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ERIK SJOLIE

Leaders in Real Estate:
SAMANTHA TOV & JUDY CUONG

Rising Star:
JUSTIN ARNEST

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If you are interested in contributing or nominating Realtors for certain stories, please email us at katie.macdiarmid@realproducersmag.com.

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welcome to the *Sacramento Real Producers* community!

▶ publisher's note

I'm honored to be addressing you in our very first publication here in Sacramento. I've already met so many of you over the last 6 months, but it seems only fitting that here, in our premier issue, we begin with introductions.

Real Producers started as an idea in 2015 and is spreading across the nation like wildfire. We are now in over 100 markets and as we launch here in Sacramento the mission remains the same; to connect, elevate, and inspire the leaders in Real Estate, highlighting what makes them human and providing opportunities for the best of the best to strengthen their network and better their businesses.

As for me, I come to you as a storyteller. I have a passion for deepening community and relationships through the connecting thread we all share: Your stories. You are the experts in Real Estate, and your Preferred Partners who have brought this celebratory platform to you are the absolute best in their fields.

As I have sat with each of you over coffee, visited your offices, seen family pictures, heard bits and pieces of the journeys that have brought you to where you are today, and heard about your plans for the years ahead, one thing is abundantly clear: we always enter people's lives mid-story, and each and every one of you are so much more than what you do.

This is also true of the clients you serve. If I am a storyteller, you all are story shapers. You have the immense privilege and responsibility of walking your clients through one of the most stressful, joyous, fearful or exciting seasons of their lives. And you, with your expertise, professionalism, personalities and humanity have the power to help write the tone of it.

When I met with Eric Hatch of Century 21 he told me he makes it his personal goal to provide each client with an experience they can't help but talk about, even years down the road. Peggy Urieff of Coldwell Banker, reminds every client, in every note or email she sends, that, 'It's a good life!' and if you know her, you know she means it! Pearl Hubred of Winder-

mere Real Estate smiled as she told me how fun it is to be able to promise her clients that no matter how long it takes, she can always guarantee this part of their story will have a happy ending.

In the *Real Producers* community, we are connecting the cream of the crop. As top producers here in El Dorado, Sacramento and Placer Counties a vast majority of the volume and therefore the lives and families in this area, are taken care of by you. I have heard from you directly how seriously you take that responsibility, and so your Preferred Partners and I look forward to highlighting your accomplishments, and delivering recognition for your continued excellence in serving your clients.

Our publication will be in your mailbox every month, we'll see you at exclusive events every quarter, and we're always in touch on social media. This is your community; join in the fun and start sharing your stories, we can't wait to know you more.



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QUICK FACTS ABOUT SACRAMENTO REAL PRODUCERS

DISTRIBUTION:

This magazine is mailed free of charge to the top 500 agents in the greater Sacramento area, according to volume each year. Within this region, there are thousands of agents, and you, in this elite group, are the cream of the crop. This year, the minimum production level for our community was over \$8 million; just to be included in this group is an accomplishment that testifies to your hard work, dedication and proficiency.

CONTENT:

This is all about you. We'll do personal and unique stories on members in the community, providing you with a platform to inspire others. As we grow, we'll add fresh content focused entirely on you. It costs absolutely nothing for a REALTOR® to be featured. We are not a pay to play model; we write real stories, about real producers, and we're always accepting nominations. We will consider anyone brought to our attention; we don't know everyone's story so we need your help to learn about them!

OUR PARTNERS:

Anyone listed as a "preferred partner" in the front of the magazine is a part of this community and a top professional in their industry. They will have an ad in every issue of the magazine, attend our quarterly events, and be a part of our online community. We don't just find these businesses

off the street, nor do we work with all businesses that approach us. One or many of you have recommended every single preferred partner you see in this publication. We won't even meet with a business that has not been vetted by one of you and "stamped for approval." Our goal is to create a powerhouse network, not only for the best REALTORS® in the area, but the best affiliates, as well, so we can grow stronger together.

EVENTS:

Along with the magazine, we will host free events, exclusive to this community, where the best of the best get together at reputable local venues to socialize, mastermind, deepen our connections and better our businesses. We will communicate about events through the magazine, emails, and on social media.

CONTRIBUTION:

If you are interested in contributing, nominating REALTORS® to be featured, know of top-notch affiliate partners who you believe should be a part of our community, or would simply like to network; email or call me. I look forward to hearing from you!

I'd like to personally thank all of our Preferred Partners as well as the many REALTORS® and Managing Brokers who helped bring *Sacramento Real Producers* to life. We would not exist without you. I appreciate you and look forward to seeing you soon!



ERIK Sjolie

REFUSE TO BE AVERAGE: HOW COMPANY CULTURE SPURS SUCCESS



Erik Sjolie launched his career in insurance with two goals in mind: to do well by his clients, and to give back to the Sacramento community. Born and raised in Northern California with five brothers and sisters, Erik has developed a lifelong passion for serving his community. This passion, complemented by the entrepreneurship in Erik's DNA, has cultivated the development of a company that is defined by its culture.

Reflecting on his upbringing in a family of entrepreneurs, Erik shares, "I would see the struggles and successes of owning businesses and what came with that. It was part of our family. I don't think it's

any accident that a lot of my siblings own their own businesses, as well. It's just the way of life for us - the way we think, process, and deal with things."

While Erik has been in the insurance industry since 2007, Sky Insurance Brokers, a full-service independent agency, has been on the rise since 2011, with a commitment to delivering value and protection for the people they serve, while having fun doing it.

For Erik, creating an agency that is driven by its culture starts with his staff, or as he warmly calls them, family. When looking to hire, he doesn't just evaluate someone's skill set, history, or perfor-

mance. He looks at the whole person, and whether they'll be a good fit for the company.

"We guard our culture drastically here and it's something that we all take pride in. We always say, 'culture is king,' and that's truly been the driver of our agency," Erik explains. His staff takes pride in both creating a family atmosphere and providing an exceptional client experience. Those who interact with his company truly take notice.

One of the areas that sets Sky Insurance Brokers apart is its timeliness in assisting agents in need of solutions during an escrow. According to Erik, "We fit in that mid-range, where we're not a small mom-and-pop shop anymore, but we're not a huge company that is hard to maneuver and navigate."

"We're able to pivot fairly quickly and move at the speed that the industry is moving at to make sure that we're always evaluating and delivering on our promise to keep a client-focused agency," Erik explains.

While the temptation to settle may be a challenge in one's work, Erik strives for constant growth and

improvement, rather than building his business to a certain level only to reach a plateau. One way Erik ensures continued progress is through his commitment to incorporating modern technology and convenience into his business model at every opportunity.

In addition to improved business practices, Erik strives for expansion, particularly to places in need of insurance as a result of environmental hardship, such as the Chico, Paradise,



...

and Redding areas. He hopes to play a vital role in rebuilding these communities affected by wildfire, thus creating a positive impact in the lives of his clients. "We have always had a heart for protecting people and family. Insurance was a good fit because it allowed us to do that on a daily basis."

"More than just a headcount or growth," Erik explains, "we're also looking for where we can make a bigger impact in the communities."

In line with this goal, Sky Insurance Brokers hired one of the area's best fire experts last year to help them work alongside clients in finding solutions for hard-to-insure areas affected by wildfires. As Erik states, "We are committed to this market and working every day to deliver solutions that assist clients in finding coverage."

An exceptional father, Erik's driving force for everything he does in life is his two daughters, Morgan, age 11, and Avery, age 4. "They're fantastic, strong-willed individuals, so I try to set a good example as a male figure in their life. They're definitely my 'why.'"

Erik's love for his daughters motivates him to give back to his community in more ways than one. In addition to insuring homes, Sky Insurance Brokers also sponsors families in need during the holidays.

Outside of work, Erik enjoys camping and hiking with his daughters, along with trying new activities in the greater Sacramento area. His hobbies include traveling, watching and playing sports, and participating in local softball leagues.

However, Erik enjoys what he does so much, that his job doesn't really feel like work. This enthusiasm falls in line with Sky Insurance Broker's motto: Refuse to be Average.

"We want to have fun and enjoy what we're doing, and if we're having fun and enjoying what we're doing on a daily basis in the office, that's going to translate to our clients and they're going to feel that as well."

For Erik, success starts and ends with this client-centered mindset, and the goal of creating peace of mind to help people protect what matters most in their lives. A commitment to helping communities in need, along with a focus on always keeping up with the latest technology, keeps Sky Insurance Brokers on the cutting edge of the industry.



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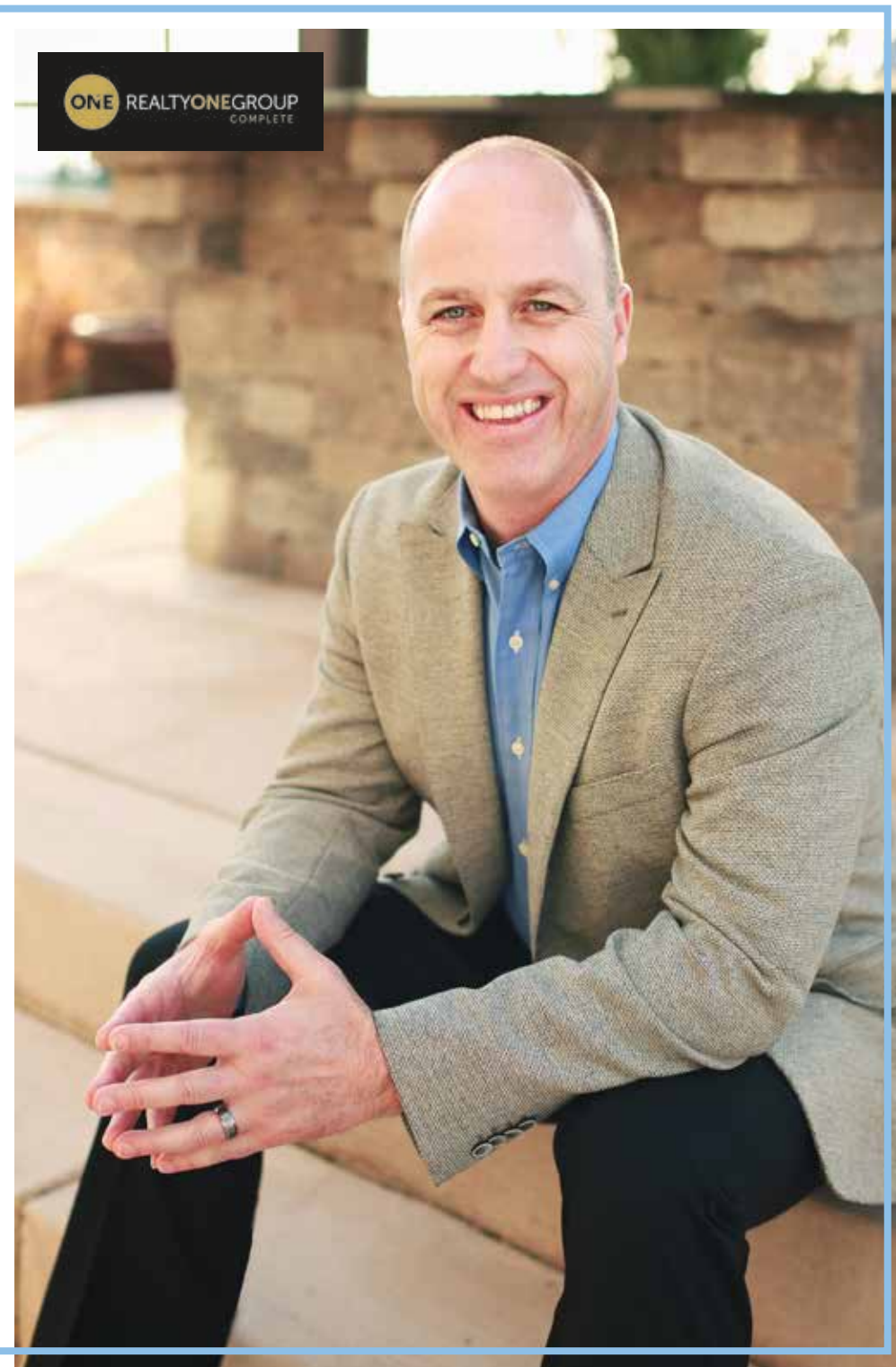
▶▶ rising star

By Erin Anderson
Photos by Rachel Lesiw -
Indulge Beauty Studio



JUSTIN ARNEST

REALTY ONE GROUP COMPLETE



When Justin Arnest tells the story of his career path, one may be surprised to learn what a civil engineer, a sheriff's deputy, and a REALTOR® all have in common. What do these seemingly unrelated careers share? Justin would be the one to know, from his experience in all three fields.

As a result of his 12 years as a civil engineer, Justin gained an appreciation for neighborhoods and communities, while also learning the importance of attention to detail. Through many years working with codes and regulations, as well as stacks of

design specifications, he shares, "I am fanatical about details."

In a shift to his career as a sheriff's deputy, Justin built on his love and respect for his community, while acquiring negotiation skills that would serve him well through his transition into the field of real estate, two and a half years ago.

As Justin states, "When you're a law enforcement officer, everything's a

negotiation. You have to learn how to communicate with people their way. And everybody communicates differently. I realized when I was dealing with my real estate clients, everybody has a different communication style, and will respond differently. I have to figure out what's the best way to communicate with each individual and adapt myself accordingly."

Applying the skills learned in the field of law enforcement to his new career in real estate, Justin is able to approach each client with an open mind. This allows him to be adaptable when helping clients understand complex home-buying and selling processes.

After buying and selling a few homes of his own alongside his wife, Justin began to consider pursuing his interest in real estate. Although a career transition often comes with challenges, Justin was resourceful and clever in his leap into the industry. Combining his love for community, negotiation tactics, and a detail-oriented approach, Justin has been excelling as a rising star in the industry, earning himself a Rookie of the Year award and a spot in the National Top 1%.

To create his own success, Justin has applied a dogged approach to all of the work that he does. He attributes his early career success to "A relentless pursuit of my clients' goals."

However, his focus is not just on his own success, but also that of his clients. He states, "I'm going to do whatever I can do for my clients to succeed. It's about finding ways to get them to their goals. If that means freshening up the landscape, timing the market, holding open houses... whatever has to be done to get that listing sold at the price or time they need, that's what I'll do."

Justin's hard work and creative implementation of the skills he obtained in his previous careers have played a large role in his success. Additionally, he notes that he had all the tools



“There are 100 ways to be successful at real estate. Pick half a dozen and go all in.”

he needed to succeed provided by Realty One Group Complete’s broker, Greg McClure, as well as his mentors, Karry Azarabadi and Sheila Reynoso. With a community-oriented focus on achievement, Justin’s definition of success is, “Having a core group of people that know you, love you, and support you. And being able to do the same for them.”

Justin and his wife of 20 years, Lilia, who moved to the United States from Riga, Latvia when she was 17, share a love for community and their home state of California. With his work as a REALTOR® and Lilia’s career in education, the two spend as much time as possible supporting their community.

Regarding his hometown, Justin states, “I love that Placer County is well-run and has a

family-centric, value system. A lot of neighborhoods in Sacramento are very family-focused with good-natured people enjoying life, growing their families, and working hard. The Sacramento region has a robust and healthy economy.”

It’s not just the people that form Justin’s passion for his region, but also the natural beauty and outdoor lifestyle of California that he enjoys. “We’ve got some amazing geography. We’ve got National Parks, the coast, San Francisco, and Lake Tahoe is just an hour away.”

All of these outdoor playgrounds provide Justin and his wife yearlong opportunities to “maximize all that California has to offer,” including snowboarding, mountain biking, hiking, and boating. The two also like to expand their trav-



els to the rest of the country and around the world, having visited 47 states and over 20 countries, with many more to check off their list.

Justin approaches all that he does in life with determination and passion, whether that’s starting his new career in real estate, reaching his clients’ goals, or climbing Half Dome. With two and a half top producing years under his belt,

Justin offers this advice for others taking the leap into real estate, “There are 100 ways to be successful at real estate. Pick half a dozen and go all in.”

It’s clear to see that Justin has gone all-in with his career as a REALTOR®. His relentless pursuit of his goals, as well as the goals of his clients, will take this Rising Star far in his beloved Sacramento real estate community.

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SAMANTHA TOV & JUDY CUONG PORTFOLIO REAL ESTATE

Samantha Tov and Judy Cuong have been business partners for over a decade. “We’re the yin and yang of each other,” they laugh. “We sell properties and mentor agents as a team. Judy’s really good at commercial leases, restaurants, and multi-units. She’s a numbers person, and I help oversee the agents and office with training and daily activities,” Samantha notes.

They’re similar in a lot of ways too. “We’re both family-oriented with kids, siblings and husbands. As women

entrepreneurs it’s a challenge to balance work, family and business but we have done it and become successful and hopefully that inspires others to know they can do the same,” Samantha states. “We complement each other. We’ve built a family-sister bond. If something happens, we’re here for one another. That’s what makes our team—and our company—work.”

Decorated with numerous awards, including the Women’s Council of REALTORS® California Humanitarian Award, SAR Outstanding Life Master’s Club, and Realtor of the Year, they’re not only top producing agents, but the co-founders of Portfolio Real Estate as well.

Samantha and Judy were already successful team leaders in real estate when the opportunity arose last year to partner with Side to start their own boutique business. This was the beginning of Portfolio Real Estate. Owing their own company has provided them with creative control, future security, and incentives they wouldn’t have otherwise.

With about 20 years of experience in the industry, they’re now passionate about taking on and training





new agents who've sought them out, mainly through word of mouth and social media.

Portfolio has about 20 agents currently, 15 of them active, and most of them multilingual. Once an agent joins their team, Samantha and Judy train them from the start to be professional, ethical agents and to earn the respect of the people in the community. They believe in leading by example because they understand that name and reputation is one's livelihood in the real estate industry. "We train them not to burn bridges with their colleagues or within a transaction. We help them problem-solve and educate them on the right way to handle things," Samantha explains.

It's important to Samantha and Judy that the Portfolio team functions like a family. "We're like brothers and sisters," they share. "Some people like to be closed off. They don't want to share anything, and that may be

where they fail. They're not willing to help one another. We want to help each of our agents fulfill their own destiny."

A quick conversation with their team members was filled with praise for these two strong women leaders. When asked to describe them, the balance of their personalities came center stage once again. "Samantha's like a tiger mom and Judy's more reserved," they joke, "but they're both amazing, supportive and knowledgeable. No problem is too small. When you need them, they're there."

Not only do they help agents to create their life's portfolio, as their company name suggests, but Samantha and Judy are serious about giving back. "Each of us has a different story. We've all gone through something," Judy shares. "We came to the United States, and the United States has given us everything we have. Giving back is a must."

Samantha's family came to America in 1979. "We were refugees from the genocide war in Cambodia," she recalls. "Two social workers helped my parents find jobs. We went to the church to get a Christmas basket. Out of the goodness of people's hearts, they gave to us. It's our time to give back to the community. Both Judy and I try to be grateful role models.

We're also setting good examples for our kids because they are our legacy."

Among other things, Samantha and Judy participate in a Christmas adoption in South Sacramento, delivering, as Samantha puts it, "Christmas miracles." She says, "We deliver food, presents, and trees. In the past 10 years, we've given to 130 families. There are a lot of tears shed."

This generous spirit, combined with their willingness to work together, is Samantha and Judy's secret to success. According to Samantha, "Success is not what one accomplishes. It's being able to help others and earning their respect. Success is being able to pay it forward in helping others achieve their success." In this, too, Samantha and Judy have found the yin and yang, a beautiful balance of success to add to their portfolio.



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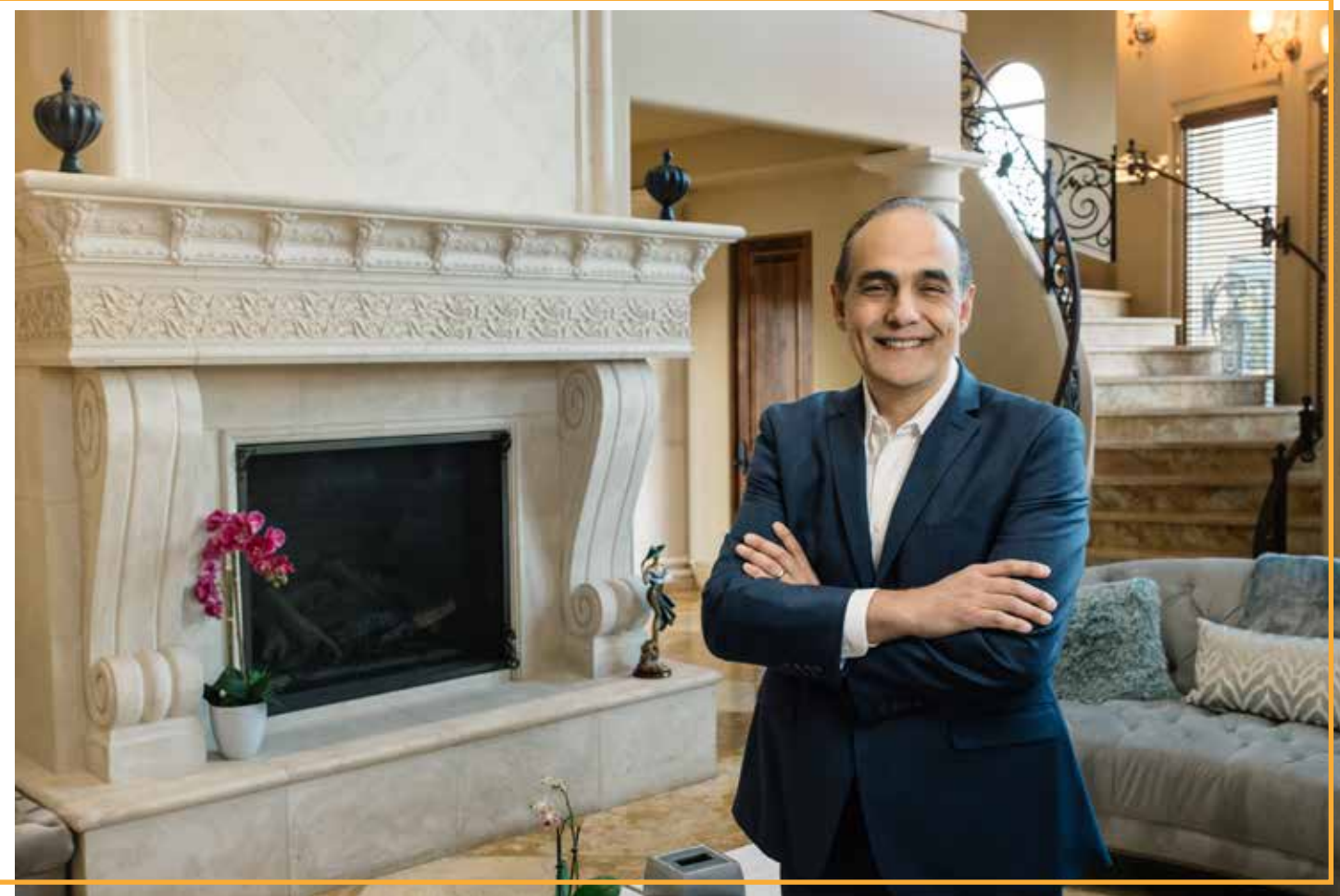
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NICK SADEK

SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY





••• Nick Sadek was climbing into an attic to give a home inspector a hand as we spoke over the phone. That's just the sort of hands-on approach that makes Nick's business practices stand out, and sets the bar for service to another level. For the past 32 years, he has worked hard to master his trade, and his efforts have paid off.

Nick is now setting industry standards in supporting both his clients and the agents he leads at his firm, Nick Sadek Sotheby's International Realty.

"It's an opportunity to get to know new friends," he shares. For Nick, making these life-long connections is one of the most rewarding aspects of his work.

Before transitioning into the field of real estate, Nick owned a chain of miniature photography development labs. Real estate was familiar territory for Nick, whose father was a developer, and in 1988, he began working for Great Western Real Estate. By the late 1990s, he was ready to grow his business, and make a name for himself.

Through determined networking, Nick was able to secure a luxury property listing, and seized this unique opportunity to promote an entire sector

of the industry. In carving out a niche for himself, Nick changed the course of his career towards specialization in luxury home properties.

Despite the rapid growth of Sotheby's International Realty, Nick has maintained a boutique-style brand based on white-glove service for clients. In the high-stakes world of luxury listings, clients are kept in the loop of promoting and negotiating the sale of their properties, with particular attention to the buyers' specific needs while searching for a new home.

These sweeping properties include every type of listing, from waterfront access homes to properties with guest houses, pools, wine cellars, fire pits, and sprawling landscapes. At one point, while Nick was marketing a property, a celebrity selling a neighboring house decided to use his services as well.

This celebrity listing helped put Nick on the map. "Everything builds on each other and it creates momentum," Nick explains.

While Nick began with just two real estate agents on his team, he now has over 100 agents working with him. Despite his firm's size, he strives to maintain the intimate feel of a boutique firm. He man-

“

Nick defines success as "Loving what you do and how you do it, and truly knowing that you did your best to accomplish your goals."

”



ages this through the personal connections he makes with buyers, sellers, and co-workers.

Nick has been creative in how he promotes his properties and services to buyers, potential sellers, and others in the industry. Before drone photography was a common place feature on real estate listings, Nick was hiring aerial photographers in planes to capture grand views of the large estates he was selling. This creativity has paid off in a big way. The firm's total volume last year was four hundred million, and Nick's career volume overall is seven hundred million.

Mentoring others is another important aspect of his work. In his advice to upcoming real estate agents, Nick offers, "It's all about mastering your game. Create a niche and a name for yourself, set goals, and surround yourself with successful people in your industry."

Nick is always looking towards the future. "It's always nice to improve your situation, so I'd like to grow the business," he states. But he is quick to add that he does not mean simply growing in numbers; he wants to improve further on the quality of work that they do, without losing sight of Nick Sadek Sotheby's core values.



••• One of these core values is promoting and opening doors for the right agents, or “great human beings,” as he puts it; people with a strong work ethic who are creative and take full advantage of the resources his firm provides to do their best work.

Successful real estate agents, Nick states, “treat it as a business.” In addition to hard work, being energetic and excited about the industry is clearly something that Nick models for agents at his firm. He defines success as “Loving what you do and how you do it, and truly knowing that you did your best to accomplish your goals.”

While Nick is passionate about growing his business, he is also committed to life at home. He married his wife, Dina Sadek, 23 years ago, and together they have two children: Danya, who will soon be graduating from university as a mechanical engineer, and Adam, who is interested in studying computer engineering.

“It’s always good to have a passion for something,” he says, clearly proud of his children’s endeavours. Their family is rounded out by Gucci, their nine-pound Yorkie terrier.

When asked how his career in real estate fits in with his personal goals, Nick says he couldn’t imagine doing anything else. However, 32 years ago, he had little idea how far his dedication and forward-thinking would take him in this industry.

As Nick mentions, “It’s like life. You feel like you get to an intersection and do you go right? Do you go left? So far, hopefully, I’ve made the right decisions.”

As a REALTOR®, Nick has made a name for himself and his brand through client-oriented service, sincere support for the growth of his agents and strategic, creative marketing. As this month’s featured REAL Producer, Nick Sadek is setting the bar for industry standards with his story of success.

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