



WINNING COMBINATION | JASON CRAIK WITH THE SUCCESSFUL TANDEM SALES TEAM.

'We are the ones who drive the business, create the buzz'

Don't underestimate the critical role of sales and marketing teams in the residential homebuilding industry, says Jason Craik, of MAC Real Estate Solutions.

He ought to know. This is the second time in a row he and his partner Cameron McNeill have won Georgie Awards for Best Salesperson or Team in New Home Construction.

"Some people fail to understand the importance of these aspects of the business, but we are the ones who drive the business, who create the buzz," Craik states emphatically.

In explaining the sales process, he uses the analogy of a hockey team. "Our sales people are the first contact, the first people buyers see. So when we get a project, we see which sales people are best suited for this target market. We select them from our staff, or we hand-pick new people and we train them."

In the old days, he says, companies would have just one sales manager and an assistant. Today, the team consists of at least three or four players, then another three on weekends. "You need a best line — a grinder, who works hard to get the puck away to the playmaker, who then passes to the goal scorer."

"In our business that is a perfect team working together. We need different personalities, with a good strong closer and someone who's more soft. You adapt your personality to the buyer. The key is having the teammates recognize each person's role, then the energy they create spills over to the buyer, making it fun for him or her."

"Buying real estate is an emotional decision, but feeling positive makes it easier for

the buyer to settle down and make the most important decision of his life."

MAC, a winning combination of sales (Craik) and marketing (McNeill) expertise, is a large organization with a staff of 60. Its teams have been finalists for each of the five years they have entered the Georgie Awards, and have won four out of five. Among latest successes, with Anthem Properties, are Tandem and Qube and currently, Elan.

"We have incredible marketing individuals, a highly diverse group with different expertise and personalities," says Craik.

Once a project is launched, the team — which might include the architect, graphic and interior designers — holds an intensive strategic think tank for one or two days, locked in a room to brainstorm and come up with multiple target markets.

"We'll know, for example, that the project would appeal to Joe Broker, who drives a BMW, wears a suit, eats at Il Giardino and has an income of \$100,000 a year. We know what he looks like, what he smells like. He'll want a one-bedroom, 620-square-foot apartment, because that's what he can afford."

"Then we have a young couple. She works for a law firm, makes \$50,000 a year; her husband works for BC Hydro and together they make \$150,000 a year. They're fine for a two-bedroom apartment."

"So now we have the buyers' mix we try to generate the personality of the project — the name, what kind of campaign to undertake. We find a hook and hang our hats on the project."

Craik describes his relationship with McNeill as "yin and yang. Ultimately, when a developer works with us they're getting superb marketing and top-of-the-line sales expertise. We treat both equally."



YIN AND YANG | CAMERON MCNEILL (MARKETING), JASON CRAIK (SALES) AND ANTHEM'S QUBE.



Home warranty insurance builds consumer confidence

Consumer confidence in new home construction in B.C. is strong and growing, according to a survey of participants of a first-time home buyers seminar organized by the Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association (GVHBA) last spring.

The annual seminar, which is scheduled for April 5 this year, draws as many as 800 prospective new home buyers each year and is the largest of its kind in North America.

According to GVHBA CEO Peter Simpson, the mandatory, third-party home warranty insurance program, which protects buyers of new homes in B.C. against construction defects, is a major factor in new home purchases.

"Buyers believe they are protected. They can make that purchase with confidence, knowing that if anything goes wrong they have

one of the strongest warranties in North America to fall back on," said Simpson.

The requirement for third-party home warranty insurance was established in B.C. in 1999 by the provincial Homeowner Protection Act and applies to both single-detached and multi-unit homes. It is mandatory for most new homes built in the province, an exception is owner-built projects.

It features a minimum of two years coverage on labour and materials (some limits apply), five years on the building envelope and 10 years on the structure.

Of the 238 attendees who responded to a post-seminar questionnaire, 72 per cent rated home warranty insurance as being "very important" to them while an additional 21 per cent felt it was "somewhat important." Only 22 participants indicated consumer protection was a concern, down from last year.

"The numbers are all going in the right direction. The overall comfort level is also evidenced by the long line ups in front of sales centres," said Simpson.

The Homeowner Protection Office (HPO), a provincial Crown corporation established by

the Homeowner Protection Act, is responsible for two mandatory programs which protect buyers of new homes.

"The third-party home warranty insurance program works in tandem with mandatory residential builder licensing to strengthen consumer confidence," said Ken Cameron, the HPO's Chief Executive Officer.

"By establishing Canada's highest standard of protection against construction defects and by making residential builders more accountable for their projects, we have greatly increased consumer protection and enhanced the overall quality of residential construction in the province," said Cameron. "Buyers have benefited from the 105,000 plus homes constructed by licensed residential builders since this system of consumer protection was introduced."

According to Simpson, the latest statistics from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) justify consumer confidence in the new home market. "The chief economist of the CMHC believes B.C. will be the only province in Canada to report an increase in new housing starts in 2005," he said.

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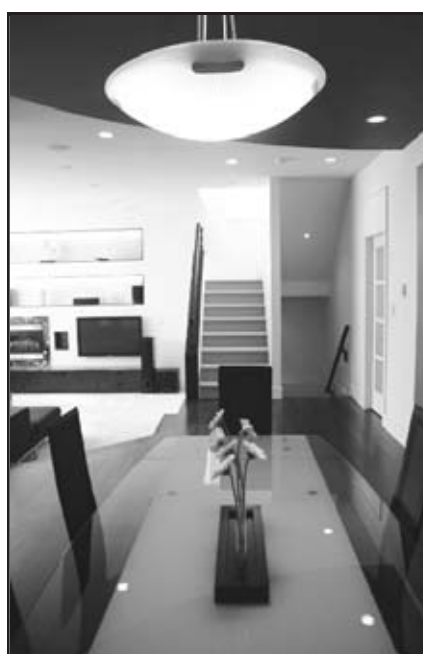
VictorEric and the value of good design

"I believe you owe it to yourself to have a custom tailored home." Eric Lee says, sitting in a modern classic black sectional in his client's home; this year's 2004 double finalist for 'Best Interior Design' and 'Best Master Suite'. Eric Lee, the principal of VictorEric Design Group, has successfully created a contemporary home with the use of full-height frosted glass, dark cappuccino millwork contrasted on a warm white background.

Looking candidly comfortable in the environment he created, Lee continues explaining his design philosophy, "No two families are alike and everyone has different lifestyles so why should one settle for a home that is mass-produced? Real estate is only getting more expensive. If I were to spend \$300,000 or more to build my home, I would do it right, beginning with the conceptual plan. A lot of people underestimate this initial step only to find out that the house they built is not truly what they envisioned and it's much more costly to make changes after construction." He sits forward and continues, "Our expertise lies in visualizing the space in its final form, for its intended use. Most people have trouble doing this and that's when a good designer comes in. We can articulate their vision starting from the initial space planning, to the building blueprints, right through to the actual construction and beyond."

"This house is a reflection of my client, who has a very modern lifestyle and character. She loves the 'latest and the greatest' and she loves people. She's naturally enthusiastic about life, but in a very elegant way. That's why we've created a space that is understated, refreshing and entertaining, all at the same time. Our [the client and Lee's] vision was for a timeless and functional space - a modern classic!"

Eric Lee can be reached at 604.720.6836 or visit www.victorerich.com



Celebrating Public-Private Partnerships

BC Housing is pleased to have been a Gold Partner of the 2004 Georgie Awards and sponsor of this year's category for "Best Public-Private Partnership."

Congratulations to the 2004 Gold winner, Fairway Woods — the Cool Aid Society's 32-unit subsidized housing development built by Cottage Grove for seniors in Langford at risk of homelessness. This innovative housing partnership is just one example of how BC Housing is working to increase housing options for British Columbians in greatest need.

Congratulations to all the 2004 Georgie winners and finalists.

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