

WORDS | Alex Evans

# Strength in numbers

Chuck Lemire, chief operating officer and managing director of RE/MAX Europe, explains why entrepreneurship can still thrive in a franchise network

These days, if you're not strengthening ties with your referral network, or partnering to reduce costs and create new business, you may not have a business for much longer.

Agents who recognised the value of strategic alliances in the good times are reaping the benefits in these bad times, but what of those who are new to the industry or looking for ways to diversify into international home sales?

Franchises offer access to a wide regional network of agents, plus a range of support elements from

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marketing to referrals.

Chuck Lemire, chief operating officer and managing director of RE/MAX Europe, has over 14 years experience in franchise sales and business development. He believes agents

across the franchise network gain from structure, support and association with a recognised brand – whilst still retaining their independence.

"The innovative RE/MAX concept is to be in business for yourself, but not by yourself," he explains. "Regional Directors, who own the franchise for a particular region, guide Franchise or Broker Owners in their region in the process of recruiting, retaining and supporting Sales Associates. In turn, Broker Owners motivate their Sales Associates while providing them administrative, educational and business support. Associates benefit from the network RE/MAX provides, including innovative technologies, training and education and marketing services. At the same time, Sales Associates at one franchise share operations expenses."

## The right model

Like any agency, its success depends on the right model and team. "While there is no guarantee of success, the use of RE/MAX systems, processes, training and guidance can lead to

the establishment of a healthy and profitable real estate agency office," adds Lemire. "The responsibility of the Franchise Owner in developing quality agents is essential. Keys to successful retention of agents include strong leadership, mentoring, one-on-one meetings, agent events and participation in RE/MAX events. Put simply, retention of agents is a constant process of leadership, caring and tutoring".

## Collective independence

But how true is this independence for people who are driven as much by ego and personal ambition as the need to make money?

"As independence is one of the major principles of the RE/MAX network, the launch of new business initiatives is always more than welcome," adds Lemire. "Naturally, ethical standards or basic brand guidelines must always be respected but you will never have RE/MAX prevent one of our members from being successful!" One Chicago RE/MAX agent took the initiative to launch the

American foreclosures tours last year to capitalise on a growing area of sales.

Independence is all well and good, but leads and sales pay the bills. "RE/MAX provides a wide range of simple tools such as a Pan European inventory listing, training tools and material in order to improve attraction," says Lemire, adding that the network's referral platform, iList, provides access to a huge number of potential customers. "Developed to strategically enhance the daily business of our members, iList is the interface to market listings to over 500m customers in all of RE/MAX Europe's regions. It is built on five key components of a sales associate's business cycle: personal promotion, prospecting, marketing/listing, selling/closing, and following-through. Covering these basic principles, iList helps to pro-actively manage customers and business partners from an initial contact to prospering long-lasting relationships".

Communication and education often go hand in hand and the best networks and associations have a central platform for sharing information



**Brand awareness** | RE/MAX has invested in its brand recognition through promotional and sponsoring activities, says Lemire, such as partnerships with Panasonic Toyota Formula 1 Team (official real estate supplier), FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup and the Austrian Golf Open

## ► Biography

H. Charles (Chuck) Lemire, Jr, COO and MD of RE/MAX Europe, is responsible for all Pan-European franchise operations which includes over 1,600 locations in 36 different European countries. Prior to this he was Regional Director at RE/MAX New England responsible for all franchise operations (in 2006 it had a sales volume of over \$16bn in gross volume). Currently, there are over 10,300 agents in the RE/MAX Europe network from the following countries: Albania, Austria, the Baltic States, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland & Northern Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and UK.

and exchanging ideas. "To keep the communication between members of the network lively, several multi-region business development meetings and events are being held throughout the year," says Lemire. "From educational content to latest retention programmes and valuable input from experienced guest speakers these meetings also serve as a communication platform to enable the network members to share their experiences and best practices. In addition, regional conventions are often attended by members from other countries to accumulate and share knowledge".

## Education and networking

RE/MAX has a number of upcoming events, including roadshows and recruiting events. "In October, the second Power Broker Summit will take place. This unique event will bring 400 members of the network to Vienna, attending two days of top content, brought to the audience by unique key note speakers, networking and fun".

These events also help to increase visibility of the RE/MAX brand. "We also achieve brand recognition with our promotional and sponsoring activities such as partnerships with Panasonic Toyota Formula 1 Team (official real estate supplier), FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup and the Austrian Golf Open".

Brand recognition is a major element of the franchise proposition,

as is marketing support. "An increased attention on Pan European but especially regional above-the-line marketing activities - such as print campaigns, billboard, radio and TV ads as well as European press coverage and PR activities - perfects a comprehensive recognition of RE/MAX in public and ensures brand awareness all over the continent", claims Lemire. "Naturally, RE/MAX offers internal marketing support to strengthen the brand at every level of business. We create powerful marketing tools specifically tailored to European regions, Broker Owners and Sales Associates. We deliver marketing instruments which are useful in everyday business, whether meetings or fairs, when contacting the customers for the first time or closing a transaction. These marketing tools clearly accentuate what RE/MAX stands for: top players in the real estate industry dedicated to professional service".

This may sound tempting to the many agents looking for support in these unforgiving times, but what about funding for new ventures? "This is subject to decision by the regions/regional owners," says Lemire. "But following the clear commitment of leadership, everyone at RE/MAX will always support those who want to be successful - in every way." 

## ► Franchise options at RE/MAX Europe

Regional Master Franchise rights are granted for specific regions in Europe and the Regional Director actively recruits and supports Office Franchisers, or Broker Owners, with training and technology. These Broker Owners establish an office of experienced Sales Associates active in the RE/MAX network, providing leadership and high-quality offices to their teams.

