



BRITISH COLUMBIA
REAL ESTATE
ASSOCIATION

the bulletin



Hon. Murray Coell, Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services

Actions taken by the real estate profession help ensure the real estate market continues to prosper and consumers are protected.

That's why about 90 members of the profession travelled to Vancouver in January and used a midday reception to publicly thank all MLAs for their work in bringing forward the *Real Estate Services Act* and *Real Estate Development Marketing Act*. The laws replaced the 46-year-old *Real Estate Act* on January 1.

"The *Real Estate Services Act* is proof that the public interest is served when the government and our profession consult each other and work together," says BCREA President Gordon Maroney. "This consultative approach works and our profession is committed to it."

BC's minister responsible for housing acknowledged the profession's efforts. "This is a tremendous occasion," explained the Honourable Murray Coell, Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services. "Our government is very aware of your industry's contribution. Thank you for working with us."

Organizations directly related to the practice of real estate were also repres-

Political Action Delivers

ented, including: the Real Estate Council of BC, The Real Estate Foundation of BC, the Real Estate Institute of BC and the Real Estate Division of UBC's Sauder School of Business.

BCREA continues to work with these organizations and member boards to ensure the profession experiences a smooth transition to the new laws.

No Vote, No Voice

With the 2005 provincial election drawing close, the profession's political action skills will be called to action again soon.

"This election is a significant opportunity for all of us," explains Maroney. "Once again, we have a chance to shape the future of our business and our communities."

While in Vancouver, real estate volunteers put the final touches on the profession's election strategy. Available on BCREA's REALTOR Link® homepage, the strategy outlines steps to ensure that any elected provincial government will facilitate good economic conditions for home buyers, sellers, owners and REALTORS.

"We must participate in the election process as responsible citizens," states Moss Moloney, President of the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board. "Each of us must seize this opportunity to shape our future."

The strategy specifies the goals and actions for member boards and REALTORS to apply during the campaign. The tools and resources available from BCREA are also noted. The strategy is flexible



and can accommodate issues unique to some boards.

Although the real estate profession is prepared for the provincial election, success ultimately depends on political action being taken by member boards and REALTORS. In March, BCREA will launch its election website offering tools and strategies for everyone.

Terminology Changes

With the new legislation, several common terms have changed:

Old	New
Salesperson	Representative
Agent 9.15	Associate Broker
Nominee	Managing Broker
Agent	Brokerage

For more information on the *Real Estate Services Act* and other implementation documents, visit the Real Estate Council of BC's website at www.recbc.ca.

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President's Report

Outlook Positive for 2005

Last year was another one for the record books. We sold 96,316 homes on the MLS® in 2004, over 2,700 more than the previous record set in 1992. Our clients invested a record \$27.8 billion in residential real estate across BC, shattering the 2003 record by more than 15 per cent.

The numbers are mind boggling, but what we do has a very real and positive impact on our economy. Home sales don't just reflect consumer confidence or low mortgage rates—they create jobs and generate spending in other areas.

Late last year, BCREA asked the Economic Planning Group to estimate just how big that impact is. They found that the average BC home sold on the MLS® in 2003 triggered approximately \$27,915 in additional spending, including legal fees, moving expenses, home renovations, furniture and appliance purchases and taxes—all of which fuel the economy.

Based on that figure, 2004 BC home sales generated \$2.7 billion in spending and created 22,538 jobs. That's a powerful contribution to our province, but are we in store for more of the same in 2005?

Only time will tell for sure, but from what I've heard from economists, the factors that support a healthy market, like consumer confidence, low interest rates and employment growth, are expected to be positive this year.

According to Credit Union Central of BC's latest forecast, the market will remain robust, but at a slightly lower level than in 2004, with more potential purchasers holding off because of weakening affordability due to price increases since 2000.

While the consensus seems to be that the 2005 market may not quite meet the levels we saw in 2004, this is sure to be another successful year for REALTORS in BC.



President *Gordon Maroney*

Looking ahead, a provincial election strategy has been created to ensure that any elected provincial government will facilitate favourable economic conditions for everyone—buyers, seller, owners and REALTORS.

It will take work to keep this momentum going forward in 2005, and I'm looking forward to it!

Gordon Maroney
President

Board of Directors 2004-2005

Long-Range Plan Principles

- Building membership relations
- Responding to communication needs
- Leading provincial advocacy efforts on behalf of the profession
- Demonstrating public interest
- Offering excellence in education services
- Providing enhanced service options for member boards
- Maintaining an equitable fee structure

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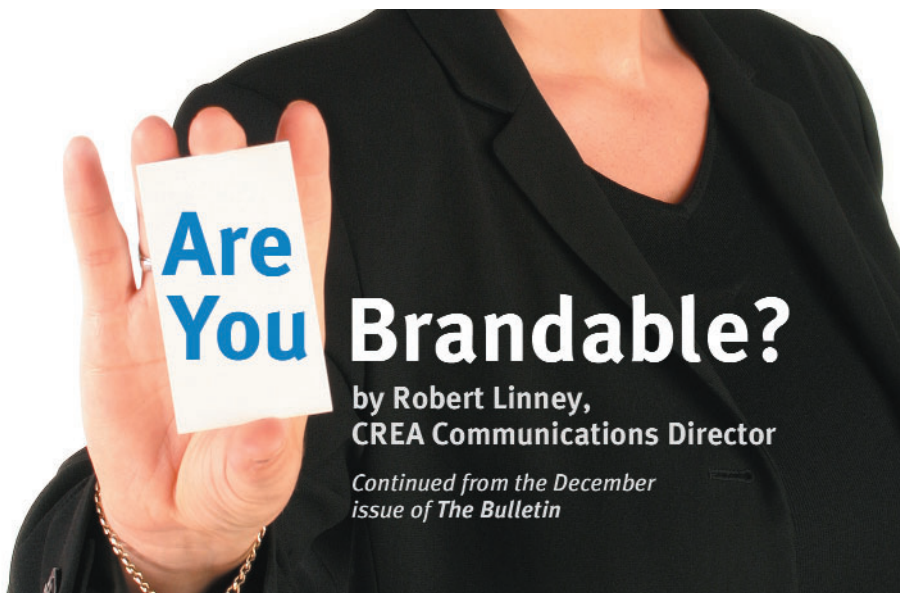
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Are You Brandable?

by Robert Linney,
CREA Communications Director

*Continued from the December
issue of The Bulletin*

Part Two of Two

You probably have a fairly good idea of the nature of your product or service. Write down the benefits you offer. Make sure you are actually listing benefits and not just features. In a car, power steering is a feature. The benefits are easier handling and less exertion for the driver.

No matter how impressive your features, they won't mean anything to the consumer unless you spell out the benefits, even if they seem to be obvious to you.

Building a positioning statement:

1. Who is your target—that is, the people you most want as clients?
2. What is your product or service?
3. What benefits do you bring to your target clients?
4. What makes you different from your competitors in the market?

The final component of your positioning statement is your unique selling proposition, or USP. It's what makes you different from your competitors, distinguishing you from every other REALTOR, or your office from other offices. Tied together, benefit and USP are key in driving your targeted customers to your doorstep.

Before you develop your USP, you need to know what your competitors are up to. How are they marketing themselves? Do they have positioning statements or is their advertising and promotion all over the map? Is their branding clear? What are their claims? And do these claims have any value to potential customers?

Take a look at their advertising and promotion. Are their key messages consistent? Are they effective? Odds are, you'll be surprised by what you find. The competition may not be what you believed it to be, or even who you thought. The insight will enable you to clarify and exploit

You need to know what your competitors are up to

your own niche in the marketplace.

"This looks like a lot of work," you say. "Do I really need a positioning statement? Can't I just run ads with a picture of myself and my team? Or pictures of property and my phone number?"

You can. That's what most real estate advertising is today. And it works. But with strong positioning—WITH BRANDING—it works much better. By creating a brand, every ad and every photo you run will have an added dimension . . . one that sets you apart.

How research can help

CREA's 2003 consumer survey reported that 63 per cent of homebuyers found the process as difficult or more difficult than it was ten years ago.

Was it red tape? Be the agency that cuts through red tape.

Prices? Be the agency that delivers full value.

Trust? Be the agency that has built its reputation on trust.

The economy? Be the agency with the knowledge and insight to counter hard times.

Bad previous experience? Be the agency that's changing the way REALTORS do business.

Buyers and sellers said they want the REALTOR to be an organized, effective marketing expert. Let your communications convey these qualities.

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Faster Payments, Closings With Electronic Filing

Electronic filing is one more in a long line of technological advances designed to accommodate the dynamic real estate profession. With implementation commencing in mid-2004, the Land Title Office's (LTO) Electronic Filing System (EFS) won't have any material impact on how licensees carry out their practices, or how conveyancing lawyers and notaries carry out their practices. In the long run, though, it should reduce conveyancing costs to buyers and sellers of real estate and improve the efficiency of the LTO.

[Electronic filing] has some distinct advantages for the conveyancing process and for REALTORS

The new system still requires the same documentation, but allows forms to be delivered among the parties by email and submitted to the LTO over BC OnLine. EFS isn't perfect, but it has some distinct advantages for the conveyancing process and for REALTORS.

Conveyancing:

Faster Posts: An EFS document submitted to an LTO will always be marked up as a pending charge in a few seconds or minutes, not the 30-60 minutes sometimes necessary for paper filings.

Faster Processing Times: EFS automates many LTO processes, allowing the LTO to process more documents with fewer people.

More Flexibility: Law firms outside the Lower Mainland, Victoria and

Kamloops can now have documents signed by their clients and submit them to the LTO on the same day, reducing courier times and costs.

Expanded Hours: EFS is open for filings from 6 am to 8 pm, Monday through Saturday.

National and International Transactions: Law firms no longer need to rely on couriers to move documents, which is a particular advantage when the parties are located across the country or overseas.

Fraud Prevention: Only BC lawyers and notaries who have completed the special registration process with the Law Society of BC may electronically certify the EFS documents that are to be submitted to the LTO.

REALTORS:

Faster Payments: EFS will allow law firms to spend more time focusing on processing the paper, notifying parties of the completion of a transaction and completing the steps necessary to move the sale proceeds and commissions—not waiting for their land title agents to call them with their post.

Faster Closings: As EFS will give almost instantaneous notice of pending numbers, the lawyer's staff can start completing post-closing documentation sooner.

Rush Transactions: While everyone tries to avoid them, EFS allows rush transactions to occur more quickly. The fact that executed documents can be moved by email is a significant time and cost savings.

Saturday Closings: While Saturday closing are strongly discouraged, EFS



by Ed Wilson, Lawson Lundell

is available for transactions on Saturdays. Licensees wanting Saturday closings must ensure their files are referred to lawyers willing and able to complete transactions using EFS and who are in a position to file on Saturdays. They must also ensure lenders involved are prepared to fund mortgages on Saturdays.

For a more complete analysis of EFS, visit BCREA's REALTOR Link® homepage.

Ed Wilson is a partner with Lawson Lundell in Vancouver and has been the Canadian Bar Association's representative on the LTO's Electronic Filing Committee for the past six years, assisted in drafting amendments to the Land Title Act to facilitate electronic filing and served as co-chair of the Continuing Legal Education Society of BC's electronic filing courses.

BCA: Privacy, Protection & Property Owners by Kim Spencer

BCREA has had a long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship with BC Assessment (BCA) for many years. BCREA gives BCA access to the MLS® system, and BCA gives BCREA access to the assessment roll.

Until the *Assessment Act* was amended by the NDP government several years ago, property owners' names were included in BCA data. BCREA has spent years lobbying the government, BCA and the Privacy Commissioner for their return. The Privacy Commissioner is concerned about the potential misuse of this data and his view has been supported by the government.

The profession misses having access to property owners' names. While

REALTORS can find property owners' names using BC OnLine or the Land Title Office, neither of these is open 24/7. Those in rural areas now have to do multiple title searches just to establish the identity of property owners—when a quick check of BCA data via their MLS® system once provided this information.

BCREA recently met with BCA and Minister of Sustainable Resource Management George Abbott to ask that the *Assessment Act* be amended. The minister advised that the Act would not be amended unless the Privacy Commissioner of BC approved.

At the suggestion of Minister Abbott, in January BCREA met with the Privacy

Commissioner to determine whether there were any circumstances under which he would approve amendments to the *Assessment Act*. BCREA suggested that enhanced security measures may ease the commissioner's concerns.

While BCREA has not yet received a response from the Privacy Commissioner, the Association and its BCA Negotiating Task Force members will continue to work with BCA and the Privacy Commissioner to once more have property owners' names included as part of our data exchange agreement. Watch for updates over the coming months.



Education

cpe Seminar Schedule

continuing professional
education

Buyer Agency

Instructor: Jim McCaughan

- February 18, OMREB, Vernon

CONDO 101: Strata Law for REALTORS

Instructor: Mike Mangan or Adrienne Murray

- February 17, REBGV, Vancouver
- February 26, BCNREB, Prince George

CONDO 202: Advanced Strata Law for REALTORS

Instructor: Mike Mangan

- February 24, REBGV, Vancouver

Electronic Marketing, Advertising and the Internet

Instructor: Gary Brady

- February 17, FVREB, Surrey
- February 23, VIREB, Nanaimo
- February 26, BCNREB, Prince George
- March 10, KADREA, Kamloops

Check with your local board office for last-minute changes. Look for more cpe seminars on BCREA's REALTOR Link® homepage, under Education.

Legal Update 2004-2005

Instructor: Mike Mangan

- February 25, CADREB, Chilliwack
- March 7, VREB, Victoria
- March 10, OMREB, Vernon
- March 11, OMREB, Kelowna

Project Marketing for the Leading Edge Professional

Instructor: Peter Dupuis

- March 1, REBGV, Vancouver

Risk Management for Commercial REALTORS and Property Managers

Instructor: Joe Mendes

- March 8, VREB, Victoria

Selling Time Shares, Hotel Strata Lots, Cooperatives and Other Forms of Real Estate

Instructor: Adrienne Murray

- February 25, VREB, Victoria

Tax Tips for Selling Real Estate

Instructor: Don Nilson

- March 2, KREB, Nelson
- March 3, KREB, Cranbrook