

# Winning Team: A Look Back and What's Ahead for Peoples Company's Recruiting, Acquisitions in 2015

Published on Jan 27, 2015 by Andrew Westlake



As we closed out the books for 2014, I found myself reflecting on Peoples Company's successes, challenges and our sales professionals throughout the past 12 months. It was a great year in which we assisted greater numbers of landowners in the buying and selling of land than ever before. [Peoples Company](#) launched its appraisal business and expanded our land management team. Finally, we recruited some of the best-and-brightest sales professionals in the industry to join our team – either individually or through acquisition. All of this has led to unprecedented growth and opportunity for [our professionals](#) and the landowners we serve.

In April, The Dirt Dealer, [Jeffrey T. Obrecht](#), joined the team. He has consistently been the leading land auctioneer and sales professional in Iowa and across the Midwest. Jeff's primary observation since starting at Peoples Company has been how engaged our agents are, and how in all of his 30-plus years in the industry he's never witnessed the level of collaboration that he's experienced here in only a few months. [Mollie Aronowitz](#) joined her father, Randy Luze, on the Peoples Company Land Management team. Together, they have modernized our management systems, increased collaboration with our sales professionals, and streamlined relationships with landowners, farm operators, and vendors.

Late in the year, [Peoples Company acquired Total Realty Co.](#) headquartered in DeWitt, Iowa. With this acquisition, Doug Yegge and his team of professionals joined our ranks. Another of the Midwest's leading land professionals, Doug has been responsible for putting together some of the largest land transactions from Mississippi to Minnesota. Chuck Greene, Dave Heunke, and Jim Keadly are the other members of Doug's team who add great deal of expertise and experience to the Peoples Company roster.

Each of the land professionals that Peoples Company welcomed throughout the year came to us with valuable experience in the ag industry that helps to bolster our collective knowledge and allows us to better serve our clientele. [Bradley Hayes](#) is relatively new to the industry, yet brings solid appraisal experience to our team. [Rick Shafer](#), who recently retired from NRCS, is now a full-time farm and land appraiser helping to lead our new Appraisal division.

[Jared Chambers](#) is a skilled auctioneer from Corydon, and adds new depth to Peoples Company's Land Auction services. Jared, who has won several national auctioneering awards, bolsters our presence southeastern Iowa. [Kyle Walker](#) joined the company early in the year and brought his experience of helping lead one of the state's largest cattle ranching operations. Finally, [Travis Smock](#) spent most of 2014 as a Peoples Company New Associate trainee, helping support two of our more experienced agents. He learned the mechanics of the business from land agents such as Daran Becker and Matt Adams, and has proven his acuity for farm brokerage. Travis completed his commitment as a New Associate in November 2014, and began building his brokerage business with a focus of his efforts on Northeastern Iowa.

We are only a few weeks into the New Year and already Peoples Company has added experienced sales professionals to our rolls. Dennis Peterson, who has built a solid real estate career in the Cedar Rapids area, has helped us to establish the company's newest branch office, and will be working closely with landowners in Eastern Iowa. Archie Kuntz has worn many hats throughout his career, and is now Peoples Company's newest professional focusing on land sales near Brooklyn, Iowa. Merrill Ahrens recently retired from a successful career in the banking industry. He will be working closely with Jeffrey Obrecht in the north-central part of the state later this spring.

Looking forward to the rest of 2015, we continue to search for experienced professionals interested in joining our team of leading land specialists. The idea of a "team" is probably overused in the workplace today. While we talk freely about "teamwork" and "team effort," the truth is that Peoples Company is more like a family. And when looking at bringing a new professional into the company, nothing is more important than how they will fit into the [existing culture and dynamic](#) of the organization.

In the real estate industry, sales professionals are generally independent contractors. As such, they tend to be an independent bunch and not prone to sharing business knowledge or asking others for advice. However, we ask our associates to collaborate and work cohesively for the benefit of both our clients and the company. While it sounds simple, this is unique in the industry today. Not often will you find a group of real estate professionals that act as resources and advocates for others within the company.

At Peoples Company, our associates will assist one another to solve challenging problems, share their knowledge to move a deal forward, and even give of their time without compensation to ensure the client is served to best of our abilities. Peoples Company is continually searching for acquisition opportunities and real estate professionals to join our leading land brokerage and farm management company. If you are innovative and resourceful, enjoy working with other professionals and looking for an opportunity to build lasting relationships in your community, we want to talk with you about the opportunities our firm has to offer.

If you'd like to know more about what sets us apart from our peers, please contact me directly at [Andrew@PeoplesCompany.com](mailto:Andrew@PeoplesCompany.com).

*Andrew Westlake is the Vice President of and a Broker with Peoples Company. A native of Bozeman, Montana, he grew up on a farm raising wheat and barley alongside a horse and cattle ranching operation.*

*Andrew and his family currently reside in Iowa, where he attended Iowa State University and spent a number of years as an Information Technology Programmer and Analyst in the banking, financial services and insurance industries. Andrew is licensed as Peoples Company's broker in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and Montana. He joined the Peoples Company team in 2008.*