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A PROFESSIONAL MAVERICK

Armed with 40 computers and plenty of class, R.R. Gable's Roger Hance hopes to change the face of Valley real estate for good.

By Julie A. Rosenthal

AT FIRST GLANCE, Roger Hance doesn't look like the head of a major real estate corporation. Wiry and athletic, with a convivial exuberance and impish grin, he could pass for a college student more at home in a classroom than in the large Reseda Boulevard headquarters he calls his office. But beneath the baby face and youthful appearance lurks a sophisticated, self-assured businessman who not only runs a company that sells \$120 million worth of property a year, but hopes to do things in real estate that college boys only dream of.

Hance is 31 and president of R.R. Gable Real Estate Corporation, a residential and commercial realty firm covering most of the north Valley. He is, in fact, quite comfortable amid his office's plush grays and burgundys, rich woods, wet bar and giant television screen. And don't forget the Hewlett-Packard computer, his latest "decorating" touch. Terminals now number 20, but soon they will be buzzing at the desk of each of his 40-plus agents.

Computers are only one of the attributes that Hance believes set R.R. Gable apart from the rest of the real estate world. He especially prides himself on the firm's quality of service, stating, "the client is better served when dealing with

a higher caliber agent." Toward that end, Hance demands a strict, professional environment—and a quick tour of the office turns up a work place that looks like the headquarters of a Century City law firm. The men are in suits and ties, the women in conservative dress. The sales staff must attend weekly meetings, take part in training programs, drive clean cars, and refrain from smoking in the office. "We're extremely regimented," Hance offers, without apology. And, "We're extremely selective. Our agents are expected to put up with things that aren't expected from anyone in real estate." One of these things is how to work with a computer system, a recent addition that Hance believes will further increase the company's professionalism (as well as business).

"Computers in our industry have been used for a lot of administrative things," he says. "We are taking it one step further, a major step, because we are designing and modifying programs that are going to affect the quality of service the clients get, and the type of marketing we can do for clients."

According to Hance, that means agents will have access to more leads and

even names of people who may not have yet decided to sell. Agents also can check the status of escrows and mortgages during off hours (evenings and weekends). Hance says that the new system "will enable us to work with more buyers per agent more effectively."

In a business where the personal touch is crucial, wouldn't computerized communication negatively affect the agent-client relationship? "Not at all," answers Hance. "It improves it. For example, we just opened an escrow division. Each principal—buyer and seller—will get a printout of every minute step taking place during that escrow. At any time, we can get access to that information, seven days a week." He adds that the image of the crooked agent out to get the naive client will be erased with the help of computers, since all communication will be conducted up front.

Hance has no doubts that the new system will pay off. "Medium sized companies have been bought for what this computer system cost me," he says with a laugh. "That's how committed I am, I mean this computer system is costing me more than my first two offices cost me to start, you know? That's how confident I am that it's going to work."