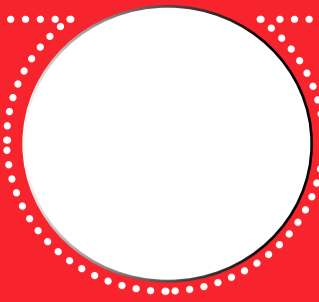


Set up your own

# Estate Agency

and help create a  
national network of  
ethical offices





# Contents





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## In the beginning

In 2015, Two Rivers Housing decided to take a huge leap into the commercial world by setting up an estate agency. We did this to save the ever-increasing fees we were paying to external agents for selling our property, and to increase the standards of service that our customers were receiving. We also intended to offer this ethical service to private clients and other local property developers, to create additional income.

Three years on, TwoCan estate agents is so successful that we think other housing associations and like-minded companies will also benefit from opening a branch, using the tried-and-tested business model we have perfected.

We hope this is the beginning of a national network of ethical estate agencies, all run individually by associations working together to improve the affordable homes sector.

This is our story. We hope it may become yours as well.

**twocan**  
estate agents

# Why sell our own properties?

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At Two Rivers Housing, we had been looking at a variety of ways to increase surplus, in order to protect and improve our financial position for the future.

As we were planning to increase our build programme, and this was to include market sale properties in addition to Shared Ownership and Affordable homes, we realised our payments to estate agents were only going to increase over the coming years.

On top of that, we already handled many parts of the sales transaction anyway, finding that traditional estate agents didn't always understand the criteria and additional procedures required when selling some of our products.

We realised selling our own properties would mean:

- we would save all the money we paid to agents
- we could provide a joined-up service to our customers
- our development, home ownership and sales teams could all work in close harmony, saving time and simplifying the process for all.

When we looked at what was needed, we realised it wasn't such a big step as we had first thought.

Employing a sales and lettings expert to work in partnership with our other team members allowed us to fill our knowledge and skills gap.



*Increased savings and increased income.*

This new employee would be responsible for measuring and photographing the properties, creating floorplans, uploading the information onto websites and then managing the client registration, viewing arrangements and sales negotiation.

Sitting within the home ownership team, they had expert assistance on hand when dealing with any non-standard property type.

This, we discovered, enabled us to better qualify potential customers, saving us time by not instigating transactions that later fell through due to ineligibility, and saving us money by having properties empty for shorter periods of time.

It also led to happier customers who got the right product for them, were communicated with professionally and courteously, and were not delayed unnecessarily.

This was reinforced by our relationships with mortgage advisors and conveyancers. We only recommended and referred to professionals who specialised and understood our sector, rather than to the one that would pay the largest referral fee.

This strengthened our service and added to the overall success of our business.



*It also led  
to happier  
customers.*

# But why an estate agency rather than a sales force?

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When we looked at how our agency would work, we realised that most of the cost is there whether you sell one house or 100. If you are going to create a website, pay to go on Rightmove and Zoopla, and employ a new member of staff to sell your own property, you may as well offer the service to others and create some income on top of the savings.

The digital revolution had helped us in this area. Ten years ago, estate agents needed to have a high street office or people would not find them and they would struggle to sell and rent out property.

Now, almost all of the marketing is online, and nearly all of the communication is by email. It didn't matter that our office was off the main road. In fact, many modern agents work from home.

Our office was the best of both worlds as we could utilise the customer services team to answer our overflow calls and our reception desk to greet any visitors, without having to pay for an office on the high street, or for additional administration staff.

Looking at the competition for TwoCan, we also felt that an ethical agent would stand out from the crowd.

Most of the regular agents had fairly similar styles and approaches, and the fact that we were part of a housing association strengthened our appeal to many, and reassured potential customers of our property expertise.

Where we were particularly successful was with other local housing associations. We contacted the ones with properties in our area and found they were happy to sell or rent them through us.

This was for two main reasons.

Firstly, they were aware, like us, that knowledgeable staff can make all the difference and our team was familiar with how HAs operated.

Secondly, they were happier to pay us and keep the money in affordable housing, than to see it go into the private sector.

# The reason to offer a franchise

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Three years on and TwoCan is a success. We can see the benefits for other housing associations following suit and setting up their own agency, but we are also aware that designing a new business, with all of the branding, legal documents, marketing literature and research needed to get it right, costs a great deal of time and money.

As we have a management structure in place and have already created a successful model, it seemed an obvious next step to offer everything we have to other like-minded companies, saving them the hassle and cost, whilst recuperating some of our initial set-up expenses.

This will save everyone having the same problems we faced with a new business.

It is always tricky for the first couple of years whilst you adapt the initial design and find out what works and what doesn't.

Using our model, you can open a TwoCan estate agency knowing every part has been tried-and-tested allowing you to concentrate on selling and letting, rather than marketing and compliance.



*Saving you  
valuable  
time and  
money.*

# How it works

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We are offering you the opportunity to run your own TwoCan agency. You can decide whether it offers sales and lettings, or just one of them. You can decide how you staff it, what the hours of work are, and how much you want to spend on marketing, although we will advise what works for us and the industry standard.

We will offer you the whole branded package ready for you to download and use. This includes all letters, contracts, standard forms, business cards, property particulars and For Sale/To Let boards. We will also show you what has worked for us, and help you to set up all your processes and procedures.

We will give you access to our website and help you set up the software and marketing licences. We will help you with job descriptions and all pre-opening training. We will spend time familiarising your staff with the floorplan software, and the agency management software we recommend.

With our oversight, you can start trading in less than 10 weeks, without concerns over anti-money laundering and property misdescriptions. Our head office facility will provide all the information you need to start, and will continue to monitor and advise when legislation changes.

Once open, your branch will have a comprehensive Operations Manual with information and guidance on all the day-to-day functions of an estate agency, plus telephone and email head office support on hand during office hours.

*How it works...  
You decide.*

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The whole branded packing is ready for you to use.



You could start trading in less than 10 weeks.



# The next step

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If you are building Shared Ownership, market sale or market rent properties, or if you have a large number of old stock properties to sell on, this could give you more control, a better relationship with your customers, and create additional income for you to re-invest.

If you would like to discuss how you can be part of the TwoCan success story, please arrange for us to visit you by contacting:

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