



## Robert Citrullo

Sales Representative  
RE/MAX Professionals Inc.

INTERVIEW : Kara Kurylłowicz PHOTO : Wilson Huynh Studio

A serial entrepreneur and natural extrovert, Rob has grown up in the real estate business. At 12 and into his teens, he worked for his grandfather's real estate operation, tackling demolition and acquiring everything from carpentry to painting and tiling skills. As a university student and sales rep with London Property Corp., he leveraged his innate social skills and ultimately social media, specifically Facebook, to get signed leases on the 220 units four to six months before the next term started. He then tapped into his love of electronic dance music to create yet another business opportunity booking concerts, festivals and events in secondary markets while working fulltime for Toronto's biggest entertainment conglomerate Ink Entertainment.

Yet as he looked to a future that would one day include a family, where he works more regular hours, Rob decided it was time to focus on his one true love, real estate. A competitive hockey, football volleyball, and baseball player through high school, Rob sees the value in outdoing himself and everyone around him. In his first year with RE/MAX, Canada's biggest broker with the greatest reach, he earned the Rookie of the Year Award as well as a place in the company's 100% Club.

### Can you tell me about your grandfather and how he inspired you?

When people told my grandfather, who came to Canada from Italy as a five-year-old orphan, that he was crazy to buy a plot of land for development in Etobicoke, he did it anyway. His faith in his own intuition led to his position as the owner and head of Gilindo Marcocchio Ltd. He's living proof that when you're completely and utterly obsessed with something, you can master it. Creativity and hard work, will make it possible to build something from nothing. Until he died at 101 years of age, his mind was always going because he lived to come up with new ideas. "Let's renovate this, Let's build that". That inspires and drives me.

### What have you learned from your early real estate and entertainment industry experiences?

Pitching rental units to university and college students and introducing new artists to secondary markets was a real passion and I quickly saw that face-to-face connections, particularly with key influencers, can create hype, produce buzz and drive interest. Even with today's technology, it's my real-life interactions that support my success on the various social media platforms.

Our family has its roots in real estate development with a preponderance of chartered accountants, so I know how to negotiate a deal that makes solid financial sense. Speaking of negotiation, I was constantly working through scenarios that gave the artists and their agencies, for example, William Morris Entertainment, one of the biggest names in Hollywood, what they needed while ensuring I'd achieve my margins.

### Why is it so important to get out in your community?

For most people, especially with real-estate prices in Toronto today, their home is their primary investment. I need to provide the facts on why a particular neighbourhood is a good investment, but I also need to convey the heart and soul of a community based on my personal experience.

**“I need to provide the facts on why a particular neighbourhood is a good investment, but I also need to convey the heart and soul of a community based on my personal experience.”**

I also learned that I can trust my gut when it comes to recognizing talent that will resonate with audiences. Bidding wars are as common in the entertainment industry as they are in Toronto's real estate market. When I'd come across a hot artist, there was always someone that wanted to work with them just as much as I did. It confirmed that if you want the deal to go through, everyone has to get something out of it. My ability to watch people and figure out how much they really wanted something really served me well.

### Isn't a bidding war all about winning regardless of the industry?

Absolutely not. In entertainment, I may get the deal but if I overpaid or miscalculated interest in that artist, I may break even or lose money. When bidding on a house or condo, I need to know how much my client really wants that home. I focus on the non-verbal cues, because what people actually say isn't necessarily what they truly feel. Over the years, I've honed my ability to read people. If they adore that specific house, it's worth it to them to pay more by however much provided they can afford it.

### Can you share a once-in-a-lifetime moment from your time working with breaking artists such as Hardwell and Avicii as well as the now mainstream, Toronto-based R&B artist The Weeknd?

Absolutely, but let's make it two moments! Back in October 2011, I'd booked The Weeknd (aka Abel Tesfaye) into the Guelph Concert Theatre and pre-show he was at my condo warming up with Turkey Bourbon because Aretha Franklin had shared that tip with him. The New York Times covered that show and the reviews were overwhelmingly positive.

I'm a real foodie—I adore food! So I regularly post to Instagram and Twitter about great meals and restaurants. People are always asking me for recommendations and much like football, which is one of my biggest passions; food gives us one more topic to chat about.

### Why is a realtor's network so important?

Our network starts with our families and friends and extends beyond that to the people we meet through everything from sports to school and work.

The larger our immediate network, the greater our power to connect because every person knows hundreds of people and those numbers increase exponentially when you tap into social media.

When you have access to my network, whether you're buying or selling a home, you can access my resources whether you need an accountant, a lawyer or a great restaurant where you'll celebrate the closing.

### Does networking come naturally to you?

Absolutely—it's in my DNA! It's as natural to me as breathing. Wherever, I am—I strike up conversations because I'm genuinely interested in who people are, what they're doing and why.

### Where do you see yourself in five years?

Right now, I love working on my own but I'd be crazy not to take advantage of growing up with family and friends who've been building Toronto going back four generations. I want to leverage the knowledge and perspective I picked up around the dining room table and on cottage weekends to grow my business and develop my own team with the guidance and help of my broker Leah Ambler.