

RCA IS DELIVERING ON THE PROMISE

REALTORS® Commercial Alliance (RCA) - The commercial division of NAR

ISSUE 18 – FEBRUARY 2009

SACS – Share a Commercial Success

Commercial Alliance of REALTORS® - Michigan

Combining Continuing Education and Networking

The development and implementation of the West Michigan Summit, which was inspired by the NAR Signature Series Grant, has been a great success for the Commercial Alliance of REALTORS®. In the fall of 2006, leadership began to seek out new and interesting ways to offer continuing education and networking opportunities to the nearly 400 commercial practitioners that the Commercial Alliance of REALTORS® serves. The information regarding the Signature Series Grant arrived, as if on cue, and inspired the creation of what is quickly becoming an annual “must-attend” event.

In early 2007, NAR notified the Commercial Alliance of REALTORS® that it was a grant recipient. The task at hand was to develop an event that featured the Signature Series Speaker, satisfied continuing education requirements, and provided time for networking. Since this seminar was going to involve both education and networking, two committee members from the Education Committee and two from Networking and Events met to discuss this new venture. A proposed schedule, budget, and marketing plan were created, and committee members were enthusiastic and optimistic that the event would be successful.

Deciding to hold the event at the recently opened DeVos Place in downtown Grand Rapids was something new to the membership, but because most of the membership has offices in the downtown area, the committee believed the venue would be well-received. CAR has ample meeting space within the association facility, and normally meetings are held at the association. But this meeting was going to be different, and moving it downtown would give it a different feel. Catering at DeVos Place is provided by the five-star hotel, Amway Grand Plaza, ensuring that the food was going to be great. A very conservative approach was taken regarding space, since this was a first-time event. The Summit Subcommittee was planning for attendance not to exceed 200.

A sponsorship plan was developed, and sent to our Affiliate members. Since this was a new event, some Affiliates were hesitant to participate. Convincing them that this was going to be huge, all available sponsorship opportunities were sold. The option for Affiliates to purchase a trade show table was also offered. This was also a very new concept, but ten trade show spaces sold.

Registration materials were sent to the members, who had to be educated about this new event, and told about the available continuing education credits. Out of the nearly 400 commercial REALTOR® members that CAR has, 175 registered to attend. When Affiliate participants were added into the mix, the total participation was 200. All available seats were sold.





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Event day came, registrants arrived, Affiliates participated, and speakers made their presentations. Facilities were fine, food was great and everyone seemed to enjoy the opportunities to learn and network. Many commented as they were leaving, "I hope you will have this again next year." The West Michigan Summit is one of CAR's success stories. CAR was able to bring in nationally-known speakers and provide its membership with great education. Affiliates had a very good chance to make excellent business contacts. The members had the occasion to spend a day with colleagues, in an atmosphere less of competition and more of friends. And, as an added bonus, a profit was made, and non-dues revenue was added into the general fund.

Needless to say, the West Michigan Summit has become an annual event. The 2008 event was held in a different venue, but attendance totals were similar to the previous year. Plans are underway to make the 2009 West Michigan Summit bigger and better than ever.

For more information, please contact:

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