

THE POWER OF TEAM BUILDING

Linda Rehwalt, CRS, GRI

Company: The Rehwalt Group, Glendale, Ariz.

Annual Transactions in 2003: 150, with an average home price of \$300,000

2003 Gross Sales: \$50 million

Her Philosophy: Customer service and education is the key. Honesty and integrity are always first.

She Says: "It's about trying to be the best REALTOR® I can be for my clients. I want to set the standard."

Linda Rehwalt, CRS, GRI, is a natural-born REALTOR®. Years before she signed up for her first real estate class, she had already sold six of her own houses — as a homeowner. So when her husband Bill was presented with a job offer in Phoenix in 1995, Rehwalt decided it was time to move and make a career change. She made a beeline to real estate school and discovered her true calling.

Almost immediately, Rehwalt knew she was in the right field. Her excitement over every aspect of the day-to-day job may have cemented her devotion to the industry. Or perhaps it was being able to forge a personal connection with people through her gentle Southern charm. (Rehwalt was raised in South Carolina.)

A bit of ambition has helped as well. In Rehwalt's first year, the Glendale–West Maricopa Board of REALTORS® named her Rookie of the Year, yet she's most proud of making the RE/MAX Hall of Fame in 2001, "an achievement that took five years," she says. Rehwalt's pursuits did not end there. Earning her CRS and GRI designations as soon as



she was able was an achievement as well. "It was important to me to get the business running by earning both of the designations."

Building Her Team

Rehwalt says her team's success and positive outlook is partly due to the inclusion of her family members — including her husband, who serves as office manager, and her sister, Ethel Coffeen — and otherwise surrounding herself with motivated individuals.

"When I make promises to my clients, I do what I say and my team backs that up," Rehwalt says. "We'll always aim to meet or exceed our clients' expectations. We want the 'wow' effect."

With a combined 40 years of experience, the nine individuals who constitute The Rehwalt Group each play a role in its success. Her team includes the following positions: listings manager, closing manager, marketing manager, office technology manager, three buyer specialists, courier and Rehwalt herself as team leader.

When it comes to her management philosophy, Rehwalt aims to empower each person to be CEO of his or her position. For example, she requires every member of her team to be a licensed REALTOR®, believing that this inspires each to operate without limitations. She also supports continuing education, paying for seminars and RE/MAX conventions, and requires everyone to take his or her birthday as a paid vacation day. Empowering employees, Rehwalt says, has resulted in fewer mistakes and more productivity —

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factors that have helped The Rehwalt Group earn its ranking as the third most productive RE/MAX team in Arizona.

Marrying Experience and Technology

As other REALTORS® have found, Rehwalt's prior career allowed her to bring outside expertise to her real estate business. After spending 20 years in the nuclear power industry, Rehwalt's familiarity with computer analysis and management and various technologies led her to pursue similar automation to her real estate business. "When I came into real estate, I was surprised that there were few REALTORS® in my market using digital cameras or e-mail. I definitely wanted to integrate my real estate business with technology."

And she did. Today, Rehwalt's team employs scanners, digital cameras and a computerized database to serve their clients, and she has encouraged her circle of colleagues and vendors to keep up on technological advances as well.

One of the perks of being in the real estate business, Rehwalt says, is the access to — and ability to be involved in — the community. "We sponsor Little League baseball teams, tae kwon do and donate money to the Children's Miracle Network," she says. "We also sponsor charity golf tournaments and such. If it's something charitable that involves children, we will always agree to be a sponsor." Plus, she says, the more active she is in the community, the more awareness she brings to her business. "If I can help them, they are going to want to help me too."

As Rehwalt thinks about her goals, her focus returns to boosting her team's expertise, a process that she believes starts at the top. "The biggest challenge is to be the best team leader I can be," she says. "I'm busy with my role on the team, but I know in my heart that if I can develop myself, it makes me better for those who need me." ■

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