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TABLE OF CONTENTS



08

Meet the Team



09

Publisher's Note:
Mitch Felix



17

Cover Story:
Michael Galli



24

Partner Profile:
Pete Pfeilslicker
— Ace Relocation Systems



29

Star on the Rise:
Sharon Chen



32

Profile:
Rusty Paap



36

Profile:
Rodger Shaheen



40

Profile:
Vicky Le



44

Game-Changer:
Greg Goumas



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Mitch Felix,
Founder & Publisher



Hyunah Jang,
Head Photographer



Amy Felix,
CFO



Anita Barcsa,
Photographer



Steve Dikeman
Content Director



Zach Cohen,
Head Writer



Dave Danielson,
Writer



Kasey Schefflin-Emrich,
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TECHNOLOGY IS KILLING RELATIONSHIPS



▶ publisher's note

By **Mitch Felix**

I didn't check emails once. And you know what happened? Nothing negative. That is mostly because, over the last 10 years, I have built a team that is efficient on their own. I realized I never gave them a shot to get on the field.

I was in the way.

At a most recent count, I am the admin on 12 different email addresses across five businesses I run. That had led to up to three hours spent in emails every day for seven days a week. It's sometimes more.

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- Real Producers team communication
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- San Mateo County Real Producers branded account
- Virtual assistant for Real Producers
- Officer manager for Real Producers
- Apple mail
- Family
- Upcoming book
- Gifts business (6,000+ clients still reorder)

Did you know email was invented in 1971?

It was initially intended as a replacement for the written letter.

A few weeks back, I took two weeks away for my honeymoon. And left my computers at home.

Assistant for gifts business
Architectural firm (I am the COO for EPIC Architecture)

Now, I am taking a stand. If you have emailed me recently, you've seen the following auto-responder:

"Due to in-person commitments and deadlines, sadly, I am unable to read or respond to most email. Please don't be offended, as this is true even for close friends."

This comes with the information for all of my team members. Seventeen in total now.

I also added a link to my schedule with many blocks of time to speak with you directly. The first week back, I implemented this process, and I had the longest conversations I've had in years. They were rich. They were deep.

It was lovely.

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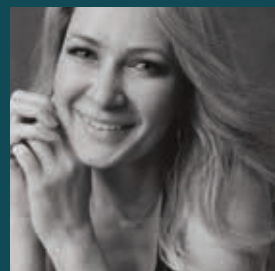
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THE **GALLI**
TEAM



▶ cover story

Written by **Zach Cohen**

With a shared passion for life, Michael Galli and the Galli Team are aligned in their pursuit of the sweetest joys in life; integrity, customer care, quality of life, teamwork, and flexibility rank at the top of their list of values. Though they work hard, Michael and the team are the types to take a midday break for a long swim or an hour of tennis. “We support each other to have a balanced life,” Michael explains. “Work hard and play hard.”

With the demands of their work usually extending into the evenings and weekends, The Galli Team makes sure to find the time to take care of themselves and their families along with taking care of their customers. They each cherish the time spent at home and are more than willing to pick up the slack for the other members of the team as needed.

The Galli Team defines true teaming, and the results are staggering. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Michael Galli was ranked in the top 250 agents in the United States for 2017. Currently, he is in the top one half of one percent of the more than 1.3 million real estate agents nationwide, with 2017 and 2018 sales volume totaling over \$80 million per year.

Yet, sitting down with Michael and his team, the statistics were never mentioned. Instead, they each talked extensively about the focus on serving their clients. “We are very honest and straightforward with our clients in every way,” Michael says. “They are trusting us to help them with a major life decision, and we take that very seriously. We’re also constantly looking for ways to improve our clients’ experience. Not following trends or fads, but looking for ways to anticipate what clients will want, and providing that in an exceptional way.”

Individually, they bring distinct strengths and experience to the table. Collectively, they are a well-oiled organization, allowing integrity to drive their business forward.

MEET THE TEAM

MICHAEL GALLI

“Integrity is the foundation,” Michael states. “We treat all of our clients as close family. It’s a source of endless joy for me to work with the clients and help them make good choices. Also, I have been fortunate to assemble a superstar team, and that makes it all work smoothly.”

Prior to becoming a real estate agent almost 10 years ago, Michael Galli wore many hats professionally. His first career was as a Wall Street stockbroker. He went on to own a fitness training business, work in internet marketing, and owned and operated a large home staging business along with his wife, Ann. A throughline in all of Michael’s work has been his lifelong commitment to exceptional service. Today, he feels fortunate that his desire to provide service is aligned with his truest passions.

“I love houses,” Michael exclaims. “Homes, architecture, fixing them up, remodeling. I’m really passionate about it.” 10 years ago, when Michael and Ann were about to have their second daughter, they decided to sell their successful home staging business. At the time, Michael was concurrently working as a mortgage lender.

“I was successful at it, but the work was like eating sawdust to me,” Michael laughs. “I just had no passion for it.” As he watched his friends that were real estate agents, he looked on with a sense of envy. “I thought, ‘That’s where all the fun is.’” Michael understood what he needed most; he cut the cord to his mortgage business and began to build a real estate business from scratch.

“At age 48 with a stay-at-home wife and two kids in private school, I jumped into this. It was a big risk for me, but I knew from my first day here that I did the right thing. It’s like trying on new clothes. When you put something on and feel, ‘Ah, this is so much better.’”

Michael’s real estate work originates from a deep source of passion within. It’s what keeps him healthy and thriving, year after year. “It’s been nine years, and I feel like I just got started. I’m never bored. It’s creative, strategic, ever-changing, and we help people a lot.”



HEATHER GREEN

Prior to her career in real estate, Heather Green worked in advertising. She had the opportunity to travel around the world and loved her work. While it was enjoyable, “it wasn’t a mom career,” she

explains. “I always had a personal passion for real estate. It seemed like an obvious next step for me,” Heather says.

Heather brings her extensive marketing and advertising experience with her to The Galli Team, leading the charge to manage listings and market the team. With a passion for understanding what motivates her clients, Heather has a unique ability to be able to empathize and serve.

“It’s such a rewarding career...to have these [clients] who are so grateful.” The struggles and joy of working with a family to get them into a new home bring the greatest satisfaction. “We do it every day. There’s always a risk of becoming jaded and not empathetic, but we really try to put ourselves in their shoes.”

Since joining the team in 2017, Heather has fallen in love with the overall team approach. “A big part of this team is taking it beyond the transaction, keeping in contact with our clients,” she explains. “We’ve barely begun.”

PATTI SMITH

Patti is the newest addition to The Galli Team. Born and raised in the Bay Area, she brings a vast background in sales, sales support, and recruiting. Patti recently made a career change into real estate as it has long been an interest and passion of hers.

Outside of work, Patti enjoys spending time with her family, cooking, and novel adventures. “I am a people-person by nature and enjoy supporting others for the success of the team,” Patti explains.



JAN VARGAS

A native of the Bay Area and a licensed assistant with over 25 years of real estate experience, Jan Vargas has been working with Michael since he was

newly licensed. Their synergy is apparent. “She’s the epicenter of what we do,” Michael explains. “She holds down the home base and coordinates the effort.”

Everyone credits Jan with making sure that no detail is overlooked. “When I began to get quite a bit of business going, I realized my weakness was the administrative side,” Michael recalls. “Fortunately, Jan agreed to work with me. I honestly don’t think I would have made it in the business without Jan.” While Jan grew up in San Jose and Santa Clara, she’s now working remotely for The Galli Team.

“I love helping people,” Jan says. “I feel like every offer we write is my own...I want every one of them to be successful. It’s almost like a motherly thing.”



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PHIL CHEN

COVER STORY
From the Street Skate to Real Estate Sales: Continuing to Take the Leap of Faith

"I recently dropped off, while my friends became professionals. In their *Thrasher Magazine* interviews they would say things like, 'I used to skate with Phil Chen, but he quit; I will never forget that.'"

"I remember I took a four-year off and when I was in college, I registered and went back to it," Phil explains. "I told my parents, 'I'm going to register this my whole life. I'm going to quit school and go pro; but I never did it. And I am going to regret it my whole life. I was too young to enjoy or understand the potential would be.'"

Despite the sense of loss from a skateboarding career that never was, Phil's path has led him to great things: first, a career in fitness, and now, a blossoming real estate business. He will take business from his early years on a skateboard with him every day.

With the nature of a skateboarder, Phil remains willing to take chances when the time is right. "I'm constantly rolling the dice and taking risks and chances. That's my nature. I'm not conservative towards it. I'm always going to take the leap of faith," he explains.

"The income I earned from skateboarding is a nice disappointment. Living, sleeping, breathing what you do, it becomes natural and instinctive. In a little way, it's a sense of 'oh, being an elite athlete was like, I could go to sleep, dream a little, and do the next day. I tell my kids now, try to be the best at whatever you do.'"

In college, Phil delved into another sport, what was I doing? "I was a triathlete. But instead of triathlon, Phil dabbled in triathlon for a larger brokerage, using the knowledge he accrued mainly on his own through his family's investments, observation, intuition, and experience. By 2010, he put himself on the map as a top real estate agent in the highly competitive area of Hillsborough.

Phil opened his own boutique brokerage, *Delux Realty*, without ever working for a larger brokerage, using the knowledge he accrued mainly on his own through his family's investments, observation, intuition, and experience. By 2010, he put himself on the map as a top real estate agent in the highly competitive area of Hillsborough.

Coming to Compare from *Thrasher*, which he opened and ran for the better part of a decade, has given Phil a unique perspective on the state of the local real estate market. "Compare is a unique opening Knight-richt.com," Phil comments.

"I'm fortunate to have had three careers that I've passionate about, because really great and made into careers."

Phil stays motivated by staying humble and continuously striving to improve in all aspects of his work.

"I'm still hungry, so watch out."

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ACE RELOCATION SYSTEMS

Pete Pfeilsticker

▶ partner spotlight

Written by **Dave Danielson**
Photography by **Hyunah Jang**

MAKING EACH MOVE UNIQUELY SUCCESSFUL

No two homes are exactly the same. In the same way, each time a family prepares to change addresses, Ace Relocation Systems gives their move the quality consideration and customized attention it deserves.

Pete Pfeilsticker is general manager of the company's San Jose branch. He lives in San Jose with his supportive wife, Christine, and three active children.

As Pete says, there are no off-the-shelf solutions at work here.

"We're not Amazon. Everything we do for our customers is a custom order," he explains. "It's not a matter of just putting a post office box in front of their house and delivering to it. We're not working with moving just one package. It's everything a family has. And it's all going."

As Pete says, he and his team take particular satisfaction in that fact.

"A big part of the passion I have for this work is we're not working on an assembly line. It's always different.



"We aren't the cheapest in the industry, but I believe we are the best value," Pete says.

One secret to delivering a move that is successful is having the appropriate amount of time to plan and organize.

"Ideally, we need at least 10 days to assess the scope of the move," Pete says. "While it's possible that we can pull things off the next day, our team is made up of craftsmen who take pride in doing what they do in the right way."

It's all part of a customer service ethic that is built on stringent quality.

As Pete says, "We're not making iPads. What we do is intimate. We're working with the possessions people have from a lifetime. And we're bringing three to five people into your home for a couple of days. All of our team members are background-checked and cleared, and we pay insurance for everything."

SERVICE ABOVE AND BEYOND

Nothing is perfect. But the drive to deliver a perfect effort is there.

"Part of our success is asking what happens when a customer is frustrated," Pete explains. "Some of our greatest customer service successes have happened when something went wrong because then we made them feel better in the way we resolve it."

Building a successful world-class moving company happens one box, one truckload, and one move at a time.

"At the end of the day, our clients pay us to get their belongings back to them in the same condition we received it in," he says. "A happy customer means more customers. Our success occurs when they get their things on time and in good shape."

It truly takes teamwork to deliver customized quality.

"What we've got going is successful," Pete emphasizes. "Each day, we're so supported by our corporate executive leadership, customer experience team, and operations department, who work so hard to communicate information correctly so that our local and over-the-road crews can make the rest of us look good through all of their hard work. It's a really cool level of communication and service. I really like our team and our teamwork."

We've got processes in place to help organize things and make sure everything that leaves one location arrives in the next. For example, if we disassemble furniture, we put all of the accessories for that piece of furniture in one box."

FLEXIBLE AND SCALABLE

As anyone who has moved can attest, the process can be daunting. That's why Ace Relocation Systems comes with the know-how, the experience, and the manpower to make it happen.

"Our San Jose branch is one of nine Ace Relocation Systems branches throughout the nation, and we're one of the bigger ones," Pete points out. "We put out 60 to 80 movers each day in the San Francisco Bay Area, along with 20 over-the-road drivers."

The nine Ace Relocation Systems branches are part of the larger Atlas company family—a massive moving giant representing the services of more than 2,000 drivers.

That size and set of capabilities allow Pete and his team to accommodate whatever comes their way.

"We move our clients wherever they're headed, whether that's local, national or international through our overseas partners," he says. "We'll do anything that folks need. Whether it's Grandma's irreplaceable china, Junior's swingset, or Fido himself, we can move it."

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Sharon CHEN

MAINTAINING
CLIENT
RELATIONSHIPS



...



Photography by **Hyunah Jang**
Written by **Kasey Schefflin-Emrich**

Sharon Chen became involved in real estate after her property manager expressed her intentions to retire from the business.

“I got trained by her,” Sharon said. “I started managing our property. Then family and friends said, ‘Sharon since you manage your property, why don’t you manage mine?’”

Sharon managed other people’s properties before obtaining her real estate license in 2016. She currently manages over 20 properties with the help of her husband.

“My husband is good dealing with all the workers—the technician stuff, soil, roofing,” Sharon said. “I’m the one telling my client what’s going on with the property and finding them good tenants.”

In addition to managing properties, Sharon helps clients buy and sell properties.



“I really enjoy talking to the client and getting to know their needs,” she said. “I have a lot of first-time buyers, and I really feel happy for them.”

Before real estate, Sharon served as a retail manager of a department store in Taiwan for seven years. She gained a lot of experience working with numbers and people—skills needed in the real estate field.

“When you do retail you have to check for all the numbers,” Sharon said. “I’m [also] pretty good with people.”

Sharon’s social skills have led her to success in real estate. She has always focused on maintaining relationships with her clients.

“The first year is really hard because you don’t know anybody and even if people know you, they don’t really trust you because you are very new,” Sharon said. “You have to have a lot of follow-ups; make clients trust you.”

Sharon maintains relationships with clients even after finishing their initial transaction.

“They have still have a friend and family,” she said. “For the holidays, I will show up or give them a gift or have a cup of coffee. And they will start to bring up topics like they want to invest more.”

Sharon said making people happy matters more to her than making money.

“[It’s] when a client says they really appreciate what I did and they start referring me to clients,” she said. “It means they really recognize what I did.”

Sharon said she gained a lot of experience through trial and error and has received help from her mentors.

“My boss teaches us a lot,” she said. “Even when you get your license, at the beginning it’s very hard to get clients. Only through practice, you can know what’s the real thing.”

Sharon has maintained a positive attitude throughout her real estate journey.

“I think I have a great passion in this industry,” she said. “I feel that’s my goal to succeed.”

When she’s not working, Sharon enjoys going to the gym where she likes to lift weights and do Zumba.

“It keeps me really motivated,” she said.

Sharon also loves to travel with her husband. Her favorite place to visit has been the Czech Republic.

Besides real estate, Sharon is also an accomplished florist and published a book in Taiwan about how to make homemade arrangements.



RUSTY PAAP

Photography by Hyunah Jang
Written by Zach Cohen



Since childhood, Rusty Paap has been propelled by two chief motivators: A need to help others and a desire for recognition.

These yearnings were manifested through Rusty's many boyhood career aspirations, from professional athlete (he planned to donate his annual earnings) to hip-hop music producer (where his fame could serve as a platform to share inspirational messages) to, finally, church pastor.

"When I was a little kid, my grandmother thought that I was going to be like a Martin Luther King Jr. and Obama kind of figure," shares Rusty. "She said that I should be a pastor. So that was something that was prophesied into my life in some ways."

His grandmother's vision, coupled with his own internal drivers, spurred Rusty to pursue a ministerial career path post-high school. After graduation, he was accepted into Oklahoma's Oral Roberts University, "the Harvard of theological schools." However, as move-in day neared, Rusty became anxious about relocating so far away from his family. More specifically, he began to doubt whether he was cut out for life as a pastor.

At the last minute, he switched gears and moved to San Jose to live with his older brother. Two days before September 11, 2001, Rusty began working part-time as a loan processor and personal assistant for a local mortgage real estate broker. After the attacks, interest rates plummeted to boost the economy and, as a result, there was a surge in home refinancing and buying. Rusty's workplace responsibilities quickly increased to accommodate business demands. Before long, he had acquired his real estate license and was promoted to office manager.

By 2009, after several years in the real estate industry, Rusty decided that the time was ripe for a change. He teamed up with a

fellow agent to run a real estate business focused solely on short sales and foreclosures.

"It was just mind-numbingly difficult because all you did all day was just call banks and have them hang up on you," says Rusty.

After three years in business, he was so discontent that he considered exiting the industry entirely. However, his business partner suggested that they consider one more avenue before throwing in the towel: Teaming up with a larger, more prominent real estate brokerage. Rusty was intrigued – he had never received formalized training on growing and operating a real estate business and felt that additional education might serve him well.

Turns out, he was right. After joining forces with Intero Real Estate in 2011, Rusty received access to a robust business and educational support system and, as a result, his career started to flourish.

"Learning a bunch of new things at Intero and then also having the market kind of shift back at the exact same time – it kept me in the business."

From that point forward, Rusty's sales transactions skyrocketed. In 2017, he formed his own Intero team, Paap Properties, in large part so that he could live out his passion for service by mentoring new agents.

"That's why I started my own team. To take what I've learned and give it to other people," shares Rusty. "I feel like the more I do that, the more that I'll blossom. And so far, a year and a half in, it's been very, very, true."

His current team roster is stacked with a diverse mix of new agents (including a soon-to-be college graduate, a former family



...

law attorney, and a retiree launching a second career). And unlike team leaders who entice novice agents with promises of endless client leads, the cornerstone of Rusty's business is education and support.

"Why they're with me is because I'm going to help them build a strategy around their own business so that they can either stay with me forever if they want to or they can take it and go do it by themselves," says Rusty. "Because, again, my whole idea is I want to give what I have to somebody else and let them do it."

In addition to his powerhouse team, Rusty credits a wildly successful 2018 (his most profitable year yet) to consistent prospecting and subtle, targeted marketing efforts. For example, he distributes a monthly, hand-delivered neighborhood market update to homeowners in a specific farm area and, without making a sales pitch, and it has reaped great results.

"Sometimes the homeowners are out in their yards, and they're like, 'Oh my God, yes. Thank you!'" shares Rusty. "They're excited. They know it's coming. And it's delivered very consistently, so they know it's going to happen every month."

As a complement to his professional success, Rusty also leads a vibrant personal life. He tries to devote three to five hours each day to spend with his "super fun" 3-year-old son and maintains close relationships with his parents and five siblings. Additionally, he strives to regulate business-induced stress in order to more freely prioritize extracurricular activities, like praying, reading, exercise, and his board membership with San Juan Bautista Child Development Centers.

With a well-respected, service-based real estate business to his name and a joy-filled personal life to boot, it's clear that, despite the twists and turns, Rusty has stayed true to his deepest personal drivers – and maintained an authenticity that his boyhood self would be proud of.

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Rodger Shaheen

LIVING HIS PASSION

“We’re not solving the world’s crises. We’re not saving lives, but we are impacting them,” Rodger Shaheen reminds us.

With his quintessentially calm demeanor, Rodger doesn’t intend to downplay the work he does in real estate. Rather, he wants to put the importance of the work he does into focus by understanding the role he plays in the lives of his clients.

“I don’t try to be somebody I’m not. I’m genuinely who I am, and take my job seriously in the sense that I make sure my clients are thought of in the same light as if I’m doing a deal for myself or my family.”

DRAWING FROM HIS ROOTS

Growing up in San Jose, Rodger learned lessons on work ethic and relationship-building early on. All these years later, Rodger still draws on his father’s teachings, bringing them into his work in real estate.

“My family had six children, and [my father] was a butcher and owned a small neighborhood market. We didn’t have much growing up, but he used to tell me, ‘The relationships you have — friendships and in business — you have to foster them, treat people respectfully and always honestly, even though they may not want to hear the what you’re saying.’”

Rodger applies those same principals — his guiding principals — to real estate.

“I spend my time making sure my clients are always thought of and taken care of as if they are my family,” Rodger says. “Many times I have turned down easy deals because I felt it was the wrong thing for the client. I’ve been thanked many times over — in word and in friendship.”

FINDING HIS CALLING

While attending San Jose State University, where he got his



...

degree in advertising and communications, Rodger first obtained his real estate license. That was in 1993 — but it took more than a decade more before he would pursue real estate full-time.

After graduating, Rodger moved into the high-tech world, where he stayed until 2006. He held executive leadership positions at several startups and larger, more prominent companies.

“In 2006, I got a call,” Rodger explains. “My family owns commercial real estate. We needed some leasing done at one of our shopping centers, so I decided to take a pause from the high tech world and try my hand at commercial real estate.”

Rodger quickly discovered that real estate was a passion of his. He grew to love his new role, but, unfortunately, the economic recession was right around the corner. With the commercial real estate market in disarray, Rodger returned to work in technology, joining LinkedIn as a sales leader.

By 2016, Rodger came to a realization. “I just was not enjoying what I was doing,” he admits candidly.

“At the last startup I worked for, I told the executive team I was quitting. They said ‘That’s good. We’re closing our doors’ — the exact same day. So I called my wife and said, ‘I have good news and great news. She said, ‘What’s the good news?’”

“The good news is I quit my job, and the company is folding. The great news is I’m going to sell residential real estate full-time.”

There was a long pause on the phone. Rodger was concerned that his wife might be mad or disappointed in his decision. When she found her words, the reply was anything but a disappointment.

“She said, ‘This is the best news I’ve heard in the past five years. You’re going to kill it.’ From that point forward, I never looked back.”

LIVING HIS PASSION

When Rodger returned to real estate on the residential side in 2016, he had no safety net, no contacts, no sphere of influence — but he had the drive to succeed. “I had the people I worked with and for in tech — and that was it.”

Despite the apparent hurdles, Rodger found almost immediate success. In his first year, he won Rookie of the Year and was in the top five in the Coldwell Banker office (out of over 140 agents). In 2017, he more than doubled his sales to reach the top 1% of all Coldwell Banker agents. And in 2018, his third year, he almost doubled his sales from 2107.

“I credit that, honestly, to the drive I learned from my father,” Rodger says.



Outside work, Rodger can be found with his family — his lovely wife, Brigid (who he claims everyone loves more than him) and their two sons, Coleman and Casey. Rodger also reminds us not to forget about the last family member, Teddy, their beloved Goldendoodle. “Teddy understands me better than most,” Rodger laughs.

“And when I have the time, I spend the majority of my time at the beach, whether it’s in the water surfing or with my dog, playing fetch.” Rodger loves to barbeque, coach sports ... and enjoy craft beer. “I’m a master of drinking craft beer,” he says with a smile. “I love craft beer. I sit on the boards of two local craft breweries as a professional taster. It’s so funny.”

Rodger’s sales experience is astounding and the success he’s found in his first three years in the business impressive, but the more obvious marker of success is his demeanor. Calm, collected, easygoing, and on point, Rodger’s way is a breath of fresh air in what can often be a stress-infused environment.

“I’m super passionate about what I do. I love it. Day in and day out. Even on the worst day.”

“It’s not about selling; it’s about learning,” Rodger believes. “If you really think about life — we’re not solving world issues. We’re helping people find their dreams and helping them get to their next destination in life. This is the place they will see their children walk or crawl or speak their first word ... It’s important. It’s about getting it right. Always putting the client in front of your own interest. Always. Always ... I want to see that more out there. That’s why I do this.”



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▶▶ profile

Written by **Zach Cohen**
Photography by **Anita Barcsa**

“Life is simple; don’t complicate things if you don’t have to.”

It takes an optimistic and confident person to utter those words. Vicky Le, recognized as a top agent in the Silicon Valley, exudes qualities of both optimism and confidence. Yet, her early life was anything but simple.

Born in Vietnam, Vicky was barely a year old when she, her parents, and four siblings made a perilous escape from their war-torn country in search of freedom and a better life. A harrowing two-year journey through various regions in Asia followed, ending once Vicky’s father, fortunately, found a sponsor for her family. Only then were they able to make their move to America in 1982.

Life in America

With their tumultuous life behind them, Vicky and her family continued to experience hardships, as Vicky’s parents worked days and nights to provide for their large family.

“I was never handed a silver spoon growing up in Oakland,” Vicky says. “We lived in a cramped two-bedroom apartment with two other large families in the worst part of town. My family home got robbed seven times. I even got robbed walking home from school.” Rather than allowing her ongoing struggles to defeat her, Vicky adopted the work ethic and selfless dedication to others modeled by her immigrant parents.

Vicky worked hard all throughout school, and her diligence paid off. She obtained a degree in electrical engineering from California State Polytechnic University and landed a job as a systems engineer with Lockheed Martin’s Fleet Ballistic Missile team.

Vicky is probably one of the rare people in this world who can say that she really was a rocket scientist.

Vicky found corporate life at a military subcontractor to be a bit restrictive of her creative capabilities, and not quite the challenging intellectual experience she had expected. As a result, she sought out a career in an area of interest with a better balance of mental stimulation, real-time problem solving, and social engagement. Always fascinated with architecture, but not wanting to spend even more years in school, Vicky decided to pursue a career in real estate.

A New Career On the Horizon

Vicky started to work part-time in real estate while still at Lockheed, but it quickly became apparent that her talents were well suited to the profession, and soon she left Lockheed to become a full-time agent.

“I have always been told by others that I have a gift for understanding people and bringing people together. Real estate is just that — connecting the right people together,” she says.

As the intensity of her real estate career picked up, Vicky prioritized her roles as wife and mother to her two young sons, Ethan and Matteo. When they got older, she felt more confident in arranging her parenting schedule and began to push her real estate career into high gear. “I want to thank my husband, Stanley, and my two kids. Without their patience and support, I wouldn’t be where I am today,” Vicky says with a smile.

In 2018, Vicky began transforming her real estate venture. She focused on branding and streamlining all aspects of her business. The more she could automate the logistics of running her business, the more time she could devote to building relationships and serving her clients, and the more time she could spend with her family.

Vicky’s success is undoubtedly a result of applying the same work ethic that got her parents through so much. She also draws on her talent and ability to rise above complications. Rather than get bogged down by challenges, Vicky takes them in stride: “You simply have to deal with your situation and make the most of it,” she says.

For Vicky, perseverance performs like a genetic trait. It’s her goal to be the best in every aspect of her life, and that includes her real estate career. She strives to set examples for her young sons and wants them to know that they can achieve anything in life they set their minds to. “I wholeheartedly believe that anything is possible if you work hard,” Vicky says.

In addition to recognizing her strong work ethic and tenacity, Vicky’s clients are well-aware of the high level of customer service she brings to them. She refrains from taking a one-size-fits-all approach just to complete a transaction and instead focuses on honesty and transparency with her clients.

•••

Serving the entire Bay Area with an emphasis on Santa Clara County, Vicky is quick to recognize ideal purchase opportunities and aggressively pursues off-market deals. She also has well-established relationships with other agents, builders, and developers, which enable her to serve as a real estate investment advisor for her clients and business partners. She uses her keen eye for architecture and design to help her clients in the areas of home improvement.

A Work-Life Balance

Vicky's personal life primarily reflects her own childhood experiences. She is heavily focused on volunteer work in her community, which includes visits to hospitals, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters.

Her most memorable volunteer work was a trip to New Orleans to help build homes for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. "Not only did I help put smiles on these families when they saw their homes completed, but I also made lifelong friendships, which are very rewarding," she says.

Vicky is interested in volunteering at a Syrian refugee camp in Greece, as she recognizes that the struggles of the Syrian people shares parallels to her own childhood experience. "I don't understand the politics behind it. We are all human. If someone needs help, reach out and help. Period. The image of the Syrian child's body washed up on shore hits home for me. That child could have been me 37 years ago. As a parent myself, I could never put my kids in danger traveling across the sea unless I don't have any other option from a war-torn country," she says. Vicky's goal is to volunteer in Greece by her 40th birthday.

Vicky loves to travel the world and enjoy different experiences and cultures. "Traveling the world keeps me grounded and humble. I do my best to share these experiences with my kids so that they too can be ground-



ed and humble. I want my kids to be well-rounded individuals who give back to the community," she says.

A physical fitness enthusiast, Vicky has already completed three marathons and has her eyes on completing a full Ironman in the near future. And admittedly, she's a bit of a daredevil. "I have a need for speed, and I do a bunch of extreme sports: Skydiving, repelling down waterfalls, river rafting, you name it. You only live once. Why not?" Vicky asks.

Vicky's life story explains her success: A relentless work ethic and selfless devotion to others modeled by her immigrant parents, an embrace of calculated risks rooted in her family's successful immigration story, and a tenacity to achieve goals despite multiple setbacks.

Given Vicky's determination and stamina in everything she tackles, she likely won't have much trouble in reaching her goals, professionally or personally.



game changer ◀◀

Written by Zach Cohen

GREG GOUMAS

The Real Estate Consultant



Back in 2009, Greg Goumas knew he was ready for a career change. He had built a successful career in finance — first in the corporate world, and then as a consultant. Greg oversaw mergers and acquisitions, managed global finance teams, and worked as a part-time CFO for smaller organizations.

“I really enjoyed that, but I found that finance work didn’t have enough variation for me. I really wanted to get out, to do something that had more daily change,” he explains.

In real estate, Greg has found that variation. As he says, “Every day, every week, every month is different.” And that’s one of the things he loves about his work.

A DIFFERENT TAKE ON REAL ESTATE

2009 wasn’t the easiest time to get started in real estate sales; with the market in disarray, more agents were getting out of the business than getting into it. But Greg had a different take on real estate. Instead of diving into real estate sales directly, he expanded upon his skills as a consultant and brought them to the real estate world.

“It was a tough year to start, but I started in a different way, I suppose,” Greg begins. “[My wife and I] built our house in 2006. We got this huge assessment from the county tax assessor. I fought that assessment and won. I told a couple of friends about it and fought their assessments and saved them money as well. That’s 2009, right when the economy went down significantly. I thought about it — I went from corporate finance to finance consulting, and I knew I wanted to something different. I thought, ‘Why don’t I start a real estate consulting business?’”

In 2009, Greg did just that. His goal was to look at real estate as a true investment and to guide his clients toward the soundest financial decision.

“As a simple financial transaction, what’s the balance there?” Greg asks. “I engaged with clients on [different ideas]. Given a lot, what’s the most you should invest in that location? At what point do you reach diminishing returns?” Greg also looked at costs to own and care for the home — essentially what it costs to own the property beyond the mortgage payment.

In 2009, Greg launched his consulting business, which he ran full time until 2011.

THE MARKET SHIFTS

“As we got into 2011, my clients who I helped started to call me and said, ‘Now that the market is rebounding, we’d like to sell our house. Can you recommend whom we should speak with about selling the house?’ So I got into real estate. That was the natural progression.”

As he transitioned to real estate sales, Greg continued to focus on the principals that he built his consulting business around.

And the best part for him? It’s fun.

Greg’s background in corporate finance, property appraisal, and real estate taxation has proved to be the perfect combination for shaping and directing his philosophy of helping clients better understand the investment component of real estate.

BEYOND THE OFFICE WALLS

Greg and his wife, Kathy, have three children: Andrew, Natalie, and Ava. In his time away from work, he enjoys golf, travel, and winemaking.

Greg’s father was an ophthalmologist. When he retired, he purchased a property, where Greg and his brother planted a vineyard one summer. “Through that process, we got involved in growing grapes and winemaking,” Greg recalls. “That property has since been sold, and we’re out of farming. But a good friend of mine in Los Altos hills started making wine.”

Greg had a ton of winemaking equipment that he gave to his friend. Eventually, Greg joined him in the hobby. He’s now been involved for six years.

“It’s a blast. And we make some great wine,” Greg says with a smile. “It’s a nostalgic thing, reflecting back on making wine with my dad and brother. But also we’re very fortunate. We make a very nice wine. That’s rewarding.”

FINDING BALANCE

Work/life balance is a challenge for any real estate agent. The way Greg sees it, balance is all about knowing what’s important versus what is urgent.

“You have the important and the urgent,” Greg explains. “You focus on the important. There’s always urgent stuff, but the urgent stuff rarely translates into value for anyone. So I focus on the important.”

Greg also pays close attention to equity markets, understanding that they track closely with real estate. The market is continually shifting and changing, and Greg is ready to move with it.

“Going back to my finance career, it was all about planning. That concept of planning and measuring yourself, benchmarking, measuring performance against projection, I’ve done ten lifetimes of that. My approach now is very different,” Greg continues.

“I can sit down and create a plan in advance ... but I find two things. If I meet a client and do my very best for them and take care of them, it’ll be a win-win. It’ll be rewarding for everybody. That takes care of the plan right there. And if I take time creating a plan, I will get pulled away from it ... I’ll get pulled in a direction to take care of a client.”

Given a choice to adhere to his plan or take care of a client, referral, or friend, Greg is going to choose to care for his clients every single time.

“So I don’t measure myself against any metric other than, ‘Did I do the very best I could?’”



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