



Fast Pitch

CCIMs offer tips for creating concise and engaging property presentations.

by Rich Rosfelder

t The tour was set for 1:00 p.m. A pizza restaurant chain was considering leasing space in a downtown Wichita, Kan., office complex, but its representatives were skeptical that the market could support the location. Fortunately, Larry W. Weber, CCIM, vice president of Builders in Wichita, had a plan. He ordered 10 pizzas from the restaurant's other locations and invited all of the building tenants to a free lunch

Olivier Le Moal/veer

in the space he was about to present. “When the client arrived, there were 200 people in and around the space eating their pizza!” Weber says. Soon thereafter, the client signed the lease.

Surprisingly, not all clients can be won over with a pizza lunch. But a little creativity, coupled with a presentation that fits the client’s needs, can go a long way in securing a listing or closing a deal. *CIRE* asked CCIMs to share tips for creating more-successful property presentations.

Presentation Basics

When it comes to property presentations, most CCIMs agree: Be concise. “It should be direct and to the point,” says Frank S. Weiskopf, CCIM, broker with Realty Executives Associates in Maryville, Tenn. “It is a sales pitch, after all.”

With a wealth of technology tools and data at their disposal, commercial real estate professionals might be tempted to pack proposals or PowerPoint presentations with all available details and graphics. But, as with any effective rhetoric, what is left out can be as important as what is left in.

“One element of pitches that should be phased out is the printed proposal, which, in some cases, totals 50-plus pages,” says Evelyn R. Ward, CCIM, broker associate with Transwestern in Houston. “I have yet to hear of a client who actually reads the elements inside. I prefer a four- to five-page handout that presents a quick synopsis.”

Jim Tucker, CCIM, principal broker with NetWorks Commercial Real Estate in Richmond, Va., prepares a full property offering memorandum but uses a one-page “place mat” for presentations, which he creates in PowerPoint. He learned this approach from Terry Coyne, CCIM, senior vice president of Grubb & Ellis Cleveland, at a CCIM Institute fall conference. “The place mat

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answers the three questions every owner wants out of the presentation,” Tucker explains. “What is my property worth? What marketing process will be used to get that price? And what is your fee for the successful completion of the assignment?”

Such focus on the customer appeals to decision makers. For example, when Tucker and his distressed assets resolution team conducted a property presentation for a major bank, he handed the bank president a place mat. “She examined it and then said, ‘You know what I like about this? We have to call for appraisals with every move we make, which often takes weeks. But with what you just handed me, I can immediately pick up the phone and start giving instructions,’” Tucker says.

Depending on the audience, other information may be necessary as well. Larry Hausman, CCIM, investment broker with Marcus & Millichap in Louisville, Ky., looks for price, capitalization rate, remaining lease term, and tenant credit information on all presentations, which usually arrive via fellow M&M brokers. And, though it

seems obvious, property location details and agent contact information should be included. “I see so many email blasts that assume the reader knows where some obscure suburb of a small or midsize market is,” Hausman says.

Basic company information is also a must, and many CCIMs promote their strengths and track record — along with their unique advantages. “I always ask myself: Why would I choose me?” Ward says. “What do I bring to the table that another company may not provide? And of course I point out that I have the CCIM designation.”

Another important step is qualifying potential buyers, sellers, and other clients. “My time is as valuable as theirs,” Tucker says. “Unless there is a motivation to [close a deal], we are wasting our time.” Ward always looks at what types of properties potential clients own, their typical holding period, location, mission, major stakeholders, and any mutual business contacts who can vouch for her as a qualified candidate.

In-Person or Online?

Though showcasing properties online has become more popular, many CCIMs still prefer in-person presentations.

The live setting facilitates a give-and-take that’s difficult to achieve otherwise. For example, Tucker spends 15 minutes of his in-person presentations walking the audience through the place mat, and then he takes questions. “I find that if I listen 70 to 80 percent of the time and only talk for 20 to 30 percent of it, it will be a successful presentation,” he says.

And it’s important to share the speaking load if it’s a company team presentation. “It is paramount to have equal speaking time per person,” Ward explains. “If one person dominates the pitch, it can diminish the ‘team’ proposal.” She also suggests running through a presentation at least twice in advance.

Another concern that arises when considering any type of in-person presentation: What should I wear? “I keep my personal attire at least one step above the audience’s,” says William Gladstone, CCIM, SIOR, a sales agent with the Bill Gladstone Group of NAICIR in Camp Hill, Pa.

When the “pitch suit” is at the dry cleaners, a virtual presentation via email, webinar, or another online platform can be effective. Hausman uses MNet, Marcus & Millichap’s internal listing network, and an email database

of pre-qualified buyers. The former includes a built-in check that alleviates one potential problem associated with Web-based marketing: “In order to list a property, brokers are required to sign off that the listing price is within — or very close to — the range proposed by the agent,” Hausman says. “This way the items on MNet are sure to be salable assets at current market prices.” He finds most of his deals through this online resource.

Technology’s Role

When creating and delivering a pitch, it’s easy — and dangerous — to rely too heavily on software and gadgets. “Technology initially turned my presentations into encyclopedias that were curing my clients’ insomnia,” Tucker says. But a strategically placed image or report can enhance a well-built pitch. Tucker uses REI Wise analysis tools to create his offering memo and STDB for maps and demographics.

PowerPoint, which is part of Microsoft’s Office Suite, is the most common software used to organize in-person presentations. It’s so common, in fact, that some CCIMs have embraced alternative programs to set themselves apart. For example, Weiskopf

HOW TO WIN LISTINGS (AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE)

Sometimes the key to making a successful pitch is to make no pitch at all. “My partner and I are the leading commercial salesmen in our region ... and we’ve never done a listing presentation in our career,” says Beau Beery, CCIM, CPM, president of Coldwell Banker Commercial M.M. Parrish Realtors in Gainesville, Fla. “It is all about getting people to like you and has nothing to do with tools and fancy gadgets.”

Beery honed this approach with the help of Dale Carnegie’s bestseller *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Carnegie encourages readers to become genuinely interested in other people, be positive, and use other peoples’ names often in conversation, among other tips. “People want to work with their friends, so we just become everyone’s friend,” Beery says.

Before meeting with a prospective client or a fellow agent about a listing, Beery learns everything he can — not only about the property and surrounding area, but also about the person with whom he’s meeting. “When you’re in a midsize town, no more than two or three degrees separate you,” he explains. Identifying these connections stokes the conversation, and getting other people to talk about themselves is the foundation of a successful meeting. “We arouse in the other person an eagerness to work with us,” Beery adds.

After this initial conversation, Beery asks for a tour of the space and gives a quick assessment. Before he leaves, he always says: “I’ll send the listing agreement.” And they’re happy to sign it, he adds: “You can’t do that just by taking them on a walk-through and breaking out an iPad.”

WHAT'S A PLACE MAT?

For examples of property place mats, PowerPoint alternatives, and video-enhanced presentations, read the Web Exclusive "Presentation Tools" at www.ccim.com.



recently expanded his arsenal to include Brainshark, Prezi, and SlideRocket.

Brainshark is cloud-based software that allows users to transform PowerPoint presentations into mobile-optimized videos. It automatically streams presentations in the appropriate video format, regardless of the device. The Brainshark app for iPad/iPhone/iPod Touch and Android devices offers additional tools. "It's business-oriented and it plays well on my Android phone," Weiskopf says.

Prezi is another cloud-based alternative presentation software, which offers pan-and-zoom features and can import PowerPoint slides, images, videos, PDFs, and more. Users can create a unified graphic — an office building image, for example — and zoom in on relevant text or interactive elements placed throughout that image, instead of presenting separate slides.

SlideRocket allows users to combine charts, audio, and images and integrate free Web resources such as Flickr images or YouTube videos to create shareable, measurable online presentations. "It has the best look of any platform I've seen," Weiskopf adds.

As this software illustrates, videos have begun to play a more prominent role in business presentations. For commercial real estate professionals, that usually means virtual tours that give clients an in-depth look at a property. But there are other creative ways to incorporate video into presentations. Gladstone records himself talking about rental rates, vacancy factors, absorption, and other factors that might affect the property in question. When he plays the video at the presentation, his on-screen persona introduces him, and he engages in a dialogue with the recording. "The hardest part is practicing to make sure I respond on cue," Gladstone explains. But the practice

pays off: This approach recently helped him get a listing for a vacant property. "It has reinforced my opinion that a presentation needs to be not only accurate and factual, but also entertaining," he adds.

And when it comes to entertaining ourselves these days, nothing beats a mobile device. That's why Gladstone conducted his first iPad-based presentation a few months ago. The client was a convenience store chain looking for potential sites to purchase in a given area. He

displayed aerials, zoning, and tax map parcels, and his assistant, Fahd, could easily pull up additional information when requested. "It had everything they would see in a traditional presentation, but it was simpler and faster," he says.

Gladstone uses the iPad's Photos app to capture Google Earth images and maps, and annotates them using Skitch. "I can outline a parcel just by dragging my finger across the screen," he explains. And he plans to add more apps to his presentation repertoire soon. "Clients are becoming savvier, and they expect you to be engaged with technology," Gladstone says.

But no matter what technology is used, it should ultimately help the presenter strengthen his or her professional identity in the eyes of the client or fellow agent. "My goal in every presentation is not to win the business but rather to be memorable," Tucker says. "If I accomplish that, I will ultimately win the business because I'll be invited back."

And if all else fails? Order that pizza.

Rich Rosfelder is associate editor of *Commercial Investment Real Estate*.