

CALIFORNIA  
**REAL ESTATE JOURNAL**

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May 5, 2008

**THE CLOSING**  
THE HUMAN SIDE OF COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

# Alternative Means of Transportation

*Titan Real Estate head finds his piloting skills help him make inroads in business while beating the traffic*

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California traffic doesn't bother Kevin Kaseff much, but that's because the co-founder of **Titan Real Estate Investment Group** has found a faster form of transportation: his single-engine Cirrus SR22 airplane.

Kaseff's passion for flying also gives him a competitive edge when he's flying up and down the West Coast to check out properties.

He doesn't waste hours hanging out at the airport before a flight because of security requirements. And he doesn't have to worry about speeding tickets even when he reaches speeds of 225 miles per hour.

Yet more than the speed and absence of hassle, Kaseff considers it an edge because he spends more time speaking with potential clients in person.

"The more we become a business society full of e-mails and faxes, it still comes back to seeing the property and standing in front of the seller and having more of a face-to-face interaction," said Kaseff, who bought the plane three years ago.

About nine months ago, Steve Haupt, a partner in the Bakersfield office of Colliers Tingey, called Kaseff about a deal in San Diego that had fallen out of es-



Kevin Kaseff, president and chief executive officer of Titan Real Estate Investment Group, stands in front of the plane he flies to scout business opportunities throughout the state.

crow. Though Kaseff was in San Francisco for a 9 a.m. meeting, Haupt convinced him that he needed to jump on this deal.

"The seller was frustrated because the deal had just fallen out of escrow," Kaseff said. "I had the ability to use the plane to get in front of him immediately."

Kaseff flew to Bakersfield and picked up Haupt. The pair then flew to San Diego where they met with the seller for three hours on his boat in the San Diego Harbor.

Six months later they closed on 6001 Snow Road, a 350,000-square-foot cold-storage facility.

"Being able to respond quickly makes the seller believe you will get the deal done," Haupt said.

"During the time we talked on his boat in the San Diego Harbor, he got to know me and I got to know him," Kaseff said. "It worked out well."

It's not just business that benefits from Kaseff's pilot's license. After meeting with the client, Kaseff was able to fly Haupt back to Bakersfield then fly his plane to its home base at the Torrance Airport and be home in Manhattan Beach in time to have dinner with his family.

Haupt is glad that Kaseff, who owns a large portfolio in Bakersfield, is a regular client.

"It saves me time," Haupt said. "A two-hour drive gets reduced to a 20-minute flight."

### Longtime Love

Kaseff's passion for flying dates back to his childhood.

"I got the bug for flying because I went up with one of my dad's partners when I was 13 years old," Kaseff said.

His interest in flying stayed with him and when he was in college at the University of California, Santa Barbara, he decided to get his license.

"The process is pretty straight-forward," Kaseff said.

Through an organization at his university, he took the textbook-based class, cleared the physical and got 70 hours of flying under his belt. He then took the Federal Aviation Administration's test and earned his license.

After college, he quit flying while he built his career.

A finance major who originally planned to be a stock broker on Wall Street, Kaseff went to work for Integrated Resources, a now-defunct syndicator, when he was fresh out of college. After several years, he returned to school to get his master's of business administration from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn.

That led him to an MBA program with Cushman & Wakefield that shot him into a position in investment sales in that company's Los Angeles

office. But an offer from Insignia Financial Group to work as managing director of acquisitions for West Coast operations led him to his calling in commercial real estate.

"I made the transition from the brokerage side to the principal side, which was a love of mine and a goal of mine," Kaseff said.

When CB Richard Ellis bought out Insignia in 2003, Kaseff and three others left to form Titan.

"CB Richard Ellis didn't want the principal group; it wanted the management group and the leasing group," Kaseff said. "So I pulled together the guys from the acquisitions group, and we formed Titan."

The 15-person company targets properties all over the country in all asset classes. Titan currently owns 5 million square feet of properties worth \$2 billion in 19 states.

Around the time that Insignia was being bought out, a business associate of Kaseff's flew him to the Central Valley to assess a property - and he caught the flying bug again.

"Within a couple of months after the flight, I picked a school in Santa Monica to get my instrument rating," Kaseff said. "I decided then and there that I was going back into it. I saw the benefit from a business standpoint."

Kaseff doesn't consider himself someone drawn to high-risk hobbies, but he does admit to a preference for alternative forms of transportation considered risky by some.

"I own a BMW motorcycle," Kaseff said. "I typically go with a couple of friends for three- to four-day trips throughout California and Oregon several times a year."