

# Education Remains Key to Sales Success

**BY ROBERT WAHLERS**  
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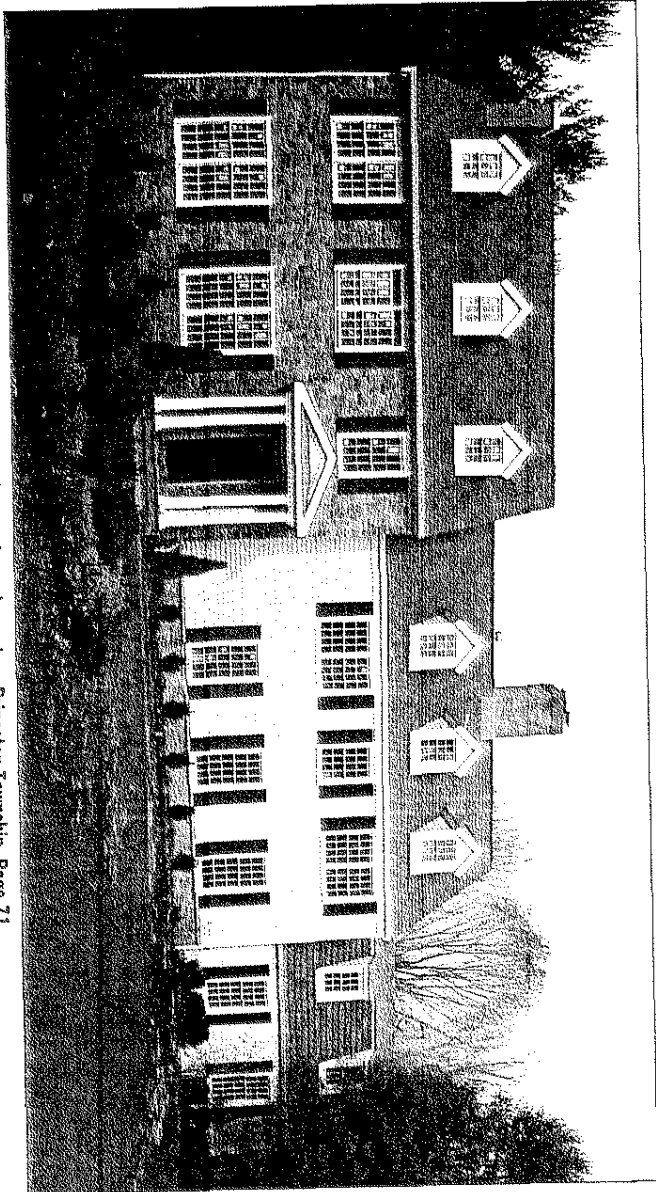
There are many successful real estate agents throughout the state who have left a mark on the industry with achievements ranging from extraordinary sales and listing volume to outstanding customer service. To reach this point, however, agents have to remain committed to continuing their education throughout their careers.

Bill Spadola, vice-president of career development at Weichert, Realtors, says the first step takes place when someone interested in a real estate career enrolls in a prelicensure class. These classes are offered at a number of community colleges, as well as business schools and also through the Weichert Real Estate School, which operates at various locations throughout New Jersey.

"This is a 75-hour course that prepares individuals to pass the state's real estate license examination," says Spadola, adding that these training classes are offered during the day, evenings and on weekends.

An applicant for a New Jersey real estate salesperson's license must be at least 18 years old and have a high school diploma or GED. Students must pass both the 75-hour course and the state examination and then have a New Jersey broker sponsor their license.

"You can sit for the state exam at about a dozen different locations, and



**Weichert, Realtors is marketing this custom-built, six-bedroom home in western Princeton Township. Page 71.**

you're able to take it just about any day of the week," Spadola says. "In the past, you had to wait for a letter to find out if you passed. Technology has eliminated that suspense. Today, you take the exam on a computerized touch screen and you get your results within minutes of finishing the exam."

Upon passing the exam, the licensed salesperson is qualified to conduct real estate transactions, but must work under the direction of a licensed broker.

"Your official title would be sales licensee, but this is seldom used," says

Spadola. "At Weichert, for example, we refer to our sales force as associates. Another common term is agent."

After working as a full-time professional can take another state exam to become a licensed broker.

"To become a broker, you need to invest 150 hours in a broker prelicensure education course," says Spadola.

Spadola says the course is divided into three sections: 90 hours cover general real estate principles, followed by a 30-hour course on office management and starting a business,

then another 30-hour course that focuses on ethics.

"Once you become a broker, you're eligible to take another test to become a licensed real estate instructor, which is what I did," he says. "Real estate professionals can also earn the title of Realtor when they hold active membership in a local real estate board that's affiliated with the National Association of Realtors. There is a New Jersey Association of Realtors, along with nearly two dozen local boards

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# Education the key to sales success

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and associations in the state."

Real estate associations are composed of professionals involved in residential and commercial real estate, including brokers, sales agents, property managers, appraisers and counselors. Spadea says membership is highly recommended because the NAR sponsors a number of specialized courses.

"You can earn many different designations, which recognize you as a specialist in a particular field," says Spadea. "One example is the Certified Residential Specialist, or CRS."

The CRS is considered the highest designation awarded to those in the residential sales field. The CRS designation recognizes professional accomplishments in both experience and education.

"You also can earn many different certifications, which can often be done by taking a one- or two-day course," says Spadea.

One example is a course created by the NAR called "At Home with Diversity: One America." Spadea says the course was designed to deal with cultural diversity issues.

"This allows agents to educate themselves in numerous backgrounds, so their sensitivity to a potential homebuyer from another culture will be met," says Spadea.

As examples, some cultures need their front door facing a certain direction or believe that buying a home with a certain street number is bad luck. Agents who are aware of these cultural beliefs and customs can better serve their clients. Spadea says.

Terry Taylor, a broker/sales associate at the Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage office in Readington/Branchburg, earned her salesperson license about 20 years ago. Taylor went on to earn her broker's license. She also is a CRS.

"To become a CRS, you have to be in the business for five years and have completed 75 transactions," says Taylor, who also holds the Graduate Realtor Institute (GRI) designation.

The GRI designation is earned after 90 hours of classroom instruction, covering subjects in contract law, professional standards, sales and marketing, finance and risk reduction.

## On the cover

This custom-built home by RPM Builders is situated on a 2-acre, wooded lot in the western section of Princeton Township, just minutes from downtown shopping and dining. Style, quality and detail abound in this renovated and expanded stone Colonial. The home features six bedrooms, six full baths, two half baths, a library and a study. Many of the spacious rooms include fireplaces. The list price is \$2.595 million. The home is owned and listed by sales associate Rivi Peer-Tirosh with the Weichert, Realtors Princeton office.

"Realtors also can become designated as Seniors Real Estate Specialists," says Taylor. "This is a fairly new course that provides insight into how to better serve baby boomers who are making major life-style changes."

Taylor says another valuable designation course sponsored by NAR is E-Pro, which helps real estate professionals improve their skills when working with real estate online. The course focuses on Web sites, e-mail and online tools.

"The biggest change since I started has been the great advances in technology," she says. "Everyone who has been in the business for awhile has had to adapt. While technology has changed the real estate business tremendously, it still will never overtake the need for personal contact and an understanding of a client's needs."

Taylor says one aspect of a real estate agent's education centers on how to read people.

"You have to be a good listener and a hand-holder at times," she says. "You always need to be able to adjust your approach. If you're working with someone who is methodical, you adjust your presentation accordingly to match that personality. You don't want them to feel rushed. If your client is a type-A personality, however, you watch for signs that they're getting impatient and you start moving things along at a faster pace."

Diane McNally, a regional director of education for Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, says sales associates who join the company benefit from an intense in-house training program that includes free computer and technology training classes, along with a variety of seminars, including attorney roundtable workshops. ◆

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