

REAL ESTATE BROKER'S INSIDER

Management and sales tools for the residential real estate broker



Broker-to-Broker

Detroit broker soldiers on through downturn, enjoys recovery

Jeanette Schneider admits she considered leaving the real estate industry during the dark days of the downturn.

Schneider, regional vice president of RE/MAX Southeastern Michigan, does business in the Detroit area, a region that was hit early and hard by the recession.

A longtime RE/MAX executive, Schneider thought about ending her real estate career and moving into public relations. But she decided to stick out the downturn, and she's glad she did — the bond that survivors share is unique, Schneider says.

Schneider also has learned that no trend in the real estate market is all good or all bad. Her biggest challenge in today's market?

"Ironically, the market getting better," Schneider says. "It's a good thing, but whenever the market rebounds, there comes the thinking, 'I don't need to change anything because I'm doing just fine.'"

Schneider, who oversees 43 offices and 700 agents in the Detroit area, is pushing brokers and agents to constantly evolve, adapt, and improve.

Schneider talked to Real Estate Broker's Insider about her career and business philosophy.

REBI: What was your first job?

Schneider: I was a civilian employee, but I was a clerk for the U.S. Army while my husband was stationed in Germany. Being very young at the time and newly married, I learned a lot about the military and the sacrifice people make. I learned a lot about loyalty and discipline. There are rules and regulations, and there's a right way to do things and a wrong way to do things. In real estate, things are more flexible. But at the core, we're all still driven by contracts and what's the right thing to do and the wrong thing to do.

REBI: What was the defining moment in your career?

Schneider: In late 2006, early 2007, here in Michigan, we were deep, deep in the throes of the hard economic times. I was faced with the question of, "Do I want to stay in this industry?" I was looking at other opportunities. I'm definitely glad I stuck it out. For the brokers who made it through the downturn, there's a real camaraderie. We look at each other and there's just something in our eyes that says, "We survived. We survived one of the toughest times in the history of our industry." Many of these folks I've grown up with. I've been with RE/MAX since

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1990, and I've been with them since they started. I just couldn't leave people at that point in time. I felt like I would have been letting them down, and I felt like I would have been letting myself down.

REBI: What are two or three important concepts or rules that have helped you succeed in business?

Schneider: At the end of the day, I want to look in the mirror and be happy and comfortable and at peace with the person who's looking back at me. I also feel that it is important to finish strong. I've taken that philosophy into workouts at the gym, and I've taken it into my work life. When you're tired, when you don't feel like going any more, you have to finish strong.

REBI: What's your favorite thing about the real estate industry?

Schneider: The people. You get to meet such interesting people. Finding out what attracted them to real estate, finding out what keeps them in real estate. Brokers are generous people — they're give-you-the-shirt-off-their-back people. They have great stories. They're

always fun to have at a party.

REBI: What's your least favorite thing about the real estate industry?

Schneider: People think everything's negotiable. There are some things that aren't.

REBI: What's the biggest mistake you've made in business? What did you learn from it?

Schneider: Trying to be somebody's friend more than a leader. That's some-

thing I did more of earlier on in my career. But you realize you're not being somebody's friend by giving them rope or by not being honest about the state of their business. When I talked to a broker about their business, I really wanted to soften the phraseology, instead of ripping the Bandaid off and being blunt. I've gotten better at that as I've progressed in my career. It still does require finesse. There still is a humanistic side. That's a person sitting across from you, and they've got a family, and they might have something going on in their personal life that you might not know about.

REBI: What is the single most successful thing your company is doing now?

Schneider: We're rolling out a program we call Broker First. We've really got a three-prong focus with this program: Lead, manage, coach. For many brokers that end up being RE/MAX franchisees, this is their first business experience outside of being an independent contractor, and there are a lot of things to learn, most fall into these three categories.

REBI: What's your most fearless prediction for the future of the real estate industry?

Schneider: Technology is not going anywhere — and what we've seen in the past is minimal compared to what's coming. We're going to see huge changes on the mobile side. For instance, the QR code readers and putting QR codes on signs so consumers learn more about properties. I don't think we've even scratched the surface on that. There's also GPS. There are all these things we can't even envision today. We're also going to see a younger average age of the agent attracted to this industry. You start bringing that age down, and you combine it with the new technology, and I think you're going to see an explosion of change in the industry.

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Broker Bio

The Broker: Jeanette Schneider, RE/MAX Southeastern Michigan.

Success Strategy: Broker First, a program that teaches franchisees to lead, manage, and coach.

Recommended Reading: *The Thank You Economy* by Gary Vaynerchuck and *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein.

Smart Phone Choice: iPhone.

Favorite App: "My favorite industry-related one is either the RE/MAX general app or the RE/MAX convention app — that one is really slick. From a practical standpoint, I like the Flashlight app."