

## Standing Out in A Crowded Field

As real estate practitioners hustle to find clients and close deals, David Kelman, [GREEN](#), a practitioner with Keller Williams Realty, Westwood, Mass., has found a way to differentiate himself in a crowded field.

For one, he's a member of the Boston Society of Architects, where he chairs the BSA Housing Committee and organizes meetings, panel discussions and speaking engagements on housing topics.

The BSA membership has connected him with architects and contractors and has given him a better understanding of home design, construction, and remodeling.

And the day-to-day contact with an array of professionals, including contractors, lenders, architects, and home inspectors he's met through the BSA and elsewhere have all broadened his network.

He regularly relies on such contacts for advice.

For instance, he was helping a client buy a 19th century house and he tapped some of his builder and architect contacts to weigh in on the property's structural problems. They recommended a beam replacement and gave Kelman's client a sense of the project scope and cost. "Without that help, my buyer would have walked away," says Kelman, who says such professionals routinely step in to allay buyers' fears.

Beyond the golden advice, the group also is a source of new clients, and Kelman says he both gives and gets a couple referrals each month through BSA contacts.

Kelman's multifaceted green building knowledge also allows him to take a full-service, consultative approach with buyers, and he discusses and charts out the added energy and operating costs they'll need to factor in beyond the mortgage payments.

"I can help them find and buy a house, and also show them how to make it more comfortable and bring down monthly expenses through renovations and rebates," he says.

Neighbors and friends know about Kelman's green niche and rely on him for advice, which he offers freely. The payback to Kelman is referrals. "My goodwill often translates into money for me," he acknowledges.

Needless to say, he's a proponent of networking outside the traditional spheres of lenders and brokers.

Among the groups he recommends are local chapters of [National Association of the Remodeling Industry](#), the [United States Green Building Council](#) and the [American Institute of Architects](#).

He's noticed that during this downturn, colleagues with a green expertise have fared better than

others. "Business is down for architects and contractors, but they're not as hard hit as those who haven't embraced green design or contracting," he says.

The same goes for real estate. "Very often when people are interviewing you, the fact that we have a green expertise is a draw. Clients want to know what differentiates you from the pack," observes Kelman. "This green expertise does it, without a doubt."

*Selection from The REsource newsletter, NAR's Green REsource Council. Written by Elyse Umlauf-Garneau.*