



# What A View

The view of Southern Lakes Real Estate's performance is as stunning as the views from the properties it sells. By Graham Medcalf

**A**fter little more than a year in business, Southern Lakes Real Estate (SLRE) has captured an unheralded market share in sales, and an acknowledged brand leader position in the Southern Lakes area. Southern Lakes Real Estate was established in January 2004 to sell property in the Wakatipu Basin, in response to the staid, traditional over-the-counter ethos of local realtors. Existing branding reflected national trends and styles, despite Queenstown being a unique market. Property accounts for a higher spend than tourism, the region's main economic driver. With Queenstown's growth forecast for a 48 percent rise in international visitor nights by 2010, the market was clearly in need of a people-centred business, delivering real service. SLRE recruited respected high-achievers, mainly in their 30s. Of 10 sales consultants, seven had never been in property. Rather than compete against each

other, the team was trained to work together, visiting new listings as one body and sharing buyer and vendor information freely around the office. The company aimed to make SLRE the team to beat and a byword for Queenstown property and the marketing department set about boosting awareness of the SLRE revolution. It wanted to force change in the local industry, leading by example. Research was conducted, including profiling other local realtors and assessing their market position and branding. Local and national statistics regarding the demographic modelling and growth forecasts for the region were reviewed. Airline access and investment by key operators were examined. Real Estate Institute of New Zealand (REINZ) statistics provided information on past and present property sales trends, and advertising and mass communication examples from other companies were collated and assessed. Council statis-



tics on the number of developments with resource consent showed this was clearly a market to be in. Local sales styles had reached a point where realtors were closed on weekends and public holidays, so vendors' and buyers' needs were not being met.

SLRE's competitive edge came from a number of sources including a strong team culture as well as from company owner, Warren White, one of Australasia's most sought-after motivational speakers.

The personalities and local reputations of the team members spoke volumes to many people in the region, and the appointment of an in-house marketing unit freed up consultants' time to concentrate on service delivery.

The team was a formidable, multi-faceted unit and from the outset that factor was an important feature of the marketing.

As a start-up company the objectives and time frame were clear – achieve maximum market awareness in the fastest possible time.

The team set about creating a brand people talked about. A campaign genu-

inely reflecting the attitudes exhibited by the team produced advertisements people looked forward to seeing. SLRE experimented with new media, tracking responses to hone marketing effectiveness. Tourism was integrated with Southern Lakes' new brand – 'Live Queenstown' – and the major message echoed the attitude of the region.

Live Queenstown evoked the region's lifestyle, vibrant future and outlook – "you don't just exist, you actually live".

Communication with prospective vendors was all about a sales team solidly grounded in the local infrastructure, with networks, integrity and a willingness to work with, as well as for, the customer.



Through multimedia advertising that included established and trusted property media, prime-time news/sports placements on radio networks, point of sale signage, media releases and high quality collateral, the campaign took shape. Product launches that included a 4WD give-away, plus developer project launches, proved most successful.

Movie theatre exclusivity, database driven marketing and exclusive flyer distribution to hotels reinforced the programme.

An internet strategy with property portals, links and search engine submission brought in prospects, while site optimisation with mobile billboards and branded vehicles reinforced the message. A blitz in magazines and print media, plus a national road show, offshore expos and exclusive presentations rounded out the marketing assault.

The results have been outstanding. Total property sales contracted by SLRE between January 2004 and March 2005 were \$310 million and total unconditional settled sales closed exceeded \$133 million. The contracted sales meant that targets were exceeded by 58 percent.

The target of securing exclusivity on four development projects was also met.

Southern Lakes Real Estate's 'Men in Black' are now recognised everywhere, as are the brand's attributes, benefits,

values and the personality that goes with them.

The brand print campaigns are the talk of Queenstown and the 'Live Queenstown' slogan, delivered hourly on the radio and each day on the cinema screen, has rapidly become a catchphrase among the younger population.

Next year will be a challenging one for SLRE.

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## The Radio Bureau Consumer Durables Award

**Winner**  
Southern Lakes Real Estate MREINZ  
– Brand launch

**The People**  
Steve Lindsay, marketing manager

**Marketing Partners**  
S Marketing  
Fluid Visual Communications

- What The Judges Said**
- Unique, interesting and exciting
  - A sound strategy. Their branding is about owning the region
  - A breakaway for real estate
  - Strong level of confidence
  - Simple and clear
  - They lived the dream
  - Have built differentiation into the brand
  - Good sense of spirit

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