

## NO.1

CUMMINGS &amp; CO. REALTORS

Persistent  
SuccessTechnology and collaboration ease response  
to pandemic and real estate boom

BY DONNA OWENS

**L**ike millions of small-business owners nationwide, Dave Cummings initially wondered how the COVID-19 pandemic would impact his company and the real estate industry.

The founder of Cummings & Co. Realtors was relieved when the operation was not only able to survive, but also to thrive amid decidedly trying times for many Americans.

“As the pandemic has unfolded, it’s led to a housing inventory shortage,” Cummings said. “That created a boom.”

A proponent of technology, he explained that the firm already had systems in place that made it easier to work away from the office during the pandemic, making the transition “smooth and seamless.”

“We already were entirely paperless, with online systems for our agents and clients to use,” he said. “We did take all our office meetings online, and they have remained online. We’ve found they save the agents time and have more participation than before when people had to spend the time driving to the meeting.”

Founded in 2006, Cummings & Co. has some 520 real estate agents spread across nine offices

in Maryland and one in Pennsylvania.

Cummings’ agents say a supportive office culture and an array of internal resources help make the company a special workplace. That’s been particularly appreciated by employees as the pandemic reshuffled personal and professional lives and priorities.

“None of us have ever lived through a pandemic, so there was no playbook,” Realtor Sally Hechter said. “That said, it strikes me that based on the existing culture in place at Cummings, we were encouraged to do the right thing for our clients. Imagine you are about to make one of the biggest investments of your life and the process is hampered by the pandemic? We each were empowered to work in a safe manner with our clients and help them realize their goals even during a pandemic.”

Protocols were put in place with a goal of creating an efficient, flexible environment where agents could run their businesses from anywhere and properly serve clients.

There were regular Zoom meetings about business development and industry topics, available via an agent-only Facebook group. The company also offered personal protective equipment,

including branded masks and complimentary booties for use when giving home tours. To boost morale, there was a companywide, online talent show, which drew rave reviews.

Even before the coronavirus, Cummings offered a wealth of resources to its team.

Among the offerings: Key Transaction Management, an in-house company available to assist agents with administrative transaction details from “contract to close.” Another in-house asset, Samantha Allen Marketing, can assist agents with any advertising and social media needs. And in November 2020, Cummings launched C&C Title Co.

“These services are invaluable because they

take a lot off the plate of an agent so they can focus on generating more business,” said John Bailey, who’s been there for six years.

“It certainly isn’t a ‘me first’ brokerage,” Bailey added. “Unlike a lot of other real estate brokerages, we have a great environment of working together and collaborating so that everyone succeeds.”

It all starts with Cummings, who seeks experienced agents and serves as a mentor as well as the firm’s broker, but not as an agent himself.

“I want people who [sell] full time, with at least two years of experience,” said Cummings, who holds licenses in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington, D.C. “I don’t compete with the agents. I manage.”

That appeals to Hechter who described the company’s philosophy as “values-driven” with a team eager to win the “right way” — with a customer-focused approach.

“[We’re] led by supportive and engaged leadership who have attracted exceptionally experienced real estate professionals,” she said. “They value tenacious relationship building, innovative business growth strategies, and involvement in the community.”

Community engagement is part of the company’s DNA. Bailey shared that about a year or so after he began working at Cummings, a colleague saw a social media post about the Johns Hopkins Pediatric Oncology division being in a good-natured com-

petition with other departments.

“Apparently they were running low on Play-Doh and it was now a contest to see who could collect the most. My colleague put out a Facebook post within our brokerage asking if anyone was interested in donating,” Bailey recalled. “In a matter of hours, cans of Play-Doh were being delivered to the Cummings offices. It became a challenge to all of the agents to collect as many as possible.”

The brokerage wound up collecting more than 6,500 cans of Play-Doh.

“I helped deliver the cases to the hospital and the overwhelming joy and excitement was amazing,” he said. “It’s one of many reasons why I’m still a Cummings agent.”



Dave Cummings, second from left, the founder of Cummings & Co. Realtors, stands with Realtors, from left, Joan Goldman, Quincy Wilson, Sally Hechter and John Bailey at the firm's Timonium office. Photo by Lloyd Fox