

Sergeant Salesman

Terry Paranych, Realtor and CEO of the Paranych Group of Companies

BY LINDSEY NORRIS

If you live in Edmonton, you probably know the face of Terry Paranych better than your own mother's. For years, this Realtor's marketing campaign has been a veritable *blitzkrieg*. He spends around \$600,000 annually on flyers, bus and newspaper ads, billboards – you name it, his face has been on it. There's a martial precision with which he controls his brand, too. Rarely will you encounter his public persona in anything but black pants, suspenders and a white shirt. And the number one trait he seeks in his growing army of proteges – once or twice a year, Realtors pay \$5,000 to attend his real estate "boot camps" – is the ability to listen and learn. His approach has been phenomenally successful. Paranych is currently ranked the top-selling broker in Canada and fifth worldwide. He is an inductee to Remax's Circle of Legends, that holy realm for agents who have made at least \$10 million in commissions. In short, the man knows how to move a house.

What did you do before you became a Realtor?

After high school I tried a little bit of everything. I sold new cars and sporting goods. I worked at Forzani for a while. (John Forzani was a huge influence when I was kid.) But I always had a passion about real estate, and I used to read these get-rich books and they all talk about real estate. When I was 25, I was selling cars and owned four rental properties. I was licensed in 1991 when I was 26.

What was it like?

I was a young guy, very motivated, ready to go. I walked around the office looking for help, and they all said, "Kid, you have to do what I did. Get out there and knock on doors and in 20 years you'll have a successful client base." And I said, "It took you 20 years?" I went to a seminar where they teach you how to door-knock and cold-call. We got on these school buses with little microphones and I went and knocked on this door. This guy answered: he had spaghetti all over his front, no shirt on, and he said,



I AM THE BRAND: 13 years ago, Paranych had a revelation – he should work on his business, not in it

"Get off my door." I decided right then that it would be better to get clients to call *you*.

What next?

I dressed up in a Superman outfit and got on a roof with some Remax signs. People in Edmonton already knew who I was because I played junior hockey, and I ended up getting national media attention. My first year, I sold 66 homes and was the Remax rookie of the year for Edmonton. I was Superman until I got a letter from DC Comics telling me to cease and desist.

What was your pivotal year?

In 1996 I was very burnt out. I had one assistant and was working seven days a week, 12 to 18 hours a day, and selling about 140 homes a year. True story: I was falling asleep at 2 a.m. in my office writing ads. I realized there needed to be another way. So I hired my first associate. It was tough, because I didn't think he could do it as well as I did. In 1997, with a licensed assistant

and three selling partners, I almost tripled production. I was finally working on my business, not in it.

How are you doing in the current market?

Great. In a rabid market, a home seller might call their sister or a commission-free company or try to sell by owner, but when the market becomes a buyers' market, people tend to gravitate towards the most recognized brand. In a rabid market, I may have 50 listings; in a market like this, I can carry 300.

When are you going to retire?

My wife is pushing me to slow down, but, from my perspective, I don't think [I'll be doing that] any time soon. I love seeing other people become successful. I know when I started there were very few people who were willing to give me the time of day. That's why I'll never forget John Forzani. He treated me like I was somebody. **AV**