

Boosting Sales for Second-Home Market

IN THE GLUT of luxury homes on the local real estate market, entrepreneur Wayne Wilkins recognized opportunity for an innovative approach to second-home sales. His objective to revamp real estate and improve slumps for both Valley realtors and prospective buyers was manifested in his recently launched, Scottsdale-based Southwest division of Ownermatch International.

Wilkins initiated the concept in Western Canada in 2004, and has arranged nearly 100 successful “ownermatches.” In a time when consumers are hesitant to make real estate investments and a place where there are many high-end properties for sale, Wilkins considered the Scottsdale area a prime location for business expansion.

Ownermatch pairs up individuals with complementary intentions who are searching to buy a vacation home and facilitates the property purchase. Once properly matched, co-owners create an ownership agreement made upon the property transaction specifically outlining guidelines and protections for each party. “Ownermatch is firstly about creating cost-effective investment opportunities for buyers of lifestyle properties. Secondly, it is about creating a smart, new product and business opportunity for real estate agents who are attempting to sell luxury properties during very challenging times,” says Wilkins.

In Wilkins’ vision, co-ownership also means the property is being occupied twice as much, meaning the two homeowners will contribute to the local economy by spending at local businesses more frequently. Currently, according to insurance industry statistics, the average use of second homes in the United States is approximately 50 days out of the year. ■ —Kayla Karp

Ownermatch International ownermatch.com

Building Bridges Between Phoenix and China

“THERE’S A TREMENDOUS amount of outward investment coming to the States, and we want to position Arizona to capitalize on that and become a hub of Chinese investment,” said Rudy Vetter upon his recent return from China’s biggest solar trade show. Vetter, senior vice president of international business with the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, attended the expo with representatives from the Arizona Commerce Authority, Arizona State University and Phoenix law firm Quarles & Brady. Such a delegation was constructed, he said, “so we could deliver a complete package to every kind of Chinese prospects to get informed about opportunities in Arizona.”

The International Photovoltaic Power Generation Expo in Shanghai is China’s biggest tradeshow. But it’s “not a place where you come back with a deal,” Vetter noted, explaining it takes time to build the relationship necessary for the Chinese companies to be confident about doing business in Arizona. So the delegation’s goals were focused long-term: enriching and deepening existing relationships, making new contacts, understanding the Chinese system and building a relationship with those who influence decision-making, and creating awareness by connecting with the press.

“We feel we outperformed,” said Vetter, reporting the delegation’s events for business and Party leaders were well attended and expressing appreciation to Suntech (a Chinese solar energy giant that recently opened a plant in Goodyear) for connecting them with some of its strategic partners. A boon to the delegation’s efforts to tell Arizona’s story, Vetter spoke on “Abundance of Sunshine, Abundance of Opportunity” as part of the expo’s official program — with Arizona the only State afforded that opportunity. ■ —RaeAnne Marsh

Greater Phoenix Economic Council gpec.org

Arizona Commerce Authority azcommerce.com

Arizona State University asu.edu

Quarles & Brady LLP quarles.com



Expanding Wireless Communications Goes Unnoticed

THE INCREASED USE of Internet-connected hand-helds has placed a big draw on the major wireless carriers to provide the wireless coverage. They need something low to the ground to enhance their service and keep the precise and even coverage demanded by a 90 percent market saturation and heavy use of the products, explains Jason Sears, site development manager with Pennsylvania-based Crown Castle, one of four companies nationally that help fill that technological niche. Crown Castle’s fiber optic DAS

(Distributed Antenna System) network, Sears says, is more expensive than a big tower but “it’s becoming more cost-effective to install these” thanks to technological changes. The major wireless carrier that hires Crown Castle to build the system is the “anchor tenant,” and the system can handle up to three additional carriers.

Because they are low-power and smaller in size, Crown Castle’s towers are more easily hidden than the major cell towers. Some of Crown Castle’s handiwork may be seen in Paradise Valley — for those who look closely. Thirty-seven new

saguaros have recently been added to the landscaping in PV’s public-right-of-way corridors — that is, 37 towers have been “planted” in housing specially created to look like a saguaro. So effective is the camouflage, relates Sears, that passers-by have stopped to ask his team why they are painting the plant. “We’re pretty proud of the saguaro, the way it turned out,” he says. Five other nodes have been piggy-backed in more traditional style: on traffic signals and street lights. ■ —RaeAnne Marsh

Crown Castle International crowncastle.com