



LOCAL LUXURY REAL ESTATE FINDS ITSELF IN VENICE, ITALY - ACROSS THE GLOBE

ROB THOMSON'S WATERFRONT PROPERTIES' INTERNATIONAL NETWORK DELIVERS MARKETING REACH

by Gregory T. DuBose

Waterfront Properties, the Northern Palm Beaches' and Treasure Coast's dominant luxury real estate company's chief visionary, Rob Thomson, understands better than most that the world has changed. Like day-old Coca-Cola, it's gone flat. Borders perceived and real are malleable. What many see as the challenge of the modern world, Thomson sees as boundless opportunity.

New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman's book, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, masterfully discusses how the convergence of technology and events have allowed so many countries to join the supply chain for goods and services. Rob Thomson argues the same phenomena have changed the world for buyers and sellers in the rarefied air of luxury real estate.

FOREIGN RELATIONS.

Thomson's 2015 kicked off at the 9th Annual Luxury Real Estate International Symposium in Venice, Italy. When asked why travel all the way to Italy to network, Thomson commented matter of factly, "Because I can." Without a hint of sarcasm he continued, "And because I should." He likened his international travel to a press junket for the local market. He explained, when he's abroad, he's a brand ambassador for this market and its listings. "Buyers hail from across the globe. I cross the globe, making certain the appropriate people – foreign brokers among them – know me, where and what I represent. Their clients do too."

Philip Weiser, Managing Director at Carlton International of Antibes, France,

comments, "I've been in real estate for over 30 years." Weiser's offices represent 12 nationalities and 14 languages. "The hype of having an international network or even a few well placed connections is pervasive. It cuts both ways, between North America and Europe. Going beyond the hype to something meaningful takes work, real work."

For years, Thomson held differentiators such as his frequent international networking, close to the vest. Why give competitors any insight into the methodology that places Waterfront Properties at the very top of the local luxury market's pyramid? Then came the epiphany. "In protecting one of my company's competitive advantages, to a great extent, I did my clients a disservice." As more companies and



Attendees, Annual Luxury Real Estate International Symposium — Venice, Italy

individuals place themselves under the umbrella of luxury real estate, for the unaware it gets harder to distinguish player from pretender. "No one, individual or company, is going to the lengths Waterfront Properties is to be at the tip of this market's spear. Period."

International luxury broker gatherings benefit Waterfront Properties' efforts in two distinct ways. First, is the attention Thomson's extensive travel brings to the Northern Palm Beaches and Treasure Coast. Rob illuminates the local area and its many desirable attributes and premier properties. Equally important are the lasting, authentic relationships he perpetually forms and maintains. Thomson spoke at length about the two-way knowledge transfer that takes place with foreign brokers.

Thilo Börner, Chief Executive Officer of Vienna, Austria's, Boerner Real Estate comments, "I am new to the international symposium and these ladies and gentlemen. Rob stands out. He has so much knowledge. It gives me a great level of comfort." Discussing the Euro's recent fall, he commented, "We all know what's happening. If Rob or any of our members weren't committed to real relationship building we'd be wasting our time. Because ours is the long view, our relationships are insulated against the whims of the market."

Thomson comfortably allowed that some of the international colleagues he's known for nearly 20 years, lead companies that dwarf even his. "It's

I first met Rob in Monaco. I knew then, this is someone who is doing the real work of forging these beneficial relationships. I count ours as one. There's no hype to what he's accomplishing.

Philip Weiser
Managing Director
Carlton International of Antibes, France

good to be the small fish sometimes." The enthusiasm for this market is testimony to the reality that there exists great opportunity and interest in the Northern Palm Beaches and Treasure Coast."

PROXIMITY HAS ITS PRIVILEGES.

The lasting relationships Thomson enjoys with foreign brokers are more than professional privilege. They provide him and his team deep reach into complementary markets, ultimately benefiting his clients locally. It's one thing to have a list of European firms. It's quite another to be personal friends with the organization's principal. Philip Weiser drove the point home. "Having Rob and Waterfront Properties

as a personal resource gives me unencumbered access to properties in a part of the world I wish to engage."

Thilo Börner comments, "I know any client I send Rob will be received with all the grace and professionalism I would show him. The same is true of anyone Rob sends my way. This is such a big thing. It's hard to over value what this means to clients and the role it plays in successful transactions."

Thomson echoes the sentiment. "These aren't trophy relationships I trot out for show. These elite brokers represent highly coveted buyers. If not with them, where should I be? One thing I learn is what the foreign buyer desires in a property." This knowledge shapes how and what properties Thomson presents to his international colleagues. That is one competitive advantage he won't be sharing any time soon.

At this point, you'd think Waterfront Properties is the Rob Thomson show. It is. But, he takes great pride in being the headliner for an all-star ensemble. An admitted "control freak," he counts one of his greatest joys as mentoring of associates. "Seeing them get it and understand the calculation and effort that goes into positioning *their company* for success is amazing. I'm not sure if it's selfless or selfish on my part. Their success is my success."

"When I travel to Italy or Germany or London, as I will later this year, I don't bring back trinkets. I bring back relationships. We leverage these relationships for the ultimate benefit of our clients. The world is flat. That in no way limits our ability to always be ahead of the curve."

Asked what's next for Waterfront Properties and their clients, Rob Thomson replied enthusiastically with his own question, "What's possible now?"



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