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► publisher's note

Shower Thoughts

By Mitch Felix

I am grateful.

We could not do what we do without the support of you. We are a tribe — a team.

I do some of my best thinking in the shower.

So much so that I have a waterproof note pad and pencils suction cupped to the wall in there. When inspiration hits, I am ready.

Recently I wrote down:

“Team Building. No name. No logo.”

Here is what I meant.

Many teams have no established name and no defined logo. These teams I am focusing on are an informal collection of like-minded thinkers who set a goal together and then make it happen.

Like us. A tribe.

It makes me think of each of the events we create together. It's a growing group of the very best real estate professionals in one room, manifesting something unique and not duplicatable.

Labels become secondary to setting an intention together and manifesting something from nothing.

These events fortify current relationships and grow new ones.

It can be quick. A few hours come and go, but the mark of the team that was created stays with us.

History is full of examples of these collaborators. My life is full of examples of these collaborations.

They have made an indelible impact on the trajectory of my life.

Participating in this community of reciprocity matters.

You matter.

My observation is that performing at a high level means you are often pouring out into everyone else's glass, but nobody is pouring into yours.

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What's surreal is this is just the beginning.

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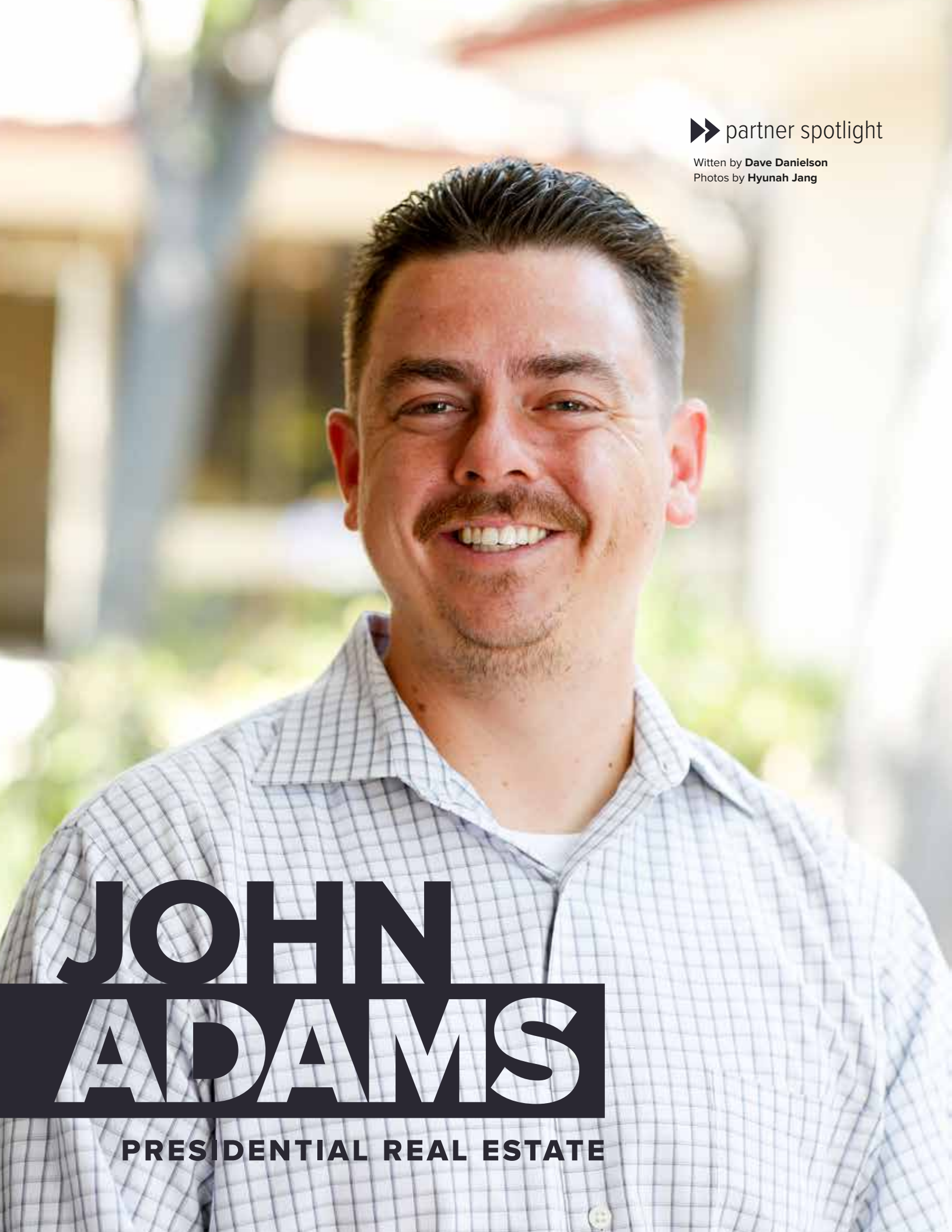
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▶▶ partner spotlight

Written by **Dave Danielson**
Photos by **Hyunah Jang**

**JOHN
ADAMS**

PRESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

A Passion for Property Management

When you talk with John Adams, it's clear to see he has a strong passion for what he does as Broker and President of Presidential Real Estate — overseeing the management responsibilities for hundreds of properties throughout the region.

Raised on Real Estate

That passion for the business is something that was instilled within John from a very early age, growing up in San Jose.

“My parents, Charlie and Sandy, owned Adams and Adams REALTORS®. My dad did sales, and my mom focused on property management,” John recalls. “My mom has been a property manager the whole time. And when I turned 18, I started working for her.”

For four years, John worked with his mom. He learned a lot working side by side with her during that time. After that, Sandy semi-retired and sold her business to another property management company—Atlantis Real Estate. John continued on with the new organization, serving as second in charge for another eight years.

“We worked with a lot of units while I was with Atlantis,” he remembers. “In fact, we were managing about 1,500 units.”

Starting His Own Path

In October 2013, John started Presidential Real Estate and started his own new chapter in property management. In a few short years, the company has become a true success.

“We have three licensed agents on our team, and we’ve grown to about 300 properties we manage. We have a nice size. We’re not too big, and we’re not too small,” he explains.

As John says, that size brings advantages for clients.

“When an organization becomes really large, a high volume of properties can make it more difficult to continually cover all of the details involved, and they become more difficult to control,” John points out. “With our size, one of the things we really take pride in is our ability to deliver personalized customer service.”



That’s why John and his team ensure that their growth is covered with the team and processes to continue to deliver the brand of service and personal follow-through they’ve become known for.

The expansion continues each year. In fact, Presidential Real Estate averages a 30 to 40 percent annual growth rate.

John attributes much of that success to the important teamwork his organization enjoys with the real estate community.

“Our agents in the real estate industry who we work with are like our best friends,” John emphasizes. “We have an outstanding relationship and are able to refer clients back and forth. In fact, over 50 percent of our business comes from real estate agents.”

That success comes property by property and step by step in covering the needs of clients.

“We really cover the whole tenant life cycle,” John explains. “So we help people prepare their properties for rental. We advertise them, screen applicants, handle all of the lease agreement paperwork and signatures, delegate maintenances, handle insurance claims, and take care of the ongoing accounting needs for the properties, as well.”



...

Excelling at the Experience

At the same time, John and his team have also taken steps to streamline the tenant experience and make the experience more intuitive for them, as well.

“One of the things we have really enjoyed offering to tenants is a series of maintenance videos that we make available through our website. These videos cover items such as how to get your garbage disposal working again, along with basic tips and reminders related to breakers and the electrical panel. They have been very popular.”

In addition to Presidential Real Estate, John and Sandy also own and operate another company called Rental Housing Network.



“Our company teaches people and provides them with the tools and materials to manage these properties on their own.”

“Rental Housing Network is designed for those owners who want to manage their own properties. Our company teaches people and provides them with the tools and materials to manage these properties on their own,” he explains.

Priorities in Place

John has been involved in giving back to the industry through time, as well. He’s a member of the National Association of Residential Property Managers (NARPM) and has served as President of the Santa Clara County chapter, along with serving on the state chapter.

Away from work, John’s favorite thing is spending time with his wife, Stacy, and their two sons, Wyatt, who is five, and Owen, who is two. He and Stacy are also preparing for their third child.

“My definition of success really revolves around them. Everything for me is geared toward my family. And I feel very lucky to be at this point in life where I am able to spend good quality time with them,” John says.

As John looks to the future, he does so with a sense of gratitude and service — a passion for working with and serving people.

“It means a lot to me to be able to serve people from all walks of life and to go the extra mile for them,” John explains. “We work with a spirit of fairness and integrity to protect the owner’s investment while also providing a great place for people to live. It makes me happy to know that we have satisfied owners and tenants. It’s a happy balance. I really love what I do.”

For more information about Presidential Real Estate:

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▶ year end review part 2

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2019

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As we look forward to 2020, we cannot forget all of the amazing articles that we were able to publish in 2019. Here's a list of all the featured *Silicon Valley Real Producers*. Thank you for allowing us to share your stories.

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AL AYUBI

profile  Written by **Zach Cohen**
Photos by: **Hyunah Jang**



Throughout his career, Al Ayubi has proven one thing time and time again: he has the Midas touch.

His initial taste of professional success came while working in his first post-college position as a financial consultant with a New York-based wealth management firm.

Al's keen business acumen and networking skills helped him to quickly excel in this role (he secured \$60 million in his first two years). However, shortly thereafter, he got

married and had his first child, a change that prompted him to rethink the demanding, fast-paced lifestyle synonymous with consulting culture. To achieve a more sustainable, work-life balance and prioritize his growing family, Al decided to leave New York and relocate to California, a state he fell in love with while attending college at California State University – East Bay.

A PERFECTLY TIMED TRANSITION

After moving, Al was eager to land another lucrative job on the west coast and, at the recommendation of a friend, briefly transitioned into the mortgage banking industry. However, by 2007, an interest in entrepreneurship, coupled with a desire for increased day-to-day flexibility, led him to pivot once again – this time, in the direction of a real estate career. Despite the perilous state of the then-market, Al considered his segue into the industry perfect timing.

“I needed the time to kind of scale-up, and 2007 gave me that time to do it,” says Al. “So, the first year was a learning lesson. I made 5% of what I was making the year prior, running a mortgage company. But it scaled up from there.”

Fast forward 11 years, and it's clear that Al's business scaled, and then some. In 2018, he secured \$70 million in residential and commercial sales, his highest grossing year so far in real estate. In addition to his focus on single-family, residential transactions, he is currently in the initial stages of developing three Pacifica-based, multi-family land parcels, ranging from a small, eight-family home property to a plot designed for 18-19 homes with accessory dwelling units. While keeping multiple irons in the fire simultaneously has contributed to his business's growth, Al also attributes his success to several other key practices, starting with a practical, client-centric business philosophy.

“Take care of the client. Do good work. Under-promise and over-deliver. And just put yourself in their shoes and accommodate their potential needs.”

Additionally, Al leverages his extensive financial background to guide his clients towards fiscally responsible purchases. Prioritizing their best interests, whether or not it results in a deal, has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on Al's business.

“If it doesn't make sense, I tell them, ‘I know you're excited and everything, but you're going to put yourself in a bad situation. Maybe you should think about it,’” shares Al. “But when it makes sense, I give them my two cents, and they're happy about it. And as a result, the majority of my business is referral based.”

...

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FINDING BALANCE THROUGH STRUCTURE

To adequately meet both personal and professional demands, Al has become an ace at maintaining a structured schedule. For instance, during the work week, he tries not to accept business phone calls after 8pm or before 7am and doesn't work on Fridays or Saturdays. These restrictions allow him uninterrupted pockets of time to spend with his wife and three children and to engage in personal activities, like exercising and meditating. His focus on intentionality also extends into the way he approaches his business to-do list and has helped to spur his productivity.

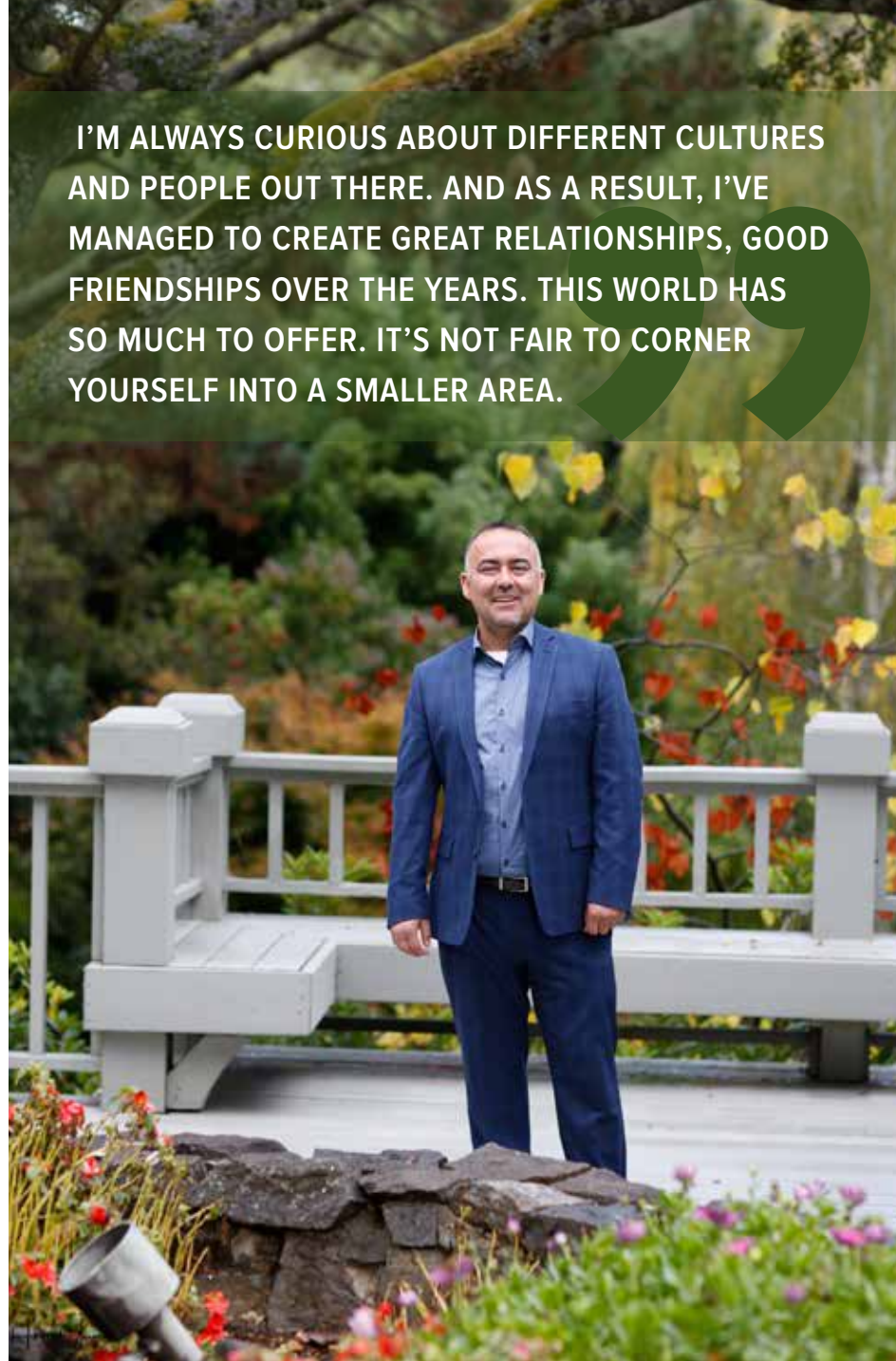
"Take maybe two to three things you can work on that you can accomplish every day, and that adds up to almost 1,000 things or more for the year, versus people who don't have any kind of structure," says Al. "That's what I try to do. I try to take three things that need to be done off my table every day."

THE TRAVEL ENTHUSIAST

Another perk to Al's excellent time management skills: ample time for global travel, a lifelong passion that he regularly enjoys for both personal and professional reasons (his most recent trips have included an anniversary vacation with his wife to Paris and Barcelona, visits to Mexico and Hawaii with his family, and work-related stays in Dubai, Shanghai, and Turkey). As a native of Afghanistan who grew up in the US, Al has a deep global appreciation, can speak four languages fluently, and views his international comfortability as one of his greatest strengths.

"I'm able to get along with pretty much all different ethnicities and diverse groups of people," shares Al. "And it's not for financial reasons. I'm always curious about different cultures and people out there. And as a result, I've managed to create great relationships, good friendships over the years. This world has so much to offer. It's not fair to corner yourself into a smaller area."

I'M ALWAYS CURIOUS ABOUT DIFFERENT CULTURES AND PEOPLE OUT THERE. AND AS A RESULT, I'VE MANAGED TO CREATE GREAT RELATIONSHIPS, GOOD FRIENDSHIPS OVER THE YEARS. THIS WORLD HAS SO MUCH TO OFFER. IT'S NOT FAIR TO CORNER YOURSELF INTO A SMALLER AREA.



In fact, Al's love for travel is so great that once his youngest son, a seventh grader, enrolls in college, he hopes to transition into semi-retirement and lead a more internationally-flexible lifestyle by purchasing vacation homes in Turkey and Dubai. During his stints abroad, he plans to stay busy with a myriad of freelance residential real estate and development projects and to devote increased energy to scaling the philanthropic outreach efforts that he spearheads for the Silicon Valley's disadvantaged and homeless populations. If it seems that Al's retirement to-do list is just as jam-packed as his present one, it's likely because, unlike many approaching their golden years, he has no intention of slowing down any time soon.

"You can never retire entirely," laughs Al. "People say if you're retiring, you're dying. I don't want to do that."

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► cover story

Written by Zach Cohen
Photos by Hyunah Jang

“A lot of times, you need drive, which I always have. I’ve never needed people to push me. I’ve never needed seminars to get motivated. I have this drive.”

...

An Unstoppable Drive



...

From High-Tech to Real Estate

Growing up in Beijing, China, Mei Ling never once had dreams of becoming a real estate agent. As the daughter of a prominent computer science professor, she excelled at math and science from an early age and was encouraged to follow in her father's footsteps and pursue an engineering career. Post-college, she went to work in the high-tech field and experienced great success, eventually landing a Director of Engineering role at a leading technology company. However, by 2003, Mei began to crave a professional change.

"I was in high-tech for so long, and I was at the Director level, dealing with a lot of politics at different levels as a people manager. I just got tired of that."

In addition, as the mother of two young boys, Mei was also eager for a more flexible job that allowed her to spend more time with her children. As she brainstormed next steps, real estate piqued her interest. Initially thinking she would sell properties as a hobby, she obtained her real estate license in 2004. However, after closing 35 transactions in her first 1.5 years of business, Mei knew that she was onto something much greater than a side gig.

Key Strengths and Practices

After spending years as a top producer in the real estate market, Mei credits her sustained business success to several key practices and personal strengths, starting with her insistence on growing slowly and operating solo. Rather than hiring a large team to support her booming business, she has prioritized handling the bulk of her clients' needs on her own.

"I do a lot of things by myself," shares Mei. "I go to check on houses by myself. Even little cleaning things right before an open house – making sure everything's straight with all the staging, turning on all the lights, doing all that. So I feel like I know what's going on."



Perhaps the most influential factor to Mei's success, however, has been her tireless work ethic and persistence.

In keeping with her streamlined approach, Mei also has a designer's eye and handles all home staging needs for her listings. She has honed this skillset from her business's outset, relying on her resourcefulness to amp up properties' selling potential.

"So, my first listing, I staged it, and I didn't have any furniture or staging accessories, so I took things from my house," laughs Mei. "My kids were like, 'Mom, wasn't that art in our house?'"

The skills that Mei acquired through her engineering background have also contributed heavily to her real estate success, particularly her expertise in time management, logical thinking, and most importantly, project leadership. She has found that, similar to overseeing a complex engineering project, preparing properties to sell also requires signifi-

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cant attention to detail and logistics management – experience that she has in spades.

Perhaps the most influential factor to Mei's success, however, has been her tireless work ethic and persistence. She still puts just as much effort into her business as she did when she was a rookie agent and prioritizes responsiveness by never turning off her phone. She promptly responds to emails, even at inconvenient times, like while she's eating dinner.

While some may question Mei's lack of work-life balance, she is convinced that, without her sustained, unwavering drive and commitment, she would never have become the high-performing agent that she is today.

"People always ask me, 'How are you so successful? How do you do it?' I think a lot of it is that you have to be persistent in your effort. You can't just say, 'Oh, I had a really good year. I'm taking a break.' You just have to keep going."

And, Mei reminds us that we shouldn't forget the gratitude she has for her family's support throughout her entire real estate career.

I wouldn't be able to be as successful [as I am] without my family's support.

"I wouldn't be able to be as successful [as I am] without my family's support," Mei says. "In my first few years in real estate career, my husband and two boys helped me put out open house signs every weekend, and four of us would go out to deliver my newsletters door to door."

Unstructured Scheduling

To continually perform at such a high level, Mei manages her days opposite many routine-driven agents: by prioritizing a non-structured, reactive schedule. Rather than carefully mapping out her days with a calendar or plan-

ner, she attends to pressing needs as they arise and keeps a running tab of tasks that need to be completed in her head -- no to-do list required. In keeping with her flexible approach, Mei fits in non-work activities, like exercising at the gym, whenever her schedule allows, with a goal to workout at least three times per week.

Another activity she prioritizes? Spending time with her husband and sons, now 23 and 20. While she regrets that, due to business needs, she missed out on many of her children's school activities when they were young, she hopes that her drive and passion for real estate will leave a lasting impression that her sons can be proud of.

"One thing both boys said that they learned from me was work ethic," says Mei. "So, I think even though I wasn't able to be with them like a stay-at-home mom, I hope – seeing how hard I worked and how successful I am – that that will teach them something in their lives, in their careers."

Leaving a Legacy

When she first became an agent, real estate was only relegated to Mei's five-year plan. However, as her passion for the industry grew, she realized that such a short business stint would only allow her to scratch the surface of her potential. Today, after continually choosing to place real estate at the center of each of her five-year plans since 2004, Mei has reached a pivotal time in her business. As part of her next big career move, she plans to launch 8 Blocks Real Estate, her own company, and expand her network by hiring a team of agents to support her steady growth. The best part? Mei hopes to serve as a mentor to her new team members and share the wealth of knowledge that she has gleaned over the years. It's a win-win – both for Mei, whose legacy will live on through those that she teaches, and for her team of agents, who get to learn the ropes of real estate from a true industry icon.





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vladimir westbrook

Pursuing New Prospects

Like many who have moved to America, Vladimir and Liubov Westbrook have uncovered new opportunities. In their case, they have created success for themselves and their clients in the real estate world by pursuing new prospects.

Along the way, they have taken their own path on their way to becoming a true power couple in the business.

FINDING A NEW HOME

Vladimir came to the United States from Ukraine, while Liubov moved here from Russia.

It was four years ago when Vladimir first decided he wanted to pursue a career in real estate. He had high hopes.

“I earned my license about four years ago, and I felt really ambitious, with lots of energy. And I wanted to work for a large organization,” Vladimir recalls. “As I sat down for the interview, everything was going great. And the company said, ‘You’re going to be working for us, you’re going to get access to all of this training and great tools. And you’re going to be paying us \$200 a month.’”

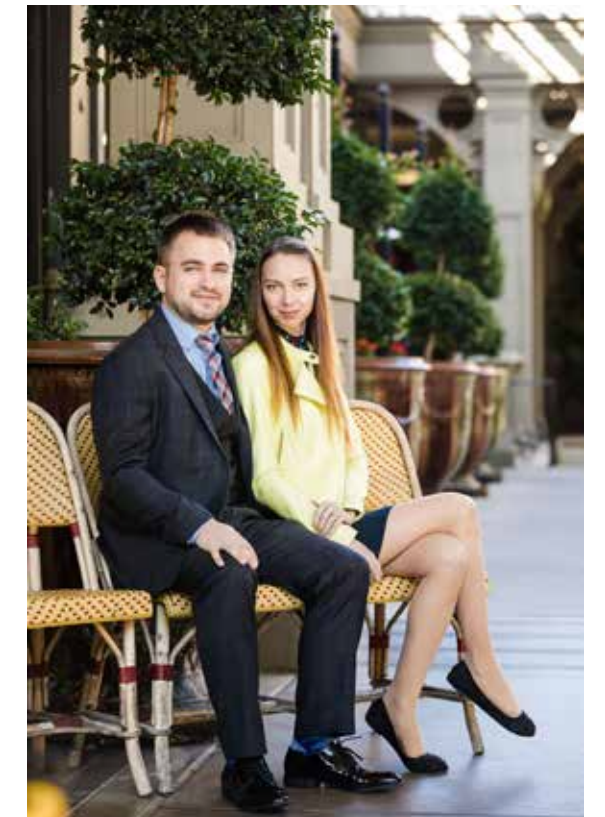
Vladimir had a double-take moment.

“I said, ‘Hold on. I’m working for you, and then I’m paying you money?’ And they said, ‘Because of all of the things that you get. It’s a desk fee,’” he remembers. “And I said, ‘Alright, so a desk fee means

that I’m going to get a desk, right?’ They said, ‘No, getting a desk is going to be \$500 extra.’”

Things were getting a bit confusing.

“I said, ‘Okay, so the fee is \$700 for me to have a workspace?’ And they said, ‘Yes, but you don’t really need it,’” Vladimir recalls.



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At this point, Vladimir was seeing a confounding picture.

“Beyond that, there were franchise fees, and insurance fees, and ... I just walked away feeling destroyed,” he says. “I was thinking here I got my license, and now I can’t put it to use because I don’t have the money to pay all these fees.”

So Vladimir went to a smaller company. In that case, there weren’t high fees. But the catch was there wasn’t a lot of training, either.

SPARKING A NEW DIRECTION

As he began life as a real estate agent in 2015, Vladimir took it upon himself, dove in and found whatever training he could find on his own through sources such as the REALTOR® Association.

“I went after whatever I could find and grab onto,” he says. “That’s what sparked me thinking, ‘Man, I want to open my own company. I just want to change things. I just want to have something with training, with marketing, with all of those tools, but with no cost, because the costs are demotivating the agents to work in some places.’”

Vladimir had seen the statistics of the high number of real estate agents who drop out after their first year.

As he says, “So that was the whole idea ... to see if I could change that, because I feel like a lot of people who have potential aren’t able to reach it because of the costs.”

In 2018, Vladimir launched Westbrook Realty.



We find that it’s just fun for us to solve problems. Once we identify an issue, we ask how we can fix it in a creative way.

FROM CONNECTION TO COUPLE

Vladimir had met Liubov a few years earlier. It had been a chance meeting while both happened to be visiting Mexico at the same time.



As Liubov remembers, “I came to America five years ago for the first time. At that time, I was working in the Russian Embassy, and I didn’t speak any English. Vladimir was in Mexico for vacation. I had gone there for a holiday for a couple of weeks.”

The connection between them was instant.

“We met there and had just two days together. And that’s it,” Vladimir smiles. “She flew back to Washington, D.C. I went back to California. And we just started calling each other. She visited me for my birthday, and one thing led to another.”

Soon, Liubov moved to California, and started working to support Vladimir’s new success in his fresh career.

As Liubov explains, “I support Vladimir through marketing and have been helping him in that way since he got his license. I work with social media for our agents to support their efforts in that way. I am also responsible for company branding and CRM training with our agents.”

REACHING FURTHER

Through hard work, innovative lead generation techniques and dedication, Vladimir has created a rare level of early success ... recording more than 55 transactions and \$60 million in volume. And, in the first year, Westbrook Realty has grown tremendously, with 22 agents and 13 people in support staff with ambitions of growing to an international scale with more than 100 agents in 2020.

“I initially thought we were going to have a small team with maybe five people. But by February, we had nine people join the company,” Vladimir remarks.

Vladimir, Liubov, and the team build with an innovative mindset.

“We find that it’s just fun for us to solve problems. Once we identify an issue, we ask how we can fix it in a creative way,” Vladimir says.

That approach says a lot about the way Vladimir and Liubov support each other, as well.

“There’s just no way I would have been able to do the things I’ve done so far without Liubov,” Vladimir smiles. “And I think that’s where the ‘power’ in being a power couple comes from ... of not just being a one-man show.”

Not everything comes easily. There have been hard times where the challenges seemed too great.

As Liubov says, “There were times when we were very tired, and we just wanted to quit.”

But that’s where they drew on the power of each other.

“When you build a business from the ground up, you hit challenges. And you hit the point where you think, ‘Okay, I’m done,’” Vladimir admits. “But having that other person there is important ... to have them say, ‘No, we’ve got to keep going.’ Then you get the positives back. And in a while, if the other person starts having doubt, you have to be there for them. It’s a fun ride together.”

As they look to the future, Vladimir and Liubov are proud to sustain a spirit of constant support at Westbrook Realty ... offering agents a variety of benefits, including in-house marketing, an assistant program, an exclusive new developments database and free lead generation — all while charging them zero desk fees.



event ◀ Photos by Slide

AgentBoss summit

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The Discussion Leaders were:

- Introduction : Kris Vann, Director of Corporate marketing, Slide
- Moderator: Mitch Felix, Founder, Real Producers Silicon Valley & San Mateo

Speakers:

- Kevin Gueco, Founder, Kinoko Real Estate
- Susan Fixsen, Broker/Owner, Pacific Oak Real Estate
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