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A portrait of Valerie Trang, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved top. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a cafe or office.

## VALERIE TRANG

By Hyunah Jang

MARCH 2019

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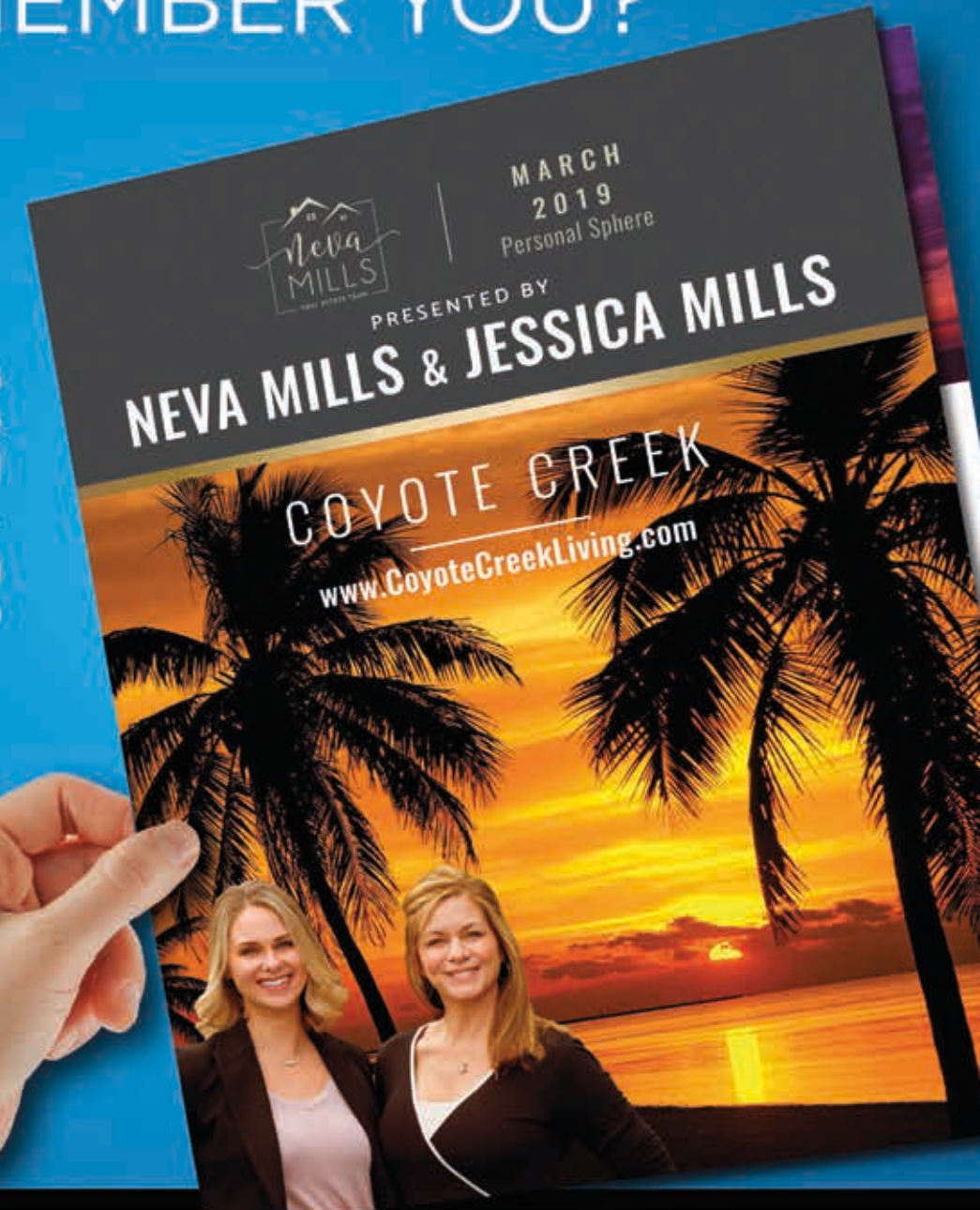


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▶ publisher's note

By Mitch Felix

As I write this, it's been under a week since the *Silicon Valley Real Producers Winter Social*, but it's only a few days before the deadline for our March magazine.

The event is hard to describe. *Real Producers* has grown beyond me. Now that it has so much momentum I will continue to be a caretaker for the integrity of the platform. I hadn't thought this big when I started it all. We have a lot of positive energy and participation, so I know to keep things moving I will keep doing what I have been doing to get it here.

Your role in all of this is undeniable. Thank you.

### Real Producers is four parts.

1. The Real Estate Agents who are generous with sharing their stories and open to receiving the spotlight on their life.
2. The Partners who financially committed to seeing this platform begin and grow, many of them before I even had a magazine to show them or an event to invite them to.
3. The Leaders who opened their offices to me to meet their rising star agents and top producers. They too share their story and reflect on the history of the industry here.
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▶ agent of abundance

By Dave Danielson  
Photos by Hyunah Jang



# Aaron DERBACHER

## An Uncommon Kind of Success

Some are born for what they do. Still, getting there can take a while.

Especially in real estate, it's common for people to enjoy successful careers in other industries before they discover their passion.

Aaron Derbacher is uncommon. As a 25-year-old real estate agent with the Boyenga Team, his determined

drive and contagious passion stretch beyond his years.

Goal Setter. Success Getter.

Growing up in Santa Clara County, there was an early spark inside Aaron.

"I was always interested in housing," he remembers. "It started during the Willow Glen Christmas Light Tour,

which then transitioned into visiting Monte Sereno and seeing the mansions there."

Aaron's parents also instilled respect for setting and achieving goals.

"Starting when I was 12, every week we'd set new goals and look at how to hit them," he says.

...



•••

As soon as he could, he put his appetite for achievement to work, joining Men's Wearhouse when he was 15. The early returns were promising.

"I love sales. At 16 years old, I was in the top five in the region for selling suits," he recalls.

#### **DIVING IN**

At 18, Aaron saw the unfair reputation sometimes associated with the real estate industry.

"It seemed like a lot of people hate real estate agents, attorneys, and car salespeople. But I realized it wasn't that people hated us, it was that they hated the service that we provide," he says. "I learned that people love good salespeople. And I realized, 'Why don't I sell someone's biggest asset?'"

Aaron got his real estate license and started with Alain Pinel Realtors in 2013. The early going was challenging.

"I failed head first the first two years. I knocked on doors for agents and got paid about 25 cents a door," he says. "At the same time, I worked at a restaurant until two in the morning, and then got up the next day, and did it again."

#### **STAYING WITH IT**

For five years, Aaron worked hard and learned how to overcome adversity.

"In October 2015, I hit rock bottom," Aaron remembers. "I was in debt, didn't have a penny to my name and didn't know what I was going to do. I knew I was either going to continue with real estate or do something else."

Aaron did whatever he could to sustain himself while he continued to learn, including mowing yards to pay the rent.

His efforts paid off. Aaron transitioned to Keller Williams in Cupertino. As he remembers, "Shannon Rose took me on and taught me a lot." He

also worked as part of the Dave Clark Team, worked with coaches like David Keesee and kept growing his lead generation methods.

"Some people don't appreciate open houses or Zillow leads. The hardest part was getting the client, not the business itself," he says. "I thrive on open houses. That's where I get all of my business, basically."

#### **HITTING HIS STRIDE**

Aaron's dedication continued. And success has followed. A constant has been his goal setting drive.

"Once you start hitting goals, it just makes you hungrier," he smiles. "I love setting and hitting goals, and then saying, 'What's next?' Last year, my goal was 25 transactions. And I did that. This year, the goal is 50 transactions."

Aaron holds respect for the tried-and-true approach, focusing on open houses, along with database and direct mail marketing. And he's made a habit of hitting goals by building trust.

"The hardest part isn't selling houses. It's getting someone who trusts you," he says. "I relate much better above the \$2 million price point. People who are higher-end buyers, whether that's at \$2 million, \$3 million, \$4 million ... they just want someone they know and trust."

#### **ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT**

While Aaron has refined his business approach, his rapid rate of success required him to take a step back — and a hard look at himself.

"Last year I was a completely different person. When you're making \$500,000+ a year, it's very easy to develop an ego when your friends are still in college. I got caught up in it. I was losing friends, and I didn't even realize I was doing it," he admits.

One presentation he gave was pivotal.

"I was presenting to a couple thousand people, and after I got done presenting, I knew I did something wrong, but I didn't know what," he recalls. "And my coach said, 'Dude, you've got a problem. You are not who you used to be.' My girlfriend noticed, my parents noticed, and I had no idea that I was hurting the people that were closest to me. It took me about four months to relinquish this ego and get back on track as to why I'm in this business and really find out who I am."

A big part of who Aaron is today is about others.

"Now I'm like, 'Who can I take with me on this journey?' I never used to be excited when someone succeeded. But now I couldn't be happier when people succeed. Now helping people is what I wake up for," he explains. "So many people expect to get what they get. The more you give, the more you get. It's completely different this year than last year. The goals are different. And I'm so much happier with who I am."

Part of Aaron's happiness is his relationship with his girlfriend, Trisha. As he says, "She's my number-one supporter. We set goals together and decide how we're going to achieve them."

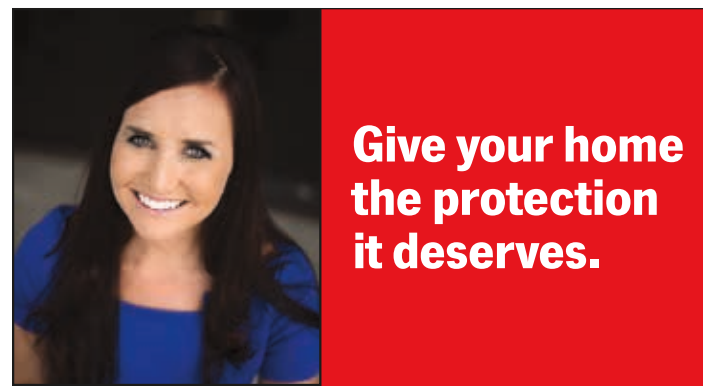
Aaron finds satisfaction in giving back through organizations such as the Second Harvest Food Bank and the Avon Breast Cancer Crusade.

As he looks to a bright future, Aaron plans on doing more with video, developing TV show ideas, and investing in real estate.

The young man with the uncommon drive also looks back with a rare sense of sincere gratitude.

"What got me here was my mom and dad — 1,000 percent," he says. "I owe it all to them."





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# ALAIN PINEL

Q & A

**SVRP: What did you do before you became a Realtor?**

*Alain:* I grew up in France. When the time came for me to make a living, I chose journalism and was lucky enough, early on, to land a job as a domestic politics editor for a major newspaper. Eventually, I deviated to foreign affairs, and then to business and the economy. Changes are good. There is a famous saying in the newspaper business in France that goes something like this: "Journalism leads to anything, so long that you dare to leave it." Well, I did. Not really by choice, but because I married an American girl and, after a couple of years of Parisian life, resolved to move to California with a one-year-old baby. After a short few years, I made a big career change; I became a Realtor. I started in Los Altos, in December 1976 (time flies) with Fox & Carskadon, a company I eventually got to run a few years later...Amazing.

**SVRP: What are you passionate about right now in your business?**

*Alain:* The honest answer is that I am most excited about what I don't know, yet, and I always (daily) try to imagine what it is that I can and should do to invent the way business is done, rather than follow the pack. These days, the real estate industry is changing more often and faster than the weather in Massachusetts. "If you don't like it, wait a minute." What I am passionate about in the industry, at the moment, is the fast developing "war" for national and world leadership between the two main protagonists: the top real estate companies using the most robust and edgy technology to survive or keep on growing and, on the other side, some powerful and well-funded technology companies using real estate as a rewarding and most docile cash cow. If you don't belong to either one of the two, I am afraid the train already left the station without you.

**SVRP: What is your favorite part of your business?**

*Alain:* Actually I have several "favorite" parts, whether for success, satisfaction, or comfort. Obviously, as I mentioned earlier, what turns me on is the thinking/creating part of the business, how to apprehend tomorrow's possibilities and manufacture ideas, concepts, programs and tools to master the challenges. But I also love and need to be with salespeople. They keep me humble but also informed. They are on the front line. They often are even more powerful than the firms they happen to be with. They (many of them) are my best friends. I need to pick their brain, brainstorm with them about the local business, and refill with energy and passion.

**SVRP: Define success.**

*Alain:* I'm still looking for the answer.

**SVRP: What is your favorite question to ask people?**

*Alain:* One, which I learned while I was GM of a mega firm on the East Coast, served me well over the years when trying to recruit top agents: "How much did your present company/broker contribute to your success?" I always cracked a smile (inside) when I heard the expected answer: "Nothing, or not a heck of a lot. I owe nothing to anyone. I did it all by myself." Top producers are so proud and ambitious. They crack me up.

**SVRP: Given your status and expertise, how would you advise an up and coming agent?**

*Alain:* Join a winning firm in your regional market and work with a manager who has a brain and whom you can trust. Even if you think you can do well anywhere, you must never underestimate the added value a great company can bring to the table. Leverage it to the bone. What they have and can do complements what you have and do. It can't hurt; it can only help. You never know where the next client may come from, what will make the phone ring. Partner with your company to make your job easier and keep on growing.

**SVRP: How do you want to be remembered?**

*Alain:* As someone who helped make the real estate industry what it is today, and what it will become tomorrow.

**SVRP: What real estate DNA are you best known for?**

*Alain:* Definitely the High-End Business and International Real Estate. It is one and the same. One does not go without the other. They have been kind of a trademark for me over the years. Foreign buyers play a major role in our regional and national upper-end market. Much of the success we have in marketing exclusive properties is predicated on our ability to reach out to prospective buyers worldwide. Also, more and more of our wealthy domestic clients are looking all over the map for a trophy house and to compare what they can get for the money in other countries. I was probably the first real estate leader to recognize this growing reality and do something about it.



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# SANDY JAMISON

## A Groundbreaking Spirit of Independence

celebrating leaders ◀◀

By Dave Danielson

As Sandy Jamison looks out over her 31 acres of untamed beauty in Paradise Valley, one thing's certain. Her sense of independence is timeless — with a drive to break new ground.

Her trailblazing self-reliance started early.

"I was a latch-key kid," Sandy says. "My parents were divorced. My mom worked full time. So I was home alone every day. She pretty much made me independent."

### LIGHTNING STRIKES

In the 1990s, Sandy's imagination was stoked by a straight-talking Cal Poly professor. He stressed the benefits of buying real estate and how to buy with nothing down. He suggested some books, too.

"I picked up *Nothing Down* by Robert Allen, read it from front to back the first night, and got motivated. When I get motivated then I become impulsive," Sandy says.

Then she went shopping.

"I bought my first condo in Arroyo Grande about a month later," she says. "I hadn't even graduated yet. I didn't have a job. Just a job offer. That was it. Loans were easy to get in those days."

With \$900 to her name, Sandy bought her first 1,800 square foot, \$135,000 condo.

"I got hooked," she smiles. "Two years later, I bought another one in Grover Beach. I started buying properties with nothing down."

Sandy started working in the high-tech industry shortly thereafter — relishing her real estate decisions.



"Within six months, my property appreciated, I refinanced it and paid off all my student loans. I just did it. It was the best investment and decision I ever made."

She earned her master's degree from Santa Clara University and started a career in high tech with Cisco Systems and eBay. She traveled the world, worked on large acquisition deals and earned success.

But she says, "My heart was in real estate. So I sold homes on the side."

In the meantime, Sandy's real estate investments tripled in value. She thought about selling. But something nagged at her to go and obtain her real estate license.

So Sandy studied, earned her license, began part-time at Coldwell Banker, sold the properties she owned and saved herself the commission.

For eight years, Sandy worked full time at eBay in the mergers and acquisitions field, fed her real estate passion for four of those eight years and focused on helping her co-workers who needed to buy homes.

"At eBay, there were a lot of young single guys and girls who needed their first condo or first small house," she says. "When I finished my workday, I went out and worked real estate. It was awesome. I did more deals as a part-timer than 80 percent of the full-timers."

### RISK TO REWARD

In 2008, during the midst of the financial downturn, Sandy continued making deals.

"I knocked on doors every night, and I brought in short-sale listings," she recalls. "I had dozens and dozens of them when the market fell."

That didn't mesh with her company's view on risk.

"They didn't like short-sales because they took six months to close. It wasn't the typical deal where you put the sign out, money goes into escrow and it closes in 30 days," she says.

So she entered new territory and learned all she could about REO. Soon, she was a Fannie Mae direct broker working with several large banks.

Again, Sandy saw opportunity while her employer saw uncertainty. So she got her broker's license and launched Tuscana Properties.

### A FISHER OF OPPORTUNITY

In 2017, Tuscana Properties produced \$45 to \$50 million with a staff that includes Sandy, her husband, Bob Jamison, who's also a broker, five agents, plus executive administrative, marketing and ISA staff.

Those numbers are the result of Sandy's straightforward marketing strategies.

"In this business, you're hunting, fishing or farming," she explains. "Some people farm and cultivate a neighborhood. Hunters are the cold callers. They're actively on that phone trying to chase down certain people. And then there are the fishers. They cast their lines, and throw their bait out there and see what comes to them. These days, I'm more of a fisher when it comes to new business. However, my repeat and referral business still remains as one of my best sources of business."

As part of her fishing strategy, Sandy invests in developing her own ads and marketing efforts.

### GIVING MORE WITH SCCAOR

Sandy has jumped into new industry opportunities, including the

Santa Clara County Association of REALTORS® (SCCAOR). In fact, as Treasurer, Sandy's on track to serve as President in 2020.

"Selling houses is fun, but it can become a little routine," Sandy says. "Through my involvement with SCCAOR, it gets me out of the office to make new friends and connections. I can work on issues that affect the industry and learn about changes that affect our business. The problem-solving discussions help feed my need for intellectual stimulation. There's so much to real estate beyond the transaction at the regulatory and political levels that realtors need to know about to be successful in this business. Building relationships with other agents is just as important as building relationships with friends or a sphere of influence. You never know who will be on the other side of your next transaction."

### LINKED TO THE LAND

After the industry ground she's broken, it's fitting that Sandy and her family live a life linked to the land in Paradise Valley area of Morgan Hill.

"We have a seasonal waterfront property with 42 fruit trees, a 3,000 square-foot garden, several chickens, cats, goats, and two dogs. And when I'm not working, I'm out here with my two little boys," she beams.

Out of all the properties she's seen, this one is closest to her heart.

"We have a lot of farm-to-table meals. We raise rabbits for meat and get our beef from Bob's family. For fun, I'll tan the hides and make purses and crafty things," Sandy says. "In the summertime, we have an abundance of fruit. I do a lot of canning. We have tomatoes that come in by the bucket loads. We plan our meals around our fresh veggies."

Future harvests at Tuscana Properties look promising, too.

"I'm not leaving real estate any time soon. We're going to double down and try to grow the team a little and grow our sales numbers and production over the next two years with new systems and processes," she says.

For all the numbers she's increased, Sandy is especially proud of some she's reduced.

"During the foreclosure days, I worked 100 hours a week. I didn't have any kids then," she admits. Then her first son arrived in 2010. "I worked until 1 a.m. every morning, every day, seven days a week. And we sold hundreds of homes a year. But it's not sustainable. I value my time more. I try not to get so busy making a living that I forget to make a life."

# COVER STORY EDITION

“I love the idea of breaking the glass ceiling.”

**JULIE WYSS**

“The world has changed. It’s not just one set of culture and experiences, it’s a combination of cultures and experiences from all over the world. It’s an international family. The U.S. community is changing too, and I want to inspire more respect for people from different areas and help to develop this international culture.”

**RENNA SHEE**

“I’m on point from the time I get up, until the time I go to sleep — which includes having a consistent morning routine, and still making time for my family. Find out what you like and be good at it. Don’t get caught up doing busy work. Do the work that brings the most value and learn to delegate the rest.”

**JOE VELASCO**

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# HOWARD BLOOM

## FINDING HIS NICHE

By Zach Cohen  
Photos by Hyunah Jang



“When I came out here [to California], my mother gave me a book called *How to Buy Real Estate with No Money Down and Never Pay Taxes Again*.”

The book’s author, Bill Greene, was one of the first teachers on the seminar circuit, according to Howard Bloom. At the time, Howard was working in hospital administration. But his introduction to real estate through this book would shift the course of his life in ways he couldn’t dream.

Rewind to Howard’s college days, in Ithaca, New York, and you’d find a young man deeply engrossed in science and business. A native New Yorker, Howard grew up in Rochester and received his Bachelor of Science in hospital and health care administration from Ithaca College. “Not Cornell – the other college in Ithaca,” he quips.

“I was always interested in health care and business,” Howard says. He’d go on to receive a master’s degree in hospital administration from the University of Minnesota.

After graduating from the University of Minnesota, Howard returned to the East Coast, where he landed in Cape Cod. There, he started his administrative residency, and eventually stayed on as the Assistant Vice President of the hospital.

“Through the Minnesota Alumni Association, I got hooked up with work in California,” Howard recalls. Single at the time, he picked up and moved to the Bay Area to work at El Camino Hospital in Mountain View. That was 1981.

Soon after, Howard attended his first real estate seminar and bought his first property that same year. “That was when interest rates were something like 16.5%,” he laughs.

As his mentor moved towards investing in rehabilitation projects, so did Howard.

“I started specializing in buying FHA repossessed properties in San Jose. I’d buy townhouses for \$50,000 to \$60,000 and they’d be all boarded up. I’d do my hospital administration gig during the day and then in the evenings go down to East San Jose...I’d do the paint and the terminal disinfecting. Fix the holes in the walls by stuffing newspaper in the walls and patching.”

Howard has always had an entrepreneurial spirit. That was the key to his success. From 1981 to 1985, he was purchasing two to three properties a year. By 1985, he was ready to jump into real estate full-time.

“In 1985 I decided I had enough fun in the health care business...I decided to make the move,” Howard recalls.

...

Howard quickly formed a niche selling condos and townhomes. While he sold 32 condos in his first year alone, the average sale was low — right around \$100,000. “I think I lost money...but it really set the foundation for the direction I went.”

Fast forward to the present, where Howard has built a powerhouse business based on consistency and integrity. He speaks of there always being an element of quality in his work. He’s hands-on, keeps a positive attitude, and is ardently focused on executing for his clients.

“I just enjoy dealing with normal, everyday people,” Howard comments. “I don’t do a tremendous amount of upper-end property.”

Each listing and each home closing brings a renewed sense of excitement. After all these years, the passion is still there.

“When you hire me, you get me,” Howard says. By the time I put the house on the market, I know the house better than anyone else. I can market the house better than anyone else. So don’t I owe it to my client to personally manage the entire process and host the open house?”



While his career began down a very different path, Howard knows that, ultimately, he’s ended up right where he belongs. It gives him tremendous pleasure to execute for his clients.

“I don’t feel like I’m going to work. It’s really a pleasure. I wish everyone could experience that joy in their job.”

“Do what you love, and you’ll never work another day in your life.”

Howard Bloom has been recognized as an Intero Real Estate Chairman’s Circle Recipient for 14 years (Highest Award bestowed by Intero for top 1% of agents), has achieved close to \$1 billion career sales volume, sold over 1,800 properties, has been Diamond Certified® for over 14 years, and was the fourth ever inductee into the Intero Hall of Fame.

When not working, Howard and his wife, Diane, find great joy in spending time with each other, his Golden Retriever, George, and their two granddaughters. Other hobbies include attending San Jose Sharks games and the occasional whitewater rafting trip. Howard supports several local charities and is a top contributor to the Intero Foundation, which focuses on local children and the elderly at risk and in need.

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6,239

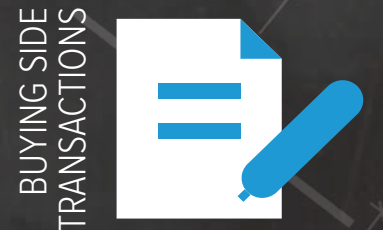


LISTING SIDE TRANSACTIONS



\$9,410,942,467  
LISTING SIDE SALES VOLUME

5,365



BUYING SIDE TRANSACTIONS

\$8,096,035,078



BUYING SIDE SALES VOLUME

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partner spotlight ◀◀

By Zach Cohen  
By Hyunah Jang

# Vanessa Nielsen

## Moving Water

“I’m like moving water — constantly on the move.”

Two years ago, Vanessa Nielsen and a friend took a trip together to Asia, visiting Hong Kong, Thailand, and Vanessa’s birthplace of Vietnam.

“I had never been to a fortune teller in my life or believed in that stuff,” Vanessa recalls. “But in Hong Kong, [my friend] was adamant about going to look for this one specific fortune teller.”

So, Vanessa and her friend tracked down the fortune teller, and each sat down for a reading. The fortune teller inspected Vanessa’s palms and her face, and gently questioned Vanessa. “Do you work in real estate?” she wondered. “Do you do design work?”

“[The fortune teller] started talking about wealth,” Vanessa says. “She said, ‘You keep making pockets of wealth; you create it wherever you go. You are like moving water, you keep moving.’ I had never heard about anything like that before.”

Considering her career in staging and real estate, Vanessa thought, “I guess I found my niche.”

### Encore Staging Services

The fortune teller in Hong Kong reaffirmed Vanessa’s path as a staging professional and business owner, that Vanessa is doing exactly what she’s meant to do, professionally. After years in the corporate world, working in marketing and PR, Vanessa founded Encore Staging Services in 2013. That was the same year that she moved to Silicon Valley with her husband, Martin, to start a family.

During her time living in Santa Monica, Vanessa worked as a real estate agent for a period between corporate jobs. She was licensed back in 2004, and her experience in real estate gives her a unique advantage as a staging professional. While she’s left her work in real estate behind, it continues to inform her decision-making as a professional stager.

Vanessa is passionate about the design side of staging. Being able to see a visceral response from her clients brings her immense joy; there’s almost instant gratification.

“I get to talk to the homeowners about the history of the home. I get to learn the stories, what went on with the house. I start thinking about the design and get excited about presenting it,” Vanessa explains.



Valerie (Cover Story) & Vanessa (Partner Spotlight) are BFFs.

### Learning to Listen

Alongside her love for design, Vanessa has a genuine affinity for simply helping people. “It comes down to customer service,” she reminds us. “You don’t have work unless you have a customer.”

Vanessa learned her expert customer service from her parents, who were immigrants and small business owners; her dad was a tailor, her mother owned a beauty salon. “My work ethic, I learned it from my mom,” Vanessa explains. “She tells me if she sits still she’s going to get tired, bored, and sick.”

In business, Vanessa has learned to be patient. To really listen to people. “It’s not about me,” she says, “it’s about the homeowners, the home, and the agent. About what is going to look amazing to sell for the price they are dreaming of. How we deliver is important because when you’re there and working and getting feedback, you have to listen.”

Always seeking to accommodate her clients and partners, Vanessa is willing to do whatever it takes to achieve the desired end result.

### Building the Life of her Dreams

At home, Vanessa is the same person as she is in business — always on the go. Her ability to express authenticity is one of her most endearing characteristics; you can be sure to get the same, genuine version of Vanessa every time.

“I keep it real; that’s how people connect with me,” she says.

Vanessa and Martin have two girls; Cataleya is 6 and Camelia is 4. They love to travel together, go offroading and camping, or just about anything adventurous. In business and in life, Vanessa’s care comes through strongly. There is a sense of joy in her love for the life she’s living — in each and every moment.

“It’s funny how I turned into my mother. There’s always something to make beautiful or improve, be it homes, my craft, or myself. I just like doing things,” Vanessa laughs. “I have three babies: my two kids, and my business.”



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▶▶ cover story

By Zach Cohen  
Photo by Hyunah Jang



# Valerie Trang

THE HEART OF A **WARRIOR**

“Never give up. Be true to yourself.”

This is Valerie Trang’s mantra, instilled at a young age. She has always understood that perseverance, determination, and authenticity would be her North Star.

Her story begins during the Vietnam War.

#### **Growing up in Vietnam**

“I could write a book about it,” Valerie begins.

The capture of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) by the North Vietnamese Army in April 1975 marked the end of the Vietnam War. As the country re-structured itself under a Communist government, Republican soldiers and political figures of the former South Vietnam were sent to re-education camps. Valerie’s father was one of them.

“My dad was a Republican,” Valerie reflects. “He was in a re-education camp for five years. During this time, my mom was pregnant with me and caring for my brother, who was five years old. It was a difficult

•••

*“Beating cancer was one of the most difficult obstacles I have overcome; it was a physical, mental, and emotional battle all at once.”*



Photo by Tri Tran.

•••

period, and my parents saw no future if we stayed in Vietnam. Over a million people fled the country by boat or feet between 1975 and 1995 with the hope of a new life. It was a perilous journey, and many drowned or were captured and killed by pirates.”

When Valerie was 13 years old, her family decided to leave Vietnam.

“It took us almost a month to flee from Vietnam to Cambodia (on foot) then to Thailand (by boat). We were on a small, crowded fishing boat for six days. We had no food for three of the days. It was horrible.”

“In Thailand, we stayed at a refugee camp. I had one set of clothes, one pair of slippers, and that was it. Not even a pair of shoes,” Valerie explains. The camps did not have adequate provisions and life was dire. But Valerie never gave up hope that things would get better. After 18 months, Valerie’s family was successfully sponsored by her uncle in Hawaii.

At a very young age, Valerie understood perseverance.

#### Life in the United States

When Valerie arrived in Hawaii, she was enrolled as a freshman in high school. Everything was new to her — the language, the culture, and the people. But Valerie adapted quickly.

“I learned a lot from this time in my life,” Valerie explains. “[In Thailand] I was poor — very poor. There were days we had no food or water. In high school, I had to work twice as hard as the next student to catch up, with half the resources. But I was determined to succeed, to overcome any obstacles that stood in my way. I had made it this far; the only path was forward.”

Valerie graduated high school with honors and would go on to obtain two degrees, business management and management information system (MIS), from the University of Hawaii. She was offered a job at in IT at IBM and relocated to San Jose, California in 1999, where she still resides with her mother, husband, and two young children.

#### The Heart of a Warrior

A warrior never gives up. Alongside her moving story as a refugee and immigrant, Valerie has overcome health ailments with dogged determination and a zest for life.

As a child, Valerie had polio. Her family could not afford treatment or a wheelchair. “I was five years old, and had to crawl on the floor to move around,” Valerie recalls. “We were so poor we didn’t have enough rice to eat most days, never mind treat my illness. My mom was lucky to have found a charity that offered to bring me to the city for rehabilitation. After a few months, I was finally able to walk again.”

Then in the fall of 2011, Valerie noticed a lump on her breast and was diagnosed with breast cancer. Rather than dwelling on “Why me?” or “How could this happen?” Valerie was gearing up for the fight for her life — literally. She was not going to let cancer stop her. After surgery and over a year of chemotherapy and radiation treatments, she was declared cancer-free.

“It was so hard,” she reflects. “Beating cancer was one of the most difficult obstacles I have overcome; it was a physical, mental, and emotional battle all at once. My son was eight and my daughter was two; I was determined to see them grow up. I was not going anywhere. There were dark moments, but there was also light. Almost losing everything changed me. It gave me a new perspective on what is important.”

Valerie is quick to comment that she’s not shy about sharing her story. Her vulnerability is inspiring.

#### Rising Above

For many years, Valerie worked as a full-time IT manager and part-time as a real estate agent, but labeling her work as part-time is something of a misnomer; she was closing 25–30 transactions annually.

Valerie loves real estate because she loves working with people. She has an affable personality and authenticity that helps her build connections. Real estate is her calling.

•••



Photo provided by Valerie Trang.  
Valerie's daughter giving out backpacks to disadvantaged students in Dong Thap Province.



Photo provided by Valerie Trang  
Valerie and her team visit the blind town of Vinh Chau, where over 5,000 blind and disabled people live.

•••

In 2015, Valerie decided to follow her heart and dedicated herself to real estate. Today she runs a successful Infiniti Real Estate brokerage based in Evergreen; she closed 48 transactions with over \$50 million in sales volume in 2018.

"I have an instinct," Valerie explains. "I know my strength, and it is relationships. When I meet clients face to face, I have that instant connection. It is not something you can teach; it is there, or it is not."

Valerie is also committed to providing her customers with the very best. She is a member of the Top Agent Network and holds the designation of Graduate Realtor Institute (GRI).

Rising above takes perseverance and determination, and sometimes a little help along the way. Along her journey, Valerie had genuine people step up in her time of need, and she wants to do the same for others. She remembers the hardship and it motivates her to take action. She wants to give back.

In 2011, amidst her battle with cancer, Valerie founded Tu Tam - Loving Hearts Charity. Upon reflecting on her personal life experience, Valerie's first initiative was to provide disabled Vietnamese people in her hometown with wheelchairs.

"What I didn't have as a child, I want to help others to be able to enjoy," she explains. She has a son, Tien, who is fifteen years old, and a daughter, Yen-Nhi, who is nine years old. Both are following in their mother's footsteps with their charity work. When Tien was twelve, he started a fundraising campaign that raised enough money to buy nineteen bicycles for middle school children in Vietnam. These students normally walked three hours



Photo provided by Valerie Trang  
Valerie's non-profit organization distributes hundreds of wheelchairs (summer 2018).

to and from school. In 2018, under Valerie's management, Tu Tam raised enough money to buy almost two hundred wheelchairs, one hundred bicycles and over two thousand care packages for the elderly and disabled in Vietnam. In addition to Tu Tam Charity, she is starting a new non-profit with the mission to build schools and support education in small villages of Vietnam.

"For everyone who has helped me during my darkest days, I am indebted. I promise to pay it forward in your honor. Through my children, I teach them the importance of giving. They understand how fortunate they are compared to kids they meet annually during our charity trips to Vietnam. Most importantly," she says, "when I leave this world, I am not leaving my children with a nice house, an abundance of wealth. What I want to for my children is to have a big and kind heart, and compassion and passion to make this world a happier place to live."

"If anything is worth doing, do it with all your heart."

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- *Quy Pham, President*

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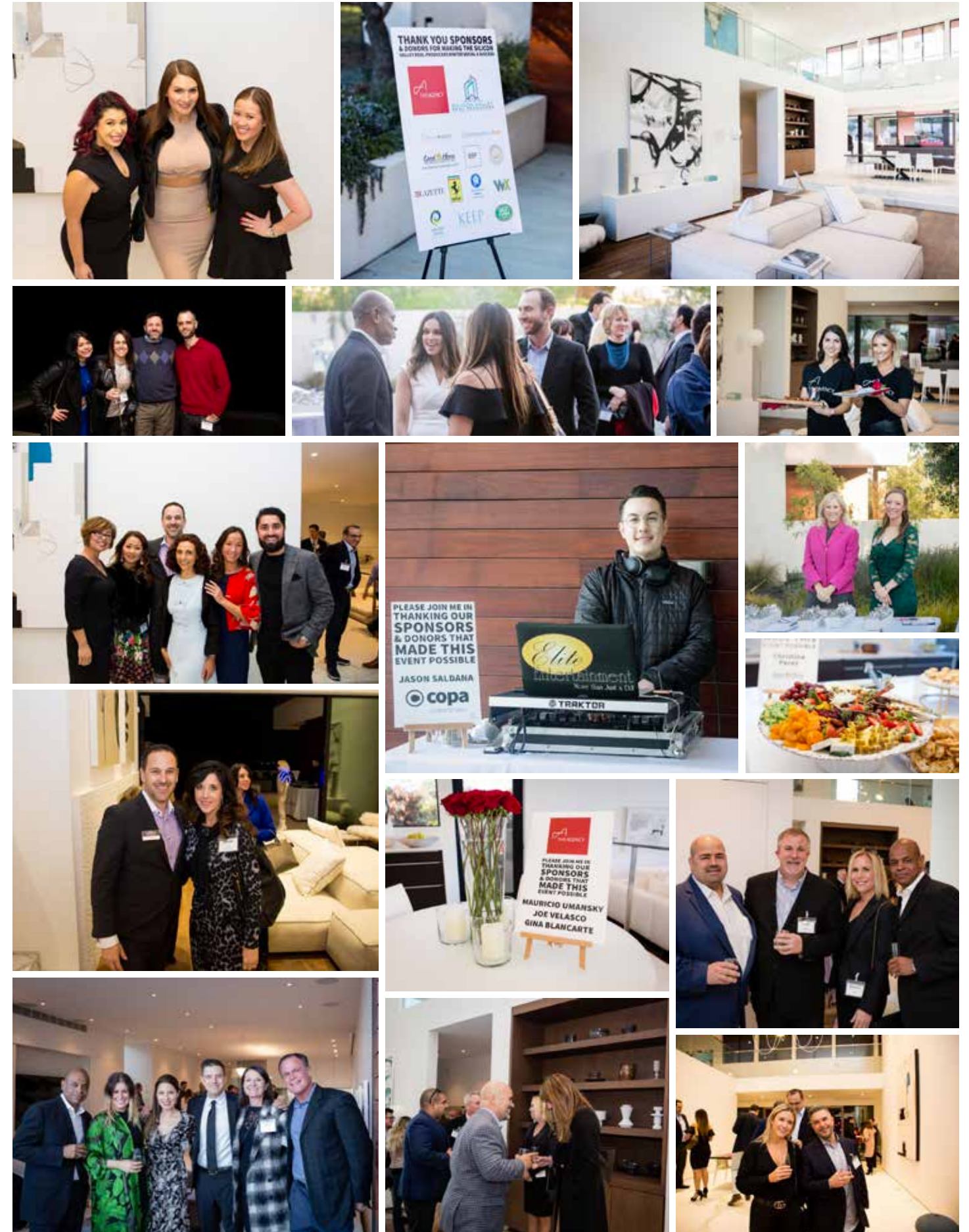
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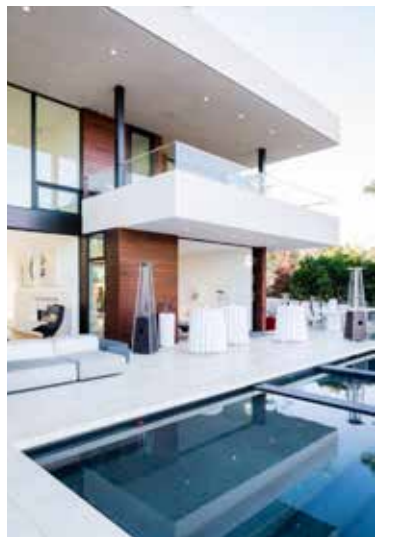
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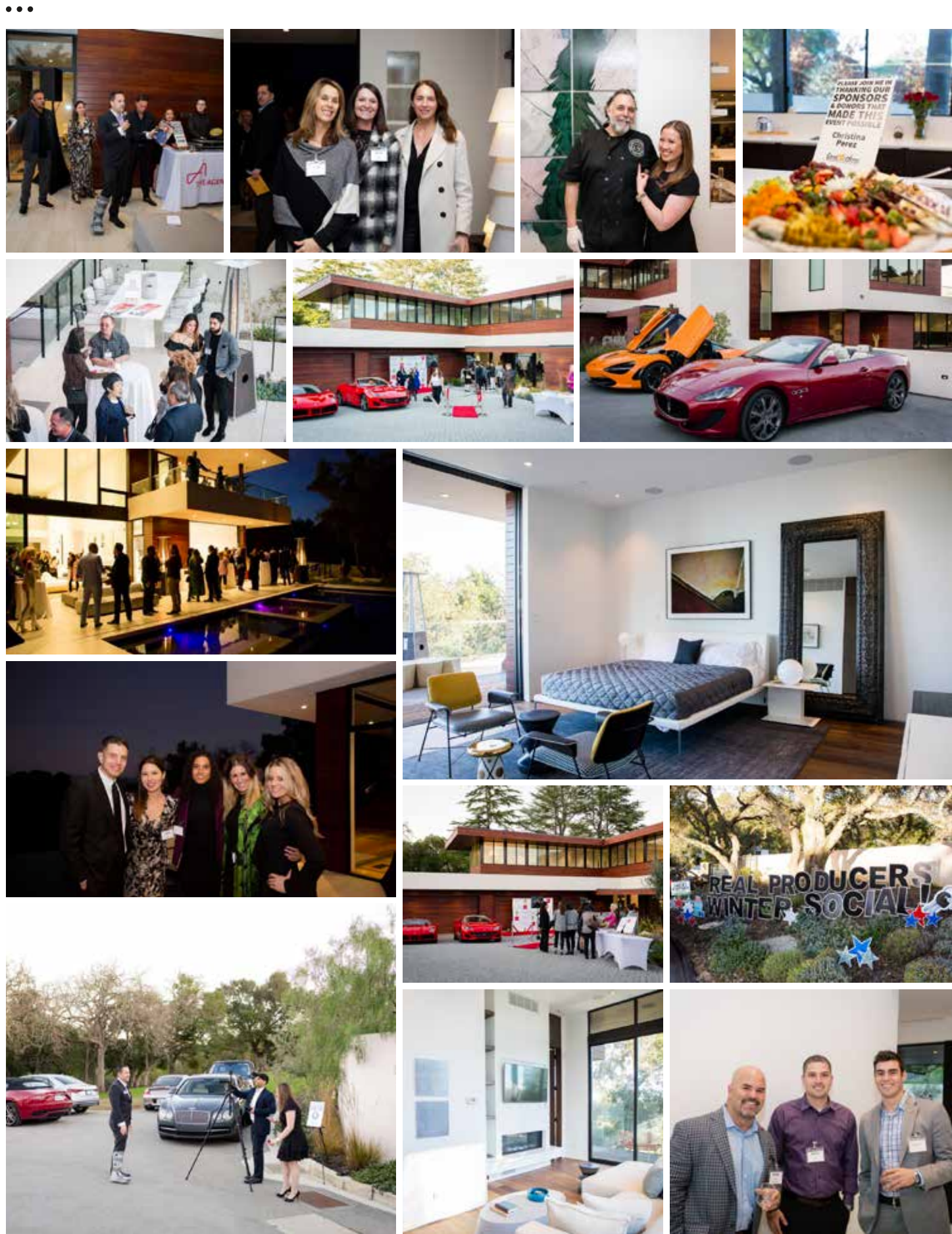






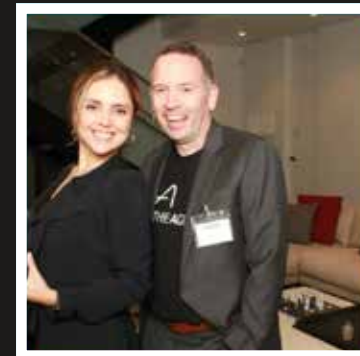
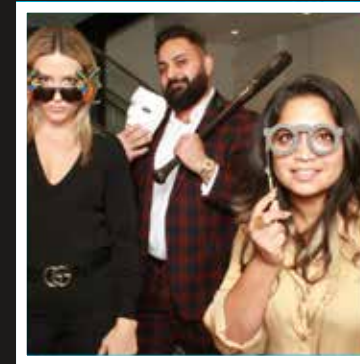






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# TOP 200 STANDINGS

Rankings Jan. 1, 2019 - Jan. 31, 2019

#	Agent	Office Name
1	Deleon Team	Deleon Realty
2	David Lillo	DPL Real Estate
3	David Troyer	Intero Real Estate Services
4	Shelly Roberson	Alain Pinel Realtors
5	Kathy Bridgman	Alain Pinel Realtors
6	George Montanari	Alain Pinel Realtors
7	Rigo Bracamontes	Intero RE Services
8	Andrei Bandrovsky	Compass
9	Gary Campi	Golden Gate Sotheby's International Realty
10	Rebecca Yen	Coldwell Banker
11	Roy Moses	Coldwell Banker
12	Connie Miller	Alain Pinel Realtors
13	Shin J Kim	Keller Williams Palo Alto
14	Nancy Carlson	Intero Real Estate Services
15	Mitchell Zurich	Marcus & Millichap
16	Greg Simpson	KW Bay Area Estates
17	Al Ayubi	Intero Real Estate Services
18	Shadi Khalili	Alain Pinel Real Estate
19	Andy Sweat	KW Bay Area Estates
20	Hiep K. Nguyen	Intero Real Estate Services
21	Ryan Gowdy	Alain Pinel Realtors
22	Robert Johnston	Marcus & Millichap
23	Friess & Orlita Team	Compass
24	Brad Gill	Nexthome Lifestyles
25	Andy Tse	Intero Real Estate Services
26	Alex Wang Group	Sereno Group
27	Sue Cheng	Intero Real Estate Services
28	Michael Kenyon	KW Bay Area Estates
29	Donna Dawson-Schwartz	Coldwell Banker
30	Denise Simons	Alain Pinel Realtors
31	Juliana Lee	Keller Williams Palo Alto
32	Tam Nguyen	Php Group, Inc
33	Carol Jeans	Sereno Group
34	David Welton	Alain Pinel Real Estate

#	Agent Name	Office Name
35	Myron Von Raesfeld	Windermere Silicon Valley
36	Morgan Lashley	Morgan Lashley
37	Bliss Katopothis	Intero Real Estate Services
38	Joseph Yen	Alain Pinel Real Estate
39	Matthew T Taylor	Intero Real Estate - Cupertino
40	Dan Noble	Key Legacy Real Estate Services
41	Michael Cheng	Archers Homes
42	Boyenga Team	Compass
43	Ivan Margaretich	Intero Real Estate Services
44	Vicky Li	Coldwell Banker
45	Matthew Swenson	Alain Pinel Realtors
46	Ducky Grabill	Sereno Group
47	Gregg Fussell	Coldwell Banker
48	Matt Cossell	KW Bay Area Estates
49	William Lister	Coldwell Banker
50	Maggie Guo	Re/Max Santa Clara Valley

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#	Agent	Office Name
51	The Hanna Group	Intero Real Estate Services
52	Ranga Mannar	Single Tree Realty
53	Cory Waxman	Colliers Parrish International
54	Aimee Smith	Alain Pinel Real Estate
55	Suzanne Bakhtiari	Elite Realty Services
56	D.M. Bettencourt	Bettencourt Real Estate Services
57	Lisa Sgarlato	Alain Pinel Realtors
58	Mark Chiavetta	Coldwell Banker
59	Coco Tan	Keller Williams Realty
60	Radha Rustagi	Keller Williams Realty - Cupertino
61	David Kim	Intero Real Estate Services
62	Donald Knight	Coldwell Banker
63	Arti Miglani	Alain Pinel Realtors
64	Grace Wu	Alain Pinel Realtors
65	Robert Herzog	Alain Pinel Realtors
66	Shelly Chou	Coldwell Banker
67	Xiaoping Song	Maxreal
68	Bonafede Team	CSR Real Estate Services
69	Mario Ramirez	KW Bay Area Estates
70	Mini Kalkat	Intero Real Estate Services
71	Ashwin Veeravalli	Alain Pinel Realtors
72	Amar Realtor	Keller Williams Palo Alto
73	Alexandra Zhou	Morgan Real Estate
74	Su-Lan Wang	Intero Real Estate - Cupertino
75	Angie Cocke	Century 21 M&M
76	Lori Buecheler	Alain Pinel Realtors
77	Shelley Lin	Green Valley Realty
78	Mark Von Kaenel	KW Bay Area Estates
79	Kerry Sexton	Alain Pinel Realtors
80	Royce H. Cablayan	Sereno Group
81	Ady Wunderman	Realty Ventures
82	Eugene Korsunsky	Intempus Realty
83	Jessa Walsh	Intero Real Estate Services
84	Lee Schmidt	Realty World- South County

#	Agent	Office Name
85	Ginger Willson	Gary G. Gillmor, Broker
86	Lynn Burnett North	Alain Pinel Realtors
87	Tom Martin	Golden Gate Sotheby's International Realty
88	Stephen Guzzetti	Intero Real Estate Services
89	Kamran Pourshams	Century 21-Alpha
90	Ruslin Paap	Intero Real Estate Services
91	Nicki Banucci	KW Bay Area Estates
92	John Van Dyk	Intero Real Estate Services
93	Brad K. Le	Compass
94	Lihong Zhong	Realty One Group - World Prop
95	Greg Stange	Compass
96	Amina Chaudhry	Alliance Bay Realty
97	Kiersten Ligeti	Alain Pinel Realtors
98	Leon Le	Pacificwide Real Estate & Mort
99	Tabea Thornton	Compass
100	Bower Cole Group	Alain Pinel Real Estate

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Rankings Jan. 1, 2019 - Jan. 31, 2019

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101	Jaleh Taghipour	Intero Real Estate Services
102	Juancho Melian	Juan Antonio Melian, Broker
103	William Pan	Green Valley Realty
104	Mike Uhri	Coldwell Banker
105	Ben Jiang	Goodview Financial & Real Estate
106	Diane Loverde	D & F Properties
107	Don Perry	Coldwell Banker
108	Adriana Trenev	Compass
109	John Forsyth James	Alain Pinel Realtors
110	Leila Shahsavari	Alain Pinel Realtors
111	Anne King	Keller Williams Palo Alto
112	Melissa Haugh	Keller Williams Realty
113	Carol Cunningham	Alain Pinel Realtors
114	Sudeshna Sen Gupta	Coldwell Banker
115	Vasanthi Jayaraman	Anthem Realty
116	Jinny Ahn	Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage
117	John W. King	Keller Williams Palo Alto
118	Kim Abelite	Glenmere Properties Inc
119	Julie Davis	KW Bay Area Estates
120	Kevin F. Garvey	Realty World-Kevin F. Garvey,
121	Anson Ip	KW Bay Area Estates Saratoga
122	Lilly Ho	S & S Realty
123	Pat & Cathy	Sereno Group
124	Brian Chancellor	Sereno Group
125	Bogard-Tanigami Team	Alain Pinel Realtors
126	Jing Luo	Maxreal
127	Patrick Conkin	Intero Real Estate Services
128	Suzanne M. Hunter	Intero Real Estate Services
129	Kary Cochrane	Intero Real Estate - Cupertino
130	Peter Myers	Coldwell Banker
131	Ruth Mistry	Coldwell Banker
132	Grace Hanamoto	Intero Real Estate - Cupertino
133	Natalie Lu	Bin Lu, Broker
134	Jamie Pfister	Realty World Milestone

#	Agent	Office Name
135	Alex Lunginovic	Montalvo Realty
136	Frank Liu	Re/Max Gold
137	Dennis Loewen	Metis Real Estate
138	Alexandra Wilbur	Era Wilbur Properties
139	Russ Sadykhov	Intero Real Estate Services
140	Deepak Prabhakar	Deepak Prabhakar, Broker
141	Brenda Miller	Alain Pinel Real Estate
142	Dhiren Unadkat	Maxreal
143	Jennifer Paulson	Sereno Group
144	Benjamin Wang	Lexicon Homes
145	Marty Brill	Intero Real Estate Services
146	Mukesh Vyas	Vyas Realty
147	Ying Liu	Intero Real Estate - Cupertino
148	Vinicius Brasil	Keller Williams Realty - Cupertino
149	Don Hoang	Provence Realty, Inc.
150	Thomas Beck	Kw Bay Area Estates

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151	Heidi Herz	Alain Pinel Realtors
152	Cathy Jackson	Sereno Group
153	Al Moridi	Intero Real Estate - Cupertino
154	Minhua Jin	Coldwell Banker
155	Hadi Ghafouri	Coldwell Banker
156	Nalini Aiyagari	Coldwell Banker
157	Ying Li	Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage
158	Humayun Kabir	Wepro Real Estate Services Inc
159	Kim Clark	Alain Pinel Realtors
160	Ken Roberts	KW Bay Area Estates
161	Lin Ning	Coldwell Banker
162	Jide Ogunbiyi	Intero Real Estate - Cupertino
163	Debbie Murphy	Coldwell Banker
164	Melinda Gedryn	Coldwell Banker
165	Jordan Mott	Intero Real Estate Services
166	Katherine Garzon	Intero Real Estate - Cupertino
167	Huong Ho	Intero Real Estate Services
168	Andrew Buchanan	KW Bay Area Estates
169	Jeffrey Crittenden	KW Bay Area Estates
170	Jim Hamilton	Alain Pinel Realtors
171	Douglas Goss	KW Bay Area Estates
172	Sandie Hernandez	Bmc Realty Advisors, Inc
173	Kai Huang	Maxreal
174	Kimberly Nicholson	Coldwell Banker Res R E Srv
175	Mark & Jason	Sereno Group
176	Bill Robertson	Coldwell Banker Res R E Srv
177	Guadalupe Silva	Guadalupe M Silva, Broker
178	David Giambruno	KW Bay Area Estates
179	Kia Amini	Keller Williams Palo Alto
180	Cathy Lin	Transamarco Realty
181	Diane Ji	Elite Realty & Finance
182	Sherry Bucolo	Alain Pinel Realtors
183	Samuel Spinella li	Intero Real Estate Services
184	Mike Khesin	Intempus Realty

#	Agent	Office Name
185	Suzanne O'brien	Intero Real Estate Services
186	Daunielle Doughty	Coldwell Banker
187	Diem T. Nguyen	Bayone Real Estate Inv Corp
188	Patrick Van Dahlen	Coldwell Banker
189	Rick Smith	Windermere Silicon Valley
190	Mary Afzal	Atlas Realty
191	Samit Shah	Intero Real Estate Services
192	Eddie Oberoi	Intero Real Estate Services
193	Dawn Thomas	Golden Gate Sotheby's Internat
194	Ella (Yan) Liang	Golden Gate Sotheby's Internat
195	Gina Pham	Intellity Real Estate Services
196	Joe Callahan	Coldwell Banker
197	Michael Kaufman	Coldwell Banker
198	Monica Corman	Compass
199	Wister Chu	Coldwell Banker
200	Carol Sangster	Alain Pinel Realtors

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