' goal-oriented, systems-based, client-first approach has led to consistent – and consistently jaw-dropping – growth. Faris' Royal LePage franchise has been the company's No.1 team since 2015.

Faris, who oversees training and maintaining company culture at First Contact, says a major part of the brokerage's success relies on allowing agents to do what they do best: sell.

"That's one thing that really separates us," Faris says. "Instead of having a ton of agents and very little administrative and marketing staff, we're heavy on the administrative and marketing

end. We take a lot of those tasks off the sales partners."

Faris says 2017 will be a year of system optimization for his team, ensuring his cooperative and tight-knit group stays on the same path.

"It seems like a small thing talking about culture, but it's such a massive part of a team and growth," he says.

"If that starts to slip, that's the beginning of the end."



**GREG ROMUNDT**  
Centurion Asset Management

Toronto, ON

A former investment banker for AIG International Group

and Citibank, Greg Romundt turned his attention to real estate in 2003, when his own personal real estate investments began generating more excitement than his daily nine-to-five.

"I enjoyed what I was doing on the outside more, so I started my own thing," he says. His "own thing", Centurion Asset Management, has overseen the management of over \$1bn in assets.

When acquiring properties for Centurion, Romundt says agents play the key role of diplomat, acting as a buffer between the buyer's potential criticisms of a property and the seller's rosy view.

"When you're trying to buy a property, you see it as it is, or as it could be, not what the buyer thinks it is."

Romundt says Centurion prefers to deal with connected agents who can make off-market deals happen, rather than those who turn every listing into an auction.

"Those kinds of relationships are a lot more fruitful for us. The probability of actually winning a deal when 50 guys are at the table is very slim."

**JASON SOPROVICH**  
Royal LePage Sussex

West Vancouver, BC

For most of the 25 years he has been selling for Royal LePage Sussex, Jason Soprovich has been specializing in the West Vancouver luxury market, helping change hands some of the city's most prestigious properties.

Targeting such a unique, exclusive market has required Soprovich to develop a multifaceted and aggressive marketing strategy, one that draws on print, multiple multilingual and mobile-enabled websites and affiliations with other luxury real estate professionals.

Soprovich says dealing with business-oriented clients encourages candid information sharing, which makes certain "information is provided with ease, so they can make an informed decision quickly. When you deal with the luxury market, you must be on your game. And we are."



**SARAH JUSTASON**  
RE/MAX Group Four Realty

Fredericton, NB

When Sarah Justason began selling real estate in Oromocto, New Brunswick in 2012, she faced an uphill battle posed by Canada's Model Town – no billboards allowed.

With no traditional way to market herself, Justason, who began selling for RE/MAX in '10 in Petawawa, Ontario, had to get creative. She started by branding the tailgate of her husband's truck, turning it into a moving billboard that

would be seen by thousands of military personnel – and a number of past clients – as he performed his duties at CDSB Gagetown. She also went back to a unique and proven homegrown strategy – recipe cards, which feature both a family recipe and a personal note about the recipe's significance to the Realtor.

"It's a really soft call to action," Justason says. "I believe you have to give a little bit of yourself if you're going to ask for something."



**THOMAS BAGOGLOO**  
RE/MAX Nova

Halifax, ON

When Thomas Bagogloo was welcomed into RE/MAX's Circle of Legends last year, it was one more accolade in the long and illustrious career of one of Atlantic Canada's top producers. Bagogloo's more than 20 years of experience in the Halifax market has allowed him to build a team that runs on unparalleled market knowledge.

"Our job is to disseminate the information that's provided and really find the best value for our clients, so that they make a strategic purchase that fulfills their family goals," Bagogloo says.

Self-improvement is one of the Bagogloo Team's top priorities. Reinvestment into the brokerage's technology is continuous; the agents themselves attend multiple conferences and courses every year, ensuring they stay in front of a rapidly evolving industry. "As a result, when we implement what we've learned, we establish a strong following in terms of the client base," Bagogloo says. "Our business is 85-90% repeat business and referrals."