

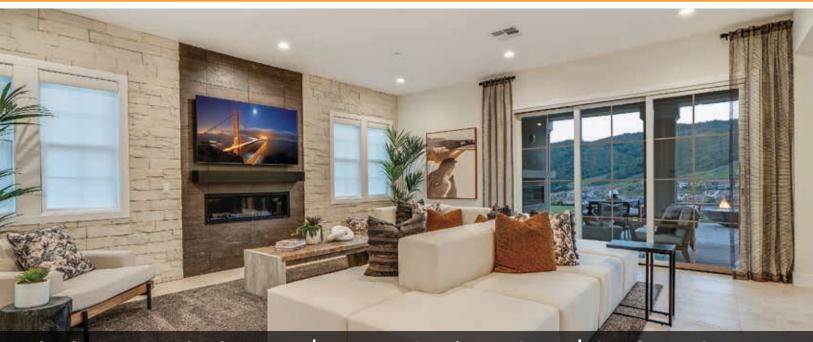


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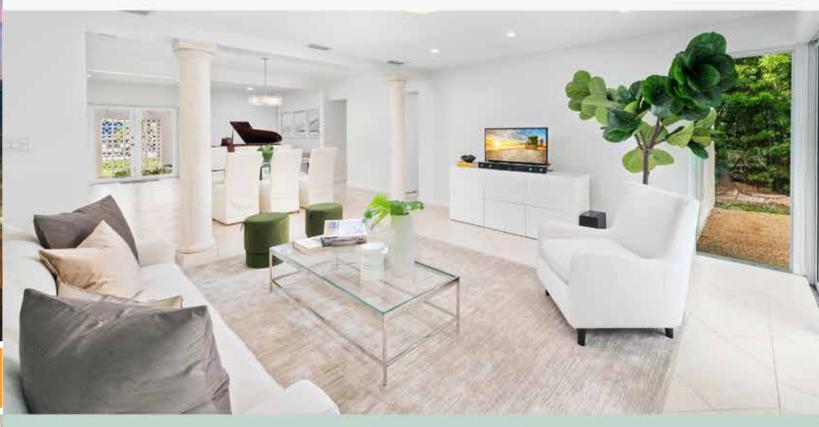
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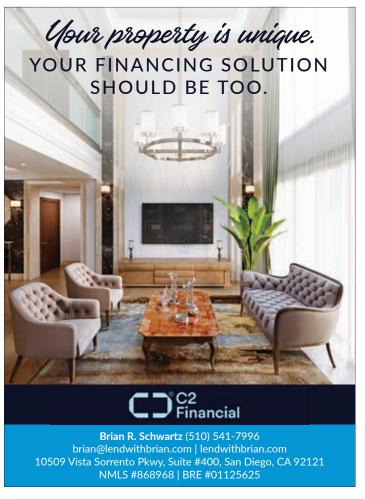
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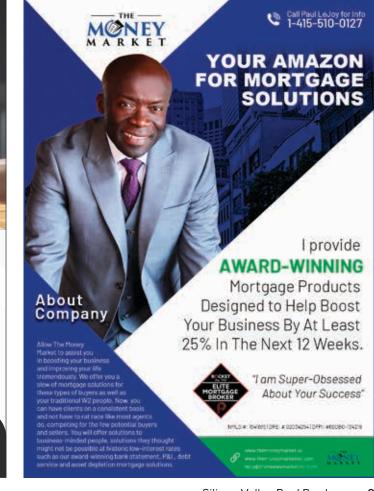


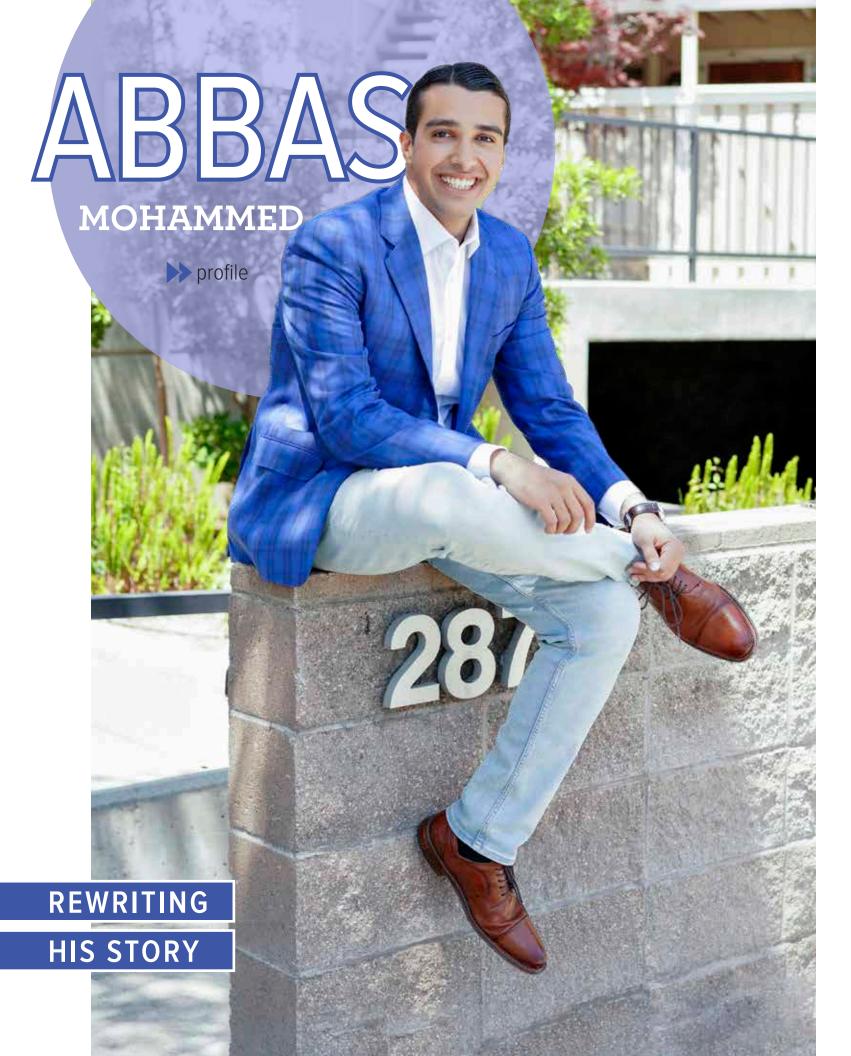
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Growing up in Iraq, Abbas Mohammed remembers his family as the poorest in the entire neighborhood. He recalls sleeping on concrete floors because his parents couldn't afford to buy beds.

"As a kid, I thought that was bad, but things got worse," he reflects.

In 2003, Iraq was engulfed by war. Abbas' family lost their home, and for the next five years, they moved from home to home in search of safety. They eventually immigrated to Syria, where seven relatives squeezed into a 500-square-foot, one-bedroom apartment. Abbas once again was left to sleep on the floor.

Two years later, his family was given the opportunity to immigrate to the United States. At 11 years old, Abbas left his home to begin again.

"We had absolutely nothing, but it felt like a dream come true because I didn't constantly worry about the possibility of dying every day."

#### A DREAM OF SOMETHING BETTER

Abbas came to loathe being poor. He dreamed of a better future and saw wealth as a path to freedom.

At 18, he entered the working world in car sales. He found success but knew there was more.

"I started looking at other options. I asked myself, 'What could I afford to do with the little money I had saved up?"

As he assessed his options, Abbas had a realization. He saw that many wealthy people were involved in the real estate business. So, in 2017, he got his license and went all-in on real estate. He paid for his startup costs on a credit card and set off to build a business. The problem was, he didn't have proper training or mentorship. Abbas was left to fail or succeed on his own.

"I knocked on hundreds of doors a day. Every single day from 9 to 5, getting hundreds of rejections and people slamming the door in my face. I was threatened, shouted at, cursed at, but I continued going because it was the only option I had at the time. Knocking on doors was free, and I couldn't afford anything that wasn't free."

After three months of door knocking, Abbas didn't make a single sale. He had maxed out his credit card and produced zero income, so he returned to his car sales job. While he was forced to retreat momentarily, that didn't halt his determination to succeed long-term.

"My real estate business was the light I had at the end of the tunnel, and I wasn't going to let it die that quickly."

Abbas continued to work his real estate business around his car sales work. He would make cold calls from

just about anywhere — including the bathroom during breaks.

"There was no quitting," he reflects.

Abbas eventually found coaching and proper mentorship. He landed one listing, then another, and his business slowly gained momentum. After selling his first few listings, he quit his used car sales job and promised never to work as a used car salesman again.

#### **BUILDING LEVERAGE**

In the following year, Abbas' business took off. He earned an impressive \$350,000, but he was burning the candle at both ends while working 15-hour days. He was exhausted. He missed his family.



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• • •

"I was seeing other people in my industry succeed and make more money, even though they were working far less hours than me," Abbas reflects. "I knew something had to change for me if I wanted to keep growing."

Abbas realized that he had to create more leverage in his business. First, he focused on systems and processes. Step one was to simplify his business.

"I looked at some of the biggest corporations and saw a consistent pattern. They all had systems, and they all had employees. I didn't have systems and employees. So, I set up systems and processes. I simplified my business tremendously. I decided if something was too complex, I was not going to do it. I want things that anybody could do because the situations are systematic. Anything that required unique decisions that had to rely on my decision making, I took out."

In late 2019, he hired his first virtual assistant. After two months, he hired another.

"I just continued hiring. So, lead flow just started going up like crazy because I was able to duplicate myself several times over."

By March 2020, he had a team of four assistants. And then, COVID-19 upended the real estate world.

#### TAKING THE NEXT STEP

When COVID-19 struck, many businesses chose to tighten their budgets and buckle down. Abbas sensed an opportunity and chose a different path. He decided to add a hiring manager and go on a hiring frenzy. By the end of 2020, he had a team of 10 virtual assistants. By the end of 2021, his team of virtual assistants

had grown to 25.

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spend every dollar I have on hiring people," Abbas reflects. "I went from \$350,000 to \$750,000 in income in 2020. Then in 2021, I went from \$750,000 to \$1.7 million in GCI. And the nice thing about it is this: Not only was I able to multiply my business, but last year, I was able to spend very little time in the business because the systems are so good.

In 2021, Abbas spent an average of seven to 10 hours working in his real estate sales business.

#### **DRIVEN TO ACHIEVE**

As Abbas has stepped back from his real estate sales business, he has stepped into being an investor. Investing has quickly become his new passion. In 2021, he purchased two large apartment buildings in Dallas.

The first, which has 64 units, was purchased for \$6.5 million. The second, a building of 194 units, was purchased for \$30.5 million. In total, Abbas acquired \$37 million in real estate in 2021, and he plans to acquire an additional \$100 million in multifamily properties in 2022.

"What I realized is that is what I want to continue to focus my time on. That's the business I want to continue to grow."

In just a few short years, Abbas has achieved impressive levels of success, and he's showing no signs of slowing down. But what's it all for?

"It's for the sake of the game. When I first started, you read my story. My family was super broke. So growing up, I hated that. But after I started making money, I realized that it's all useless. There's nothing else that I want. I realized my purpose is to actually grow a company because I enjoy hiring people. I enjoy seeing people's lives change. I want to build the biggest company I can build and change other people's lives in the process. And then, it's just for the sake of the game. What is the highest thing I can achieve as a person before I die? Coming from where I come from, the achievement and seeing what is possible is what drives me the most."





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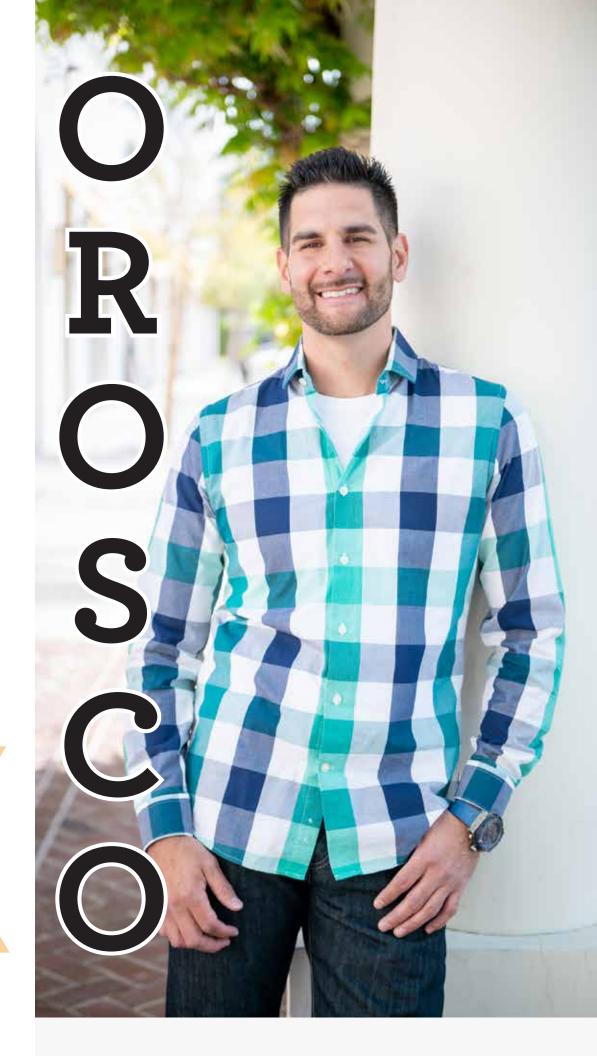
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#### DRIVEN TO GROW

By **Zachary Cohen**Photos By **Ewa Samples,**www.maytheartbewithyou.com

"I had no idea about anything in the industry — nothing. It was, I don't know. Maybe it was fate. Maybe I just needed a change." In 2012, Lex Orosco took a leap of faith into the real estate industry. Despite knowing little about the business, he took a chance on a new opportunity. That decision has made a massive impact on Lex's path, his community and those he now leads.

#### Taking a Chance

After graduating from college, Lex spent a short time as a loan officer before five years working for a Japanese solder paste manufacturer. Lex was making good money but felt he was simply going through the motions. During this time, a family acquaintance began trying to recruit him into real estate.



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After countless discussions, Lex began to consider the prospect of selling real estate and, in 2012, he got his license, left his former company and made a bet on himself.

In real estate, Lex was faced with a new reality. No longer supported by a steady paycheck, he was on his own to discover success. Unfortunately, he found training resources and genuine support to be lacking.

#### FUN FACT

Lex has backpacked across Central and South America multiple times. His most recent trip, a month-long journey across South America, concluded in January 2020. Lex, who is half Argentine, says that these trips have helped him develop gratitude for his parents and for where he stands in life.

"It was four years of no one really teaching me anything, trying to figure things out for myself," Lex says. "I don't think any company trains well, honestly. I had to figure out my own training. I had some success, and I had some failures, but I took to the customer service aspect of it really well. I let things happen, and over time my sales progressed. I was learning deal by deal."

Lex landed a few listings, and his business began to grow. But it

wasn't until he joined Joe Velasco's team in 2017 that his business truly took off.

"By luck and chance, I was introduced to my future mentor. He lost someone from his team and needed someone to fill that slot. He saw something in me, and I decided to join his team. That changed my life forever," Lex reflects.

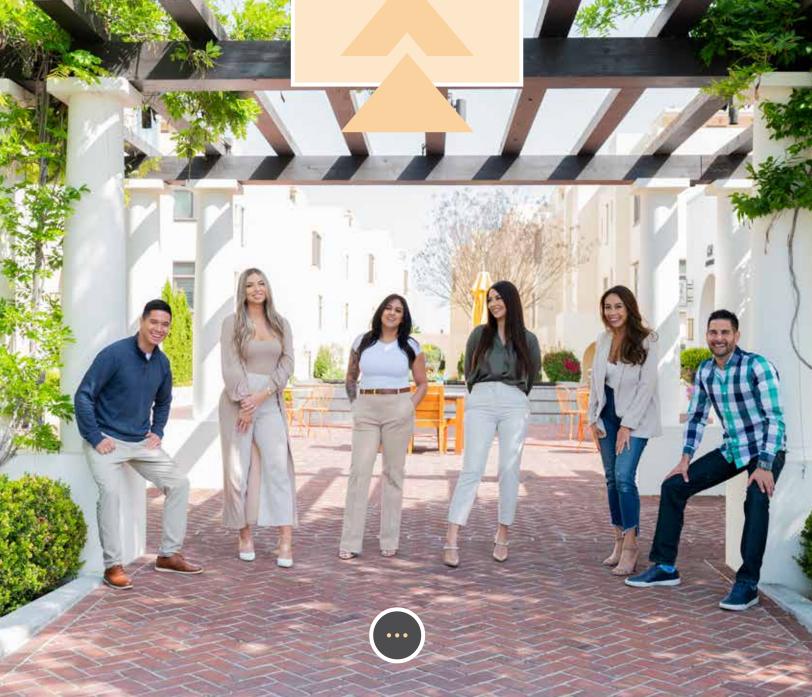
Lex's real estate education took flight. He went from having a basic

## WORDS OF WISDOM

"There is so much momentum that I have flowing right now. Real estate is all about momentum. I feel like when you have it, you have to double down." grasp of the business to being an expert. He learned the right way to do business and how to do it on a much larger scale. His eyes were opened to a new world of possibilities.

#### A Team of His Own

By the end of 2018, Lex returned to working as a solo agent, and he continued doing so through early 2020, when he began to grow a team of his own. He brought on his first two agents in January,





and by the end of the year, his team was 25 agents strong.

"I went from \$30 million in sales two years ago to last year having over 25 members on my team and selling over \$110 million in 2021. And this year, as of March, I have over \$100 million under contract," Lex beams.

As Lex looks ahead, he is inspired to continue growing the business. He wants to gain market share in every town and city in the Bay Area. He wants to continue training his agents on how to build their business on listings.

"We're setting the stage for something really big down the line. We want to change the industry. We want to focus on really taking care of clients. We are always willing to do what's extra," Lex says.

"My life is really about — I can't explain it, but I have something inside of me driving me to a point. I haven't seen what the end goal is, but everything for me is about making this thing as big as I can, to help as many families and agents as I can. There is so much momentum that I have flowing right now. Real estate is all about momentum. I feel like when you have it, you have to double down.

66

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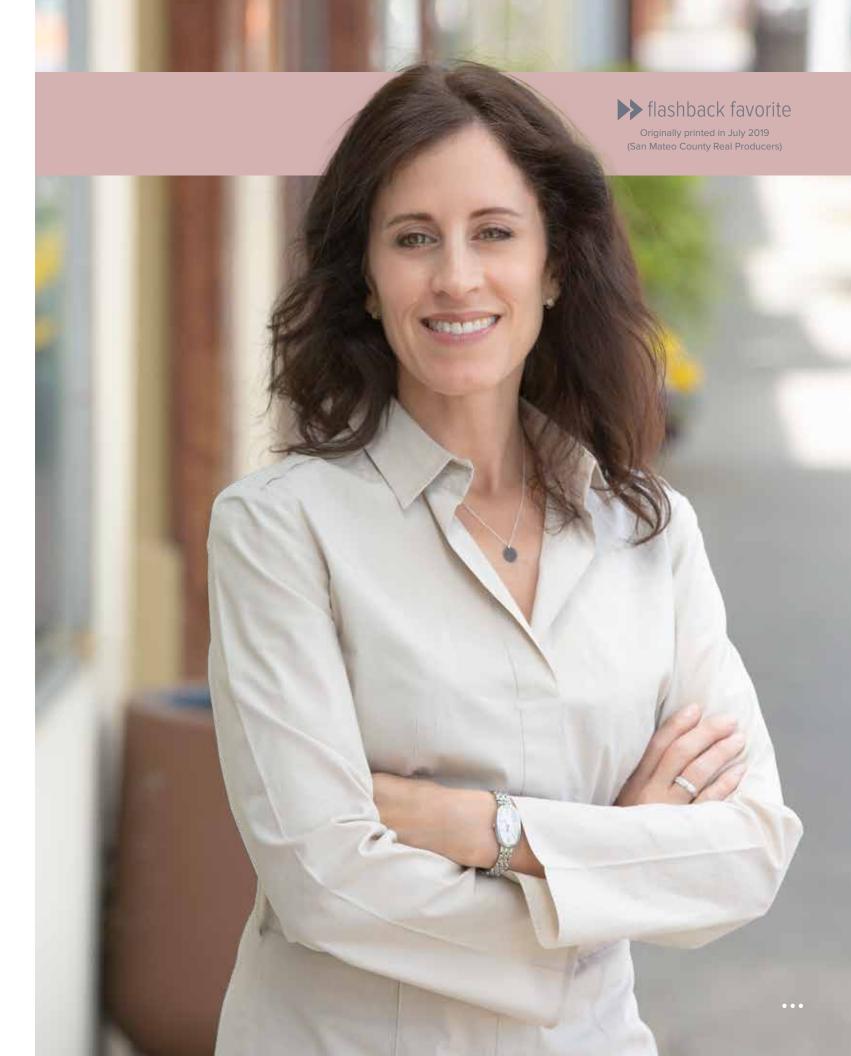
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## LINDA HYMES

#### Intero Real Estate Services

A Standard of Excellence: Linda Hymes' Journey from Professional Ballerina to Celebrated Cookbook Author to Top-Producing Real Estate Agent

If there's an art to leading an extraordinary, outside-the-box life, Linda Hymes has mastered it. As one of the Bay Area's top agents, her path to success in real estate is certainly unique: She has been a professional ballerina, chef, tour operator and multiple award-winning cookbook author, publisher and board game designer. To succeed in any one of these careers would be enough for most people; however, for Linda, this is just what she does.

From as early as high school, Linda's unwavering ambition and proclivity toward excellence resulted in a multitude of personal achievements. An academic standout, she won a year-long full scholarship to study in Germany, then completed her senior year of high school in a mere two and a half months in order to pursue her dream of becoming a professional ballerina.

"The discipline required to be a dancer teaches one early on to be organized, to use their time well," shares Linda. "I was going to high school during the day and often performing at night. Though I had many interests, I knew I only had a short window to dance. Everything else could come after." On top of her already jam-packed schedule, Linda was determined to receive a college education.

At 17, she moved to New York City to train at the prestigious School of American Ballet, the official school of the New York City Ballet, while fitting in college courses at Fordham University's Lincoln Center campus towards an undergraduate degree in international affairs.

#### Law, Cuisine and Board Games

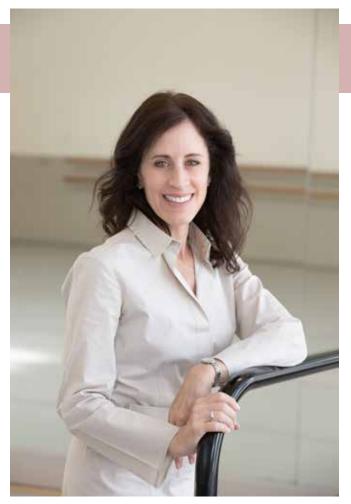
A decade later, as her professional ballet career neared its end, Linda met her husband, Derek, a builder and property developer. Her interest piqued by his work, she decided to get her real estate license and dipped her toes for the first time into the home buying and selling market. While she enjoyed life as an agent, family ties and a unique development opportunity to remodel a historic stone hattery spurred a break from real estate and a move to England, where Linda took the opportunity to attend law school at Bristol University. However, over time she questioned whether she would find fulfillment in a legal environment after years of creative employment. This doubt propelled her to switch gears.

With resolve that her next career remained rooted in the creative arts, Linda was accepted into Le Cordon Bleu culinary school, the alma mater of famed chef Julia Childs, and obtained a professional degree in classical French cuisine. The foundational approach to cooking appealed to Linda's artistic sense and affinity for detail and served as the springboard for her next creative venture: writing and publishing cookbooks. Her cookbooks earned two Gourmand World Cookbook Awards and later evolved into a gourmet tour company that worked with top American university alumni travel programs leading exclusive architectural and gastronomic tours in France.

By 2009, a teetering economy caused group sizes to dwindle and prompted the closure of this endeavor entirely. Once again, Linda was at a crossroads and decided to transition — this time circuitously back to real estate. While her husband pursued new building projects, Linda poured her energy into running the office, building her knowledge of construction and raising their two young children. As a creative side gig, she even developed a new educational board game, "Synonyms: The Word Game That Gets Your Mind Racing!" In keeping with her track record, the game received rave reviews and five awards, a further testament to what others may deem as Linda's Midas touch or, in her opinion, a reflection of her nose-to-the-grind work ethic.

#### A High-End Transition

When Linda and her family eventually relocated to the Bay Area in 2012, she decided that, with a myriad of successful



endeavors to her name and the kids in school, the time was ripe to try her hand at real estate once again. Since then, she has partnered with her husband on many unique, historical and high-end home renovation and new construction projects that have spurred her business's continued growth. The primary key to her success, she claims, stems from her rigorous former dance career.

"I think what keeps me going is always looking for new challenges, but I try to approach them by building on past experience," says Linda. "I've managed to weave my disparate careers into a kind of life's journey that allows me to stay true to myself."

Additionally, Linda's ability to seamlessly transition into new yet similarly focused endeavors has enabled her to make significant impacts quickly.

"There is a lot of crossover," Linda says. "Most of what I've done in my life has required creativity, strong focus and commitment, acute attention to detail — the same skills required to successfully represent clients and market property. I think



having diverse life experience has enhanced my ability to navigate the business of luxury real estate; it acts as an ice-breaker to conversation and helps me develop new relationships." She also credits her husband with educating her on the building process and helping her to understand a property's potential and best possible use, expertise which has served her well.

As for those who may question whether Linda's wide-ranging passions hinder her ability to immerse herself and excel in real estate, the proof is in her numbers — she ranked No. 71 nationally (per the WSJ, 2016) and has closed a consistent \$30 to \$60 million annually in transactions. In 2018, she had a banner year, closing \$110 million in sales. Linda's latest and most rewarding challenge is helping her son, Alex, and daughter, Milla, navigate their high-school years, and in her downtime, she enjoys spending time with her dog, Luna.

For a high-achieving ballerina turned creative entrepreneur turned real estate agent, success is nonnegotiable, no matter the job at hand.

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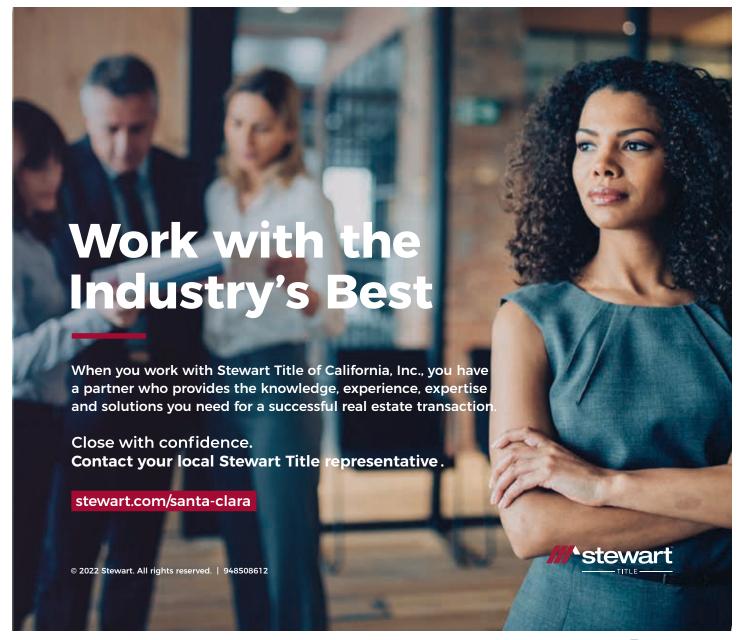
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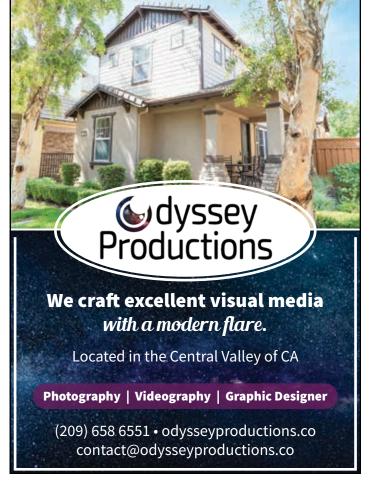


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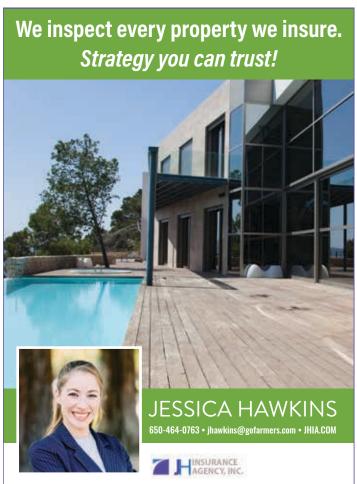
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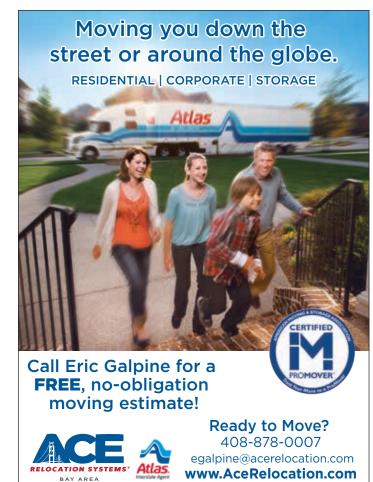
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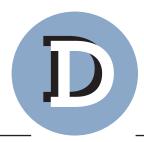












ana has a vivid memory of the first time she saw the house in which she and her family now live. It was the early 2000s, and she was touring open houses as her son napped in the backseat of the car.

"We saw this house that needed a good amount of work. It was tired looking," Dana admits. "But I loved it. I saw the potential. It had good bones."

Dana recognized something in that home that other buyers didn't. She and her husband, Charles, purchased the house and did a complete interior renovation to make it a place they loved.

Years later, with three boys and growing family needs, Dana spearheaded a project to completely reshape the property. This time, she designed and project-managed the work to take her house down to the studs, add an addition and rebuild it in a new vision.

Meanwhile, Dana kept one eye on the real estate market. She was constantly searching for homes online or attending open houses for fun.

Friends and family members would call her for her advice.

These personal stories are the beginning of an even larger story. Dana first fell in love with real estate through her own experiences buying and remodeling her home. Since 2018, she has committed herself to helping others navigate the challenges of buying and selling.

"Through the years, people have suggested that I get into real estate," Dana reflects. "So after we finished the remodel, I decided it was time. I had been talking about it for a while."

#### Rewind: Coast to Coast

Dana is originally from northern New Jersey; she graduated with a degree in marketing from Cornell University and began her professional life working for a consulting firm out of New York City. In 1999, she moved out to the Bay Area alongside her husband, who had been accepted to Standford's business school.

"We moved out to the Bay Area 'for a few years," Dana quips. "I remember telling my mom, 'I'll come back.' And she cried, saying, 'No one comes back from California."

Dana's mother turned out to be correct. First, it was Dana's career that kept her in California. She carved out a successful career path in marketing, first for several tech companies before founding her own marketing agency.







WHATEVER I PUT
MY MIND TO, I GO
FULL STEAM AHEAD.





## FUN FACT

Dana and her family have an extensive magnet collection with over 1,000 individual pieces. As a part of their recent remodel, they added a large metal wall in the kitchen. When Dana and her family travel to a new place, they buy another magnet to add to the collection.

Dana continued setting down roots in the Bay Area. Her family grew, and she now has three sons (ages 16, 14 and 11).

"We settled in, bought our first home. Year after year went by, and here we are. We have great weather, a nice community. We feel fortunate to raise our family in this area," Dana says.

When her sons were younger, Dana scaled back her marketing business to focus on being a present mom, but by 2018, she was ready to re-enter the workforce full time.

"Whatever I put my mind to, I go full steam ahead. I joined Alain Pinel (which became a part of Compass), went through their master's training program, and we finished right as COVID-19 hit."

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Despite the challenge of starting her business amid a pandemic, Dana has enjoyed tremendous success. In her first two years, she closed north of \$60 million.

"I've been fortunate to build one transaction after the next. The business has really blossomed," she smiles.

Dana has leveraged the marketing expertise she developed in her previous career. She stays up to date with movements in the real estate market, and she is both proactive and communicative. Dana also has the advantage of being a long-time Bay Area resident deeply entrenched in her community.

"I'm very active in the schools and community," she explains.



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WORKING
WITH MY
CLIENTS,
AND I FEEL
LIKE I HAVE
A LOT MORE
TO GIVE THIS
COMMUNITY.



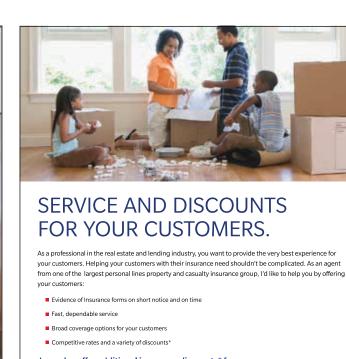
One such way that Dana supports her community is through Make a Move, a program she founded to support local public schools. She donates \$5,000 from every sale to the education foundation of the client's choosing.

#### Settling In

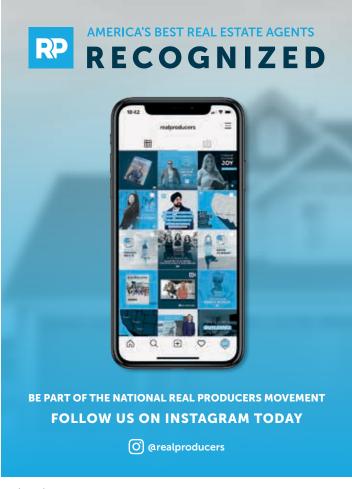
Dana couldn't be happier with the results from her first two years in the business. As she looks ahead, she hopes to continue to leverage the flexibility that life as a REALTOR® offers. She enjoys volunteering at the local schools, getting outdoors with friends and traveling.

"I hope to build on my initial success and continue to grow a leading luxury brand for real estate in the Menlo Park/Atherton area," Dana says. "I truly love working with my clients, and I feel like I have a lot more to give this community."





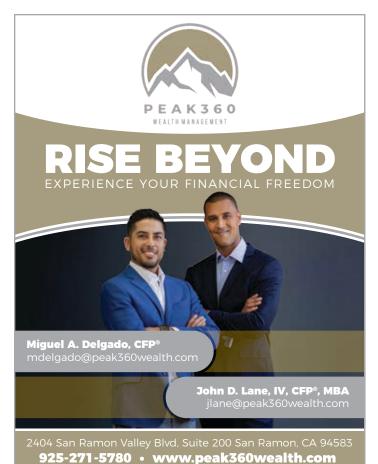






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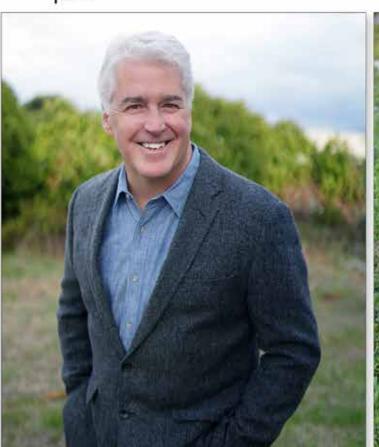
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