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The Hoffman Group, Inc.

David Hoffman



DAVID HOFFMAN

Photo By Kate Philips

The Hoffman Group

REVITALIZING THE MYRTLE BEACH LANDSCAPE

BY LAURA EDWARDS

In a little less than two years, The Hoffman Group, one of Myrtle Beach's premier oceanfront condominium sales and marketing firms, has represented and sold more than 2,000 redevelopment units. In the past year, it has presold an almost equal number of new construction units. And by the end of this year, The Hoffman Group will have attained an annual sales volume approaching nearly one billion dollars.

Given the facts and numbers, it could well be said that the 21-year-old firm is the most prolific company of oceanfront properties along the Grand Strand, as well as the company responsible for reintroducing new condominium development to the area after almost a decade of stagnation.

It's a win-win situation for everybody, from buyers to sellers to anyone concerned about economic development in Horry County. Headed by founder David Hoffman, the agents and staff at The Hoffman Group are single-handedly transforming the landscape of Myrtle Beach's oceanfront and making the dreams of countless numbers of people come true.

"This market has been developed more by David Hoffman than by anyone else," says Tim Horton, the company's vice president of sales. "We found a niche market and it has been very successful. We're focusing on oceanfront condos and doing very well. Without a doubt, we're the largest company doing what we do in this area. Our reward is seeing the growth that's taken place over the last few years."

Far from slowing down, The Hoffman Group is forthrightly taking the Grand Strand by the hand and leading it into the unknown financial and development promises of the new century. And everyone benefits as a result.

"The pace at which we've grown is blinding," says David Hoffman, president and CEO. "This company has grown from strength to strength over the past 20 years by using the talents of an extraordinary group of people who are taking this company to the next level."

Beginnings

Myrtle Beach actually has the Bah' ai faith to thank for the development ushered in by The Hoffman Group.

A resident of Los Angeles, David Hoffman decided to respond to a call from the Bah' aís to support the first Bah' ai radio station being set up in Hemingway. A devout Bah' ai member, Hoffman packed up and moved to South Carolina in 1983, and it wasn't long before he began searching for gainful employment in the area.

Originally from Miami, Hoffman studied theater and filmmaking at the University of Miami and the University of Southern California, holds a degree in interdisciplinary studies, and had a successful career in real estate planning and sales in California.

As he began researching the Grand Strand area, Hoffman realized the oceanfront condominium market was a

good place to start. He jumped in with both feet in 1984 – just before the market took a turn for the worse.

That was the year the real estate development industry in Myrtle Beach, as well as other resort locations across the country, was devastated by soaring interest rates and proposed tax reforms.

Many real estate development companies were immobilized by these reforms and neglected the oceanfront segment of the properties market. A visionary, Hoffman quickly began using his skills and ingenuity to do something about the situation. He developed and implemented a marketing strategy for his company to successfully sell condominium developments that others could not. It wasn't long before his company became known as the "oceanfront condominium solution."

"My strength lies in creating a vision and articulating that vision," Hoffman says. "In that respect, it's creative, theatrical and visual. During that time, there were properties that had been developed that were not moving. My vision was to move as many properties as fast as we could by restructuring several deals. I got on the phone, and through sheer hard work and persistence, began to find opportunities. I had to be very persuasive and aggressive in making things happen."



Tim Horton



Alicia Polson



Penny Martin

Partly because of his experience in the highly competitive Los Angeles market, Hoffman was no stranger to focusing intensely on his work. He adeptly began developing and implementing a marketing strategy that would move the flagging properties. To help developers move inventory, he started preselling units before construction started so the owners wouldn't be saddled with a lot of debt and banks would offer a more attractive interest rate. The Hoffman Group, which by this time included several sales agents, started with The Meridian Plaza in Myrtle Beach, then moved on to The Blue Water Resort, The Caravelle Tower, and other properties that had been developed but were not moving.

By the beginning of the 1990s, the real estate market along the Grand Strand was starting to pick up, and as moving property became less of a hassle, The Hoffman Group started diversifying.

In 1991, Hoffman began taking family-owned properties and hotels and redeveloping them into condominiums for sale. The properties, which would still be owned by the hoteliers and only marketed by The Hoffman Group, would be debt-free resorts still run like hotels, but with individual units owned and financed by buyers before the actual property was developed. By launching this concept, The Hoffman Group became the first company to reintroduce new condominium development to the Grand Strand. In addition, The Hoffman Group resorts would provide benefits to hoteliers like on-property management and services such as golf packages, entertainment packages, and daily maid services.

"We started in a market where you really had to take care of buyers even though the work was being done for the seller," Hoffman says. "You had to aggressively maintain contact with buyers. And even today, the nuts and bolts are the same. You take good care of people and treat them fairly, and they'll do the same."



Ocean Reef

Capitalizing on a Vision

At this point, The Hoffman Group was really beginning to pick up steam, as was the Myrtle Beach economy.

By pioneering such concepts as presales for preconstruction condominium resorts and redevelopment sales for conversion from resort hotels to condominium resorts, not only was the group helping hoteliers in dire straits, but it was instrumental in stimulating the oceanfront real estate market, perking up other property values that were lagging, and reshaping the real estate focus of the Grand Strand by promoting Myrtle Beach as a vacation destination.

In 1999, more than 15 years after following Hoffman's vision, The Hoffman Group simultaneously offered multiple projects for sale and attained an annual sales volume in excess of \$200 million. That same year, the sales of the company grew 400 percent. By 2004, the motivated sales staff helped The Hoffman Group presell more than 1,200 redevelopments in a nine-month period and began further expanding its offerings of redevelopment projects.

The Breakers Boutique was the first redevelopment deal The Hoffman Group was involved in. Since then, the company has worked on such hotels as The Ocean Reef Resort, The Landmark Resort, Compass Cove, The Pinnacle and The Island. The Breakers project, which the company converted into an art deco style with a chic, hip lobby, remains one of Hoffman's personal favorites because it was that property that allowed him to reinvent himself.

"When you take a property that has neat characteristics but has been lost in the shuffle and you turn it around, it's like going into film production," he says.

Vision is the word that comes up over and over again among the 35 sales agents and 12 staff members who currently work for The Hoffman Group. Alicia Polson, the operations manager, has been with the company for 16 years and fully appreciates the genius of David Hoffman.

"David's a true visionary," she says. "It's exciting working for him. The business is fast-faced. There's never a dull moment."

Hoffman has expanded his work to other areas, including Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, where he is working on phase two of The Resort at Governor's Crossing. He is also working on a residential project in Greensboro. But with several projects in the works in Myrtle Beach and North Myrtle Beach and 15 on-site resort sales offices across the Grand Strand to oversee, Hoffman is unsure whether he wants to continue to expand and diversify or just continue on the work at hand.

"There are days I want to conquer the world and days I want to go home and go to bed," he says. "The biggest challenge at this time is keeping everybody satisfied. It can be very complex, with so many projects and so many people involved."

Hoffman also has his hands full with the recent opening of Cool Mortgage, a business that provides in-loan mortgages for the type of property The Hoffman Group sells or markets for other folks, including oceanfront condominium mortgages and resort property mortgages.

Fortunately, Hoffman has a good staff and other individuals to help juggle the many needs and demands that are par for the course in his business. Casey Shroff has been a consultant with The Hoffman Group as well as Hoffman's business partner on some of his deals for the past year, and says he enjoys his work with the organization.

"I think The Hoffman Group is an up and coming business," he says. "Obviously, it's one of the largest marketing companies in the area, and



Breakers Boutique North Tower



Breakers Paradise Tower

probably the largest when it comes to condominiums. I consider it a privilege to work with David. We have a good relationship as we carry on to the next step.”

The Next Step

Just where that next step will take The Hoffman Group is yet to be seen. The company currently has its hands full with such projects as the Dunes Village I and II, the Grand Atlantic, Sandy Beach and the Ocean Reef North Tower as well as redevelopments including Monterey Bay, The Landmark Resort and The Boardwalk.

It’s also important to keep up with emerging technology as both the company’s sales force and clientele grow. All agents are armed with laptops. And with a contact management program called the Pivotal Program, they are able to get access to all the information they need.

Hoffman and his wife, Homeira, whom he married in 1984, and their three children, Haley, Janette and Anis, spent three years in South Africa as pioneers for their faith. Haley, 20, is a

Duke scholar at Duke University, Janette, 19, is attending Tufts University, and Anis, 16, is planning on studying filmmaking at Harvard University.

Hoffman likes to think of his employees as extended family. Penny Martin, the company’s marketing director, left her career in graphic design and public relations four years ago to work in real estate with The Hoffman Group and has found her job so thrilling that she has never looked back.

“I like working here,” she says. “It’s a much faster-paced life than I was used to. It’s dynamic and exciting, sort of the heartbeat of what’s going on along the oceanfront. David is a visionary. He sees things that other people don’t, and he’s able to translate that vision into reality. When you look at all the projects from the 1990s, you see his hand in everything.”

Hoffman says the most rewarding aspect of being involved in this business is making a difference in the Myrtle Beach community.

“We’ve always pushed against the upper edge of the envelope,” he says. “But I think we’ve made a positive impact on Myrtle Beach.” ■

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