

MARKETING STRATEGIES

Keeping focused Brokers cater skills for gay community

By **BILL CRESENZO**

On his Web site, Philip Altland, a broker with Prudential Douglas Elliman, has links that direct potential clients to his listings, categorized by neighborhoods: Chelsea, Greenwich Village, Tribeca, et al.

Alongside those links is one that says Gay/Lesbian. Click on it and it contains information about buying real estate as a gay buyer.

"I was the first New York City broker to advertise in the *Advocate*," Altland recalls, referring to arguably the most famous gay-themed magazine in the world. "First, there were very few male brokers in the '70s, and I was out and gay and decided to try to work that niche market. Some years, I would sell seven or eight properties from that ad."

Now, three decades later, Altland has moved beyond the pages of the *Advocate* to the Web, advertising on gay-themed Web sites.

The gay market for brokers has grown exponentially over the years and brokers like

PHILIP ALLTAND

Altland have taken advantage.

"Gay people have certain issues" when buying an apartment that straight people may not, Altland said. "And many gay people want a broker who is gay and can empathize with them."

That's not to say that straight brokers can't provide good service to gay brokers, but Altland and Glenn Minnick, also of PDE, said that gay brokers often know things about buildings that interest gay people, such as ones that are more gay friendly than others.

"I attract a lot of gay buyers from Europe, and they just feel more comfortable working with me," Minnick said. "Gay people often have a lot of money to spend, and they want to spend it on a gay broker."

He added that right now, many gay buyers want to live in either Hell's Kitchen or downtown.

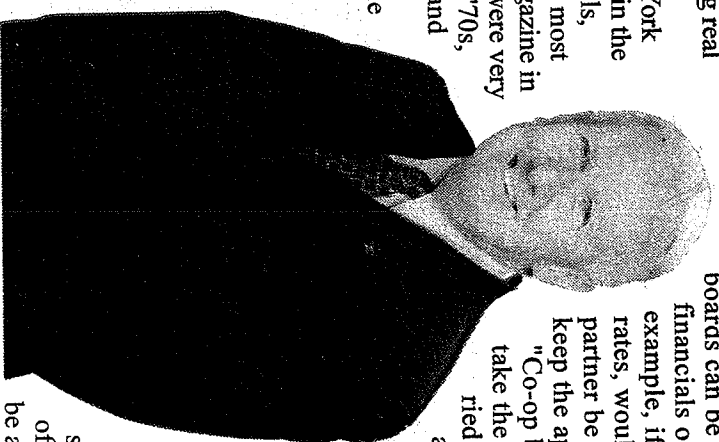
The characteristics and needs of gay clients are often different from straight ones, they said. Gay people tend to have more disposable income, and they tend not to have children.

And while every broker knows that the co-op board can be the toughest part of closing a deal, Altland

that can be especially true with gay couples.

"Gay people may have certain issues with co-op boards," Altland said. "If a couple of guys or two women want to buy a new apartment, the board cannot discriminate."

But, Altland said, since gays are not allowed to marry in New York, boards can be wary of the financials of the couple. For example, if the couple separates, would the remaining partner be able to afford to keep the apartment?



"Co-op boards pretty much take the position that a married couple's combined assets and incomes are considered together," Altland states on his Web site. "An unmarried couple (be they heterosexual or homosexual) is not treated the same way. The rationale for this is that if the relationship ends, each one of the applicants must be able to afford to carry the apartment on his or her own."

"This is obviously outdated based on the prevalence of heterosexual divorce, but this has always been the way it is."

Altland said that some boards do discriminate against gay couples, so he uses his knowledge of the city to steer clients toward gay-friendly buildings.

"Sometimes gay people want to be in a building that where there are other gay people," he said. "Or they would rather live in Chelsea than, say, Chinoatown."

"I know what buildings are more receptive to gays," Altland added. "Some buildings are more friendly toward gay couples. It's a tricky thing to deal with, because boards can't outwardly discriminate."

Altland said that he also markets to other gay people because he has a network of gay lawyers, contractors, mortgage brokers and designers.

And, as an "added bonus," Altland also proudly said that he plays matchmaker for his clients as well. He says that when one of his buyers complained that she was lonely, he introduced her to one of his friends. They have been a couple ever since.