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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***Real Estate Firm Prioritizes Professionalism Over Profits***

**(Plymouth, MI)** A veteran local Realtor has created a real estate company that places professionalism, commitment to customer satisfaction, teamwork and ongoing Realtor training, education and support as priorities of greater importance than bottom-line company profitability. Professional One Real Estate is the first company to guarantee its services across the board in the form of a “zero commitment” policy that permits its clients to rescind their contractual relationships with the company at any time, for any reason.

The company concept, says broker/owner Michael McClure, is simple: “The real estate industry has in many respects lost sight of the fact that the business is about satisfying clients. And you satisfy clients by providing great service. And you provide great service by educating, training and supporting your agents to make them the best in the industry. I am assembling a real estate all-star team that will be the best in the business. I intend to be the New York Yankees or the Detroit Red Wings of real estate. Our ‘guaranteed services’ policy is the angle that gives real legitimacy to our contention that we are the best in the industry. This policy forces us to deliver on our claim of being a superior service provider.”

McClure went on to say, “If you look at this from either end of the spectrum, you come to the same basic conclusion. Most of the big national franchises are based on the misguided concept that ‘bigger is better.’ This is the result of the fact that brokers’ margins have been shrinking for many years, so a brokerage does not make much money from a given individual agent, which means you must have a lot of agents to survive. Narrow margins, in turn, create unwillingness on the part of companies to invest in individual agents, because you can’t very well spend \$5,000 per year training someone that is contributing \$5,000 to your bottom line. And when you don’t train people, quality of service suffers.”

“From an agent’s perspective, real estate is very much a ‘confidence’ business. Without confidence, it is hard to be successful. I believe that confidence is tied directly to competence. There is so much to know in real estate – salesmanship, contracts, law, psychology, title issues, accounting, finance, etc. – that it is hard to be competent without extensive, ongoing training. What you end up with is an industry in which the exact things that people need to be successful – extensive training, administrative support and broker involvement – are precisely the things that are NOT being provided, at least not on a consistent,

industry-wide basis. This is why turnover in the industry is so high, and why the average income for a beginner in real estate is so low. Common sense would tell you that companies that operate in this fashion won't be able to sustain long term success. The end result of this all-too-common dynamic is an erosion of consumer confidence – which has obviously happened in our industry – along with a corresponding increase in people buying and selling real estate without realtors.”

When asked for his thoughts on what can be done to reverse these negative trends, McClure stated, “I believe that the logical responses to the challenges facing real estate are simple, and as follows:

- Put the emphasis on quality of service, not on quantity of service. I've always believed that consistent quality is the key to success in any business. If the focus is first and foremost on profits, quality often suffers. If, on the other hand, the focus is on quality, profits will inevitably follow. It's the age-old struggle between 'get rich quick' and 'build it slow and build it to last.' I'm afraid most of the industry has opted for the former. I have absolutely opted for the latter
- Focus on making existing agents the best they can be. That is, prioritize the investment you make in the people you already have, and de-prioritize recruiting
- Provide outstanding administrative support so that agents can focus on doing what they do best: generating sales. This also has the twin benefit of increasing the esprit de corps within an office
- Only include people that have absolute integrity and a complete commitment to client service
- On an office level, create an environment where people view one another as teammates rather than competitors.”

McClure continued: “As the old adage goes, ‘necessity is the mother of invention.’ This industry has been crying out for a new business model for many years; all we are doing is filling an obvious void. The name says it all: Our entire emphasis is on creating the most PROFESSIONAL organization in the industry. We are going back to the basics of any successful business: focusing on pleasing clients and helping our agents to be the best that they can be by providing constant training and support, and then letting the profits fall where they may. This may sound naive or simplistic, but it works. Of course, many will hear this and think, ‘They're just another company making hollow promises of superior service.’ Here's the proof that we aren't: We guarantee our clients' satisfaction, in writing. There are no catches, and there is no fine print. Prior to the signing of a purchase agreement, any Professional One client can rescind any contractual relationship with Professional One at any time for any reason. This makes working with us literally risk free. It puts all of the pressure on us to deliver. This forces us to be very good at what we do. And we are.”

In 1991, McClure, a Certified Public Accountant who graduated from Michigan State University in 1983 with a degree in Accounting, walked away from a promising, decade-long career with the international accounting firm Price Waterhouse to join the family real estate business. “As a CPA, I felt I had a great business education, I always wanted to be my own boss and there was an obvious opportunity, so I thought I'd give it a go.” Thirteen years later, he and his partner, long-time top-producer and Re/Max Hall-of-Fame member Phyllis Lemon, have racked up over \$300 million in cumulative lifetime real estate sales. “We've been very fortunate, we've been blessed with a core group of over 500 wonderful past clients — and we've also worked very hard.”

When confronted with the question as to the specifics that make Professional One Real Estate unique, McClure replied: “There are a number of examples I can give you: First, I lead by example. I make myself as accessible as possible. I help my people with everything. Nothing is beneath me. I help people with brochures, I help them prepare offers, I help them prepare for listing appointments, I help them learn how to take and enhance digital photos, I've shown houses for them, and I meet with them privately and in groups. And I have two other licensed brokers on my staff that are similarly minded.”

“Second, I financially reward people that do the things that further my agenda. I have created a program with my relocation director that actually incents her to refer relocation leads to my other agents. As we do a lot of relocation business, virtually every one of my agents profits from this very

stable source of clients. We are creating a mentoring program in which I will give a portion of the company profits to the established agent that helps a newer agent learn the business. I am creating additional businesses - a title company, and a few other peripheral things - and I intend to include certain people in those future endeavors as a reward for being good and selfless workers. There is a 'big picture' plan above and beyond real estate. This gives people a much greater incentive than simply maximizing a commission split on a given real estate deal."

Terry Levett, a Certified Relocation Specialist with over 20 years of experience and over \$200 million of relocation-specific sales and one of the three licensed brokers at Professional One, had this to say: "I've worked for several of the national companies. This is by far the best environment I've ever worked in or encountered. The support I receive is unbelievable. My business is covered when I go on vacation, I have administrative support that is unbelievable, I am able to focus on developing my business instead of cutting into my efficiency following up on the minutiae, the office is wonderful, and the location is fantastic; I could go on and on. And the commitment to excellence is real. Michael (McClure) won't tolerate people that are not completely dedicated to providing the best service in the industry. I've been in this business a long time, and this is by far the happiest I've ever been."

McClure continued: "Third, I make a sincere attempt to include people that are already team-oriented, quality human beings. I want people that are focused on the client, not on themselves. To be candid, Professional One is not for everyone. I won't accept people that are not completely dedicated to being the best in the business. But that's OK, because I'm not trying to create the biggest organization. I'm trying to create the best organization. I have a 'wish list' of people that I hope will one day join Professional One. And that list is very short. I will always be hyper-selective, because it's the only way to ensure a consistently excellent professional service experience for each and every one of our clients. The philosophy of the majority of the industry is 'bigger is better.' Let's be honest: most real estate companies will take in anyone with a license. There is no screening, there is no interviewing and there is no counseling. Most companies have a total 'open door' policy. Bigger may be better in manufacturing, for example, where economies of scale considerations apply. However, in professional services like real estate, bigger is frequently the precursor to an erosion of quality."

"Fourth, I try to include people that have professional backgrounds, and or backgrounds that are germane to real estate. Right now, our team includes an attorney, a CPA, two MBA's, a licensed builder, a linguistics expert that speaks five languages fluently, a Certified Relocation Professional, a member of the Re/Max Hall of Fame, a former bank manager, a former director of advertising for a division of General Motors, a mortgage processing expert, a high school principal, two former teachers and an interior designer. We have graduates from the University of Michigan, Central Michigan, Michigan State, Kalamazoo College, Miami of Ohio and even an MBA from Moscow State University (that's Russia, not Idaho). We have three former Re/Max agents, five former Keller Williams agents, three former Michigan Group agents, two former Real Estate One agents and a former Century 21 agent, among others. With this breadth of experience in things relevant to real estate, we have a legitimate reason to want to help one another. Now add in the financial incentives of the mentoring program and the relocation referral program, and you have serious motivations to collaborate and work as a truly unified team."

"Fifth, we have a great office, which is very plush and cutting edge. It was designed to feel like a luxury home – it is the absolute antithesis of the drab, boring, gray, gloomy environment that you find in most corporate spaces. It is a fun, comfortable place to work. We have broadband at every desk. We're adding a wireless network. We're located in the heart of one of the most vibrant, dynamic, evolving communities around: downtown Plymouth. People often say that Plymouth is becoming a mini-Birmingham, and I completely agree with that. Finally, we have open workspaces instead of a slew of claustrophobic offices as is the norm for the industry. This promotes communication, teamwork and group awareness, and it's just plain more fun."

"Sixth, I have great role models. Our core group of agents has incredible experience - we have nearly \$.7 BILLION worth of sales experience on our small staff already – and, far more importantly, this core group is super-committed to excellence and client service. To say that they are obsessed is not at all an exaggeration. And, more importantly, they are people of absolute integrity. This sets the tone for the office in total. It makes my highest objective - creating and maintaining an atmosphere of the utmost professionalism - so much easier to accomplish."

"Seventh, I always try to do what is 'right,' which may or may not be what is the most financially advantageous for the company. I think this is crucial, because you absolutely must have the respect of your agents and your peers. Some brokers end up with two sets of rules: one for the average agent, and one for the 'top producer.' I think this is bad policy. It invariably hurts company profitability, and it damages company morale."

"Finally, I spend the vast majority of my time developing, educating, supporting and motivating my existing agents – not on recruiting. We have a weekly staff meeting that typically lasts two hours, and then I meet with agents individually throughout the week. I know this sounds basic and overly simplistic, but this is what makes Professional One unique. I sincerely want to help each and every one of my agents be the best they can possibly be."

When posed with the question as to how a real estate company can grow and survive without recruiting in an industry that focuses on recruiting, McClure stated the following: "By simple word-of-mouth. By providing so much support for my people, that they can't help but want to tell others. And I know how much it means to an agent to have a broker that really cares about them as a person, and about how they are faring professionally. This whole situation simply sells itself."

Sue Darrow, a Professional One agent with a little less than three years experience, had this to say: "I literally had more intensive training in my first week at Professional One than I had in my first year at one of the big national companies. And that level of support and commitment has been consistent since I came here over a year ago. I feel badly for all the people in the business that have no idea what it means to be truly supported by their broker. I just sold a home in which I successfully competed against two other offers. The listing agent told me my offer was accepted because it was so complete and professional. I can tell you that this is the direct result of all of the training that I've received since I came to Professional One. And if that wasn't enough, I've received several relocation referrals, one of which was a \$1.7 million buyer. I never received any sort of referral at my original company. And the only thing better than the training and support is the people. It really is a great group. Coming to Professional One totally changed my outlook on my career."

Steve Levett, another Professional One agent with a broker's designation, added this: "I've been in real estate for 22 years, and I've managed five different real estate offices myself. I came to Professional One at the start of 2004. At the time I made the decision, I felt that I was taking a minor risk by coming to a small company without a national name. This year, I have made more money and worked fewer hours than any year that I've been in business. The administrative support that I've received is the best I've seen in the industry. I have outstanding broker support – I had a very complex 'Section 1031 Exchange' transaction this year involving commercial properties in which Mike (McClure) provided great guidance and advice. He even got an outside CPA involved at no cost to me or my client. And we have a great office environment. There are no 'bad seeds,' there are no egomaniac prima donnas and we have a lot of fun. Needless to say, my concerns about working for a small company were totally unfounded."

McClure was then asked about how a small, upstart company can realistically compete against the established brand recognition of the giants within the real estate industry. His response: "I have a number of points to make in response to that excellent question, as follows:

- I'm not trying to compete on the same level as the Re/Max's and Century 21's of the world. I'm creating a small, highly-trained, team-oriented group that will perform at a level that really

cannot be duplicated within a large organization. Imagine if you were trying to create a Blue Angels-type of precision flying team with 100 jets. You don't need to know much about flying to know that that probably wouldn't work very well. But with a small group of well trained, disciplined people, you can get breathtaking results;

- Real estate is a professional services industry, much like medicine and law. The best medical and legal practices are not the biggest, nor are they large national franchises. They tend to be smaller, one-of-a-kind operations that are exclusive in terms of their practitioners and their clientele. They tend to have a small group of extremely talented, dedicated professionals that focus on being the best at what they do. They tend to build their businesses by word of mouth by providing exceptional service to their clients, not by simply hiring the most doctors or lawyers and shouting "look at how big we are" from the rooftops. Their clientele tends to be more sophisticated and educated and understanding of the fact that there is little correlation between size and skill (and, if such correlation exists, it is of an inverse nature). Smart agents understand this without being told;
- Many big-company brokers like to play the 'you-can't-do-business-without-a-big-name-behind-you' card. This is purely a scare tactic designed to keep their agents in place. I've switched companies three times in my 13 years, and I can honestly say that the moves have had no discernable effect on my business. Here's the secret that the brokers don't want the agents to know: clients work with, and develop professional relationships with, individual agents, not companies. My experience clearly shows that my clients place much more emphasis on the agent than on the company. Brokers do everything in their power to keep agents from thinking like this, but it really is the truth;
- At some point, I believe that the masses of agents will wake up and realize that they are not getting bang for their buck in terms of the cost/benefit of being affiliated with a large national franchise. When I was at several of the large companies, I received literally nothing more than a recognizable name and voicemail. And for that I paid a not inconsequential amount. Don't get me wrong; I think brokers should make a profit. But they should provide something valuable and tangible to their agents in exchange for the hard-earned money that agents bring in. The name recognition really doesn't mean much if there isn't also something of value that comes with it that helps the agent to have a better quality of life, and
- Having made the prior points, I do concede that there are certainly many agents out there that will never be able to be comfortable in a small company that lacks 'sufficient profile.' Again, that is fine. If they don't understand that, in the game of real estate, every agent is really building his or her own, individual, personal brand recognition through the quality of the work that they do each and every day for each and every one of their clients, then they really don't understand the business. My personal experience clearly shows that the brand recognition issue is highly overrated. At Professional One, we are committed to helping each and every one of our agents to build positive, durable brand recognition for themselves. They can carry that with them forever, no matter where they work."

When asked if he had any final thoughts, McClure concluded with these remarks: "From a real estate professional's perspective, I would ask two questions: Are you being properly served and supported by your current company, and do you feel as if you are an important, valued part of that company? If the answer to either of those questions is 'no,' then you owe it to yourself to seek an alternative real estate brokerage. Too many brokers get by without providing adequate support, training and mentoring for their agents. And too many brokers spend too much time looking for the next agent to recruit and not enough time taking care of the ones they already have. These things are flat out wrong. Agents need to understand they do have choices. Finally, I would ask this question: do you receive business just because you work for a 'name' company? I can tell you this: in more than a decade of working for several national franchises, I never did. Not one time did someone call me out of the blue and say, "I understand that you work for 'Big National Franchise X,' will you come and list my house?" Every client I've ever had was obtained through my own efforts. If people weren't first and foremost comfortable with me personally, the logo on the business card was irrelevant. And if people were comfortable with

me personally, then the logo on the business card was inconsequential. At the end of the day, it always comes down to the basic human relationship between agent and client.”

“From the public’s perspective, I would ask these two questions: A home is typically the single largest, most valuable investment that most people will ever own. Why would you entrust the purchase or sale of that asset to anyone other than a true professional? I’m not suggesting that Professional One is the only company that has great service providers – of course, there are good people in most companies. However, I am consistently amazed how often people select a realtor with so little thought and research. Would you have your dream home built by someone that just obtained their builder’s license? Would you have surgery performed by someone that dabbled in medicine? And yet people buy and sell homes every day with Realtors that are sometimes not even remotely qualified to function as agents. Do your homework, please. Interview a number of agents. Ask tough questions. (For additional ideas to help you separate the good realtors from the bad, check out <http://professionalone.com/selectarealtor.htm>.) **My second question is this: Which type of company is likely to provide better service - the one that guarantees its services or all the others that do not?**