

# Vivian L. Turok

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, DIVARIS REAL ESTATE INC.

Vivian L. Turok is the first woman to receive the Platinum Award for Commercial Sales and Leasing Achievements from the Hampton Roads Commercial Alliance (previously the Commercial Real Estate Council).

## AS SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

I represent a number of local and national tenants as well as landlords with a total of more than a million square feet. That's the main thing I do. I have a good knowledge of the market and provide clients with representation. I also specialize in representing landlords, tenants and office leasing transactions. I do a similar service for buyers and sellers of office properties.

## MY SOUTH AFRICAN ROOTS

I began my career in South Africa. After graduating from the University of Cape Town, I began working for Divaris 33 years ago. I started off by doing commercial real estate. I began learning the business and soon became a full-fledged commercial real estate agent. I was one of the first female agents in Cape Town.

Early on in my career, I wasn't taken seriously by owners and prospective clients. Commercial real estate was a male-dominated profession in that area. I overcame that with hard work and perseverance. Today people are much more open-minded about women in this profession.

I came to the States in 1986. Gerald and Michael Divaris had come (from South Africa) a few years earlier. They asked me if I was interested in moving to this area and I said yes.

It was very different from what my husband and I were used to. The only family I had in America lived in Los Angeles. In South Africa, I knew everyone and had connections. After moving to Virginia Beach, I had to branch out and become familiar with everyone.

## A REAL ESTATE CAREER

I graduated from the university with a degree in social sci-

ence. At the time, the Soweto riots were going on in South Africa. Times were really bad. It was difficult to look for a job in my field. So when Gerald, a family friend, asked me to come aboard, I thought I would give it a try.

I love the challenge of the job. When I'm challenged, I'm at my best. I enjoy dealing with the decisionmakers in commercial real estate. The only difficult part of this job is that it's still a male-dominated industry. I think it's important to show people that women have the ability to perform at the same level as men.

## COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE FOR WOMEN

This is an organization that mentors women. It's known by its acronym, CREW. Its mission is to promote women in commercial real estate. It's actually an international network. I'm a member of the advisory council and co-chair for the sponsorship committee. We discuss the mission of CREW and how we should go forward in the future. It's been wonderful to be part of this organization. We help and mentor each other. I always tell the women I mentor to be persistent and hard-working and you will eventually get what you wish for.

## EFFECTS OF THE ECONOMY

You know the Hampton Roads market has been affected by the recession. I think our area remains in a relatively stable state compared to most markets. This is obviously due to the military presence. I see 2010 shaping up to be a good year compared to 2009. This is a circular business. We experience highs and lows.

## ON THE REWARD

It's an amazing experience to receive this. I felt so proud to



HARRY GERWIEN

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be one of the first women to receive this award. The last 33 years have been the best years of my personal and professional life. Michael and Gerald Divaris, along with my husband Paul, have been my best cheerleaders. □