

TOP AGENT MAGAZINE

Bert Gor



Specializing in distressed properties, says Broker Bert Gor, President of the RE/MAX affiliate The Short Sale Group, Inc., is not simply about knowing the complexities of foreclosure and short sale transactions, but about intimately understanding what it feels like to be caught in this unfortunate situation. “It’s not only about facing the loss of your home; it’s about everything your home represents. When you can’t make your payments, when the sheriff drops off a court summons, when banks and lenders are giving you conflicting messages, it’s hard see the light at the end of the tunnel.”

Gor understands because he’s been there, with his own property. But he overcame and, in doing so, he not only learned the short sale process, but found his true calling. Originally an investment realtor—and RE/MAX’s Northern Illinois 2004 Rookie of the Year—by June of 2007 Gor’s career was on a trajectory of success. That’s when he and his fiancée, feeling financially solid and eager to start a family, tied the knot. About a month later the Chicago housing bubble burst. Gor had 19 listings, but buyers stopped buying, and the newlyweds watched their income rapidly dwindle. Chicago was, at that time, and as Gor puts it, truly the Wild West. “There were hardly any resources available to educate yourself on the Illinois short sale process. All the distressed seller certification programs were still about one to two years out.” Yet Gor persevered. He invested nearly every last dollar he had on understanding and marketing short sales, and that’s how his hard knocks opened up a door. “Being one of my own first short sale clients, I became fundamentally passionate about helping others through the process. And my personal experience, well,” he laughs, “it remains, to this day, my worst short sale outcome! Since then, I’ve come to understand the need for full-deficiency releases. If I know, upfront, that such an outcome is not attainable, in most cases I won’t list a property. In this way, my word is everything—my potential clients deserve a candid evaluation.”

For seven years Gor has focused solely on short sales, and though he now has a support staff and expert networks of CPAs and attorneys in place in the beginning he conducted all his own negotiations: talking to banks, learning how lenders think, gaining foresight on the objections lien-holders will inevitably make. “My knowledge is invaluable—it’s why so many realtors refer me their clients for my specific attention. And I don’t just empathize; I can see beyond the tumultuous emotions. I understand the actual timelines and the cards the banks are going to play. I can navigate the paperwork and dialogues, can mediate between tax liens and second mortgage lenders, and everybody who has their hand out.” Furthermore, Gor clarifies, he refuses to engage in dual agency short sale representation because integrity dictates that his loyalty be first and foremost to the homeowner.

A first-generation American and the son of Hungarian immigrants, Gor is quick to point out his appreciation for his clients’ vastly different contexts and situations. “I work with all walks of life, from families like my parents, who came from poverty and so every bit of effort and hope went into their primary residence, to families who’ve poured all their savings into buying the American dream. The point is, at the end of the day there’s nothing comparable to the reward I get positively reshaping a client’s sense of hopelessness.” A devoted husband and father of two little girls, Gor admits it especially affects him when he sees parents who believe the pervasive myth that you can just walk away from a mortgage and it won’t injure a household’s wellbeing for years to come. This also goes for his clients who have convinced themselves that a foreclosure is the only viable option.

And if the conviction and compassion is Gor’s voice doesn’t make you a believer, his record will. As a top-ranked short sale agent in the Midwest, a four-time Who’s Who of Chicago Real Estate, and in recent years recognized as one of the top five Northern Illinois RE/MAX agents, he has helped hundreds of homeowners get out of their underwater mortgages, even posting individual loses that exceed \$1 million in full-deficiency release—some of the biggest numbers on record in the state. Also a regular contributor to a number of Chicago Real Estate

columns, Gor continues to educate himself. Earlier this year he identified an IRS tax loop that helps thousands of homeowners who’ve been left hanging by the expired Mortgage Debt Relief Act, and, more recently, he’s testified before the 18th Judicial Circuit Court of Northern Illinois on behalf of two clients, securing sheriff auction deadline extensions for both. “It’s my job to think rationally when my clients can’t, and where the process is complicated, I make it clear. The bottom line is knowledge—what you do right now will affect your future, either positively or negatively. Distressed homeowners have a choice, and I’m devoted to helping them choose correctly.”



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