



## WHAT I LEARNED FROM 5,000 CUPS OF COFFEE AND REAL ESTATE AGENT RECRUITING INTERVIEWS

By John Meechan

*February 1, 2020*

Over my 17 years in real estate, I've played a key role in managing companies across the spectrum, from national brand franchises to local indie firms. One of the key aspects in every leadership role I filled was recruiting, as real estate agents are the gasoline that fuels brokerage success. During that time frame I interviewed more than 5,000 agents over a cup of coffee.

I learned a great deal about what makes for a successful agent and how the structure and culture of a brokerage directly influences that success.

### THE QUALITIES OF A SUCCESSFUL AGENT

Looking back, I calculate that 80% of the agents I interviewed are no longer practicing full time. Many have left the profession entirely, some have put their license into referral and the balance of that 80% are still active but at a low transaction level.

But that 20% who continue to hit it out of the ballpark? They demonstrate that they know what it takes to be successful and share traits that I look for in every interview now.

- **They know they are salespeople** – this seems shockingly obvious but the day in and out activities a successful agent needs to perform to build their business are sales activities: prospecting, networking, negotiating. They steadily focus on acquiring listings. The media presents a sanitized version of an agent's life where they seemingly walk through beautiful homes with well-financed clients. However, business growth happens in the back office and good agents make this their daily focus.
- **They know they are entrepreneurs** – whether they work at a big box national franchise that appears to have an add-water-and-stir market strategy or a smaller, scrappier shop, the successful agent knows that this is their business and they are ultimately responsible for its growth. They figure out what works for them and they apply it rigorously. They invest in personal development and in marketing. They have a budget and a business plan.

- **They know they are professionals** – many people get their license as a second or third career. Some agents seem a bit embarrassed by this and describe themselves as doing “real estate on the side” or “doing a little real estate.” Some agents prioritize their emotional connection to their office and team over their personal business growth. Successful agents are proud of the profession and determined to succeed. They embrace how they entered the profession as part of their backstory, have a positive and healthy connection with their colleagues -- and get to work.

## THE BROKERAGE AS AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

As I write this, my business partner Jeffrey Kniffin and I are marking our three-year anniversary of the agency we created, The Gallery Residential Brokerage. The question we get asked most often by the agents we are recruiting is “How are we different? Why The Gallery?”

We love answering that question.

Between us we have nearly 30 years of experience as agents and office managers. We know absolutely everything that works and doesn’t work in this business, and we set forth to design a brokerage that served our community by enabling agents who demonstrate the success traits above. They deserve an environment that put them first and did not consider them a profit-center.

All we had to do, we realized, was to get out of their way.

- **We removed all the complexity around splits and how people are compensated** – we have a set transaction fee for each side of a deal. It is the same for everyone. And if an agent completes enough transactions in a year, they don’t have to pay that fee either. Currently that number is 15 which is the same amount of transactions to qualify for the bronze Level of The NAR Circle of Excellence.
- **We’ve eliminated all miscellaneous fees** – that 6% admin fee, typical of so many companies in our industry, doesn’t exist here. (Agents are still responsible for expenses designated by the board: license, E&O etc. that are not incurred by the brokerage.)
- **We have no pre-canned marketing anything** – Agents drive their business ethically and the way they see fit. However, we offer tons of coaching, marketing support, and classes via our SCORE platform (Support, Coaching, Opportunities, Resources, and Education)
- **We have no corporate requirements for meetings** – or things like “floor time.” We want our agents to be focused on their business, not ours.
- **We offer a modern interpretation of “going to the office”** –all agents can access any of our office locations 24/7. We help empower agents by operating a paperless environment, leveraging the cloud and our corporate resource portal.
- **We’ve eliminated cut-throat competition** – your lead is your lead. No referral fees and if someone calls the office inquiring about your listing or you – they are immediately directed to you.

We are very serious about having a high professional standard and we recognize that The Gallery is not a fit for every agent. All associates are expected to get their broker licenses. And if someone is referred to us, but has less experience than we feel comfortable with, they have to join a team – only after completing a mentoring program to make sure they can perform. Lastly, we have no multi-level marketing features where agents are compensated for bringing someone on board.

It is a simple premise that we are built around what great agents need and we believe our communities need outstanding, professional agents who serve them skillfully.

5,000 interviews and how many cups of coffee later, I still love talking to people who are ready to step forward and take control of their real estate career. If you are intrigued about The Gallery, then I would welcome a conversation and another cup of coffee.