

TOP AGENT

MAGAZINE

TOMMY
VAN ESS



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The day I spoke with Tommy Van Ess he was simultaneously working on a three million dollar land development listing, a \$1.25 million dollar house offer, had two closings scheduled the next day and was selling a 1,000 square foot condo in Middleton for \$100,000. “I treat everyone the same,” he says with a smile.

After years working in politics, having served on the staff of the Governor in the 1990’s and as Chief of Staff for a past State Senate President, Tommy Van Ess certainly knew a lot of people. Lobbyists and business professionals representing the REALTORS® Association, WI Bankers, and the Builder’s Association were amongst the many he really took an interest in and spent hours and hours in negotiations.

“It gave me a crash course in development and real estate.” He was known as one of the best negotiators in the Capitol. “Real Estate negotiating came really easy after dealing with all the controversial issues on the floor of the Senate.” Tommy also

learned a lot about real estate and mortgages working for a law firm which represented one of the nation’s largest banks.

Yet Tommy didn’t enter real estate during the peak of the market. “When I started in real estate, many agents who had been successful for years were leaving in droves. But I like a challenge.” Thus in 2009, during one of the worst housing markets in recent history, Tommy dove in.

“I don’t know what it’s like not to have to work extremely hard for every sale. I didn’t have the luxury of getting into real estate when you basically took orders for homes. But that means I also didn’t have time to develop bad habits”

As the result, Tommy is always willing to do whatever it takes for clients. For example he recalls working with a buyer who wanted a \$79K condo. “I found the President of a development company in Chicago. He didn’t have any condos listed, but



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I called him and said that I had a buyer in Madison and asked if he would be willing to sell one. He said he absolutely would. He'd had them on the market with another agent for over a year without one sale.”

“I sold that condo, and then I sold 30 more in my first sixteen months in real estate. One of the owners of First Weber, Sharon Rapkin, likes to say that I didn't know any better. I didn't think twice of calling the President of a Chicago company. That single condo turned into more than \$2 Million in condo sales alone that year.” From there, Tommy listed two large 72 unit multi-million dollar

commercial buildings, all from one \$79,000 condo.

Those he has worked with don't forget the extra mile Tommy went for them, either. “The woman who bought that first condo comes back every year and buys another rental property with me. We're at five or six so far.” Another example involved taking over a listing from another that had moved away to South Carolina. The seller told him he didn't have any showings for months. “I went over to the house for a preview and the snow was literally five feet high down the driveway and sidewalk so I went



home and grabbed a shovel. I think I had a good idea why no one viewed the home,” he laughs. Tommy listed and sold the house a couple months later.

Today, although Tommy has now sold some of the most expensive homes in various areas, he is always willing to work with those in any price point. “From \$50K-\$5 Million, I won’t turn away any client. I’m very people-oriented and I love that every day, and every client is different. It keeps it interesting for me.”

Tommy is able to work with so many buyers and sellers due to his partnership with Laura Callahan. “She does a ton of research, internet, computer, and all of the behind-the-scenes work. Pulling comps, drafting listings and offers, you name it. She’s incredible,” Tommy says.

Of course Tommy and Laura are proud of being top producers within First Weber, which is the largest real estate company in the state. “Awards are great and dandy, but the biggest reward is seeing families so happy.



I've seen people cry because they are so happy to own a home, and that's what makes us feel good."

To ensure that he continues to provide service that makes people happy, Tommy is very goal driven. "My goals aren't just for real estate, they are life goals. I believe that if you fail to plan, you plan to fail." As such, his goal includes the ways in which he will give back to others each year. He's currently donating a portion of every commission to the First Weber Foundation. "Our Company

has donated more than \$1 Million to charities through the First Weber Foundation." Tommy also volunteers Friday nights at the local fish fry and at the summer picnic on Father's Day. He gladly supports causes close to his clients' hearts.

His goals extend to how he will spend time with his sons, Devon and Addam, and he loves to plan ski trips to Colorado with them, and attends sporting events with them. "I like my Badgers and my Packers. Before real estate I never missed a game, but



now I squeeze them in when I can.” He also plans which courses he will teach at Concordia University, where he has been a professor for more than 15 years. “I’ve taught Business Management and Business Ethics in the past. I love teaching and many of my students turn into my clients”

Rest assured, Tommy will never compromise his service to clients for sports or anything else. “Personal contact is so important. That’s why when buyers and sellers work with us, they deal only with Laura or me. We know what is going on with each other’s clients all of the time, and we don’t ever send someone else in our place.”

Clearly Tommy has found the key to success for his clients, and he couldn’t be happier about it. “I very, very rarely lose a deal. My tough experiences in life and in the Capitol fighting to pass bills taught me how to find solutions to any obstacles that arise.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TOMMY,
VISIT WWW.TOMMYVANESS.FIRSTWEBER.COM
EMAIL VANESST@FIRSTWEBER.COM
OR CALL 608-395-7375