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Question for YOU

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17 BY TRACEY VOLT | MARKETING
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Real Estate's Pet Detective

"May you have the hindsight to know where you've been, The foresight to know where you are

going, And the insight to know when you have gone too far"--Irish Blessing

Happy St. Patty's Day!

When Rhona Sutter arrived in Naples, Fla., from London years ago, she had trouble finding a rental that allowed her large dog. "At the time I was involved in commercial real estate, particularly hotel development in the Middle East, Africa and Europe," says Sutter, who holds a real estate license but is no longer actively selling.

In addition, while a real estate broker at Lloyds of London, she set up a pet insurance company, which she sold after 10 years. "I had the most incredible database of pet owners in the United States and a light bulb went off," she says. If she was having so much trouble finding a place for her and her dog, what about other relocating pet owners?

Thus was born the Pet Realty Network (www.petrealtynetwork.com), a network devoted to helping pet owners connect to pet-friendly real estate. "At the time I was looking for a way to differentiate myself from other sales associates, but eventually I was so busy with this network and our new directory of services, that I decided not to sell real estate anymore."

For a \$30 yearly fee, real estate professionals can join the network, upload listings and find matches for pet owners who have very specific criteria for a new home. "The Network is not a lead generator, aggregator service or broker," says Sutter. "We don't take referral fees for the sale of the property, and we don't charge referral fees."

Both rentals and properties for sale are shown on the Web site. "Perhaps you have a Madison Ave. co-op that has looser pet restrictions than most, a ranch property with a kennel or a horse farm to sell, our network gets you in touch with the people

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most interested in those properties," says Sutter.

The network currently has about 700 listings and 250 member real estate sales associates. Looking for an innovative idea? Here are her tips:

1. **Don't try to be all things to all people.** "For example, I'm not a golfer," says Sutter, "so if I had a client who was a golfer, I would refer the buyer to someone who knows golf."
2. **Specialize.** This goes hand in hand with tip No. 1. "Whether it's relocation, golf, short sales or working with pet owners, it pays to get to know one area very well. It all goes back to referrals," she says. "If you give good advice and know what you're talking about, your name will get passed along."
3. **Join a community.** "The reason our Pet Realty Network works is because we go out and do a lot of work for our members," she says. If you specialize in 55+ communities or tennis communities, find groups that cater to those niches. "Now it's full circle back to getting the referral and becoming known for your specialty," she says.

What are you doing to differentiate yourself?

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