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# Building Lifestyle

Sam Scalia

When assigning addresses to their condominium buildings, Devmont president Sam Scalia, and his brother Joseph Scalia, VP, turn to Feng Shui, choosing addresses which add up to eight or nine, in order to reassure clients seeking thoroughly harmonious dwellings that the odds are stacked in their favour. But according to Sam, Devmont's own success hasn't depended on any sleight of numerology nor lucky charm, but rather plain, unadulterated “hard work”.

We've all heard it before, work hard and you will reap success. But what exactly does working hard imply in the building-development industry? Does it mean putting in long hours? “To some extent,” says Sam, whose work weeks average 50-plus hours and who experiences habitual slumber interruptions at 3 a.m. “to think about work.” Does it mean pushing creative limits? “That too,” he adds. “We always challenge ourselves to put out the best product for the customer.” And what about firsthand involvement? Check mark, again. “We're macro-micro managers, involved in every aspect, including sales on the weekends,” he continues. “There are no shortcuts. We didn't acquire this kind of success overnight.”

Sam and Joseph were exposed to the business as youngsters, when their father Francesco, and their uncle Giovanni, started a construction company in Montreal, like many other Italian immigrants in the '60s. Despite his own success, their father steered them toward more professional careers instead. The brothers heeded the elder's advice, obtaining university degrees and working in their chosen fields for a few years – Sam is a mechanical engineer and Joe studied commerce and finance. Ironically, it turned out to be their father who spurred them in the early '90s to build some condos, noting that the housing market was inching toward that format. The two brothers gave it a whirl, building a basic-needs condominium building in Villeray. Today, Devmont is a multi-million dollar business, with 20 direct employees, turning out upscale lifestyle-oriented projects.

Sam is spokesperson for the company and for his brother Joseph – an equal partner, who prefers a low public profile, but takes centre stage on the job. “Joseph projects strong on-site leadership. He shows thorough product knowledge, impeccable execution, and makes sure delivery schedules never slide.”

The brotherly duo started lean in the same style as their father but, unlike him, they have had the advantage of higher education that their father never had the chance to acquire. Their education has equipped them with big-picture reflexes and the confidence to take calculated risks. It's also led them to structure their company to include expert departments managing the many facets of the business. “By delegating specific responsibilities to professionals with matching competencies, we were able to bring things to the next level and expand the business,” Sam explains. It's a more progressive and corporate way of managing, in stark contrast to their father's approach. “He and my uncle didn't delegate anything, believing that the only way to do something right was to do it yourself.”

However they choose to label themselves, the two brothers are totally focused on the business and seemingly gifted with nerves of steel that help them deflect the pressures of the industry. “I don't show my reactions,” Sam says convincingly – that is, until he slips into an expressive cheshire cat grin. A latent endurance swimmer (he only learned how to swim several years ago), he attributes his tolerance for stress to physical conditioning as well as natural disposition. Appearing at least ten years younger than his actual age, the trim, fashionably bearded executive not only looks young, but thinks young, embracing social media as the mighty marketing force that it is. “If you haven't seen us on Facebook, then you're not on Facebook,” he teases.

Devmont's brand definer is the deluxe Le Rouge six-phase condominium project. Knowing that the physical pinnings of a home can shape the feelings and perceptions of its occupants, Devmont hasn't skimped on high-end finishings, accessible amenities and spaciousness meant to evoke not only initial oohs and ahs, but a lasting sense of delightful comfort. “We sell a dream on paper and want to make sure that when customers live there everyday, it will surpass anything they could've imagined when they bought the unit.”

The developers' on-point practicality and quest for style lead them to fabricate spaces that are at once efficient and stylish. “Everything has to look and feel good, including the lobbies.” In fact, Sam has commissioned one of his favourite artists, Montreal-born Carmelo Blandino, whose artwork hangs in his own home, to create original paintings for Le Rouge's common areas. “Every lobby and corridor is unique; the feel is like a boutique hotel.”

The Scalias realize that many home dwellers shudder at the prospect of downsizing, fearing confining sardine can dimensions, so they're offering empty-nesters and first-time buyers – accustomed to larger living spaces – the hassle-free convenience of condo living, while maintaining respectable square footage. “Our project is the only one in Montreal where condos reach 2,800 square feet,” he says.

It's a niche market: one Devmont caters to and, to some extent, may have actually created. “We pioneered this area – Le Triangle (north of Jean Talon, south of De la Savane, and west of Décarie) – tapping into the need for higher quality units that customers from upscale surrounding areas – Côte St-Luc, Hampstead, Town of Mount Royal, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Westmount and Outremont – have expressed they were looking for.”

The executives stewarding Devmont know that meaningful marketing and resonating branding depend on an alchemy of product plus experience. Customer service is amped up to a rarely seen degree, not only after sales, but before, going as far as providing a complimentary stretch limo (red of course) to chauffeur prospective customers to the Le Rouge sales office.

Evidently the novel perks and unexpected flourishes appeal to discriminating customers. “We've had so many repeat buyers and their friends. In any business, if you deliver a quality product and keep the customers very happy, they will always come back.”