

Free Legal Advice Part of Deal with Morreale Real Estate Services Business

In any given day, Morreale Real Estate Services staff is busy coordinating settlement services for transferees while lawyers stand over them to make sure all the "i's" are dotted and the "t's" are crossed. The legal consultation and supervision is free—part of the deal Morreale strikes with third-party companies, its client base.

The company provides real estate, mortgage and relocation services to third-parties, including national title coordination, document preparation, settlement coordination and inventory management.

The company started out as a law firm founded by John F. Morreale & Associates in 1971. On January 1, 2000, John C. Morreale, his son, founded Morreale Real Estate Services, to take advantage of the need for increased non-legal services required by the industry.

Because its client base is made up of companies that compete for business, says John C. Morreale, confidentiality is of utmost importance—and it is observed in the strictest sense. "We all work in a law firm culture," he explains. "We have strict confidentiality agreements with corporate clients and

government. In a law firm culture, you don't share client information."

Most of the business comes through Morreale Real Estate services. "The law firm is a helper," he explains, "we bring them into the process on an as-needed basis."

Real estate services are provided through seven teams, each of which works with medium to large clients, and is staffed by as many as 7 people. Another team is assigned to work with various smaller companies.

Team members are comprised of experienced relocation professionals who have earned ERC CRP designations, and are cross-trained to handle three functions—coordinating settlements, making equity calculations, and managing inventory homes or homes in the process of being sold. "We have more fully outsourced opportunities than our colleagues because of the legal component," he said.

"Lawyers can help with any legal issues encumbering the transfer of the property, be it a divorce encumbrance, or a tax lien, or unpaid credit card bills," he said.

His company also provides destination service. "We have a huge advantage by being an independent family owned company," he said, "because we can partner with the best companies" to provide services to transferees.

Lawyers Remove Legal Obstacles to Sales

Case Study: A transferee's property shared a driveway with their neighbor, but did not have a formal agreement in place for its maintenance and common ownership. "The lack of a formal agreement with the neighbor would have created an issue for our client once the home buyout was completed," says Lynn Menzie, director of client services at Morreale Real Estate Services, "and ultimately, the property would not qualify for the program. We immediately involved our attorney staff."

The lawyers contacted the transferee and the neighbor, negotiated the terms of the agreement, and resolved the issue by placing the agreement of record - without any additional billing. Thirty days later, the property sold to an outside buyer and the file closed "without any issues, she said.

What did the transferee say? "We were very fortunate to have your legal expertise. We almost entered into a short sale deal, but your legal guidance steered us in the right direction. We would have exposed ourselves financially had we gone through with the deal, but thanks to you, we backed away. We really appreciate your services."