



José Ribes Bas, Rob Thomson and Antonio Ribes Bas



GLOBALLY CONNECTED

Waterfront Properties and Club Communities enhances an international trade of luxury real estate concepts and practices.

As large as this world is, there's one thing that is becoming more and more certain: The distances between global markets are getting smaller and smaller.

As vast bridges connect more and more international businesses to each other, the world has indeed become a smaller place. The real estate industry has seen no different outcome. Case in point, the recent Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate International Symposium, held this year in Valencia, Spain, saw more than 100 nationalities representing the global real estate market. Realtors and market specialists from Europe, Australia and the United States came together to discuss luxury real estate concepts as well as gave its attendees a multidisciplinary platform to discuss and exchange ideas that would serve the world's high net worth demographics. One such attendee was Rob Thomson, managing partner of Waterfront Properties and Club Communities.

As a board member of Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate (an invitation-only organization) and one of the group's most-dedicated and sought-after members, Thomson has been a leading advocate of global connection among his international real estate colleagues. The only Florida-based Realtor at the symposium, Thomson has been known to offer Internet and interpersonal insights on how seemingly distant markets can connect to better their luxury clients. As the leader in Internet marketing who uses Waterfront Properties' sophisticated web presence to reach homebuyers and sellers from Jupiter to Japan, Thomson has impressed members of Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate with his savvy understanding of technology and marketing.

Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate began in 1986 as a small network of brokers, says Meghan Barry, president of the group. Now, the Seattle-based organization has expanded to include nearly 70,000 real estate professionals from more than 85 countries who sell in excess of \$190 billion annually. The International Symposium is one of four annual events held by the group that brings together thought-leaders, including Rob Thomson.

"When you put Rob Thomson in the conversation with other international brokers, their eyes are wide," Barry says. "It's sort of eye opening for our European members."

Major attractions in this year's symposium included speeches by laureate professor Santiago Grisolia and renowned economist Ramón Tamames, who lead a discussion called The Future of Europe after Overcoming the Economic Crisis. Too, the event brought together experts in the areas of commerce, education and real estate, and cited case studies of how successful companies, like Spain's Porcelanosa and the United States' Berklee College of Music, made decisions based off values and principles.

As host of the three-day symposium, José Ribes Bas – co-owner of the well-regarded Rimontgó real estate firm in Spain – couldn't have asked for better results in exchanges of ideas among his international colleagues. And, as a close colleague to Waterfront Properties' Rob Thomson, Ribes Bas has found a great ally.

"Rob is a leader in his own market and an inspiration for all of us," Ribes Bas says. "When we meet and he stands up to talk, everyone listens with interest because there is always something new he is going to generously share with us. In that way he is also a leader in the international level."

After meeting nearly six years ago at a Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate symposium in Philadelphia, Ribes Bas and Thomson refer to each other clients who were looking to make the trans-Atlantic move.

But beyond the exchange of referrals, the two started an international trade of global real estate practices. As Ribes Bas says of Thomson, "He is very innovative in online marketing and is able to provide an exceptional service to his clients and colleagues when collaborating with them."

In addition to Ribes Bas, Brian Hazen has also felt the exchange of ideas and client referrals have made Thomson unique in the real estate industry. Based in Aspen, Colo., Hazen has been a broker for nearly 35 years. Too, as an executive committee member of Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate, Hazen has been in touch with some of the best Realtors in the world. And for Hazen, Thomson has long separated himself from other brokers based off his willingness to share.

"I've really come to embrace Rob," says Hazen, whose company Coldwell Banker Mason Morse is an exclusive regent in Aspen and Snowmass to LuxuryRealEstate.com. "He's been very loyal in helping me with referrals. I also feel that he is unique in that he keeps some of my listing on his website."

Thomson's savvy real estate acumen has impressed even Elizabeth Ann Kivlan, president of the prestigious Stribling & Associates, Ltd., in the bustling real estate market of New York City. After meeting Thomson nearly 10 years ago at a Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate symposium, Kivlan took to heart Thomson's advice to embrace technology.

"Waterfront is good at understanding there's a constant change on global trade," says Kivlan, whose operation includes 300 employees and threes offices (with a fourth on the way) in New York. "So I rebranded my website about a year ago after I rebranded my entire company. The website is so transformed to the point we were nominated for a Webby Award."

"What I admire so much about Rob is not only his desire to better his company and his agents, but also on a global level, he has contacts throughout the world. Even more, he wants to be educated on a local and global market. What's happening in Asia can be impacting those here."

Even in San Francisco, where technology reigns supreme in Silicon Valley, Realtor Tim Murray has been taken aback with Thomson and Waterfront Properties' high-tech reach. Vice president of the well-respected Alain Pinel Realtors, Murray says his company has always been at the forefront of cutting edge technology – even mentioning that Steve Jobs installed the first computers at their offices. But nothing has left such a large imprint on Murray as Thomson's advanced web presence.

"He's a master in lead development, which allows his agents to work so efficiently," says Murray, who has known Thomson since 2007 when they met at a Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate convention. "I think from all of our perspective in luxury business, we are all in awe of how he organizes his business. He is in touch with those who are interested and looking at properties on his website, and he can get in touch with them within five minutes."

"Nowadays, it's all Internet-based," Murray continues. "Potential buyers go to websites to see what's available. Everyone used to go to actual open houses. Now, the Internet is the new open house."