

Alasdair and Alice Macdonald need no introduction. Known locally and internationally as the 'A-Team', they built up the largest real estate company on the Costa del Sol, with sales levels never equalled and not seen since, and now show others how to sell property. As always, they don't do it from afar, but lead by example.

POLAR

THE SYNTHESIS OF 30 YEARS IN REAL ESTATE

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What do you do when you've led one of the most successful property agencies in the history of the Costa del Sol? Some might retire to Bora Bora or St. Barts, become collectors or write their memoirs, but Alasdair and Alice Macdonald like to share their knowledge. Indeed, when you've been successful in business there is a well-established tradition of passing your expertise on to the next generation, and the consultant is the living embodiment of it in a very wide range of fields. In effect, this is exactly what the Macdonalds do through POLAR Global Marketing Direct, where POLAR stands for Promotional Organisation Launching Areas & Resorts.

POLAR is not a real estate company, but the culmination of more than 30 years in the real estate business. "We already did things differently when we ran Ocean Estates International," says Alasdair, who founded the company with Alice in 1985. "When everyone focused on the same markets, we also opened up new ones, such as South Africa and Hong Kong, to which we later added Australia, Singapore and Dubai." The couple combined out-of-the-box thinking to conventional property marketing and sales practice, but above all built their success on a very pro-active approach. "I guess you can say we lead by example," says Alice, "because while we have always focused strongly on giving our staff proper sales training and support, we

were always there at the forefront, showing them exactly how it's done."

Much of the sales success of Ocean Estates International was built on exhibitions, which formed the leading source of clients for a company which had 12 offices in Spain and in addition also sold real estate in Thailand, Bulgaria, Turkey and South Africa, where they had a 600m² state-of-the-art office on the Waterfront in Cape Town. "We were highly successful in established markets such as the UK – where we were at the Dorchester – Germany and The Netherlands, but also opened up new ones in places like South Africa, Dubai and Singapore." Alasdair and Alice have come to read the market well, and it was the early trend to diversify their client base that saw the company grow through two recessions, starting with the 1989 downturn. "Before long, we had a prominent presence at the most important international property fairs and also organised our own in a variety of countries," says Alasdair.

No matter how gruelling the schedule, he and Alice were always there to lead the way and coach their team in situ. "It's rewarding to see how many of our team members have had successful careers in the industry," and indeed, with over 350 permanent staff and sales of over 2,500 properties per year in Spain alone, Ocean Estates International at its peak was one of the largest firms this region has seen. The formula for this

level of success can be traced back to the daily presence and commitment shown by this extraordinary couple who seem to have real estate in their blood. "We love what we do, especially the challenge to do well and the interaction with people, which is never boring because every situation is new and different."

PROPERTY SALES CONSULTING

Alasdair and Alice founded POLAR after they sold Ocean Estates International in 2007. "Having experience as both real estate agents and developer, we saw there was a niche in the market that is not catered for. Online marketing is a vital part of any modern company's business strategy, but the competition in Marbella property is intense so you can't sit back and passively rely on this alone, but should combine it with an active sales and marketing strategy. Few companies do this well, so those that do are richly rewarded in terms of results." As Alasdair puts it, at the end of the day real estate remains a personal business with the salesperson at the heart of it all. Developing a rapport with your clients, and being proactive in terms of connecting with them and subsequent follow-up is often the difference between success and failure.

"This is why exhibitions continue to be a great marketing and sales tool," says Alice, "and it's why we've continued to offer our services in

this regard – from training staff to managing exhibition stands ourselves – to local and international developers such as Taylor Wimpey, Knight Knox, Remax, FM Consulting, Siesta Homes, Real Capital Solutions and many others." In essence, POLAR offers the success formula of Ocean Estates International to property developers, commercialising agents and also general real estate agencies in the form of a consulting service that incorporates exhibitions, fly-ins, sales and telemarketing training, product pricing and also a more global analysis of sales operations and marketing strategies. "Our years at the forefront of this business have taught us a lot, making us experts in off-plan developments and kick-starting sales on re-launch or slow-moving developments. POLAR is a niche company through which we pass this knowledge on," says Alasdair, "and yes, we don't just explain, we show our clients how to take control of their business and raise their sales conversion rates typically from between 25 to 40 per cent."

Having earned investment clients good returns in the past, POLAR takes this ability as well as a loyal client base from a B2C into a B2B environment to add an extra dimension to a company's sales and marketing capacity.

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