

THE PROOF IS IN THE PEOPLE



INDUSTRY HEAVY HITTERS SEE UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY IN KW COMMERCIAL



Larry Locke



Butch and Rhonda West

Photos By: Sara Kerver

By Celesta Brown and Lisa Wahlgren

The Austin-Southwest market center's recent infusion of top commercial talent is sending a big message out to the market: KW Commercial has arrived.

Drawing on her 31 years of experience in commercial real estate management, leasing, sales and acquisitions, **Rhonda West**, associate, is spearheading training and education. "We see a paradigm shift in the commercial real estate industry. The KW Commercial business model is appealing to people who have been on their own and are now in need of more support and training."

Rhonda's husband, Butch, is equally excited about joining KW Commercial. Having flown solo and affiliated with some of the top commercial brokerages in the business, Butch and Rhonda were looking for new opportunities and outlets to use what they have learned to benefit others. Lately, they've been volunteering almost half of their time, working for the CCIM (Certified Commercial Investment Member) Institute and other organizations. "We have a lot to give," Butch says. "KW Commercial provides us a platform to share our expertise,

give back, and be part of a team that feels like family. Rhonda and I can make a difference here."

Joining Rhonda and Butch is **Larry Locke**, another heavy hitter who brings more than three decades of insightful industry knowledge to his new role as KW Commercial director. At his previous company, he developed a land brokerage division throughout central Texas and had amassed more than 40 listings – 5,000 acres' worth – in the four years he was with them. As a testament to the strength of the relationships that Locke forged with his clients, all his current listings have come over to KW Commercial with him.

Locke's particular strength is forecasting and trend spotting. It's second nature to him to look for undeveloped areas where expansion and growth are forthcoming. Over the years, he's worked for companies, been on his own, spent time working on brokerage financing overseas, and worked in all parts of real estate sales from shopping malls to office parks, but he always gravitates back to land brokerage.

He was attracted to Keller Williams Realty because of the

competitive compensation structure and the myriad of opportunities to enhance his career that he's not been able to find elsewhere. As a new division, KW Commercial is seeking people who are steeped in the business and have experience growing a company from the ground up.

Locke emphasizes that it's important to draw clear-cut lines between commercial and residential. "They are wholly different," he says. Because the shifted market hasn't fully impacted the commercial side of the business, yet, he says residential agents are curious about moving into commercial, thinking there are huge commissions. But he warns that it often takes years to get to closing. For this reason, Locke is interested in guiding and mentoring promising commercial agents.

"Commercial brokerage is a slow business; the attrition is substantial. You have to have a support system, and I want to develop and lead training endeavors that will assist new brokers on their journey to success." He acknowledges that the Keller Williams team culture will give commercial agents a considerable competitive advantage. "Everyone at Keller Williams is so willing to lend a hand, which is refreshing because that's not usually the way it is in the land brokerage business."

Nowhere was that more apparent to Larry, Rhonda and Butch than during their trip to Family Reunion this year, prior to signing on with KW Commercial. "I talked to so many people and I never got one negative comment. Everyone was happy," Rhonda says. **kw**

Phone POWER

The growth of the Austin-Southwest market center's

commercial division has relied on the oldest technique in the book: cold calling.

First there was the call last year from Assistant Team Leader **Eric Copper**, to **Eden Box**, urging the Austin-area real estate icon out of retirement to serve as the commercial division's director of development.

"Once I signed on, I started doing some research about the people I thought would be wonderful additions to our commercial division, and **Rhonda West's** name kept coming up, so I called her and we agreed to have lunch." It was around that same time that **Gary Gentry**, associate at the Austin Southwest market center, contacted **Larry Locke** whom Gentry had known for years. That set the wheels in motion for him to join forces with the company.

Rhonda and Butch's credentials and their CCIM leadership speak for themselves, Box notes. "What isn't as well known throughout the industry is how much fun they are. They were both very successful in their businesses, and it took a while to persuade them that this would be even more fun."



Photos By: Sara Kerver

Eden Box

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