

One Group Leads to Another: Launch of a Diversity Network

Summary

In response to the changing demographics in the Seattle area, the Seattle King County Association of REALTORS® launched a new Cultural Diversity Presidential Action Group and actively recruited minority members to participate. The Association has also devoted a section of its Web site to diversity resources, based on information gained through cooperation with other real estate associations, nonprofit organizations, and federal and local government agencies.

Background

Between 1990 and 2000, the African American population of Washington state grew by 27 percent, the Asian population by 53 percent, and the Hispanic population by 106 percent. Overall, the state's minority population increased by 92 percent, with most of the growth concentrated in Seattle.

What the Association Did

In September 2002, Steven Wayne, former president of the Seattle King County Association of REALTORS® (SKCAR), invited Paul Bascomb and Maria (Suki) Bazan to cochair a new Cultural Diversity Presidential Advisory Group. Bascomb is African American and Bazan is Hispanic; both are members of SKCAR's Board of Directors. The three met with Ginger Downs, SKCAR's former executive vice president, and decided on the following procedures:

Presidential Advisory Group recruitment: On its annual member data sheet, SKCAR had asked agents if they spoke a foreign language. Out of 6,000 members, 600 responded positively; in all, they represented close to 50 languages. Those 600 received e-mails inviting them to join the Presidential Advisory Group. SKCAR also sent notices to broker members, asking if any agents in their offices might be willing to serve, and to potential sources of information and advice outside its membership: mortgage bankers, escrow and title companies, nonprofit groups involved in minority housing issues (the Urban League, El Centro de la Raza, the International District Housing Alliance, and State Finance Commissions), and governmental and quasi-governmental agencies working with minority communities (Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, and local city and county governments).

"These groups are fairly easy to identify," says Downs. "All you need to do is talk to one and they'll give you the name of four others." Through Bazan, for instance, SKCAR



was able to identify a Hispanic real estate professionals group; and another individual helped identify a Korean American women's real estate professionals group.

More than 30 REALTORS® and representatives from low-income housing providers, banks, HUD, and Fannie Mae attended the first meeting in January 2003. Two-hour meetings have taken place every month since then, and while the same people are not always present, the number of attendees has remained between 30 and 35.

Member education: SKCAR pays \$350 a year for an Internet survey service called Zoomerang. An online survey revealed that more than half of SKCAR's members had never heard of many local low-income and minority housing organizations. Yet these organizations provide the information and assistance that members indicated, elsewhere in the survey, that they needed. The Presidential Advisory Group decided to devote a section of SKCAR's Web site to diversity resources, such as products and services, agencies that work with various minority groups, and brochures in four languages.

Because SKCAR had invited representatives from so many of these groups to attend the workgroup meetings, the information was easy to come by. It took about two days of staff time to organize the information and design the Web pages.

Outcomes

Presidential Advisory Group members were encouraged to become involved in SKCAR's committees and run for a seat on the Board of Directors. In 2003 the Board had five open seats, and a Hispanic agent, an Asian agent, and an African American agent were elected, bringing the total number of minority Board members to four. "We have had agents of color on our board before," says Downs, "but this is the largest concentration." A change in SKCAR's bylaws is expected to bring about more such opportunities: of the five at-large seats on the Board, two will be set aside each year for real estate agents or brokers who have not served in the past three years.

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SKCAR Cultural Diversity Survey

SKCAR is attempting to better understand the ethnic and racial diversity of our membership and the clients they serve. SKCAR's goals are: 1) to prepare members to work with new American and culturally diverse homebuyers through understanding those buyers' cultural differences and special needs, 2) to increase diversity in the real estate workplace and SKCAR's membership, and 3) to expand diversity within SKCAR's leadership. SKCAR has formed a work group to address these issues and now needs your critical input to direct their work efforts. Thank you.

1. Are you a:		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Broker/Owner or Office Manager		15	8%
Sales Associate		161	90%
Personal Assistant		0	0%
Affiliate: Mortgage lender		3	2%
Affiliate: Title or Escrow service		0	0%
Affiliate: Other		0	0%
Total		179	100%

2. Office Location:		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Snohomish		1	1%
North King County		13	7%
East King County		61	34%
Seattle or West Seattle		56	31%
South King County		47	26%
Pierce County		0	0%
Total		178	100%

3. Are you with a Franchise office? (i.e. Windermere, John L. Scott, Coldwell Banker, etc)		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Yes		148	83%
No		31	17%

4. Number of sales licensees in office:		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
1 – 10 licensees		11	6%
11 – 25 licensees		14	8%
25 – 50 licensees		47	27%
50+ licensees		104	59%
Total		176	100%

5. You identify your racial/ethnic background as:		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
American Indian		0	0%
Asian		24	14%
Black or African American		5	3%
Hispanic/Latino		7	4%
White		122	69%
Two or more races (list in comments)		2	1%
Other (list in comments)		3	2%
Comments		14	8%
Total		177	100%

6. What percentage of the agents in your office are ethnically or racially diverse?

	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
None	13	7%
1 – 25%	138	78%
26 – 50%	20	11%
51 – 75%	3	2%
76 – 100%	3	2%
Total	177	100%

7. I speak the following foreign languages (check all that apply):

	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Arabic dialects (note in comments)	1	2%
Cantonese	7	11%
Farsi	3	5%
Indian dialects (note in comments)	0	0%
Japanese	3	5%
Korean	4	6%
Mandarin	11	17%
Russian	1	2%
Spanish	17	26%
Tagalog	4	6%
Thai	1	2%
Vietnamese	0	0%
Other(s), Please Specify	36	55%














8. How important are foreign language skills to your success?

	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Very Important	26	15%
Somewhat Important	43	26%
Not Important	99	59%
Total	168	100%

9. What percentage of your clients are non-English speaking homebuyers?

	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
0 – 10%	136	77%
11 – 25%	17	10%
26 – 50%	13	7%
51 – 75%	6	3%
76 – 100%	5	3%
Total	177	100%

**10. What are the languages spoken by these individuals?
(Check all that apply)**

		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Arabic dialects (note in comments)		9	7%
Cantonese		35	28%
Farsi		12	9%
Indian dialects (note in comments)		15	12%
Japanese		22	17%
Korean		34	27%
Mandarin		28	22%
Russian		30	24%
Spanish		56	44%
Tagalog		11	9%
Thai		10	8%
Vietnamese		45	35%
Other, Please Specify		24	19%

11. Has the percentage of culturally diverse clients you serve increased or decreased in the last 3 years?

(The top percentage indicates total respondent ratio; the bottom number represents actual number of respondents selecting the option.)

	1 Increased	2 Decreased	3 No change	N/A
1. African	12% 16	1% 2	40% 55	46% 63
2. American Indian	6% 7	1% 1	38% 45	55% 65
3. Asian	53% 79	5% 7	28% 41	15% 22
4. Black/African American	21% 27	2% 3	45% 57	31% 39
5. East Indian	32% 38	3% 3	23% 28	43% 51
6. Eastern European	31% 37	3% 3	28% 33	39% 46
7. Hispanic/Latino	32% 42	4% 5	32% 42	32% 41
8. Middle Eastern	20% 22	3% 3	32% 35	45% 49
9. Other	21% 15	3% 2	28% 20	48% 34

12. How are you introduced to these home buyers/sellers? (Check all that apply)

	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Church affiliation.	20	13%
Live in my home community.	32	20%
Live in the community where my office is located.	30	19%
Organizations (i.e. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce)	8	5%
Referrals from other clients.	111	71%
Referrals from other agents.	24	15%
Referrals from housing organizations (i.e. CHOC)	4	3%
Other, Please Specify	57	36%

13. What are the biggest obstacles for minorities or culturally diverse individuals who want to purchase/sell homes? (Check all that apply)

	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Access to Credit	23	14%
Credit Issues - No history	52	33%
Credit Issues - Poor credit	25	16%
Cultural issues	63	39%
Insurance	9	6%
Lack of Education on homebuying process	81	51%
Lack of money	27	17%
Lack of affordable housing supply	39	24%
Language	68	43%
Mistrust of real estate professionals	59	37%
Predatory lending (higher loan costs)	28	18%
Steering	11	7%
Other, Please Specify	33	21%

14. The following housing organizations all provide a variety of services and products designed to assist minority and culturally diverse homebuyers and sellers. Are you aware of, and work with, any or all of these organizations?

(The top percentage indicates total respondent ratio; the bottom number represents actual number of respondents selecting the option.)

	1 Work with Frequently	2 Work with Occasionally	3 Never Work with	4 Was not aware of
1. ACORN - Assn. of Community Org. for Reform Now	3% 4	7% 10	26% 37	65% 94
2. CHOC - Community Home Ownership Center	1% 1	8% 12	27% 39	64% 93
3. Fannie Mae	13% 20	40% 61	36% 54	11% 17
4. HUD - Housing & Urban Development	8% 12	46% 70	36% 54	11% 16
5. IDHA - International Housing District Alliance	0% 0	2% 3	21% 28	77% 105
6. Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle	2% 3	3% 4	38% 52	57% 79
7. WSHFC - Wa. State Housing Finance Commission (Key program)	3% 4	19% 28	28% 40	50% 73

15. What steps have you take to increase your outreach efforts to clients of other cultures?

		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Advertise in a foreign language publication.		28	17%
Joined diversity organizations (i.e. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce)		15	9%
Learned a foreign language.		12	7%
Network with culturally diverse sales associates.		35	22%
Network in diverse neighborhoods.		30	19%
Taken cultural diversity courses.		40	25%
Work with housing organizations that serve diverse populations.		16	10%
None		61	38%
Other, Please Specify		25	15%

16. If you are a minority or of a culturally diverse background — Why did you choose real estate as a profession?

45 Responses

17. If you responded to the previous question — What challenges/obstacles did you face in choosing a real estate career?

		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Cultural issues		8	16%
Language		5	10%
Money		11	22%
Understanding legal issues		6	12%
Trust by other agents		11	22%
Trust by diverse consumers		12	24%
None		14	29%
Other, Please Specify		17	35%

18. What challenges/obstacles do you face when you work with a sales licensee of a different cultural background?

		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Cultural issues		56	35%
Language		77	48%
Trust levels		44	28%
Understanding of ethics		60	38%
Understanding legal issues		36	23%
None		38	24%
Other, Please Specify		12	8%

19. FOR OFFICE MANAGERS ONLY: What efforts has your office made to better serve our area's culturally diverse home buying population? (Check all that apply)

	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Recruited culturally diverse agents to the office.	15	83%
Identified agents who speak foreign languages.	13	72%
Send agents to training on diversity issues.	6	33%
Developed company foreign language materials.	3	17%
Developed company foreign language advertising.	4	22%
Other, Please Specify	0	0%

20. What services do you need from SKCAR to better serve your diverse client group? (Check those that you believe would be most helpful).

	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Ads promoting the use of REALTORS in local foreign language publications.	58	41%
Ads promoting the use of REALTORS using visuals of diverse members	42	29%
Address issues impacting housing in culturally diverse neighborhoods.	45	31%
Articles on diversity issues.	46	32%
Education on multicultural issues.	63	44%
Education on resources offered by housing organizations for diverse buyers.	73	51%
List of housing organizations that provide services to diverse home buyers.	73	51%
List of foreign language speaking REALTORS	50	35%
List of foreign language speaking title, affiliates (mortgage bankers, escrow, insurance agents, etc.)	66	46%
Networking opportunities with other agents and affiliates who serve diverse buyers.	29	20%
New Member orientation materials to assist agents with understanding the products and services of the REALTOR organization	25	17%
Mentoring program (more experienced agent assisting new agents)	21	15%
Real Estate materials in foreign languages.	47	33%
Website pages with information on serving a diverse home buying population.	51	36%
Other, Please Specify	16	11%

21. Any further comments and/or suggestion for SKCAR to consider on this topic?

32 Responses

22. If you would like to participate on a SKCAR workgroup related to diversity issues, please fill out the information below.

180 Responses