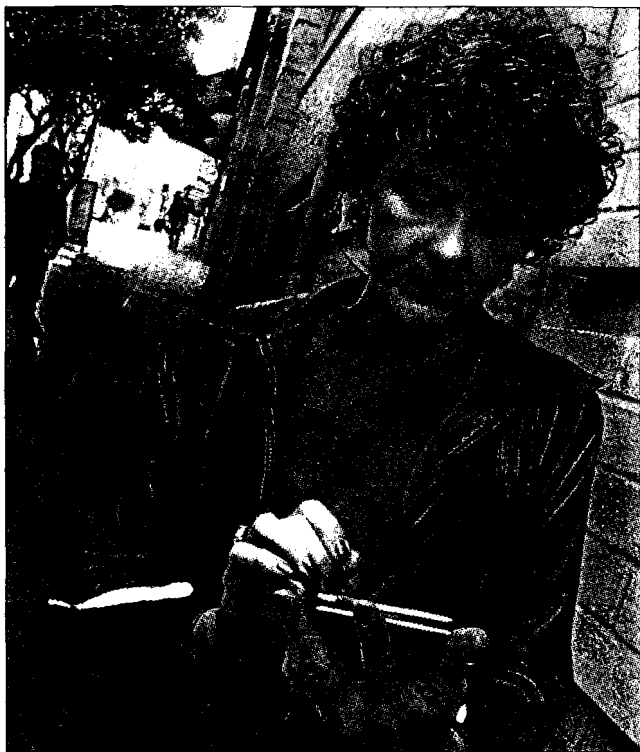


COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY



Betty Brachman's connections

A conversation with Examiner Real Estate Editor Richard Paoli



EXAMINER / MARK COSTANTINI

Betty Brachman works on her Palm Pilot and listens to messages on her cell phone while working as a real estate agent in The City.

BETTY BRACHMAN sells luxury real estate in one of the nation's hottest markets. She's an Oklahoman who came to the Bay Area and worked first as a dental hygienist before seeing better career opportunities in real estate during the market surge of the 1980s.

Now an agent for Pacific Union Real Estate in San Francisco, Brachman heads a staff of three other employees, all linked by an electronic web of computer and communications gear. She specializes in putting high-income earners into properties — many of them cutting-edge lofts with seven-figure price tags. "I have to be able to communicate with them and have the data I need about a property immediately available. The technology does that," she said.

She also has a Web site (www.betty-brachman.com).

What was your first personal computer, and when did you get it?

"The first computer I had was an IBM 286 about 15 years ago. I used it for spread sheet

work and for communications."

What about cell phones?

"Staying in touch with my office, clients and others in real estate is vital. The four of us in the office all use Nextels. The system links us by radio, plus there's the phone side, and it also is used for e-mail. I also use an I-2000 phone with an earpiece when I travel or when my clients are traveling. It gives me a global phone link."

What other technology do you use?

"I use a Palm V, and so do the others in my office. That gives me all the data base I need away from the office. The latest technology for the Palm Pilot is using it to access a lockbox. (Lockboxes, containing keys to a home or apartment, are left at a property by sellers' agents. Normally a code entered on its keyboard gives other agents access to the keys.) We'll be able now to download the code to the Palm and then beam it at the lockbox."

How do other electronic gadgets figure in

your real estate sales?

"We use an electronic camera to e-mail photos of properties and for the Web site. I've got a scanner and color printer that we can use to prepare other photos and papers for presentations."

What do you think about efforts to create a Web site-based, electronically driven real estate transaction platform?

"I don't like it because I don't like the idea of taking the real estate agent so completely out of the process. I really believe sitting down with a client is important in a real estate deal. Completing a transaction without that personal contact gives me an uncomfortable feeling."

Do you use computers or electronic equipment for purposes other than real estate?

"Not really. The last thing I would do is go home and surf the Net. For me, the benefit of computers and the electronics is strictly work-related. I'm interested in them making business efficient."



Brachman's Kit:

- ▶ Palm Pilot V
- ▶ Nextel cellular radio telephone with e-mail.
- ▶ Nextel I-2000 cellular telephone for global communications.
- ▶ HP 5200C Scanner Jet.
- ▶ Sony digital camera for photos on her Web site and for e-mail.
- ▶ Desk Jet 895-CX1 color printer.