

International reach

Natasha Higgins talks to Anita Mehra, Managing Director of Benham and Reeves Residential Lettings

Put simply, Anita Mehra is a visionary. In the course of her career, which spans over 30 years, she has continually identified gaps in the buy-to-let market and successfully sought to fill them. As a result, she now not only runs a successful chain of ten residential letting agencies across London with international offices in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, India and Dubai, her business has expanded

into other fields including furnishings and interior design.

"I started in the accounts department of Benham & Reeves Residential Lettings in the late seventies," Anita explains. "I didn't have a background in property but I was ambitious and quickly developed a passion for it." So strong was her passion, that by 1998 she had taken over as Managing Director.

"When I first joined the company there

were few women in property; to progress in the industry you really had to stand out. I remember actively approaching agency partner Cyril Brown in 1983 about buying a stake in the company, his response was curt: "The company isn't for sale".

As Anita's business acumen grew, so did her desire to offer clients the very best of customer service – something for which the company is renowned today: Efficiency, unbiased advice and value for money are at the forefront of her business model. "I still like to meet as many of our clients as possible," says Anita, with genuine delight. "I also ask my clients to be honest, to tell me if they're unhappy with any aspect of our service."

By 'clients' Anita is of course referring to landlords throughout the world who use Benham & Reeves Residential Lettings to let and manage their London properties. Much of her time is spent in the South East Asia where a vast majority of buy-to-let investors in the London property market can be found. "20 years ago we spotted the need for offices in the countries where so many of our clients are based. We employ multi-lingual staff and set up our first office in 1995 in Hong Kong followed shortly after by Singapore."

"Lettings is a very different animal to sales," states Anita. "As specialists in lettings and property management, we have on-going contact with our clients unlike sales which is based around a single transaction. We're keen to have the same clients in 20 years time so we nurture those relationships: We offer advice from unbiased opinions

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Grosvenor Waterside, Chelsea

that we've been asked to design their show flats." Anita is involved in the design process mainly when a property is not letting quickly. She will look at it and advise if it needs freshening up with a new lick of paint or more modern furnishings. For most properties, however, the company employs a group of experienced designers.

Today, Anita and fellow director and Head of Lettings Marc von Grundherr travel around the world dividing their

time between the various offices. Their expertise is also called upon by banks and organisations where they frequently gives

"We offer advice from unbiased opinions on property investments to how much clients should be spending on furnishing their properties in accordance with rental yields".

talks and seminars about the London property market to investors.

The agency has certainly come a long way since its flagship office opened in Hampstead in the fifties, over half a century ago. Today Benham & Reeves Residential Lettings have grown to become central London's largest,



Imperial Wharf, Fulham

independently owned lettings agency. With a team of four directors, Vidhur Mehra, Finance Director, Simran Prasad who heads up the legal side of the business, Lettings Director Marc von Grundherr, Mansi Mehra Design Director, 15 management staff and around 100 employees across London, the business is growing.

So what exactly lies in store for the future? "we've recently opened an office in Kuala Lumpur and plan to open two further letting offices in London next year. We have always had offices strategically positioned near or within developments to suit our demand and we have identified two further areas."

As for Anita, she has no plans to slow down just yet: "If I had to give up my job it would be like punishment. I love what I do. I enjoy travelling the world and meeting new people but mostly I love helping investors reach their investment goals. My personal motto lies in treating people as you would want to be treated and always giving my best".

TO LET: Wychcombe Studios, Hampstead, NW3, £3,500 per week
Five bedroom house.



TO LET: Lyncroft Gardens, Hampstead, NW3, £675 per week
Two bedroom apartment.



TO LET: Castle Yard, Highgate, N6, £550 per week
Two bedroom cottage.



TO LET: Beaufort Park, NW9, £270 per week
One -bedroom apartment.

