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THE TOP BROKERS

A look at Manhattan's 75 residential agents with the most exclusives

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By Candace Taylor



Top

agents, in order from left: Carrie Chiang, Dolly Lenz, Serena Boardman, Hervé Senequier, Leonard Steinberg

Manhattan's top real estate agents are as diverse as the city itself, proving once again that there's more than one way to make a buck in this town.

This year, *The Real Deal's* annual ranking of the city's top brokers showcases a range of different business models, from agents who sell hundreds of newly built condos a year to those who specialize in historic townhouses, and everything in between.

Generally speaking, however, Manhattan's top brokers fall into two camps: those who work alone or with a single partner, and those with teams.

"There's two ways to do it," explained Corcoran's Leighton Candler, who ranked No. 11 on this year's list.

Some big-name brokers become "a company within a company," she said, selling a high volume of listings with help from a number of junior agents. Others, like herself, choose only a few very high-priced listings, and handle them with only an assistant or two.

Whatever their business model, agents said properties priced north of \$20 million are more likely to change hands this year than they were in 2009. Deals, however, are still taking much longer than they did in the past.

"It seems like we're working three times as hard to achieve what we achieved in 2008," said Brown Harris Stevens' Paula Del Nunzio, No. 9 on this year's list, who at press time said she had three contracts out on "major properties."

Ranking agents is always challenging because brokers' names are not listed on city documents when properties change hands, so their total sales figures are not publicly available. *The Real Deal's* list tackled the problem another way -- by determining who is marketing the most Manhattan property. To do this, we used data from On-Line Residential (OLR.com), counting only active, exclusive residential listings that had been updated within the previous month. Sold or in-contract properties were not included.

Below is a look at the 15 New York City brokers whose combined listings are worth the most.

1. Carrie Chiang

Of all the agents in Manhattan, Corcoran Group Senior Vice President Carrie Chiang is marketing the most property, by both number of listings and dollar value, according to OLR.

And there's a good reason why. So far this year, Chiang's six-person team has already sold a townhouse for roughly \$17 million, another home for \$15 million and a \$14 million apartment that was on the market for only two weeks.

At press time, Chiang said she was negotiating three more deals worth a total of \$60 million.

She said she's already on track to have a better year than 2009, which she describes as her "lowest ever," with sales of about \$150 million. That's down from her usual total of roughly \$350 million and a banner year in 2008, during which she sold approximately \$500 million worth of property.

When the recession hit, "I was very nervous," Chiang told *The Real Deal* during an open house last month at 3 East 94th Street, a townhouse owned by developer Aby Rosen, where she has a co-exclusive with Classic Marketing. "I have a whole staff to support."

But she still did deals that would turn other agents green with envy: Her biggest 2009 deal was the sale of a development site at 313-317 East 46th Street for \$44.7 million.

What's her secret? In addition to 23 years of experience, it's the diversity of her listings, she said.

"I do everything," said Chiang, who earned the nickname "Condo Queen" in the early '90s, but in recent years has turned much of her attention on townhouses.

"I'm not focusing on one type of merchandise," she said. "If one [area] is slow, I have something else I can sell."

2. Dolly Lenz

Prudential Douglas Elliman superbroker Dolly Lenz came in at No. 2 on *The Real Deal's* ranking, with listings worth some \$288 million.

Lenz, who made a name for herself selling new condos hand-over-fist in the mid-2000s, was once widely viewed not only as the top agent in the city, but in the country.

When the condo market stalled in the midst of the recession, however, Lenz lost several large new development projects and her star has since dimmed a bit. (She declined to be interviewed for this story.) Still, she rebounded in the summer of 2009 by becoming the exclusive sales broker at iconic Upper West Side condo conversion the Aphorp. Despite controversy when critics alleged that some of the buyers were largely inside business associates or relatives of the developers, she sold enough units for the attorney general's office to declare the offering plan effective last month.

Lenz has also expanded the kinds of listings she takes on. She's currently marketing a historic townhouse at 2 East 80th Street, built for the Woolworth family, for \$20 million, and a co-op owned by real estate doyenne Agnes Nolan, the onetime owner of brokerage Whitbred-Nolan, at 271 Central Park West for \$13.9 million.

3. Serena Boardman

Serena Boardman has recently become the "It Girl" of New York real estate.

Boardman, who grew up on the Upper East Side and works for Sotheby's International Realty, was selected in September to market Bernie Madoff's penthouse at 133 East 64th Street. She sold it a few months later to toy mogul Al Kahn (who made a fortune off Cabbage Patch Kids and Pokémon) for \$8 million.

At No. 3 on the list, she currently has listings worth \$267 million. One of those is the townhouse at 22 East 71st Street that belongs to her brother-in-law, developer Aby Rosen. The home is the city's highest-priced residential listing at \$75 million. She's also selling Massimo Ferragamo's Park Avenue penthouse for \$16 million.

But despite her high-profile properties, press-shy Boardman has been even more under the radar than usual since she became pregnant, reportedly by boyfriend John Theodoracopulos.

4. Leonard Steinberg and Hervé Senequier

Leonard Steinberg got into real estate in a roundabout way.

"I always wanted to be an architect, but I'm really bad at science," said the 15-year industry veteran, who is originally from South Africa. Instead, he went into the fashion industry. "I used to dress all those women on Dallas and Dynasty," Steinberg recalled. "My favorite line was, 'More shoulder pads!'"

Steinberg moved to New York in the early 1990s and started dabbling in real estate. Now, he specializes in

high-end properties Downtown, or those that are "Uptown, with a Downtown mindset."

About eight years ago, he teamed up with Hervé Senequier, who has master's degrees in nuclear physics and engineering. Ranked No. 4 on the list with \$249.66 million worth of listings, the two Elliman brokers are currently the exclusive sales agents at high-end new development condos like 415 Greenwich Street in Tribeca, 54 Bond Street in Noho and the Annabelle Selldorf-designed "Sky Garage" at 200 11th Avenue, where Steinberg himself recently bought a unit.

At that project in 2009, the pair sold the top four floors for a total of \$34 million -- the highest price ever achieved for a West Chelsea property, and a personal best for the duo.

5. Brenda Powers and Elizabeth Lee Sample

Like Steinberg, Elizabeth Sample has a fashion background. But after fashion design school, the Connecticut native realized she wanted to be her own boss, so she gave real estate a try. Twenty-three years later, she's brokered some of the highest-priced property in the city, including the triplex penthouse at the Pierre Hotel, which she sold in 1999 for more than \$21 million -- the highest price paid for a co-op in the 20th century.

Powers, a child of diplomats who is fluent in French and German, "learned to negotiate in the bazaar in Morocco," she said. She started out as Sample's assistant at the Corcoran Group, but the two (who are also a couple) quickly starting working as a team, eventually moving to Brown Harris Stevens. They live in the residences at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel at the Time Warner Center, where Sample is the board president. Last month, one of their Time Warner Center listings priced at \$15.95 million -- 25 Columbus Circle #7475B -- went into contract. Sample said at press time that another one, #70B at 80 Columbus Circle listed at \$16.5 million (the Mandarin Hotel residences), was about to follow.

6. Kathy Sloane

Brown Harris Stevens' Kathy Sloane made headlines in 2009, when she was investigated for tax evasion by the Albany County District Attorney along with 30 other brokers (the charges against her were ultimately dropped). But before that, she was best known as the broker who found Bill and Hillary Clinton homes in Chappaqua and Washington, D.C. Sloane, who has been a broker in New York for 26 years, said she counts the experience as the proudest of her career.

"It was a privilege to have their trust, and I cherish their friendship," said Sloane, who has \$190.6 million worth of listings. She is currently marketing two listings at 998 Fifth Avenue, the McKim, Mead & White-designed co-op: one for \$25 million and one for \$34 million.

Her biggest deal in 2009 was "over \$17.5 million," said Sloane.

7. Ilan Bracha

With his team of 15 people, Elliman's Ilan Bracha typifies the high-volume approach to selling real estate: The team sold 24 apartments in the last month, he said.

Currently, they have listings worth a combined \$173.45 million, including the Centurion at 33 West 56th Street, and the 200-unit Azure condominium (site of the deadly March 2008 crane collapse) on 91st Street, which his team took over several months ago from Brown Harris Stevens. Bracha's team has sold about 30 units there since signing on, he said. But Bracha, who previously focused almost entirely on new condos, has recently branched out into co-ops. For example, he is marketing a co-op, #2NDFL, at 150 Central Park South (a space that can be used for either residential or commercial purposes) for \$23 million.

8. Raphael De Niro and Claudine De Niro

Raphael De Niro, son of famous actor-turned-restaurateur Robert De Niro, is only 33, one of the youngest to make the Top Brokers list. He started his real estate career in 2004, but, as he put it, "didn't start kicking butt until 2005."

Now, "I'm starting to hit my stride," said De Niro, who has about \$173 million in listings. "Each successive year that I do this, the referrals grow."

Predictably, many of his clients are celebrities and models, but lately more of them come from "hedge funds and private equity," said De Niro, who works at Elliman with his wife, Claudine.

For example, this winter, the De Niros closed on the sale of hedge fund founder Ephraim Gildor's home at the Park Laurel at 15 West 63rd Street for \$23.98 million.

9. Paula Del Nunzio

Paula Del Nunzio, a Vassar graduate and former advertising executive who is known as one of the city's highest-grossing townhouse brokers, has also been busy lately.

In April, she sold a house at 12 East 63rd Street for \$19.66 million (Craig Dix and A. Laurance Kaiser of Key-Ventures represented the buyer). Then she sold 20 East 93rd Street for \$7.5 million, and 16 West 12th Street to developer Ara Hovnanian and his wife Rachel for \$15.35 million.

As for the \$177.04 ([note: correction appended](#)) million in listings she still has for sale -- including developer Tamir Sapi's flashy Duke Semans Mansion, currently listed at \$50 million -- she said, "I have a lot of contracts out right now."

10. John Burger

Manhattan native John Burger has sold real estate for the last 26 years, sometimes working with several generations of New York families. He's currently at Brown Harris Stevens, marketing a penthouse for \$17.5 million in the south tower of the Emery Roth-designed Central Park West co-op San Remo, where listings rarely appear.

Burger said he's noticed that buyers these days are more willing to sign on the dotted line.

"People are stepping forward in terms of committing to residential real estate," he said.

Last month, Burger put a unit at the Dakota in contract, reportedly for \$11.5 million. Reports also indicate he sold Conan O'Brien's duplex apartment at the Majestic for close to the \$29.5 million asking price. He has \$145.89 million in listings.

11. Leighton Candler

Atlanta native Leighton Candler has several very high-priced listings that have been on the market for a while, like a penthouse at 1020 Fifth Avenue listed for \$34 million and one at 1040 Fifth Avenue listed for \$32 million.

But now that the doldrums of 2009 have lifted, she's starting to see more activity.

"At a point last year, you felt there was no movement, which is not the case now," said Candler, who works with one other agent at Corcoran, Jennifer Garabedian. "You sense there's a lot of willingness to enter into deals."

For example, Candler reportedly sold real estate bigwig William Mack's full-floor co-op at 760 Park Avenue to Getty Images cofounder Jonathan Klein for \$10 million, in a deal that closed in March (she declined to comment on that transaction). A small townhouse at 50 East 73rd Street, on the market for \$8.95 million, is in contract, she said.

Still, these days, "the deal-making itself takes longer," she said, noting that except for two new listings, "everything I have now is in negotiations, or in contract."

12. Meredyth Smith

Sotheby's' Meredyth Smith has worked in real estate for more than 20 years, following a career in the art world. She, too, has several longstanding listings, like Rosen's townhouse at 22 East 71st Street, which she is marketing with Boardman. But she recently put #4/5C at 830 Park Avenue into contract.

"I tend to take a long view of the market," she said. "My sellers are not distressed sellers. They are willing to wait for the market to recover." Smith and Boardman also have a listing for a Beaux Arts townhouse at 116 East 65th Street priced at \$16.5 million that recently came back on the market after a temporary hiatus (that property was not included in either of their rankings).

13. Adam Modlin and Marisa Sargent

Adam Modlin started his own firm as a twentysomething after borrowing seed money from his parents for a computer, printer and stationary. Now in his late 30s, Modlin, who was featured in *The Real Deal's* ranking of the top boutique firms last month, has a star-studded client list rumored to include the likes of Alex Rodriguez,

Britney Spears and Billy Joel.

Along with team member Marisa Sargent, the famously discrete Modlin currently has \$125.79 million worth of listings, including a penthouse at Trump Park Avenue for \$31 million (down from the original asking price of \$51 million) and a full-floor unit at 510 Park Avenue for \$19.8 million.

14. Jed Garfield

Jed Garfield recalls showing properties alongside his father, Leslie Garfield, at age five. Now the younger Garfield runs the family firm, Leslie J. Garfield & Co., which *The Real Deal* named the city's top boutique firm last month. A townhouse specialist, Garfield is currently marketing some \$116.15 million worth of property, including a newly renovated house at 14 East 95th Street for \$18.5 million.

15. Carol Cohen and Deborah Grubman

Formerly a high school math teacher, Corcoran's Deborah Grubman is married to entertainment attorney Allen Grubman, which makes her socialite Lizzie Grubman's stepmother. But she's also one of New York's most successful real estate brokers, along with Carol Cohen, with whom she started working around 12 years ago. The two have a combined \$110.45 million in listings.

The year 2009 was a tough one, Grubman said. "We did move property, but not as much as we're used to moving," she said. So far, "2010 has started out as a much better year."

In February, Grubman and Cohen put a 65-foot-wide townhouse at 2 N. Moore in Tribeca -- listed at \$29 million -- into contract. Last month, their \$21.7 million listing on the top floor of One Beacon Court also found a buyer.

Research contributed by Margaret Daisley

[Top Agents Charts](#)

TOP BROKERS

Manhattan agents with the most listings

Rank	Name	Firm	Total value of listings	Number of listings	Notes
1	Carrie Ohang	Corcoran	\$324,527,554	75	Listings include exclusive marketing agreement for 360 East 42nd Street (the Alexander).
2	Dolly Lorz	Prudential Douglas Elliman	\$316,177,200	33	Listings include exclusive marketing agreement for 590 West End Avenue (the Aphery).
3	Serena Boardman	Siebel's International Realty	\$307,130,000	18	Listings include 32 East 71st Street, a \$75 million townhouse owned by developer Aly Rosen.
4	Leonard Steinberg & Hervé Senoguer*	Prudential Douglas Elliman	\$348,893,700	33	Listings include exclusive marketing agreement for 415 Greenwich Street and 54 Bond Street.
5	Elizabeth Sample & Brenda Powers	Brown Harris Stevens	\$313,894,000	13	Listings include three apartments at 35 Columbus Circle (Three Warner Center) for \$17.5 million, \$94.95 million and \$98.75 million.
6	Kathy Sloane	Brown Harris Stevens	\$190,950,000	14	Listings include a unit at 640 Park Avenue for \$25 million, and two units at 593 11th Avenue for \$34 and \$25 million.
7	Ilan Broche	Prudential Douglas Elliman	\$175,446,946	69	Listings include a unit at 190 Central Park South for \$23 million and a unit at 35 West 29th Street (the Canton) for \$11.40 million.
8	Raphael De Niro & Claudine De Niro*	Prudential Douglas Elliman	\$173,709,600	33	Listings include a unit at 60 Columbus Circle (the Mandarin Hotel residences) for \$33 million.
9	Paola Del Nuzio	Brown Harris Stevens	\$152,544,000	14	Listings include 1009 11th Avenue, the Dolce Serena Marston, on the market for \$60 million.
10	John Burger	Brown Harris Stevens	\$145,565,000	15	Listings include a unit at 233 Park Avenue on the market for \$18 million.
11	Leighton Candler	Corcoran	\$139,725,000	7	Listings include penthouses at 1040 and 1050 11th Avenue for \$85 and \$34 million, respectively.
12	Meredyth Smith	Siebel's International Realty	\$125,500,000	5	Listings include 32 East 71st Street, a \$75 million townhouse, which is a co-ownership with Serena Boardman.
13	Adam Modin & Marisa Sargent	The Modin Group	\$125,794,000	10	Listings include a townhouse at 9 Riverside Terrace for \$15.5 million.
14	Jed Garfield	Lewis J. Garfield & Co.	\$116,170,000	5	Listings include a townhouse at 14 East 50th Street for \$16.5 million.
15	Carel Cohen & Deborah Grubman	Corcoran	\$110,470,000	9	Listings include a unit at 177 Hudson Street for \$18.5 million and a unit at 1010 11th Avenue, also for \$18.5 million.
16	Alexa Lambert	Stirling	\$103,315,000	23	Part of exclusive marketing base at 1300 11th Avenue and at 455 West 19th Street.
17	Shelley O'Keefe	Corcoran	\$98,880,000	24	Part of exclusive marketing base for 311 West Broadway (Solo Mews).
18	Rana Hunter Williams	Trump Sales and Leasing	\$97,840,000	37	Listings include resale units at Trump properties such as 751 11th Avenue (Trump Tower) and 105 Central Park South (Trump Park).
19	Wendy Maitland	Brown Harris Stevens	\$80,505,000	15	Listings include a penthouse at 50 Vestry Street for \$34.95 million and a townhouse at 5 Centre Market Place for \$12.95 million.
20	Cathy Franklin	Brown Harris Stevens	\$78,445,000	6	Listings include units at 570 9th Avenue and 750 Park Avenue for \$28 million and \$57.5 million, respectively.
21	Debra Stotta	Trump Sales and Leasing	\$74,990,000	37	On-site agent (for resale) at 845 United Nations Plaza.
22	Sharon E. Baum	Corcoran	\$70,840,000	6	Listings include units at 354 9th Avenue and 240 Centre Street for \$55 million and \$16.70 million, respectively.
23	Richard Grunstein	Holmes Property	\$70,403,000	21	Listings include a townhouse on East 10th Street for \$13.95 million.
24	Burt Savitsky	Brown Harris Stevens	\$69,537,000	13	Listings include five units with an aggregate value of \$22 million at 1 Central Park South (the Plaza).
25	Cathy Tard	Stirling	\$69,070,000	19	Part of exclusive marketing base at 465 West 19th Street.
26	Holly Parker & Trisha	Prudential Douglas Elliman	\$67,705,000	11	Resale agent at the Jean Nouvel-designed 100 11th Avenue.

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COMMENTS

Anonymous

wow, very cool data for the brokerazzi.

Comment #1 Posted By: Anonymous 06/02/10

Anonymous

this top 75 list is very misleading. collecting listings does not translate into a top-grossing producer. many top agents are not even on this list. and onsite sales agents are mostly product pushers which cannot be compared to a resale agent with their own clients base.

Comment #2 Posted By: Anonymous 06/03/10

Anonymous

I hear DL is in tizzy over this...look out RD...she will try to tsake revenge

Comment #3 Posted By: Anonymous 06/06/10

Anonymous

When are we going to have a report about brooklyn

Comment #4 Posted By: Anonymous 06/11/10

Anonymous

So let me get this straight. If I were actually performing for my clients, i would be selling their apartments therefore not having many listings as I would be doing my job...moving product. This is a misleading list as many top brokers (who actually rank #1 2 or 3) in their companies are not listed. Additionally, why would I choose anyone on this list to sell my apartment seeing as they have tons of listings and generally assistants or teams. I would no t get any personal attention (unless my apartment is 20mil+) then maybe.

Comment #5 Posted By: Anonymous 06/13/10

Anonymous

Totally agree #2

Comment #6 Posted By: Anonymous 06/13/10

Broker/Client

Does carrie deserve the #1 status? She does have a brilliant mind and can work non stop around the clock. Her staff however, is a lazy bunch who does not appreciate her and could care less about the listings. You never get a call back from them when it comes to appointments!

Comment #7 Posted By: Broker/Client 06/23/10