



Teaming To The Top: Organize To Execute

by *Esther Muller*
and *Dr. Michael Williams, Ph.D., SPHR*



Will teaming optimize your business success? How do you know if you can work collaboratively with others? Can working in a team reduce your professional effectiveness?

Teaming is not a core competency within the residential real estate agent culture. Working with others to expand business operations may seem like a sound strategic decision. However, without clear guidelines, responsibilities, and accountabilities, teaming can be counter-productive, producing unsatisfying results.

Teaming and Culture

Historically, residential real estate agency has been a solitary profession. The agent-client relationship is sacrosanct owing to its relational and network-based designs. As a result, sales agents develop target markets and affinity groups, in turn claiming ownership of these client categories.

With declarations of ownership come challenges from competing sales agents questioning the validity of claims. Unfortunately, prospect and client ownership disputes are frequent occurrences in branch managers' offices nationwide. Equally as unfortunate, teaming is infrequently suggested as an organizing strategy for resolving and preventing competitive issues

However, teaming has existed within the residential real estate industry for decades. Historically, positioned as a family-business, teaming has evolved with increasing sophistication. Today, most successful teams are composed of two or more sales agents supported by buyers agents, listing specialists, marketing managers, and sales assistants.

Sales agent teams organize themselves formally and informally. Regardless of organizational structure, their goal is shared success. However, shared success through teaming does not reflect the industry's cultural norms. In fact, teaming may be a foreign concept, uncomfortable, intrusive, and threatening. In addition, working with others requires team members to acquire specific knowledge and practical skills in management, organizational behavior, and business disciplines including strategic planning, team building, marketing, and technology in order to be successful.

Teaming and Change

The residential real estate industry is experiencing rapid and significant change resulting from the nation's economic recession. These market conditions are driving real estate agents to reevaluate their professional capabilities relative to surviving and sustaining in the industry. Jack DeNiro, President of JC DeNiro, shares, "The residential real estate market has transformed overnight! The industry has been put on notice. Acquire new skills and be competitive or perish!" Markets of all types present opportunities for change, growth, and achievement. Today's residential real estate market abounds

with opportunities to implement new and innovative approaches to success; teaming is a key approach. However, it requires sales agents to transform their thinking and behave in new ways.

Teaming and Assessment

Teaming is a learned process. Sales agents must acquire relevant data informing them if teaming can be a successful career choice or an unproductive misjudgment. Lisa Maysonet, founder of Group Maysonet of Prudential Douglas Elliman, states, "Working as a team requires specialized knowledge and skills."

In order to determine if teaming is a viable work structure, we recommend sales agents consider taking several assessment instruments focused on assessing personal preferences for engaging self and others, conflict management styles, and learning capacities. Four recommended assessment instruments are: The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®), Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, Kolb Learning Style Inventory, and Life Styles Inventory.

Teaming and High Performance

High performance teaming requires team members to organize using engagement guidelines focused on productivity. High performance teams differentiate themselves by implementing and monitoring their engagement. To help determine if teaming is a viable work format for you, consider the following high performance team practices and reflect on your ability and desire to engage them:

1. **Shared Vision and Values:** Agreement and commitment to a shared vision, common purpose, strategies, and roles.
2. **Empowerment:** Promoting autonomy, accountability, and life-long learning.
3. **Engagement and Communications:** Proactive relationship building and networking predicated on inclusion, strength in diversity, and acquisition of skills to ensure effective communications.
4. **Adaptability:** Performing nimbly and flexibly in order to anticipate and respond to changing environments and client needs.
5. **Continuous Improvement:** Establish team learning as a foundational activity for all team members.
6. **Performance Coaching:** Partner in peer and professional coaching.

So, will teaming optimize your business success? Answering this question requires reflection, observation, and study. Begin the self-education process. Find successful teams, watch their behaviors, and interview team members. Teaming begins with you. ■

Esther Muller

Co-founder of the Academy for Continuing Education & Master Coach

Tel: 646-391-7406

Esther@RealEstateAcademy.com

www.EstherMuller.com

www.RealEstateAcademy.com

Dr. Michael Williams, Ph.D., SPHR

Dean of the Graduate School of Business

Division of Graduate Studies, Touro College

Tel: 973-477-6727