



REAL ESTATE EXECUTIVE

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By Dale Garrison

In comparison to other competing top agents in Kansas City's real estate market, Jim Vogel's career appears short in tenure. With more than 500 transactions under his belt and an average transaction of \$220,000, Jim has found undeniable success in Kansas City's aggressive real estate market.

In a relatively short time, Vogel has applied a series of business strategies that avoid problems and help create a viable and dynamic business, which now boasts a 10-member team. As a third-generation real estate professional, Jim has been able to witness, first hand, many business plans that are effective, and ones that are not. Throughout the years, he has used various programs and ideas to form a professional curriculum that has proven to be effective as well as profitable. Perhaps the most important of these to his success is following a structured schedule.

With a work day that begins at 7 a.m., Jim's routine begins with client follow-up, prospecting and making sure that his clients are getting the best customer service from his team possible. Jim relies on his entire team to help him follow this well-organized daily schedule because he understands the importance of a structured environment.

"I attribute a lot of success to holding to a schedule. Otherwise your business will maintain the ups and downs that the industry experiences as a whole. Having a schedule is how you can maintain some control. To succeed, you have to."

Like this idea of a structured daily routine, many of Jim's concepts for success have come from his real estate coach, Mike Ferry.

"I began working with another top agent who exposed me to the Mike Ferry Organization," Jim recalls. "It's been a perfect match because I



PHOTO BY MARK BALTZLEY



The Vogel Team meets every Monday morning to discuss current business and business plans.

really believe you do better in almost anything with a structured system like that. I think the results speak for themselves.”

Over the past four years, Jim’s weekly coaching sessions continue to provide ongoing support and ideas, not only from the coaches, but also from agents experiencing challenges and changes in markets around the country. These weekly coaching sessions keep Jim abreast of the latest marketing strategies across the nation, business planning and development and continue to remind him why he loves his job and Kansas City’s exciting and challenging market.

Working with the Mike Ferry Organization has assisted the Vogel Team in the development of their customer service program, which stresses personal attention for each client, and a regime that has created true raving fans. Customer service, as elementary as it sounds, is the foundation

Dan McCuiston, Chris Norman, Lindsay Sproul, Suzette Vogel, Jim Vogel and Bruce Harlan.



PHOTOS BY MARK BALTZLEY



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The Vogel family, L to R: Hayden Vogel, 2, Jim Vogel, Suzette Vogel and Isabella Vogel, 1.

that has propelled Jim's business to where it is today.

"I cater to my clients on a 24-hour-a-day basis, utilizing the best technology available in the business, and I treat my clients' interests as if they were my own," he says.

To assist Jim in preserving his high level of customer service, he employs two office managers to focus strictly on escrows and listings. Clients of the Vogel Team not only experience 10 agents working to sell their property, but also have access to specialists in their stage of the transaction. "I'm biased, but I know that I employ the best in the business."

Dan McCuiston, listing manager for The Vogel Team, handles the implementation of Jim's marketing plan for every listing the team takes into inventory. Dan boasts a six-hour turnaround time, from listing taken to fully marketed policy. "Dan is as efficient as he is thorough." The Vogel Team Escrow Manager Lindsay Sproul is a five-year veteran of the title business, and brings all of The Vogel Team's transactions to the closing table. She aspires to make every client a client for life. Dan and Lindsay are in the office every day from 8–5, and they act as additional customer service representatives helping to manage every transaction the Vogel Team does, allowing Jim to do what he does best, which is to sell.

"You'll find the average real estate person spends about 60 percent of their time doing things other than selling," he noted. "Under our model, my job is listing homes, selling homes and negotiating contracts, which is the perception of every client of what agents do all day long. Well, we

all know that there is a heck of a lot more than just listing, selling and negotiating contracts. Dan and Lindsay are very essential to the process, and I'm frankly grateful to have them. Our model enables myself and my team to function as salespeople."

Jim's ability to sell is unlike any other.

"When I first started working for Jim, I could not believe how skilled he was on the phone. I remember thinking to myself, I don't even own my home, but I want him to sell it," laughed Sproul.

The interesting part is that Jim fell into sales accidentally. Trying to escape the industry he had grown up around, Jim went to work for a computer company seeking a career in management. "One day a team member fell ill, and I filled in selling computers, not knowing anything about them. Effective salesmanship suddenly became required, and I was stunned to find that I loved it," he recalled. "It was a natural progression from there. It wasn't long after that I began seeking a new challenge, and real estate seemed to be an obvious option, considering the number of licensees I am related to."

Jim does emphasize that real estate isn't for everyone. Although those who do well are very visible, the hard work and challenges are not so widely known.

"It is a taxing job if you do it right, and juggling ability is a must," he said. "But the returns are high, and the exciting thing is that you get what you put into it."

The main area of focus for the Vogel Team is in Johnson County, KS, and nearby Jackson County, MO. Their price ranges are extremely diverse, from listings in the \$100,000 range to as much as \$2 million. Interestingly, the team attacks sales the same, regardless of market.

"We use the same strategies for every market and every customer. The person buying the entry level home today may be in the market for a larger home tomorrow," Jim noted. "Your past customers should account for at least 30 percent of your business. Our team concept is turning five years old this year, and we're already starting to reap a lot of benefits of past work."

Vogel works hard to maintain the level of professionalism that helps bring clients back, admitting that some mornings he feels staying on track with two children age 2 and under, a third on the way, 47 listings and a \$20 million business "is a lot like standing one-legged in a hammock, juggling eggs."



Chris Norman handles many of the Vogel Team's buyers.

Dan McCuiston, listing manager, and Lindsay Sproul, escrow manager, ensure every transaction runs as smoothly as possible.





Bruce Harlan has been with the team since 2002.

"But that's where (having) the team really helps," he said.

His cohesive team approach began with his first recruit, his wife, Suzette. "She's my partner, not just in business, but in life."

This efficient and highly capable partnership only grew from there with Bruce Harlan joining in 2002.

Entering real estate in 2001, Bruce ironically found a Mike Ferry coaching cassette tape in his office from the 1980s, and began to find all the answers he needed for his business. Bruce contacted Mike Ferry, who then set him up with Jim. The addition of Bruce has proven to be a true asset to the team, as he is the team's listing lead.

"The first year he tripled his income, and it continues to grow," Jim says now.

The team's buyer lead is Chris Norman, who joined the real estate business last March, after working for Cerner Corporation. Using the Vogel Team's strategies and support, Chris sold more than \$1 million in his first calendar month, and continues to help buyer after buyer find their dream home.

The team features three additional buyer's specialists: Katie Sullivan, Marecie Daniels and Gar Vogel, Jim's father, who also acts as the team's CFO.

Working with his father and his wife are one of the most enjoyable parts of his job. Spending time with his family remains one of the most important aspects of Jim's life.

"Those are my real core values," he commented as he pointed to a picture of his family on his desk.

With two kids age 2 and under, Hayden and Isabella, and another due in March, Jim and Suzette know how to work hard, but they can also play hard. This partnership prides themselves on keeping their eight-year romance new and exciting. Whether going on romantic trips around the world, taking the kids to the Lake of the Ozarks or visiting nearby Weston or Parkville, MO for a simple Saturday of cuisine and shopping, Jim and Suzette cherish every moment they can spend together. Their weekly Smokey Sundays bring friends and family from throughout the metro area to enjoy Jim's barbeque and cold beer.

In the eight years Jim Vogel has been tackling the Kansas City real estate market, he has successfully found a true balance of family and professionalism. He understands the importance of providing excellent customer service, while maintaining a structured and enjoyable business.

"We have a lot of fun doing this," he concluded. "I have the best job in the world. I get to see my wife every day, and get to meet and greet people that, in most cases, end up being very good friends. It's just a lot of fun."

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