

## Realla in conversation with Davide Gaeta – Head of UK Digital Marketing at BNP Paribas Real Estate

**Realla:** Could you please introduce yourself briefly?

**Davide:** My name is David Guetta and I'm the head of UK digital marketing for BNP Paribas Real Estate. I look after the commercial and residential business from the digital marketing perspective. I took over this role in December 2017.

**Realla:** Could you tell us a bit more about your background before you joined BNP?

**Davide:** My background is marketing and digital marketing. I firstly started in advertising after my university my studies in Italy twelve years ago. From advertising, I moved to the public sector. After my studies in London, I decided to steer my career on a more digital marketing focussed path. It is in London where I moved to a very niche market working for information technology companies, specifically for the big boys like Apple, Samsung, IBM and Toshiba. There I was working on the core marketing side in managing digital marketing campaigns and working alongside with a chief technology officer and a chief marketing officer. We were working in this kind of a very tech-focussed environment were obviously from a digital marketing perspective I had a huge advantage. We were, in simple terms, actually speaking the same language as tech guys. It was very straightforward to deliver digital marketing campaigns most efficiently and using the best technology there. From there I was approached by BNP Paribas Group Europe with an opportunity at BNP Paribas Real Estate UK which I took and here I am.

**Realla** So what do you find most interesting about the commercial property industry today?

**Davide** What I found most interesting personally was the journey we have had since the acquisition of Strutt and Parker by BNP Paribas Real Estate UK. As we became a real estate group of significant size, we were able to cover the full property lifecycle from commercial to residential to rural to forestry. I think it was a huge opportunity from a digital marketing perspective, as there is a complexity in commercial and residential for digital marketing. I still think that in the sector there is no great level of maturity. That means there is a great opportunity where I can introduce new technologies adding value to the commercial industry. In the beginning, the speed of adoption of the different technology was split. I could see the discrepancy between residential which is much more consumer focussed and commercial real estate which had some difficulties in approaching internal stakeholders and wider audience. At the moment what I find is the way how the industry and my stakeholders are reacting is changing. There is a kind of change in the speed of adoption. They seem to be much more responsive. They seem to be much more reactive. I think we've got to the point where we can really be in a position to start producing highly effective digital campaigns.

**Realla** What do you think the biggest challenges are for firms like BNP in today's market?

**Davide** I would say the biggest challenge is being able to adapt to the change of the market as a large enterprise business. From the digital marketing point of view, there is also the ability to provide my agents from the commercial team with the most advanced tools in a way that they are digestible and competitive. Agents must be able to get a value and benefits out of them. For me, I would say the biggest challenge is to make sure that I can be efficient and at the same time be quick in developing new solutions.

**Realla** What's your biggest ambition for the next 12 months?

**Davide** I would say the biggest ambition is to be able to manage the data in a way that is much more efficient. We want to get more value out of all data as we can anticipate the fragmentation of different data source and data sets within the next couple of years. Plus, being able to monetize the data with the right management platform is the goal.

**Realla** How long have you been working with Realla?

**Davide** I think the very first trial it was at the beginning of the Q1 in 2017. We went through trial periods and now we've been using Realla over two years as the full use of the platform for our UK business.

**Realla** What are your objectives for using Realla?

**Davide** I would say the main objective of using Realla is slightly different today from what it used to be a couple of years ago. When I took over this role and I was primarily looking after the commercial business of BNP Paribas Real Estate. My main objective was the consolidation of all my ecosystems and all digital platforms including commercial marketplaces. Today we have a more dynamic business with the focus on more sectors. I would say that the main objective is to increase the quality of our online activities and results. At the same time, I want to provide a more efficient tool for my commercial markets team. It is also true that I would say is also to increase efficiency. With less time dedicated to managing listings will allow my team to dedicate more time to more productive activities.

I also think the difference between now and two years ago is that from the commercial real estate perspective the online space is much more appealing. If you think about who the main audience of commercial real estate is, they are investors. Small and large investors, fund managers are becoming much more demanding from online platforms. I think one thing that I really like about Realla is the way how it can be flexible in adopting the different functionalities to meet the new digital audience needs. For example, I would say it's not really common that you have a commercial real estate software or a commercial marketplace that can be flexible across platforms and devices. I think one of the beauties of Realla is that it really has real-time relevance.

**Realla** Can you talk us through your lead generation strategy?

**Davide** Capturing the need for prospects when they are looking for a commercial property online is something that is part of my lead generation activity and my lead generation strategy. The end goal is obviously to increase the lead generation. I don't want to increase my lead generation just for numbers' sake but I would like to get more quality out of my lead generation. This is something I think we are trying to work together with Realla. I believe we would like to achieve together to have mutual success.

**Realla** One thing that we've done together in terms of improving the actual quality of listings was to focus on property descriptions and photography. Could you talk through this process?

**Davide** Yeah sure - one of the workstreams between Realla and BNP Paribas Real Estate UK concentrated on improving the quality of how we are actually presenting and

introducing our listings to the audience. One of the biggest problem in the past was the quality and the inconsistency between different listings including photography, 3D videos and so on. I think that with Realla we found the way to have more consistency and to streamline the process of providing very high-quality listings. I would say that we achieved this through teamwork. First of all, it has been very important to have the right tools in the right place. Having Realla for our full commercial team has helped to have more user feedback and better user adoption. We were able to deliver a richer experience, a different experience compared with three years ago when no one really was paying attention to the quality of online listings. Today in a world where everything is online, we need to make sure we provide the best user experience across all channels, not only our website. I think it is important to align the B2B world with the B2C world where digital blends with physical.

**Realla** How do you measure performance in terms of conversions and lead quality?

**Davide** From our from our digital marketing perspective, I'm using different tracking tools. We do have a CRM as well. I'm only mapping the lead journey from the moment that we've received a lead. We then track a lead to the moment where we can hand over to the sales team. Let's call our agents the sales team. At the moment I can tell you is at the moment between 28 and 25 per cent is the ratio between the lead generated and the ones that are actually converted into a request for a viewing. I can see that there is acute value in the journey and it is something we are working on. Hopefully, we are going to have a full view of the conversions in the future. That's my end goal.

**Realla** How would you describe the benefit of using Realla?

**Davide** The benefit of using Realla has been an increase in the number of leads. First of all, we could see an increased number of leads that we generated via the portal and via the platform. That's one of the first key points. I would say that's from all the leads we received we get more viewing requests via the online platform.

**Realla** If you're going to share an insight with a senior leader in your business about the most important trends in digital marketing, what would you say?

**Davide** Based on my experience I would probably say that my recommendation would be to focus more on the data intelligence side of the business. I know it can be seen as something boring or annoying. I think what is really important today is to start recognizing the importance of the data sets that we have. I think I would probably suggest starting investing and dedicating more resources and energy to the data and the data intelligence element. This will give us a competitive advantage. I would focus more on investing in data.

**Realla** Thank you.