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**The Korn Team**

Working Smart and Having Fun

MAY 2005

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The Korn Team uses its collective intellect in achieving some of the area's strongest residential sales. Although not a large and impersonal group, the Korn Team sells nearly 150 homes per year throughout metropolitan Kansas City.

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The Korn Team is Working Smart and Having Fun.

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# The Korn Team

## Working Smart and Having Fun

By Dale Garrison

The success of The Korn Team, Keller Williams Realty, is not always easy to analyze.

This group clearly uses its collective intellect in achieving some of the area's strongest residential sales. Although not a large and impersonal group, the Korn Team sells nearly 150 homes per year throughout metropolitan Kansas City. Along with a strong, service-oriented philosophy, and the best of Keller Williams' respected techniques, they also combine an old-fashioned work ethic that is as unusual as it is effective. Together, they are committed to improving on the services they provide.

"A lot of people get into real estate because they think selling real estate will be easy," founder Brad Korn noted. "But to do it right, and truly represent your client's best interests, it's a lot of work."

### MORE THAN EXPECTED

The Korn Team does more than simply work hard, however. They realize that savvy business organization and aggressive marketing techniques are among the key factors in a successful real estate business. The Korn Team member's high-level of specialization is a good example.

"We don't just have more agents," Sonya Korn explained. "We have people who specialize in a specific area. For instance, Jeremy Fouse is our listing specialist. He focuses his energy and talents on working with sellers and making sure that our marketing not only guarantees results, but also guarantees the best results. We don't just want to get a contract on a home; we want to get them the best offer the market can bear."

Although that sounds like common sense, many teams are comprised

**Our Team has a lot of the same values. God, Family, Business. It's the relaxed and family atmosphere that brings out the very best to both clients and fellow real estate professionals.**



Photo by Steve Johnson



The Buyer Specialist team of Jen, Shea and Wendy are dedicated to providing clients with a smooth real estate transaction. They work with each client to find a home that best fits their needs.

of agents who are generalists rather than specialists. "We found that by focusing our talents on smaller portions of the business, from listings to contract, to closing day, we created synergy and efficiency. And our clients reap the benefits."

The most obvious sales techniques, such as planting a front-yard sign, or holding open houses, are what many sellers expect from agents to sell their home. In fact, The Korn Team and their clients have found that the most effective marketing strategy resulting in the best service is commonly overlooked, the cold call.

Yard signs are a good example of an overrated technique. "Signs and that kind of basic marketing are great for generating traffic, but not necessarily the best tool for selling that property," Sonya noted. "Advertising can be the same way. There is actually less than a two percent chance that one particular ad or one open house will result in the sale of that home. Both are examples of passive marketing, waiting for the buyer to come and find you."

Brad compared this type of marketing to "order taking" in retail. "That's the way they've done it for years, but it's not really marketing," he said.

#### A BETTER WAY

The Korn Team uses proven marketing techniques that are more involved and more expansive than simply sticking a sign in the yard — but they bring

proven results. "We've all heard horror stories about homes that don't sell, or only sell after the owner drops the price," Sonya noted. "We learned early on that most sales came from one type of marketing. It is the marketing done from agent to agent."

The Korn Team has found that they can reach more buyers quickly by targeting their marketing towards the agents who sell homes in the areas where their homes are listed. By focusing on those who are most likely to have a buyer and using repetition, the Korn Team brings results that are nothing short of astounding.

"The team uses what's called 'top-of-mind' awareness marketing. They keep that property in front of agents on a continual basis," Brad said. "The home sells because hundreds of agents who sell homes in that area are aware of it."

The process may begin with a single flyer sent to area agents — then another and another until the home sells. "On a given day, perhaps three or four of those agents will have a client in that price range. But two weeks later, when the flyer is delivered again, it's a different three or four agents. That continuous marketing makes that house stand out. That's very different than if they have to remember that house on their own, or have to find it on the computer among thousands of other homes for sale."

This consistent marketing is a significant effort in terms of time and resources, but The Korn Team has seen the benefit over and over. They



**Above:** The Sales Team of Jeremy, Jen, Wendy and Shea specialize in a specific area of the home selling or buying process to ensure our clients have the best experience possible.

**Below:** The administrative team of Kimi and Sonya are truly the hub of the office. Getting a sale from contract to closing is the most challenging part of a real estate transaction. They make sure the contract gets to the closing table.



look at what types of marketing statistically sell the most. National statistics show that more than three-quarters of all homes sold from Realtor to Realtor. The Korn Team focuses their marketing strategies where they know they will get the best results. "We talk with buyers all the time about open houses and the inconvenience of kicking them out of their home every Sunday for a one percent chance of selling (another national statistic). It doesn't mean we avoid holding houses open, but we don't want our clients to rely on them," Sonya says. The Korn Team will hold an open house if the client wants. By marketing to all the agents in the area, and knowing that 98 percent of the buyers that are going through open houses will not buy the house they visit, there is a good chance some of those buyers will find out about The Korn Team listings, and the other agents will schedule a showing sometime after their open house. "It's just playing the odds."

#### EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

The team's results are so impressive that they don't hesitate to address one of the most typical issues in real estate: homeowners who insist on selling their own home in order to eliminate paying a commission. Korn doesn't argue with these sellers, but bases his comments on proven facts.

"We're honest with them," Sonya noted. "If they want to sell it themselves and price it slightly under market value, they probably don't need a Realtor. But if they go with a Realtor and price their home at market value, they can make more money, because The Korn Team can find more buyers yielding the seller top dollar, which will often net them more than if they had sold themselves. Without expert marketing, they're losing, perhaps three-fourths of the market." Sonya noted. Many buyers are already working with a Realtor, or at least talking with them. If a homeowner wants to sell without the assistance of an agent, they could be missing buyers. According to national statistics, approximately 5

percent—8 percent of all for sale by owners will sell their home without the assistance of an agent. The other 92 percent—95 percent will end up listing their home. It is those sellers that will benefit from The Korn Team's marketing plan. They have already tried the sign, newspaper ad and the Internet. When those sellers list their home with The Korn Team, they will still find the buyers that may have called on the sign or newspaper ad, but in addition, they will find other buyers that they missed; the ones looking at home with other agents.

Commission levels are another issue and here, Jeremy gives specific examples. "Sellers may be able to find an agent that would give them \$4,000 on commission. But if they sell their home with us, and we find another buyer that may have been missed who is willing to purchase the home for an additional \$5,000, they didn't pay \$4,000 more in commission, they made \$2,000 more, net profit."

Other factors come into play as well, including the Keen Team's systematic examination of market trends for pricing homes. "When trying to determine the price of the home, you need to look at more than just what other homes in the neighborhood are selling for," Jeremy noted. "Especially in upper bracket homes, pricing can be sporadic. You'll see a neighborhood with homes that run from \$400,000 to \$700,000. So to price a given home, you really need to compare that home with what's available in other locations as well."

### TRUE TEAMWORK

Other examples of Korn Team advantages include team members themselves. Eight years ago, Brad's wife, Sonya, joined the team. Her specialty involves processing contracts and ensuring that everything is in place to guarantee a smooth and profitable transaction. "There are so many people involved in a real estate transaction that if one person doesn't get their job done, it can delay the entire process," Sonya explained. "That's, again, why we have such a specialized team."

Keri Lucia is the team's office manager who maintains the database and other in-house records. She also provides valuable marketing expertise, with photographic and design talents that are invaluable for Korn Team customers and clients. "She's the hub of the office," Sonya noted. "When we hired her, we were looking for a key administrative person, and that's her. She is available to answer questions, and direct customers and clients to the appropriate specialist."

Other Korn Team members include the Buyer Specialists Team. Shea Painter, Jon Owen and Wendy Linbaugh are dedicated to providing clients with a smooth real estate transaction. They work with each client to find a home that best fits their needs. Shea has been involved in the real estate industry for more than six years, and specializes in the Eastern Jackson County and Lafayette County areas. A lifelong resident of the Kansas City area, Jon

**The Korn Team works as a team. When clients or agents call into the office, they can talk to anyone who is available. If that particular person is not able to assist, they will direct the call to the appropriate specialist.**





**Jeremy Fouse** has taken The Korn Team listing side of the business to a whole new level of service. **Jeremy's** only focus on a day-to-day basis is to list properties and make sure they are selling. He updates sellers and agents throughout the transaction.

also ensures a smooth transaction with her Midtown and Kansas customers. A 15-year veteran of retail sales, Wendy knows the customer always comes first. She brings a Kansas City Northland focus to the team.

#### HISTORY OF LEARNING

Not surprisingly, all of this didn't come together overnight. A native of Blue Springs, Brad walked a long road before gaining the personal and professional insight to succeed. After college, he entered retail management, which involved a great deal of travel. Although he was never satisfied with that environment, he admits it was a good education.

"Marketing was my big interest in college," he recalled. "I was in DECA (distributive education) in high school, and I always loved business."

That's why he jumped at an opportunity to become an assistant manager for a retail chain. He proved so good, that the company transferred him to locations throughout the country, where his talents could help turn failing locations into successes.

"When you're good at something, they send you around to clean up messes," he recalls now with a laugh. "But the travel was hard on my family."

For that reason, he eventually decided to try his luck at real estate. At first, success appeared unlikely.

"Being a Realtor is one of those things everyone thinks they want to be one day," he noted. "They think it's easy, and you earn a lot of money. I probably should have been a statistic (there is an 80 percent turnover in real estate agents every year). — I should have been one of those people that failed."

In his first three years, Brad made \$10,000 — if you combined all three years! "At one point, I worked three jobs to support my real estate habit," he recalled. "But I did learn the value of continued training, and I decided to stick with it. I'm glad I did."

The turning point involved returning to Blue Springs and Jackson County, where Brad could apply the lessons he'd learned in the area's of residential real estate marketing. His sales improved almost immediately, but the most important step was when he began to build his team; at the time it was a new concept for many in real estate.

"I came from a team in Minnesota, where an agent represented six builders and she had six people to represent each builder," Brad explained. "In effect, she had a team before teams were widespread. I liked that concept and wanted to implement it here in Kansas City."

He was also fortunate in finding good associates in the beginning. "We have great people on the team, and we've been fortunate that almost all of them have been with us for some time," he noted. "That makes for a consistent, experienced team. We have the same values. Our top priorities are not only our families, but also having fun. We're a good mix. We like to laugh and joke, even with our clients. It's not a stuffy, formal kind of situation. It's more like being around your friends and having a good time." It's the relaxed and friendly atmosphere that brings out the very best service to both clients and fellow real estate professionals.

#### BOOMING MARKET

Although based in Lee's Summit, the Korn Team serves real estate markets from Eastern Jackson County, Lafayette County and Johnson County in the Eastland, to Clay and Platte counties in the Northland, to Cass County in the Southland. From this solid perspective, Brad sees a continuation of today's strong markets.

"I don't see the market slowing any time soon," he said. "It's going very strong. I haven't seen any neighborhood where there's depreciation," he said. "Everything is either appreciating or at least holding its value. There's nothing going backwards, and that's good for everyone."

One factor is the relocation market, which sees residents moving to this area — almost always from locations with much higher housing prices. "Kansas City is one of the better priced places to live," he said. "I don't know if people living here are especially aware of that, but when new residents move here, they are able to get a lot more home for the money. They are really blown away. And that's definitely driving a big part of the market."

All of this has proven a success for the Korn Team. Between a good market and an even better marketing plan, they consistently rank among the top 10 percent of real estate agents in Kansas City.

For more information, contact The Korn Team, Keller Williams Realty, at 4201 Lakewood Way, Lee's Summit, MO 64064. Their phone is 816-224-KORN (5676), or you may e-mail them at info@kornteam.com. Additional information is also available on the Internet at [www.WeSellKcAreaCity.com](http://www.WeSellKcAreaCity.com) and [www.kornteam.com](http://www.kornteam.com).



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years. I look forward to the many  
years to come.



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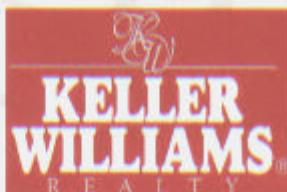
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Six years ago I was asked "judy, in your heart of hearts, is KW something you want to do?" NOT even pausing a second, I responded...

"NO---- this is something I have to do, we (the johns family )HAVE to bring the KW opportunity to the agents in KC"

judy johns

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