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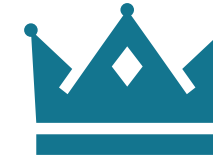
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# A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER



Dear Real Producers and Valued Partners,

Well, we're past Thanksgiving and have just a little while to digest before all the holiday food comes at us again. Haha! I guess my diet starts in the New Year...

The holidays are a time of giving, no matter which holiday you celebrate, and for being grateful to all the special people in our lives who have given so much to us. I can tell you, I'm so grateful for all of you. Thank you for helping make 2021 an amazing year of growth and success for *South Orange County Real Producers!*

And thank you all for coming to our awesome quarterly event at BLK Burgrz at the end of November.

It was another event to remember, that's for sure! Be sure to check out photos from the event on Instagram (@southocrealproducers) and in next month's issue.

Have a great rest of your holidays. I can't wait to see everyone in early 2022 as we embark on yet another crazy, wonderful year!

Sincerely yours,

**Michele Kader**  
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# Giving a Great CLOSING GIFT

Successful REALTORS® understand that the real estate business is relationship-based. That's why so many of the very top producers aim to have a highly referral-based business. A successful agent has built a lot of goodwill along the way, and word of mouth and great referrals can power their business far into the future.

► topics in real estate

By Ellen Buchanan

One of the best ways to stay remembered, long after the closing, is to give a unique and memorable closing gift that thanks the client for their business and hopefully will remind them of you fondly, and even be something over which they can brag about you — their amazing, trusted adviser who helped them into the fabulous home they're now enjoying. It's somewhat surprising that not all agents give closing gifts... They probably should. It's an easy way to say thank you, and the cost is a marketing investment worth making.

**A great closing gift should check off all or most of the following boxes:**

- **Long-lasting** — Food and beverage gifts, while nice and appreciated, aren't going to be around long. You want your gift to have staying power.
- **Memorable** — Every time your clients see your gift should make them think about you.
- **Relevant** — Some thought should go into your gift so that it's not something that ends up being thrown away or put in storage. Your listening skills go a long way here in deciding what would be appropriate for this client or all your clients if you give a signature gift.
- **Useful** — If your gift is something your clients will use regularly, all the better. This increases the number of times they'll be thinking of you and keeps you top of mind.
- **Can be used or shown around others** — What could be better than having one of your client's guests remark on your gift and ask where it came from? Gifts that are proudly displayed or put to work during get-togethers get noticed.
- **Unique** — A remarkable gift shows you put some thought into it and that thoughtfulness gets noticed.
- **Enjoyable** — Good vibes around your gift is important for achieving the effect you want.
- **Timely** — At closing is the best time to cement the good vibes between you and your client. The first few days in their new home can also work; just don't wait too long and miss your opportunity to capitalize on the glow of excitement at move-in.

Here are some great closing gift ideas that can help make you unforgettable:

- **Liquor decanters** — Don't give a bottle of wine or liquor. Sure, they loved it ... but once it's been consumed, it's gone and so is your marketing effort. Giving a decanter ensures your gift sticks around.
- **Wine tree** — If you must give wine, doing so in an artsy wine tree is unique and memorable, and the tree will be around long after its original occupants were enjoyed.
- **Drink coasters** — These are excellent for engraving. Put their names on them, not yours.
- **Unique glassware** — A useful, everyday gift that should get a lot of play.
- **Bar or serving tray** — Used occasionally or every day, trays are a great gift to have engraved.
- **Painting or wall art** — A great piece of art that gets displayed will get lots of positive feedback ... which means your name will come up often.
- **Custom return address stamp** — These may not be the most expensive gifts but will be used again and again.
- **Spice rack** — Make it a nice one they'll want to display.
- **Stylish kitchen gadgets** like electric wine openers that will be used time and again.
- **Branded items** like tumblers, cutting boards, Cutco knives, and golf accessories — make sure anything branded is a high-quality gift so the branding doesn't come off as cheesy. Engrave with their names on it too and make yours smaller and unobtrusive.
- **Gifts unique to the particular client** — This shows you've really paid attention and are giving a gift from the heart, which always makes a lasting impression.

Most of you are already giving closing gifts. As we close out the year, it's a good time to reflect on whether your current closing gifts are wowing your clients the way they should be and having the most positive impact. If not, it may be time to shake things up in the new year and come up with a gift to thank your clients that is impressive ... and uniquely you.



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▶▶ cover story

By Dave Danielson  
Photos by Jason Wallis

# JACQUELINE *thompson*

*passion for  
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...



Leaders come in all forms and bring a range of qualities to life and business. But one of the common traits they share is a sense of commitment ... of going all in. One leader who exhibits this quality is Jacqueline Thompson.

Jacqueline, a REALTOR® focused on the ultra-luxury niche with the Jacqueline Thompson Group at Surterre Properties, has a true passion for the profession. “When I do something, I really tackle it with a laser focus. I’m very passionate about it,” she emphasizes.

“The most important thing for me is giving quality service. I love working with people. I think that’s key to my success. One of the reasons why I’ve always been very good at sales is because I begin by putting the needs of people first.”

#### Finding Her Own Path

Jacqueline earned her real estate license 16 years ago. Before that, she had taken a different path in life. Jacqueline graduated from USC and began her career as a business consultant for one of the nation’s Big Five accounting firms. In time, she realized she was ready for a change. She remembered earlier experiences she had.

“During college, I had worked at Nordstrom in sales. Through that process, I had several clients mention to me that they thought I would be good in real estate,” she recalls. “After I left corporate America, I took time off to think about what I really wanted to do. My husband reminded me that I was really good in sales and that I should think about real estate.”

Jacqueline looked into it, earned her real estate license, and began working with a broker. It didn’t take long for her to realize that she had made the right decision. She quickly became the number 1 agent in the firm. Thirteen months later, after gaining experience, confidence, and a solid foundation in the business, she made the decision to go out on her own.

#### Remarkable Results

Since getting her start, Jacqueline’s record of achievement in the industry has been truly remarkable. In fact, during the course of her 16-year career, she has already amassed over \$1.5 billion in sales volume.



Jacqueline Thompson and her husband, Bill.

“This year [as of October], I sold over \$335 million, and I do it all by myself,” she says.

That level of achievement requires a rare level of passion. “I am very hands-on with my work. I do the negotiations, the contracts and I also go to the showings. I think one of the parts of my work that I really like is the fact that I love a challenge,” she smiles.

“I love the whole process of getting to know my clients and then having a chance to work through the negotiation process. It can be very difficult, but I enjoy that process of working through a situation where each side has its own agenda and being able to work through it and put a deal together.”



“  
I am very hands-on with my work. I do the negotiations, the contracts, and I also go to the showings.  
”

...  
Jacqueline Thompson's team at Surterre Properties is focused on the ultra-luxury market.



### A Wonderful Life

Away from work, Jacqueline's world is made richer by family, including her husband, Bill. In her free time, one of her favorite things to do is enjoy unwinding with him at home.

She also has a heart for helping others and giving back to the community. One of the efforts that Jacqueline has become involved with is helping to raise awareness for, and supporting the development of, a new 144-bed medical facility at the University of California in Irvine. She and Bill also donate to Saddleback Church.

As Jacqueline reflects on her growing business, she offers advice to others who are looking to take the next step forward through real estate.

"The first thing I would say to someone is to find what's important to you. If you want to succeed in real estate, it takes 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Pick an area that you want to be an expert in, get to know the area and the people and make it your farm so that you can know everything you can about that," she explains. "Also, remember to return every call, email, and text the same day. I think that's very important. In sales, time matters. Time is money. If you don't call back, you risk losing that person."

### Vision and Belief

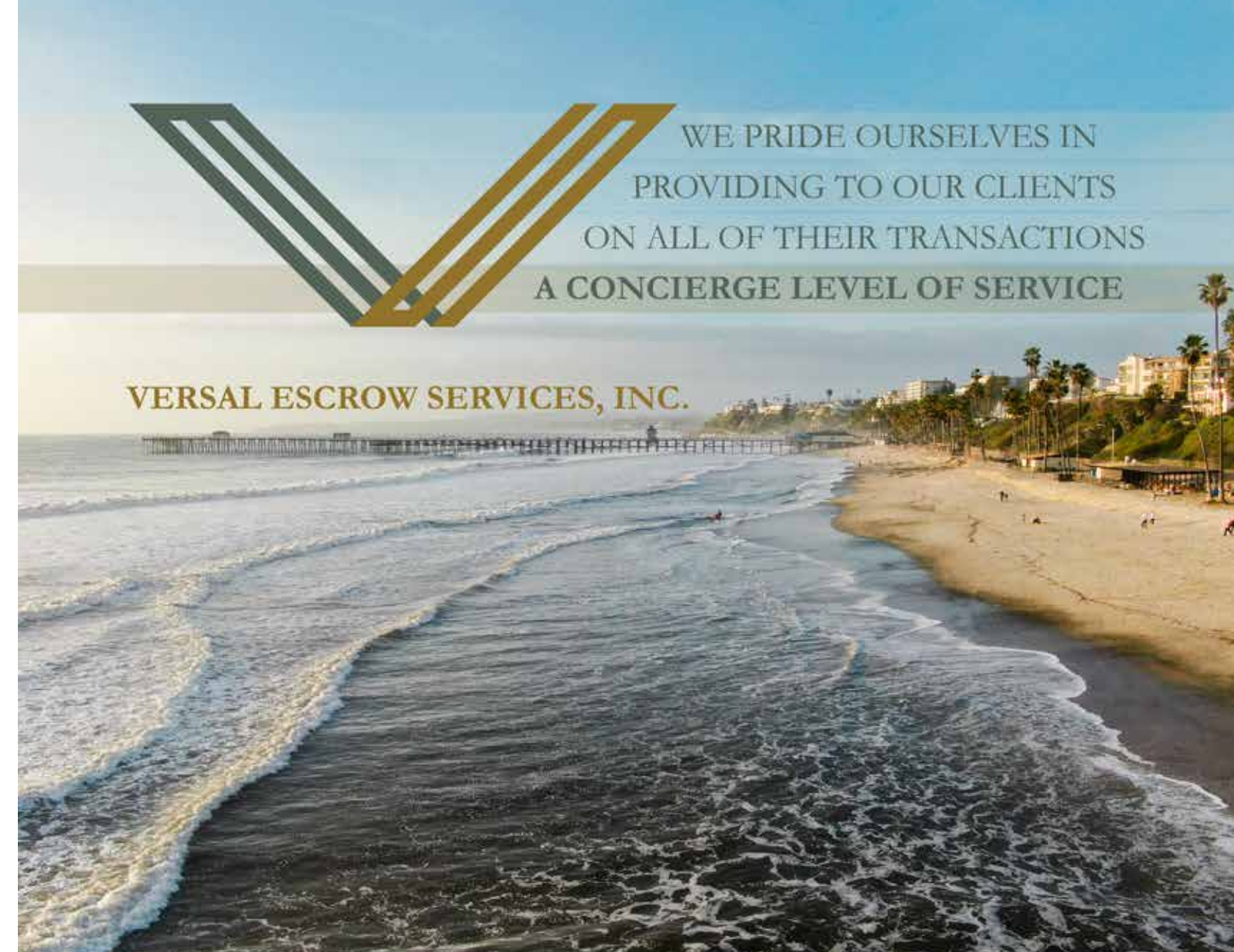
Leadership requires vision and belief. Those were two elements that Jacqueline definitely put together from the start of her career in the industry. "When I came to Newport in the beginning, I knew I wanted to be at the top of my game. I set out to do that. I wanted to be professional and be on my A game to be able to make it in the ultra-luxury market," she says.

"When I came here and got into real estate, I had no connections or friends, and I wasn't a member of a club. However, I had my drive and a strong passion to be very good at what I planned to do. That's what it takes," Jacqueline emphasizes.

"If you are willing to work hard and you give quality service and you're smart about it, you can do it. I really believe that if I can do it, anyone else can do it too. It was about hard work. I was lucky that I met people who recognized my hard work and gave me a chance."

Congratulations to Jacqueline Thompson. Each day, she puts her unwavering passion for the profession to work on behalf of those around her.

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# How to Sell Way More Homes & Have a Great Life with 2 KEY HIRES!

By Robert Mack

Real estate has flexible hours and big paychecks! Isn't that what everyone thinks as they optimistically enter one of the toughest industries on the planet? The average person — and even most agents — has no idea what has to happen on the back end of a real estate agent's business to actually be profitable. We all know what it's really like!

In 2021 and beyond, the consumer expects perfection, especially if they are going to pay you the commission fees you charge. They want the

process to be streamlined, predictable, and hassle-free. They expect the highest level of service, they want you to be available all the time, and they want it NOW!

It is literally impossible to build a scalable and profitable real estate business all by yourself, especially if you're trying to have a life too. We got into real estate because of its flexible working environment, and flexibility is an option with the right strategy and a team effort! Yes, I said it, *team effort*, for all you micromanagers who don't think someone can

do it as well as you can. I was that way until I found the right people, and over time, I learned that anything is possible with the right people.

A team doesn't have to be huge. It can be two people because anything is better than doing this by yourself. Those agents who already run a successful team know all this already, so today I'm talking to the

solo agent — the agent who has a big heart, strong work ethic, is motivated for more, but is killing themselves working around the clock to make it happen with no opportunity to grow and a poor quality of personal life. That's no good.

As a solo agent, you're expected to do a lot more than sell real estate, right? Seventy-five percent of what we do doesn't even require a license, so why *are* we doing it? We're doing it because we either don't know or we've convinced ourselves that we can't afford it, so we give up and go on autopilot. I know, because that's what I did.

Preparing paperwork for clients to sign, creating marketing materials, uploading listings, scheduling appointments, breaking down offers, checking your emails ... takes hours! When are we supposed to prospect for new business, show homes, or go on listing presentations? Geez, doesn't it sound like a dream to have an assistant in your office who you can count on and call to ask for help? I hope it does ... so let's dive in.

There are two key hires for a solo agent looking for growth wants to focus on:

**1. EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT.** This is always the first and toughest hire, especially if you're a micromanager. It will force you to step outside your comfort zone and bring someone in to help you with *all* of the things



you don't want to do. Literally, it's that easy. So spend one week and audit your days. Write down everything you do for five days and associate a timeframe to it. You'll find that most of your day is filled with non-income-producing activities ... so guess what? Once your list is complete, go through it and identify all of the tasks you no longer want to do if you had the right assistant. These are the job description for your new assistant.

Yeah, you have to put an ad out, yeah, you have to interview, hire, train, etc., but the short-term pain will bring long-term pleasure as soon as your new assistant is up and running. And voila! You now have hours back in your day to focus on income-producing activities like prospecting, scheduling appointments, going on appointments, and negotiating offers, because nothing else matters. Once you are able to focus on the highest and best use of your time by leveraging yourself with a talented assistant, you'll not only be able to scale your business and sell exponentially more homes, but your clients will have a better experience, which will lead to more referrals, and you'll be able to have a life outside of work. A great assistant is the ultimate game changer and is grossly underrated!

**2. SHOWING ASSISTANT.** Most solo agents with a new assistant may not have enough business coming in to bring on a full-time buyers agent, however, I will go out on a limb and assume that if you're reading this, you don't love spending five hours of your day driving around to different cities showing your buyers homes. We have shit to do; we don't have time to be a driver ... and that's where the showing agent comes in.



A showing assistant will help you serve your demanding buyers at a higher level while ensuring you still net what you need to continue to build your profitable business. Having a showing assistant (ideally, licensed) is a great way to buy back your time while "always" being available to your clients. A typical buyer's agent may have a 50/50 split with a team leader, whereas a showing assistant may only get paid 10 to 15 percent of the gross commission since they are only showing homes and aren't responsible for paperwork. That's your job, hence the smaller split (unless you took my advice and got yourself an assistant, and that's where the magic happens because now the showing assistant can work with your assistant to write up the offers too).

No one teaches us this stuff. We get our license, we hang it at a broker, and we're expected to be excellent. Stop for a moment, think about your business, and consider who you need to bring on your team to make sure you are producing the volume of sales you want, serving your clients at the level they expect and deserve, and having a quality of life worth living. Together, everyone achieves more!



Robert Mack has been helping home buyers and sellers in OC for nearly 16 years. After nine years of spinning his wheels, working long hours, and still not making progress, he realized that the only way to serve his clientele at the highest level and to have a life was to build out a team and a predictable process. Today, the Robert Mack Group consists of founders Robert and Tania Mack; an operations manager, Kristy Dunkel; a virtual marketing/content/social media manager; full-time, in-house TC, Anne; full-time client concierge, Zach; and three full-time sales associates, Ryan McMillian, Christian Darnas, and Monce Carrasco. The Robert Mack Group is always on the hunt for talented and committed individuals interested in a real estate career because they know a team will always outperform an individual.

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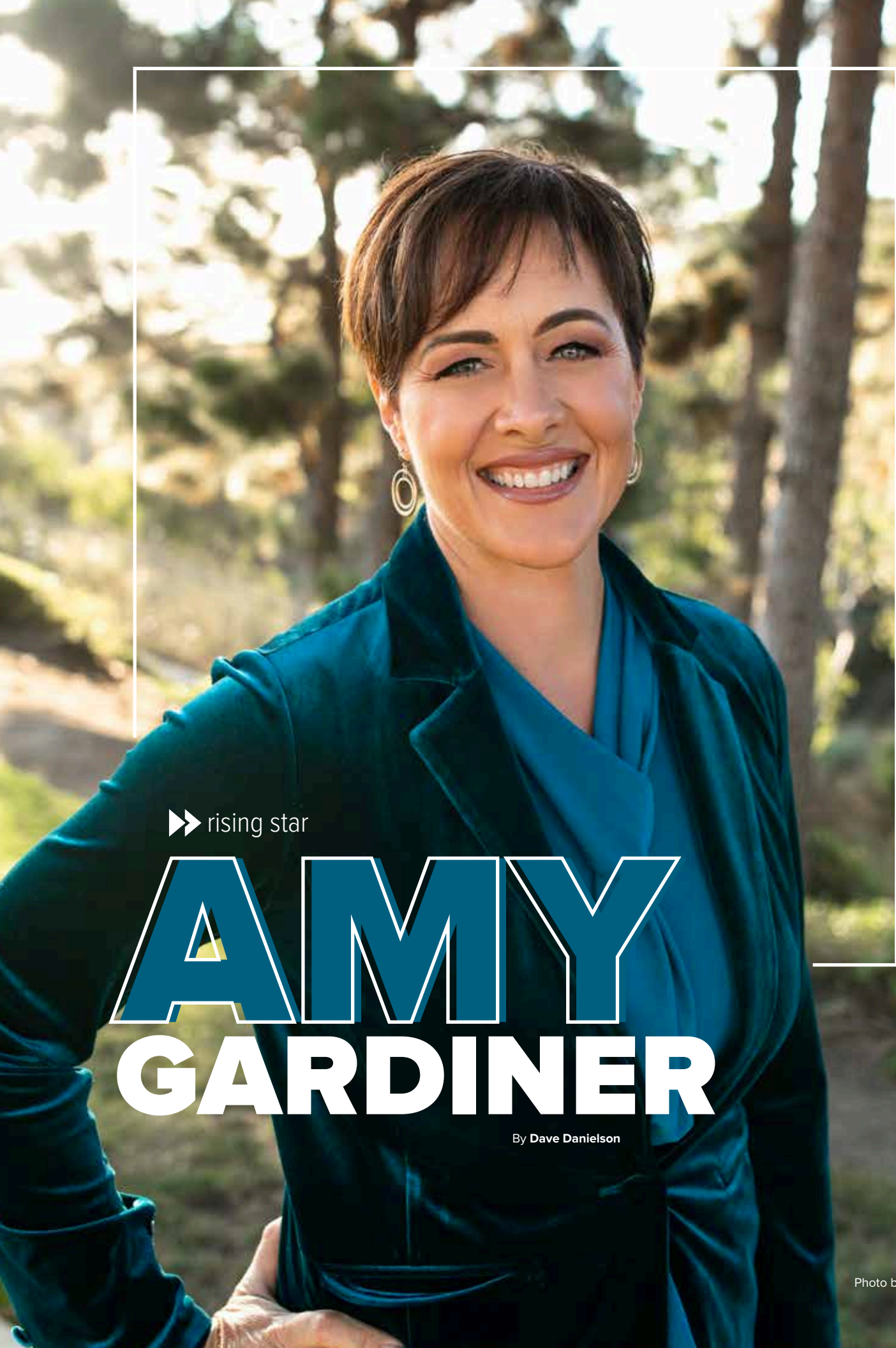
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# AMY GARDINER

By Dave Danielson

Photo by Bodie Kuljian

MAKING THE MOST OF EACH MOMENT



Photo by Bodie Kuljian

Each of us is surrounded by potential ... by the possibilities of what our future could be. Unlocking that potential begins with taking positive action. That's something that Amy Gardiner excels at. As a REALTOR® and auction specialist with Coldwell Banker Realty, Amy truly makes the most of each moment.

Throughout her life, Amy has consistently achieved results at a high level with her competitive spark, relentless follow-through, and willingness to put in the work. "Growing up I was an athlete," she says. "And as I got older, I played Division I basketball at San Jose State. "That's where I met my husband, Andrew. He was from New Zealand and played basketball there also." In 1995, Amy and Andrew moved to Andrew's home country of New Zealand. She immediately immersed herself in Kiwi culture, including playing and coaching in the Women's National League.

In time, Amy's basketball career ended. She was drawn to sales and started in the car industry selling Chrysler Jeep and became a top salesperson there for four years. "I loved that experience," she smiles. "It taught me so much about sales and interacting with people in a deal. You have such a short time to build trust, provide a solution, and do a deal. That stint in car sales made me so good in sales and negotiation." Amy later went on to sell investments and insurance for a large company in Wellington, New Zealand.

From a very young age, Amy had developed a gift for communicating with and reading people. "Negotiating has always been one of my strong suits," she explains. "I think a big reason is the fact that I was nearly deaf until I was 6 years old. Because of that, I really had to learn how to read body language and lips. It made me ultra-sensitive to people's demeanor, and it made me a natural communicator. It helped me develop really focused listening skills."

## TAKING A NEW PATH

As Amy and Andrew started their family, Amy returned to University in Christchurch, New Zealand, studying business commerce. After having her second child, Amy was ready for a new career direction. "My mom suggested that I give real estate a try, as she herself was a Realtor in Norco, California. I could see how happy she was starting her career later in life," she says. "It was something I always wanted to try, and her encouragement was definitely motivating."

Amy wasted no time. She took action and dedicated herself fully. The results were remarkable. In fact, within her first month, she had 12 listings. "From being an athlete and having a natural drive to push myself, I didn't know how to not try to be the best I could be, so I was able to perform at a high level early on," she explains. "New Zealand and





The Gardiners have a lot of fun as a family and rarely take a serious photo (from right to left: Amy, Andrew, Mason, Asher, Ella).

# “MY FAMILY IS EVERYTHING THAT I WORK FOR.”

Australia are very auction-driven. It was such a high for me. I was able to use those skills of being super-sensitive to people and became very strong with auction work.”

After just four years in the business, Amy took the next step and opened her own brokerage with some business partners in 2008. She owned and managed this business very successfully until she sold it in 2014 following the birth of her third child.

“It was a really high-performing team. We had a smaller team, so it really allowed me to do the coaching and sales management,

which I love, and it also gave me the opportunity to still sell a bit,” Amy says. “I’ve been able to work in a lot of facets of the business, so I understand it from being a new agent to being a broker/owner. Having that full range of experience allows me to see at both the micro and macro levels.”

### RETURNING TO AMERICA

Eventually, Amy and Andrew decided to move back to the United States. “Since the children have dual citizenship in New Zealand and the United States, we wanted to give our children some experiences here and moved back to the U.S. in 2016,” she says.

Amy worked with Harcourts Real Estate in New Zealand, and when she and her family returned to America, she became their auction specialist in the San Diego area. She excelled at the role for three years and completed over 500 negotiations over hundreds of auctions she was managing throughout Southern California.

*Amy wants to acknowledge the support of her family and friends in New Zealand and here in the U.S. “It is never easy immigrating a whole family across the globe, and the move back to the U.S. did not come without its major hurdles,” she says. “If it weren’t for the constant love and support, I certainly don’t think I would be sitting here doing this interview for this incredible magazine.”*

Today, Amy is focused on building her own business. “So much of my real estate life has been about helping other people’s business, which I’ve enjoyed. It’s very natural for me to coach, assist, and build up other people. Now, I’m focused on building Amy Gardiner as a brand and business,” she says. “I’m getting some good momentum with that. Coldwell Banker, as a company, has fantastic people and tools, so that has made it easy to plug and play.”

### LIFE’S REWARDS

Away from work, Amy cherishes time spent with Andrew and their three children: 19-year-old daughter Ella, who plays volleyball and attends college at Fairfield University in



Photo by Bodie Kuljian

“IT’S ABOUT BEING ABLE TO BE THERE IN THOSE MOMENTS AND MAKE A SITUATION BETTER FOR SOMEONE.”

Connecticut; 17-year-old son Asher, who is a senior in high school and plays basketball and football; and their 9-year-old son Mason. “My family is everything that I work for,” Amy says with a smile.

In their free time, Amy and her family lead a very active life. As she says, “We are very sports driven. If we do have spare time, we are probably at a sporting event. We enjoy going back east to see my daughter play volleyball. And Asher has also had four or five college scholarship offers for basketball.”

Amy and Andrew are both coaches for the San Clemente High School basketball teams. They also have a passion for giving back to the community. One example was a Thanksgiving meal event that Amy organized last year, working with area teenagers to make and assemble meals and then providing them at drive-through points to area residents.

### TRUSTED RESOURCE AND FRIEND

As Amy considers the experiences she has had over her 20 years in the industry and the goals in front of her, she reflects on the times that are the most rewarding. “We sometimes work with people who are in difficult situations. During those times, I like being there to sympathize with them, to be a counselor, and to help them realize that they aren’t alone and they will get through it,” she emphasizes. “For me, it’s about being able to be there in those moments and make a situation better for someone. That’s what I love the most.”

In return, Amy’s clients appreciate the fact that they can count on her. In good times and trying situations alike, they trust that Amy Gardiner will be there ... helping them make the most of every moment and opportunity.



Amy Gardiner spent 20 years in New Zealand before returning to Orange County. (Photo by Bodie Kuljian)

# MASTER THE MEDIA



## Optimizing Your LinkedIn Profile for 2022

By Christina Daves

Whether you are an active user or not on LinkedIn, you want to optimize your profile. The reason is that LinkedIn has such powerful “Google juice” that when someone puts your name into Google, it’s very likely that your LinkedIn profile will come up as one of the first search results. That might be your only opportunity to make an impression on a potential buyer or seller. That being said, let’s get your profile looking great!

1. Put in a header photo that is aligned with your brand. If you sell luxury homes, put that type of image. If you sell condos, don’t show a luxury home kitchen. It’s off-brand, and you will confuse people.
2. Make sure your headshot is professional. Remember, this isn’t Facebook. Don’t use a picture with your kids (unless your branding is “The Family REALTOR®.”) And don’t use a happy-hour shot. LinkedIn is a professional business platform. Speak its language.

3. Don’t list your title as, for example, “Top Producing Realtor.” Think in terms of “what’s in it for me.” Tell people what you do for them. “I help new home buyers find their dream home while keeping cash in the bank.”
4. Make sure your “About” section is in the first person and address the “What’s in it for me?” What do you do for the people you work with? What is your secret sauce? Make sure you include relevant keywords here. Use emojis to make things pop. Always include your cell phone number.
5. The “Featured” section is a great place to put videos, PDFs, or eBooks about what you do. This is prime real estate on LinkedIn. Don’t miss out on this opportunity.
6. Ask for recommendations. Every time you work with a lender, title company, buyer, or seller, if you are connected on LinkedIn, ask them for a recommendation.
7. Fill out the rest of your profile as completely as possible. Remember, real estate is a referral business. You might connect with someone from high school, college, or a former company you worked for. These are

all things that will help you relate with and connect with potential clients.

Spend a little time as the year is coming to a close to get your LinkedIn profile geared up and ready to go for 2022.

### Christina Daves PR for Anyone®

Christina Daves is the founder of PR For Anyone®. She has trained thousands of real estate agents in gaining visibility by using traditional and social media together for maximum effectiveness. Agents she has worked with have appeared in national magazines, newspapers, radio, television, and blogs. Book your free business strategy session with Christina at [www.ChatWithChristina.com](http://www.ChatWithChristina.com), and learn more about her at [www.ChristinaDaves.com](http://www.ChristinaDaves.com).



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