

The Client Comes First

Knowing your client is one of the fundamental tenets of business, as Ann-Marie Doyle can attest to.

After working in the Venice, Italy, market for 20 years, Ann-Marie opened Venice Estates in 2004 and joined the Sotheby's International Realty® brand last year. The firm now operates as Venice Estates Sotheby's International Realty.

Because the majority of Venice real estate buyers are foreign and English-speaking, Ann-Marie splits her time between her homes in London and Venice, while her colleague, Piero Schiavon, is based full-time in the Venice office.

"Our clients are from all over the world, and very often will come to Venice for only a short period of time just to see the properties we have selected. So there is a lot of work done prior to their visit to make sure we understand their needs completely," she said. "It is crucial that we make the most of the little time they have by showing them properties that are absolutely right for them. Also, my ability to speak fluent English and Italian is critical during negotiations. Purchases of palaces and historic buildings of this level by foreign clients are complicated and I am uniquely placed to be able to interpret their needs, negotiate on their behalf and steer them through the vagaries of the Italian legal system."

According to Ann-Marie, a prime example of the necessity of knowing a client's needs is last year's sale of Palazzo Bragora, which was purchased by a Russian London-based client. After meeting several times in London, she got a sense of what he needed and pulled together a list of homes to show in the one day he had available to travel to Venice. Just before it was time to leave, Ann-Marie and Piero took him to Palazzo Bragora and he immediately decided to purchase it.

Ann-Marie's London connection also was instrumental in the sale of Palazzo Soranzo Van Axel, one of the two most important Gothic palazzos in Venice. Owned by the London-based family of an Italian architect, she conducted the entire sale from London.

Equally important to understanding your client is knowing the market, however. "Venetians do things in a certain way so you really have to be familiar with their culture. Because I have worked in this market for so long, I have that edge," she said.

Ann-Marie credits the *Sotheby's International Realty* brand for helping take Venice Estates Sotheby's International Realty to new heights, enabling her to build on her client relations skills and market knowledge.



"Our affiliation was a logical development. We already were working at the top end of our market and believed that the brand name would enhance and validate what we do. And that definitely has happened."

— Ann-Marie Doyle

