

Tough Times for Title -- More Solutions

By Bill Cotter, Title Alliance Ltd.

Last time we spoke about the importance of an affiliated title operation to the overall competitive position of a real estate or mortgage operation and we discussed the importance of letting your sales people -- your top producers -- understand the value of that operation to them and to their success by explaining all the advantages they receive as the direct result of your affiliated company's success.

In times like we are currently experiencing it isn't always easy to earn a profit, even for the best run companies. Sometimes you have to take a very hard look at the total available business and the competitive landscape and determine that unless you do something radical you will continue to lose revenue rather than gain revenue, and in these times that is definitely not the way to go.

Over the years (Title Alliance and its affiliates have been in business since 1948) we have seen more than our share of tough markets. Each time we have come out of the market stronger and tougher than going into it. Each time we have grown our business and added value to our franchise. How, by taking advantage of the weakness in our competitors due to the market conditions and adding great producers, and by a scrupulous review of our own operations and combining weaker operations with other TA operations, merging them with competing operations, or shutting them down to preserve those that remain. The medicine is not sweet, but often is critical for survival and growth.

I've spent my forty plus years in the business paying very strict attention to the people I most admire -- many of my clients and many of my competitors. Over the years I have learned a lot from people much wiser than me by watching and listening, then copying what they have done that has been successful. I have seen that the really well run companies -- banks, builders, mortgage lenders of all stripes and Realtors and title companies -- all concentrate on hiring the best talent there is during these down times. That just makes sense -- the "Super Stars" always find a way to make money, even in bad times, while the rest of the pack hides until the storm blows over. You want the very best people in your company, and this is the very best time to pick them up!

When professional teams head into their playoffs they always look closely at their rosters and see where they need the most help. If they needs a few "closing" pitchers, or a center or a left guard they seek out the talent and go after them! That's what business people have to do, especially in tough times. These times are our "playoffs" and the way we manage these times will determine if we deserve to win the top prize.

Do you have to give up something to get the top players -- of course? Is the price worth the cost -- it should be or you shouldn't make the deal. Perhaps it even means trading away a good player for an excellent one. That's a tough decision, of course,

but often it is a necessary one. You may also have to slash expenses elsewhere to add the top talent. Maybe an unproductive office or two need to be closed. We win by playing to our strengths, and holding on to an operation that's draining the organization's strength and resources is foolish when that money could be used to hire the best manager, sales recruiter, or whoever else is needed to grow the operation.

Have you even noticed the fans get all over management when a popular player is traded, but not when they come home with the Stanley Cup or the World Series Trophy – then the fans are all for the trade. We managers have to make those tough calls from time to time, but if you can find the right person for the job, you'll grow your company and win the prize.