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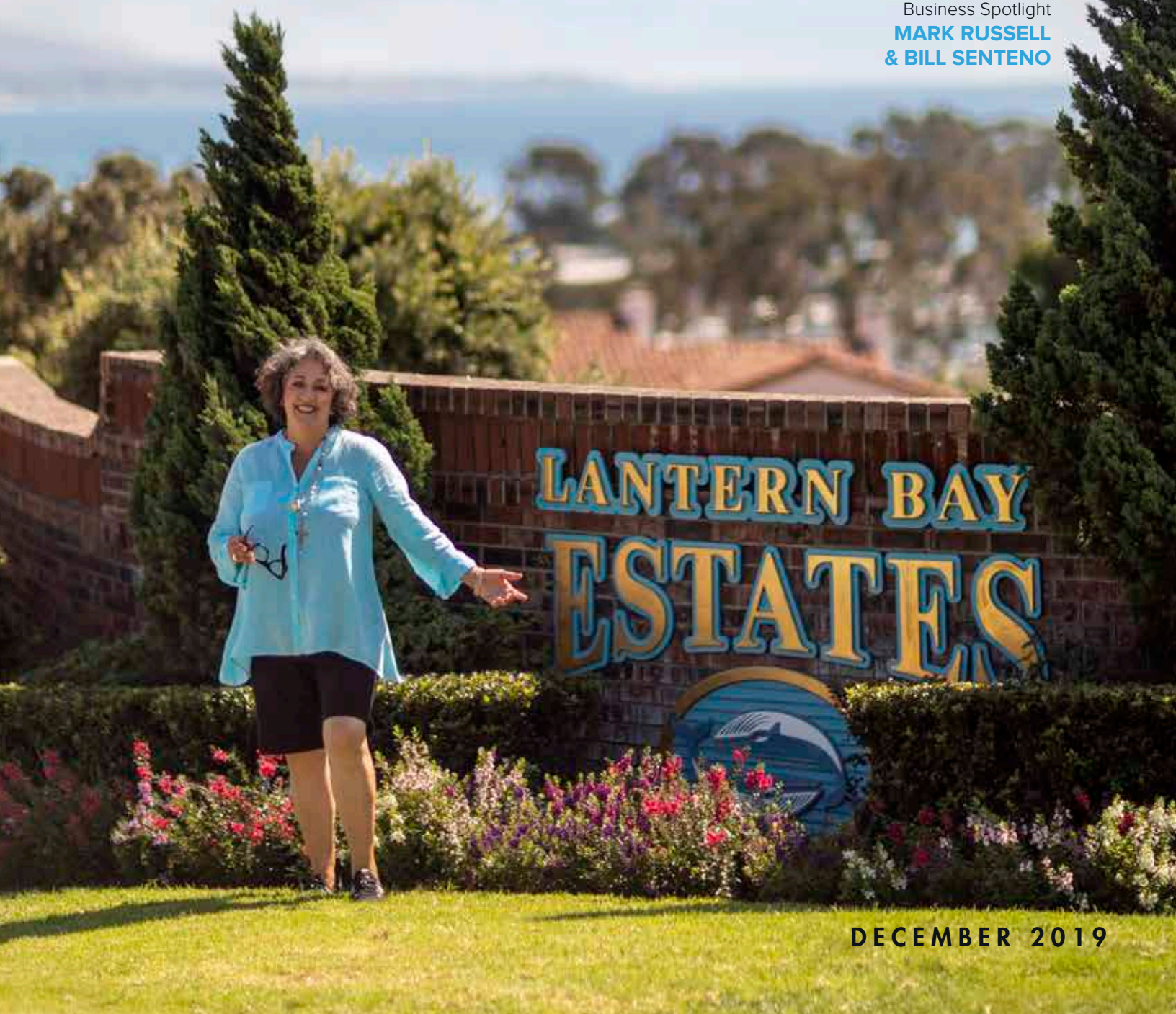
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& **CHRIS SIDLOW**

Agent Spotlight

**KELLY LECLAIR**

Business Spotlight

**MARK RUSSELL**  
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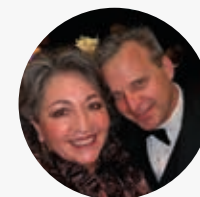
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- Martucci Angiano, First Team / Christie's International Real Estate

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► agent spotlight

# KELLY

## LeClair

### Staying True to Herself

By **Chris Menezes**  
Photos by **Andrew Bramasco**

12 • December 2019

Many agents stress the importance of finding a niche to focus on when building a successful business. While that may commonly refer to finding a particular segment of the market to hone in on, it can also be applied to marketing and branding, the identifying quality of your business compared to others. Successful branding often includes a genuine part of who you are, something that offers a level of authenticity. Much of Kelly LeClair's success in real estate is a result of this very thing, combining her background and who she is as a person with how she runs her business, in other words, her signature service.

Kelly grew up in New Jersey, about an hour outside of New York City. She attended Ithaca College with the goal of becoming a television

...





journalist. Before even graduating with her degree in journalism, she started her career on-air in the tiny market of Binghamton, NY. From then on, every few years, she moved to a bigger city for a new reporting job, until landing in California.

“I loved interviewing people, digging for stories, sorting through the facts, racing against a deadline, and ending each day sharing what I put together live on the air,” says Kelly.

After about 10 years as a reporter, Kelly saw the industry changing and knew she needed to switch paths. The real catalyst occurred when she became pregnant with her first child.

Although she thought about starting her own business, she was afraid that all of her experience in the newsroom wouldn’t translate to another industry. It turned out, however, that hustling to get “the story” every day was the perfect learning experience to become a successful REALTOR®.

Kelly had a relatively slow start, entering real estate in 2012. Her marketing at the time consisted of her pushing a stroller through the neighborhood while flyer-ing it. Her first “big sale” came from a referral for a \$250,000 condo where she forgot to check the “refrigerator box.” Her commission-only covered a pedicure and dinner out with her husband.

“It wasn’t easy and it wasn’t glamorous, but there was something in the back-and-forth of working with people, something that gave me a rush of adrenaline, just like going live on TV,” says Kelly.

“I loved the satisfaction of getting an offer accepted. I loved hearing ‘thank you’ from clients when I negotiated more money for them. I loved the pressure of meeting deadlines and following the contract.”

Kelly had built up some good momentum in her business when she became pregnant with her second child. Not wanting to stall, she came up with an idea to create content videos to send out to her email list and post on social media so that she could still be “seen,” while adjusting to life with two kids. She shot several segments and then launched LeClair Real Estate reels in September of 2014, a few days before her daughter was born. She sent one to



two videos out every couple of weeks to her sphere. Once she was fully back to work, she started shooting listing videos as well. While each year has been a little different in the type of videos she has created, the original idea behind them has remained the same: to tell real estate stories that are interesting so when that person is ready to buy or sell a house, they call Kelly.

“For me, video was a natural step. With many years in the newsroom writing my own stories, I knew I could explain real estate concepts and market trends in an easy-to-understand way. Today, 5 years later, many people are trying their own version of video and I think it’s great. For me, video elevated my business from amateur to professional. I think any REALTOR® can take advantage of video as well. You don’t have to have the camera experience that I had in order to present well,” says Kelly.

Last year, Kelly created an online course for REALTORS® to learn

how to use video and grow their business. She has laid out everything from how to get comfortable, to shooting with a camera, to writing scripts for listing videos. She’s posted everything on [www.kellyleclair.com](http://www.kellyleclair.com) to be available to everyone.

Being honest and transparent in building solid connections with others agents is just as important to Kelly than it is with her clients. “Cultivating positive relationships with others in the industry really makes a huge impact on future transactions,” she says. “Coming from a VERY competitive industry in TV news, I know that working in an ‘us versus them’ mentality is a waste of time and prevents deals from getting done.”

Not only has Kelly integrated her experience behind the camera into her business, but she has also drawn on her role as a mother to further enhance the service she provides. “In our culture, working mothers are expected to work like we don’t have kids and mother like we don’t have jobs. To overcome this, I have flipped the script in my mind and focus on how my experiences improve my work, from insight on functionality of a property, to anticipating the needs of a family who is juggling a move, to managing people and expectations during a transaction. If you have successfully negotiated

with a child that there will be no treats after dinner, then you aren’t easily persuaded to let your clients give in to an unfair repairs response,” says Kelly.

Kelly and her husband, Colin, have three kids—Parker (7), Hadley (5), and Lilly (10-months). They love going to the beach together, swimming in the pool, playing games and watching movies. Kelly and Tom are getting back into Triathlons (after 8 years) and plan to do the Half Ironman in Hawaii in May. Kelly is also re-learning the piano with Parker and Hadley, and loves to sing with them at home in the music room, in the car, and at Taka-O in San Clemente.

By incorporating all of her past experiences, the things that make up who she was, and is today, into her business, Kelly has created a truly genuine approach to building a successful career in real estate and making a positive impact within the industry.





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# CHRIS

SIDLOW

AND

# MAX

LINDENBERGER

**Partners,  
Friends**

**J**ust over a year ago, Chris Sidlow and Max Lindenberg were out on a camping trip with friends. Chris, then two years into his real estate career, remembers the trip that shifted their partnership – and their career paths – forever.

“Getting Max to come on board wasn’t easy,” Chris begins with a laugh. “We were out camping, and we were together for three or four days. It was a three-hour drive there and three-hour drive back. In real estate, you’re never off the clock. I remember the first day, pushing to get a deal. I was jumping up and down on a laptop in the middle of nowhere. Max was like, ‘What are you doing?’ I told him the basics of how the business worked. I said, ‘You should be doing this.’”

Shortly after, Max put his trust in Chris and made the leap to join him in real estate. While over the past year, the two have learned that they have different approaches to the business, similar backgrounds and work ethics keep them bonded together.

“We both had strong sales skills,” Chris reflects. “I told him, ‘I can assure you you’ll have your

best financial year working with me.’ And I believe I delivered.”

#### **From the Beginning: Chris**

“As a kid, I remember my mom dragging me from open house to house,” Chris reflects. “As an interior designer, it was what she liked.”

These early days left an imprint in Chris’s mind that ultimately led him back into the real estate business. He began his real estate career in 2012, working for Zillow selling advertising to real estate agents.

“I went to Zillow not to get into real estate, but it was a well-paying sales job,” Chris reflects. “I did well, but after my second year there, I was tired of teaching agents how to get rich and do well.”

Chris saw how successful one could be in real estate, and decided it was time to transition to the other side of the business. He took his time to learn from top real estate agents and build relationships with those he would eventually call his mentors before leaving Zillow for good.

...







Chris Sidlow



Max Lindenberger

...

“My top clients at Zillow took me under their wing, I helped them build their business, then I got my license. I learned real estate backwards from every other person. I am just starting to farm. I worked internet leads form the beginning. I am good at selling homes to people I’ve never met – it’s like online dating. It’s a funny dynamic, but it was my skill.”

Chris recognized early on that if he treated real estate like a traditional, full-time job, he’d already be at an advantage compared to the average agent. One deal turned into two, which turned into more, and in his first year, Chris closed 12 transactions.

“They weren’t big, but it was rewarding,” he recalls. “I realized I had the skills. The path of success was that I watched what other producers did, and I knew I had to do what everyone else wasn’t willing to do: grind, make the calls, and follow-through.”

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to do: grind, make the calls, and follow-through.”

#### From the Beginning: Max

“Before I graduated college, I was in the industry,” Max begins. Max’s father worked for a general contractor, and during his time in contracting, Max learned to understand everything from blueprints to development to construction. “I initially started in the engineering department, where I got an understanding of what it took to build something.”

After college, Max worked in sales in the action sports industry, and then in swimming. It was during this time that he met Chris through their mutual interest in motocross.

“Chris had approached me and said, ‘You’re easy to talk to, you get along with people, and have been in sales. This could be a good fit for you.’”

Max decided to put his faith in Chris and get his real estate license. He thought he’d start part-time but quickly recognized the opportunity present and dove into real estate fully.

“I’ve built relationships my whole life,” Max says. “I shadowed Chris for a bit to understand how contracts work, how to work with buyers as well as sellers, and we’ve put it all together. It’s been a lot of building, grinding, crazy ups and downs, and we’ve adapted and adjusted to things.”

As he looks ahead to his second year in real estate, Max has added investors and developers to his list of clients and has begun searching for small commercial deals. With a past background in construction, this development in his business is second nature.

#### Following Their Own Paths to Success

After a year of being in business together, Chris and Max have decided to dissolve their partnership - at least on paper.

“We made a decision at the beginning that after a year we would look at numbers and reevaluate if it made sense. We prepared for this,” Chris explains.

The duo discovered that they not only approach the business with different perspectives, but they have different interests going forward. Each has begun to develop their own niche, and as a result, they’ve decided to go their separate ways.

“Once we started doing it, we both learned a lot about ourselves and liked different aspects of the business,” Chris explains. “We both know we can find successes in the avenues that we were most drawn to.”

“Business aside, we are friends,” Max chimes in. “That’s very important to me. If something happened to either of us, we’d be friends. Our bond and friendship are so strong. We hang out on the weekends. That’s what made this partnership so fantastic. We’re not closing the door.”

While Chris and Max may work at different brokerages, they’ll still be sharing information back and forth and doing deals together.

“It’s a friendship and partnership that will never really go away, just on paper,” Max says. “We’ll always be partners and friends, and we want to see each other grow.”

“And it’ll be fun to compete against him,” Chris adds with a smile.



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# MARK & BILL RUSSELL SENTENO

business spotlight ◀◀

By Chris Menezes  
Photos by Andrew Bramasco

## THE RUSSELL SENTENO TEAM AT TICOR TITLE COMPANY

Bill Senteno and Mark Russell are exploring uncharted territory in the Title Industry with The Russell Senteno Team. By blending their experience from outside industries to synthesize information, create new ideas, and add more sales opportunities for their clients, they help build their clients' companies through data marketing, data targeting and selling more homes.

"We are the 'fresh set of eyes' for the real estate and title insurance industry," says Bill. "Nothing has changed in this industry for decades, which

allows our team to be contrarians in taking our business and its services to a level not explored previously."

As an experienced executive and vice president of sales, with a demonstrated history of working in marketing and advertising, Bill is skilled in negotiations, business planning, advertising, sales, and retail. After building a successful, independent escrow company, Bill was excited to join the Tigor Orange County family to utilize the support of the only Fortune 500 Title Insurance Company in the country. Specifically, Bill uses property/financial data to help his clients grow their real estate and mortgage businesses. ● ● ●



“We are the  
‘fresh set of  
eyes’ for the  
real estate  
and title  
insurance  
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...

Mark is a seasoned professional in the Title Insurance and Escrow industry with over 29 years experience. He has been a top producer and manager for several nationally recognized companies and has specialized in the facilitation of multi-state real estate transactions. Having founded several industry-related companies on his own prior to joining Tigor, Russell has a depth of knowledge regarding lender services that few title professionals can match. In addition to serving as the managing partner of The Russell Senteno Team with Bill, Russell is the vice president of the National Lender Division for Tigor Title.

Bill and Mark pride their team on its integrity and dedication to helping their clients' businesses grow. Having both lived in Orange County for decades, they have an extensive, local network that is able to meet virtually any need.

Always willing to make a connection or an introduction, they find creating long-lasting relationships to be by far the most fulfilling aspect of their work. They often find themselves out with clients and their families, golfing, playing tennis, fishing, and having beach days.

“Not only do our clients love the real estate industry as much as we do, but they also love the California coastal lifestyle. Loving and living life with our clients doesn't get any better,” says Bill.

Mark resides in southern California with his wife of 29 years, Rhonda, and their Jack Russell Terrier, Willie. They have two grown sons and enjoy traveling together, whether it's spending time on the golf course in La Quinta or fishing and camping in Mammoth or Aspen. Russell also loves to surf and is an active member at El Niguel Country Club.

Bill is happily married and loves spending time with his family, camping in their RV, playing golf at Coto De Caza Golf Club, having beach days at San Onofre, and having large family dinners together. He also enjoys coaching his children's sports teams and getting away to the eastern Sierras for some camping and fishing.

The Russell Senteno Team likes to view success in the same way as the late UCLA coach John Wooden, as he says, “Success is measured by one's own happiness.” Bill adds, “Of course, helping our clients sell more homes helps too.”

For more information on The Russell Senteno Team, visit [mrussell.com](http://mrussell.com), [billsentenotitortitle.com](http://billsentenotitortitle.com), or call Mark at 949-395-8395, or Bill at 562-972-2454.

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# MARTUCCI ANGIANO: First Team Real Estate With a Heart to Serve

"I always start my day by asking God to put people in my path that I can help make a difference in their lives, and that they can make a difference in mine," says Martucci Angiano with First Team Real Estate.

It's that genuine focus on wanting to help people that has contributed to Martucci's success in real estate since 1993. Only authentic relationships, built on honesty, integrity, and a sincere drive to make a difference, can sustain a business for that long. Well, that, and an unwavering work ethic that is at once determined to succeed, and content with whatever happens.

Martucci's worldview was largely shaped early on in life, growing up in northern California. Her parents were devout Christians, who raised Martucci to be very involved in church. Having a talent and passion for music, Martucci played guitar on her youth group's worship team, which is something she hopes to get back into today. Her first introduction to real estate was surrounded with excitement after seeing her father and uncle's enthusiasm for buying and selling investment properties.

As she got older, Martucci's love for people translated into a love for travel. Having traveled all over the world, living in Paris for a time, she learned to speak several languages and developed a deep appreciation for diverse cultures. Her knowledge of people and desire to serve others cultivated a practical understanding of business when entering the professional world.

...







**“No matter where I am, the opportunity to give a Bible away always presents itself. It’s priceless.”**

...

Martucci was highly successful in the loan and financial business before co-founding BODEGA Chocolates in the early 1990s. Considered the “chocolates to the stars,” BODEGA Chocolates received many coveted confectionary awards both domestically and internationally.

After her tenure with BODEGA Chocolates, Martucci decided to re-enter the real estate industry as a REALTOR®, to work more closely with people and become an integral part of their journey in finding a place to call home. Over the years, she has developed and retained a book of business with deep relationships in the ultra high-end, coastal real estate market, while also spanning the economic spectrum.

Martucci has a deep gratitude for real estate. It has not only given her the opportunity to meet and serve a variety of people, but it has further shaped her as a person. Perhaps the biggest life lesson that she has learned through the years is how to handle rejection with grace and kindness, to continue persevering, and to never give up.

“I am passionate about serving people,” says Martucci. “Helping them with their real estate needs often leads to helping them with various other needs outside of real estate, which I love.”

Outside of real estate, Martucci supports several charitable organizations, including several churches, and more recently, The Shea Center. Part of her giving back ministry is to help “change the landscape of Bible engagement in the community.” She purchases cases of the Illustrated Action Bible, and Children’s Illus-

trated Bibles, and gives them away whenever she can. “No matter where I am, the opportunity to give a Bible away always presents itself. It’s priceless,” she says.

In her free time, Martucci loves spending time with her family, skiing in Deer Valley, Utah, traveling to watch the Red Sox play in Seattle, Angel Stadium or Fenway, and playing Pickleball.

“Success for me is accepting God’s will in every aspect of my life,” says Martucci, “living to give with a positive attitude, accepting blessings in a humble state of gratitude, sharing hugs and smiles, and making a difference in someone’s day.”





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**Where: Union Market, Kaleidoscope Mission**

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