

# The de Movellan destiny

Real estate success has run in the family for 45 years

BY BOB ROUSE  
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Saying someone is a “product of his environment” often carries a negative connotation. But for Anthony de Movellan, it’s a compliment.

Anthony is operations manager of Prudential A.S. de Movellan Real Estate, a firm founded and owned by his father, Antonio, or Tony. Tony acquired his real estate license in 1965, when *The Sound of Music* played in theaters and the nation’s new-home average cost was \$13,600. He formed A.S. de Movellan Real Estate in 1973. Today the firm is, to Tony’s reckoning, the only large, generational firm in Lexington that’s still family owned.

Being around the business all his life, Anthony couldn’t help learning about real estate. As a kid, he and his brother, Christopher, would ride the school bus to their dad’s office on Euclid Avenue.

“We’d do our homework at the office, take out the trash and watch real estate training videos. This was before cable,” Anthony explained. “Maybe it just soaked in, like sleeping with a textbook under your pillow.”

Informal real estate lessons extended to the de Movellan home, where Tony regularly fielded calls, often during dinner, from agents who had questions and problems.

“Sitting at the dining room table, we’d hear Dad when he got a call from an agent,” Anthony said. “We couldn’t hear the questions, but we learned all the answers.”

Today, Anthony is the answer man — along with his dad and Chip Diehl, the firm’s sales manager — for a thriving company with 65 agents. He’s comfortable following in his father’s footsteps.

## A CHANGING BUSINESS

“I’ve been doing this a long time now — 20 years,” Anthony said. “It’s an honor, with a little bit of pressure, to continue what Dad started.”

And over the past 45 years, Tony has seen the real estate landscape change.

“The profession is more advanced. The people are more educated,” Tony said. “The city has changed, too. You used to not be able to get lost in Lexington.”

As more people moved to Lexington, Tony recognized the value in affiliating with a national chain that offers relocation services. He acquired the Prudential franchise in 1989. While the move broadened the firm’s range of listings (30 percent of its 2009 sales were under \$150,000), Tony takes pride in his company’s lofty standing: As long as Multiple Listing Service data has been collected, de Movellan has ranked first in high-end sales (over \$650,000).

“We’ve always emphasized the high end, and we’re still the leader in high-end sales,” Tony said.

Tony’s business is now housed in its seventh location. After leasing his first, a small house on Euclid, for \$100 a month, Tony moved down the street to the corner of Euclid and Clay avenues, across from Kroger. When the building’s owner offered to sell, Tony bargained.

“The owner offered the building for \$55,000. I tried to make a deal for it and offered \$50,000,” Tony said. “After I didn’t hear anything, he told me he had sold it to somebody who met his price! Some real estate man I was.”

Tony eventually acquired the building when the buyer didn’t qualify for a loan.

“I bought it for his asking price, and I would have given him another 10,” he said, chucking at the memory. “That’s how you learn.”

## UTILIZING AGENTS’ STRENGTHS

Anthony learned from his father to be selective when adding agents to the firm. He has learned from experience how to best utilize an agent’s strength.

“It’s like a basketball team that runs plays to get a player to the spot where he has the best chance to score,” Anthony said. “We try to place agents in the spot where they perform best, whether it’s hosting open houses or working with community groups.”

One such high-performing agent is Donna Enslinger,

a broker associate with de Movellan for 10 years. When Anthony was trying to recruit her from another firm, she was in charge of organizing assistance for a family at Christmas.

“She made us wait until after Christmas,” Anthony said. “That’s the kind of people we want.”

And de Movellan is the type of firm that agents want, said Enslinger.

“We have a lot of fun, and there’s a lot of love here,” she said. “It’s the only place I’ve ever been where, when the boss walks by he asks if there’s anything he can do to help me. And he’s being sincere.”

Anthony views the relationships agents form as core to the business.

“Everyone has a reason for buying or selling: marriage, starting a family, moving or downsizing — getting to the next step of their life,” he said. “We help them get to that next step, providing quality services and advice.”

Agents at the de Movellans’ firm prepare for new challenges through a technique Anthony learned at his childhood dining room table.

“When something new comes up, we pose the question to the agents and let them toss it around and resolve it,” he

said. “Each agent might have 20 sales a year, but they learn from all 800 transactions in the room.”

That sort of cooperation and commitment to service is rooted in Prudential A.S. de Movellan Real Estate’s past, Anthony believes.

“What Dad has built is an atmosphere, a quality of people,” he said. “And we protect that by doing business the right way.”

Tony envisions the same atmosphere — business done the right way — for the company’s future. “It’s going to continue with Anthony,” he said. //



ABOVE: Anthony de Movellan (left), operations manager of Prudential A.S. de Movellan Real Estate, learned the real estate business from his father, Tony de Movellan (right). | PHOTOS BY JOSEPH REY AU

