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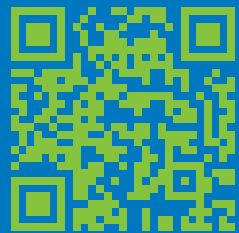
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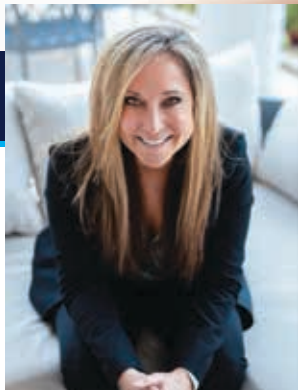
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From



KATRINA CRANE & HUNTER CRANE

In the past three years since they were first featured on the cover of *South OC Real Producers* in November 2020, Katrina Crane and her son, Hunter, say their business has undergone significant transformations that have greatly impacted their overall success.



“One of the most notable changes was the expansion of our team,” explains Katrina. “We welcomed key support personnel, including a dedicated marketing director, additional staging assistants, and a client support team. This strategic move enhanced our operational efficiency, enabling us to streamline both seller and buyer escrows while providing superior service to our valued clients. These additions to our team have been instrumental in our ability to meet the needs of both current and future clients, contributing significantly to our continued success.”

In order to remain competitive in the ever-evolving residential real estate market, Katrina and Hunter adopted a range of new strategies and approaches over the last three years, adjusting their tactics to stay ahead of fluctuating market conditions and the impact of rising interest rates.

“We’ve increased our marketing budget and efforts to ensure our properties receive maximum exposure. Embracing cutting-edge technology has allowed us to operate more efficiently, responding swiftly to changing conditions. Moreover, we’ve maintained strong relationships with past clients, expanding our referral sources,” Katrina notes.

“Our motto, ‘LIST, STAGE, SELL,’ encapsulates our dedication to excellence, while our mantra, ‘Not just a client, but a friend,’ reflects our commitment to building lasting connections with those we serve.”

The mother-son duo’s stated short-term goal is to further integrate technology into the industry, while their long-term goal is to continue prioritizing their clients’ needs above all else, sustaining their reputation for exceptional service.



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» ask the guru

DEAR GURU: I am entering my fifth year as a real estate agent. It seems like there are wild swings each year so far. Currently, my business is significantly off compared to 2021 and 2022. What is normal? What should I do?

SARAH ANDERSON, EXP REALTY

DEAR SARAH: A very timely question. Many agents are asking their real estate coaches, brokers, and the Guru the same question.

The word 'normal' does not exist anymore in our industry. What used to be is no longer the case. Since COVID, there has been a paradigm shift. History is interesting, and looking in the rearview mirror of your career is insightful; however, every agent should be looking out the windshield to the future. Most of us are aware that the number of listings is half of what it was pre-pandemic. Why? It's because the vast majority of homeowners refinanced their homes to a 30-year, fixed-rate loan at 3 percent, plus or minus. Why would they move?

Today, interest rates are approximately 7.5 percent and may head higher. The Federal Reserve is serious about stopping inflation — it is brutal for our industry and its related businesses.

Transaction count is off 50 percent to 60 percent since pre-pandemic levels. Our industry, therefore, is overstaffed for agents, mortgage, title, and escrow, as well as other related partners. Some of our contemporaries will seek new career options.

Throughout my career, which spans back to 1975, I've witnessed several devastating real estate cycles. Surprisingly, the current situation is relatively mild compared to some of the challenges I've encountered.

As an up-and-coming agent, such as you are, the sky is still the limit if you navigate correctly. For those agents that do not like or adapt to change, it will get uglier.

Technology and social media have been both a blessing and a curse. As an agent at any production

level, you should be doing the old-school nuts and bolts. That means building and improving upon your database of past clients and social contacts is a valuable thing to do in a slow market. Instead of texting them or posting on social media, CALL them. The curse of technology has been that people don't talk to each other face-to-face or by telephone anymore. This creates a one-dimensional environment as compared to a three-dimensional environment where you can glean more information in person or by telephone.

It is more important than ever to meet people in person and talk about real estate. Some examples of old-school marketing include joining the Chamber of Commerce or participating in civic events, charity events, school events, tennis or pickleball clubs, etc. Additionally, door knocking still works, as well as open houses. If you don't have any listings, ask an agent if you could host their open house.

Perhaps you could host buyer or seller seminars in your local area to educate consumers on local real estate trends. Let your imagination run wild on additional ideas of where you can meet people and discuss real estate trends. Instead of asking them directly if they would like to sell their home, ask them if they happen to know anybody who would potentially consider selling or buying a home within their personal sphere of friends and family. This is called a 'soft sell' approach, which can yield positive results.



Phil Immel
Real Estate Guru®

Best regards,
The Guru

Have a real estate question?
Email Phil Immel at phil@realestateguru.com. Visit realestateguru.com. The Guru® has more than four

decades of experience listing and selling homes in South Orange County. A licensed real estate broker, Phil majored in real estate at San Diego State University and is also an expert in mortgage, title, escrow, appraisal, and negotiations.

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WHY CAMP:

A VITAL RESOURCE FOR MORTGAGE PROFESSIONALS AND CONSUMERS

By Michelle Velez

As the president of the California Association of Mortgage Professionals (CAMP), I am proud to celebrate our organization's 30-plus years of educating and advocating for mortgage professionals and our consumers in California. CAMP is a nonprofit trade association that represents mortgage professionals throughout the state. We are committed to providing our members with the resources and support they need to succeed in the ever-changing mortgage industry.

CAMP offers support to the mortgage industry in many ways. We are committed to providing mortgage professionals with accredited continuing educational opportunities and enrichment programs designed to raise industry standards, as well as customer service.

Additionally, our association focuses on strengthening consumer awareness of mortgage services to provide CAMP members with updated information about state and federal legislative and regulatory developments related to the industry. This ensures our members are better educated and protects the means and methods of the industry from unfair regulatory restrictions.

CAMP also provides mortgage professionals with the opportunity to network and learn from each other. This allows our members to focus on our association's last goal: to increase access to homeownership and housing affordability for all Californians.

Now Is the Time to Attend

The mortgage industry is constantly evolving, and it is more important than ever for mortgage professionals to stay informed about the latest changes. CAMP events provide our members with the invaluable opportunity to learn from industry experts, network with other professionals, and share best practices.

I encourage everyone in the real estate industry to attend CAMP events in the coming year. This is a critical time for our industry, and we need to come together to better understand these important changes. Our local chapter meetings are a great place to learn about our advocacy efforts, industry and regulatory changes, and how to best navigate these changes. We also need to work to reduce the regulatory burden on small mortgage businesses.

CAMP Events Help Promote Change

CAMP events are also an ideal way to help mortgage professionals promote important changes in the industry. Our monthly meetings provide mortgage professionals with the opportunity to learn about the latest legislative and regulatory proposals that could impact their business. Attendees can also learn how to advocate for changes to these proposals.

Additionally, CAMP events can also be used to educate consumers about the mortgage process and their rights as borrowers. This can help to create a more informed and engaged consumer base, which can lead to positive changes in the industry.

Each year, CAMP hosts a State Legislative conference to discuss legislation that has been introduced and how it can be a benefit or harm to our consumers. On Legislative Day, CAMP members meet with their state legislators to discuss important mortgage issues. This gives our members the opportunity to advocate for policies that support homeowners and the mortgage industry.

Why Younger Professionals Should Volunteer

I have been volunteering with CAMP for the past 16 years, and many of our leadership have been volunteering even longer. CAMP welcomes the knowledge of younger generations to enhance the leadership of our seasoned leaders. I personally feel it is important to learn and mentor each other so the next generation can lead our association.

Volunteering with CAMP is a great way to give back to the industry and make a difference in the lives of homeowners. Most importantly, it will help you grow and learn more about the profession you serve. There are many

volunteer opportunities available at CAMP, including serving on a committee, helping to organize events, or mentoring newer members. I encourage all younger mortgage professionals to get involved.

CAMP is best known for their grassroots advocacy efforts. A younger volunteer could serve on the CAMP Legislative Committee to help develop our legislative agenda and advocate for our members' priorities. Local chapters are always looking for fresh meeting ideas for educational meetings or networking events, as well as mentors and mentees. By joining CAMP, you can make a difference in your business, to your customers, and in your industry.



Michelle Velez, a certified mortgage consultant and veteran lending specialist, currently serves as the 2023–2024 president of the California Association of Mortgage Professionals. With an impressive track record spanning over 30 years in the mortgage industry, Michelle is a seasoned professional who has dedicated her career to helping individuals and families achieve their homeownership dreams. Her commitment to excellence and her passion for making a difference in the mortgage industry have set her apart as a leader and trusted advisor in the field.

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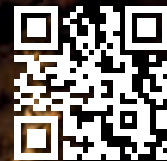


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What price can you put on being the resource that others know they can count on? Of course, the answer is that it's absolutely priceless. This invaluable quality allows Joey Leisz of Century 21 Affiliated to thrive while he helps others around him as a true real estate advisor.

"That's really the way I refer to myself in my work with clients. I believe that we are in the role of being a marketer and advisor in this industry," Joey notes. "I love working with people and connecting dots. I love leaning into my own network and thinking outside the box to find that opportunity."

HOMETOWN ROOTS

Joey also has a strong appreciation for his hometown of San Clemente.

"That's where I was born and raised. I love showing people new to the area around, and getting them entrenched in the community," Joey affirms. "I like providing a full concierge service along the way."

Joey's career has been shaped through time, beginning with his father, who has worked as a real estate agent for 35 years. After growing up in and around the business, Joey had his mind set on another path before earning his real estate license in 2016.

"I was studying communications and marketing while working for an art and apparel company out of Ventura," Joey recalls. "As part of that, I worked with artists and designers. It was a start-up brand. But I always knew it was inevitable that I would join the family business in real estate someday."

FINDING HIS OWN WAY

As Joey reflects on his start in real estate, he points out it took him a while to find his footing.

"I'd say it took the first two and a half years to figure out who I was as an advisor. I wore a polo shirt and slacks to keep up with the Joneses."

That's when our owner, Ramona, told me, 'You just have to be you.' I took her advice to heart," Joey remembers. "The next day, I was wearing my boots, chinos, and shirt. I love fashion and art. I felt I had to put on this face to work in real estate. I realized I hold the same value no matter how I dress."

Today, Joey enjoys being surrounded by his remarkable team members: Jeff Carron, Will Ting, and Larry Leisz. Together, they've generated north of \$60 million in sales volume over the past four years.



» agent spotlight | By Dave Danielson
Photos by WASIO faces



San Clemente native Joey Leisz is a Realtor with Century 21 Affiliated.

In the spirit of responsiveness and authenticity, Joey brings a balanced style to work with his clients — a straightforward style they know they can trust.

“I like to come out of a deal knowing that everything was disclosed openly,” he asserts. “If there’s something that might not fit in my clients’ criteria, I will be open with them and be the voice of reason.”

FAMILY REWARDS

Joey is driven in his work by his love for his family, including his wife, Sydney, and their first daughter, Wren, who was born this past August.

“They are my ‘why.’ If we need something, I work hard to make sure we can maintain that lifestyle,”

Joey shares. “I’m also rewarded with the joy my clients bring and seeing that come full circle, whether it’s helping them find a lease, a studio, or house on the hill.”

In his free time, Joey has a strong passion for surfing. He also likes to volunteer and stay engaged with the community. He serves as publicity chair for the San Clemente Rotary Club, and is also active in his local church.

LIFTING OTHERS

As Joey thinks about the distance he has come in his real estate career over the past seven years, he offers helpful tips for others who are looking to move forward in the business themselves.

“

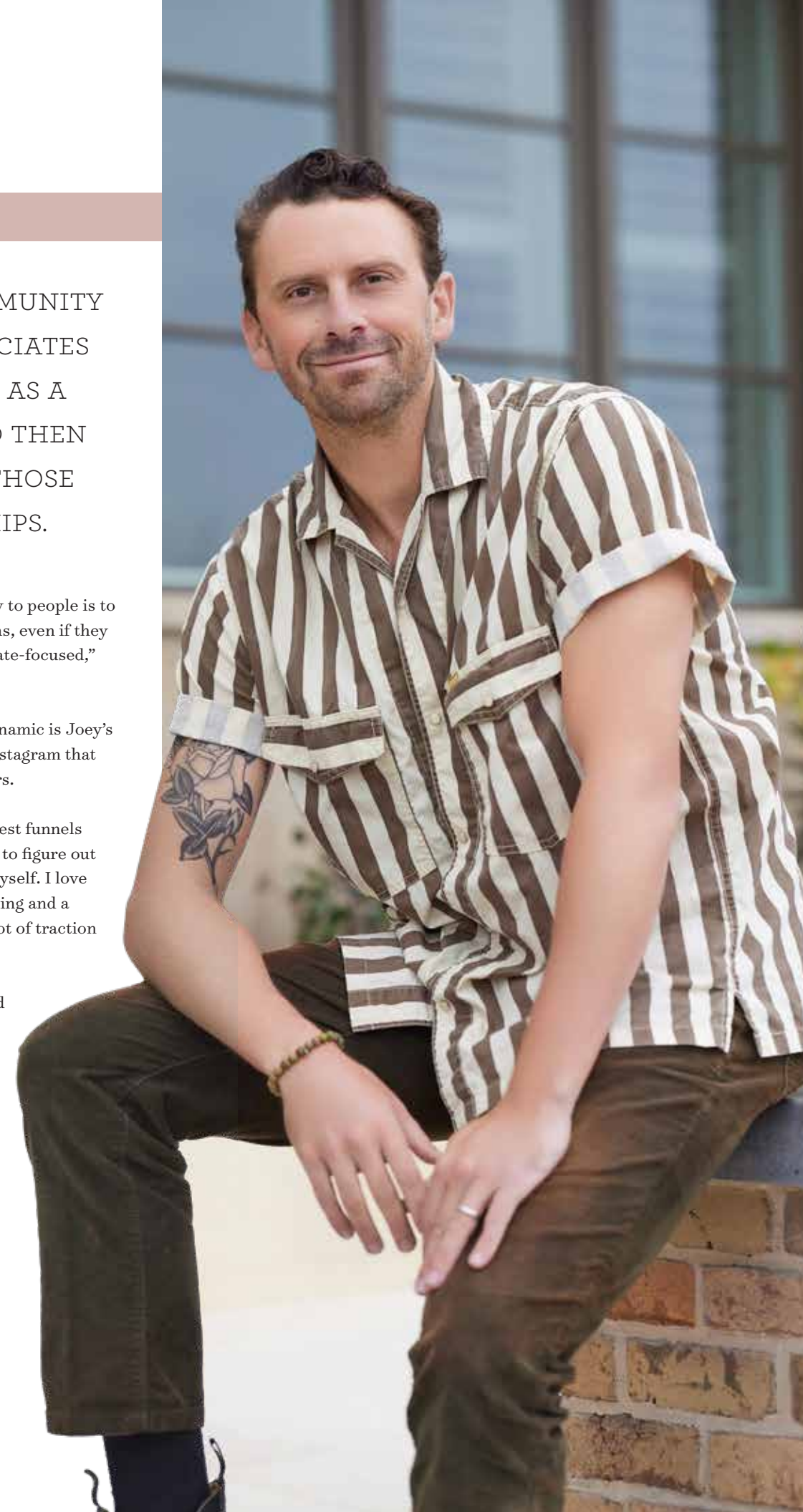
FIND A COMMUNITY THAT APPRECIATES YOUR VALUE AS A HUMAN AND THEN LEAN INTO THOSE RELATIONSHIPS.

“One thing I would say to people is to focus on your strengths, even if they aren’t strictly real estate-focused,” Joey advises.

An example of that dynamic is Joey’s community page on Instagram that boasts 13,000 followers.

“That’s one of the largest funnels for business. I wanted to figure out how to differentiate myself. I love out-of-the-box marketing and a few videos that get a lot of traction online,” Joey smiles.

“Another thing I would emphasize is the importance of having a genuine appreciation for the relationships that you have, and plug in real estate when you are engaged in communication,” he adds. “Find a community that appreciates your value as a human and then lean into those relationships.”





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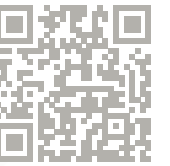


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JERRY STONGER

PREFERRED
INSPECTION
SERVICES



» partner spotlight

By Dave Danielson
Photos by Wasio faces

Those who know Jerry Stonger and have worked with his company, Preferred Inspection Services, understand the great friend and partner they have on their side — an experienced professional who dedicates himself to meeting their needs with genuine expertise and care.

“I appreciate having the chance to serve people with the best possible customer service,” Jerry affirms. “That’s a big part of why I got into this business. I have always believed that you can do a thorough inspection without scaring everybody away from the house that they are looking to buy. That’s been our goal since day one.”

BUILT FOR THIS

Jerry’s founding of Preferred Inspection Services was a natural extension of his construction background.

“I first started when I was 15 years old, working alongside my dad, who was a general contractor,” he shares.

Jerry continued along the construction path, steadily growing and becoming a licensed contractor in 1998. After a successful career working in building, Jerry decided it was time for him to make a career change.

“I was looking at doing something a little different. Through time, I got home inspection reports since I was doing a lot of HOA work,” Jerry remembers. “As I looked at those reports, I noticed that they were written in a very technical way ... to a point where it was hard for clients and even property management professionals to know what was being talked about.”

PROVIDING

GENUINE

EXPERTISE

AND CARE



In the meantime, Jerry had started doing inspections for friends and family members.

“From there, business just took off,” he remarks. “I enjoy helping people and informing them, using my construction background to do that. I realized there was a need for it, so in 2012 we concentrated all of our efforts as a company on inspections.”

SERVICE FIRST

Today, Jerry is joined on his team by two full-time inspectors. One of the most rewarding parts of Jerry’s duties is the training and mentorship that he provides to those who work with him.

“I train them myself,” Jerry says proudly. “I train them with that mentality of ‘we’re here to do a thorough inspection, but we’re not here to scare people away.’”

He continues, “I tell them we’re here to provide a service first and foremost, to inform these people of the house they’re looking to buy, but that we’re not here to chase them away from it or create problems that aren’t there.”

Indeed, the process of helping people seems to be in Jerry’s blood.

“We want to be known for being our partners’ go-to service company, not just with home inspections, but also taking advantage of my background and construction. There’s pretty much nothing I haven’t seen,” Jerry asserts.

“When a REALTOR® says they have a listing and they get an inspection report from another inspector and they’re not sure about something, I can look over the reports for a moment and tell them if it’s something

legit or not. In addition, I can help with estimated costs on a lot of projects. So if people are looking to develop a budget or see what they need to ask as far as credits, I can help them with that as well.”

A HELPING HAND

In a competitive market, Jerry is the first to give credit to the number of high-quality inspection companies out there. For those who haven’t had a chance to work with him yet, Jerry is happy to be another valuable option in his partners’ toolkits.

“We just love when people give us a shot and see that we do things a little bit differently maybe than their current inspection partner,” he smiles. “We are very personal in our approach. We always do a review with the buyers if they’re able to because the report only tells so much. But what we really strive for is to give a thorough walk-around and review of the home that they’re purchasing to go along with reports.”

As he looks ahead, Jerry feels immense gratitude to have the chance to help his partners and clients move toward their goals.

“I’m always eager to help in any way I can with their transaction, with anything they may have going on in their personal life with their own home,” he concludes. “I love to be able to use my knowledge and experience to help people out and try to guide them in the right direction; and if I can’t help them myself, I’ll steer them in the right direction.”

When you need an expert home inspector on your side, contact Jerry Stonger and Preferred Inspection Services at 949-234-7125, or visit their website, www.preferredinspects.com, to learn more.



Jerry Stonger is the owner of Preferred Inspection Services.

FAMILY FOCUSED

Family is at the center of Jerry’s world, including his wife, Chris, who also works as a Realtor. “Chris is always a big help for me. She keeps me in tune with what’s happening in the business from the Realtor perspective and is fantastic at helping me touch on the points that are most valuable to my partners,” he shares.

Jerry and Chris treasure time spent with their children — 21-year-old daughter Riley and 18-year-old son Dylan. Outside of work, Jerry also enjoys being outdoors hiking, playing golf, or skiing.



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South Orange County Real Producers • 35

KEVIN HILL



CASUALLY ELITE

By Jess Wellar | Photos by Jenny McMasters

Whoever said nice guys finish last has never had the pleasure of meeting Kevin Hill. In the competitive world of real estate, Kevin's a rare breed of agent who effortlessly blends expertise with a laid-back attitude for a successful balance. As a broker associate with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties, Kevin stands in the company's top 1 percent, an impressive feat considering the vast pool of over 50,000 BHHS agents nationwide.

Kevin's casual demeanor belies a wealth of experience and knowledge, and he consistently delivers five-star service as a top real estate expert in South Orange County. With an impressive list of accolades and a rich history to match, Kevin's success is a testament to his dedication to his clients and his enduring passion for the industry.

TAKING OFF

Originally from upstate New York, Kevin's career path first

took him to Xerox and American Airlines. His eventual dive into the world of real estate was sparked by a financial seminar he attended with his sister in the early '80s.

"I caught the real estate bug after my sister bought me a ticket to fly with her to a three-day financial event at the Anaheim Convention Center," Kevin recalls. "I was so inspired by that seminar I bought 11 properties shortly after that!"



“
ALWAYS BE
A STUDENT
OF YOUR
PROFESSION.”



The Kevin Hill Team (From left to right: Jesenya Magaña, Kevin Hill, Clint Bradford, Molly Green; Not pictured: Mitch Hill)

“My sister was always worried about me,” he adds with a chuckle. “But I turned out okay.”

After obtaining his real estate license in 1984, Kevin held significant roles, including owner of several local luxury home divisions, and escrow and loan companies, shaping his comprehensive understanding of the industry.

Perhaps what sets Kevin apart most, however, is his unassuming nature, which often hides the intensity and passion he brings to every client interaction. Behind his relaxed demeanor is a seasoned professional who strives to make every real estate transaction a smooth and successful one.

“I love being able to help people with their challenges, to understand the process, and minimize the



bumps along the way while managing expectations,” he remarks. “Having been a former broker/owner, I have come across a multitude of situations where I am able to see red flags quicker than most.”

As part of a close-knit team, Kevin is also quick to praise his teammates for the group’s phenomenal track record.

“The Kevin Hill Team is just my son, Mitch, Clint Bradford, our licensed office manager Molly Green, and social media manager Jesenya Magaña. We’re a small group, but we work together well and collaborate to achieve results.”

Kevin also credits his unique background and client-centric approach as a key element to his accomplishments over the years.

“I think my past experience as a flight attendant and supervisor for American Airlines helped me expand my conversational abilities with clients,” he shares. “I learned to read people really well.”

Last year, Kevin personally closed a remarkable \$48 million from 41 transactions, but more impressive still is Kevin’s consistency year after year at such a high level. He’s been among the top 100 agents nationwide within the BHHS organization six times, solidifying his status as an industry leader. Moreover,

he’s claimed the title of the number one agent for Berkshire Hathaway in Orange County eight times, with the title of #1 Lake Forest Agent for 11 consecutive years now.

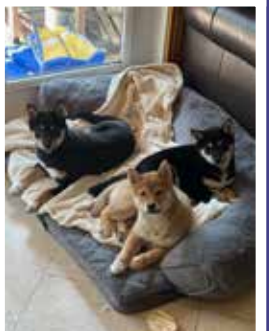
To Kevin, success isn’t merely about professional achievements though. “I define success as having enough time to do the things you want to do in life while helping others along the way,” he offers.

OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

Family is a cornerstone of Kevin’s life, and he enjoys spending free time with loved ones. He shares his life with his significant other, Grace, and her three children, as well as three adult sons of his own: Mitch, Kollin, and Konnor. Their blended family has brought over 20 years of happiness, and as the assistant vice president of a national insurance company, Grace is a successful professional in her own right.

“We have seven grandchildren under the age of 4 right now, as well as a female Shiba Inu, Moshe, who just had a litter of three puppies,” Kevin says. “So our household can be a bit chaotic in the mornings, especially when the dogs start to rumble.”

Kevin and Grace also enjoy cheering on the Angels together, dining out, going to the movies, attending family events, and taking leisurely walks with their dogs.





ALWAYS RESPECT THE AGENTS THAT YOU WORK WITH;
CLIENTS COME AND GO, BUT AGENTS WILL BE THERE FOR ANOTHER
DEAL — YOU DON'T EVER WANT TO BURN ANY BRIDGES.



Top producer Kevin Hill is a broker associate and team leader with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties.

Kevin notes he also finds great fulfillment in giving back to his community. Through the generous support of clients, The Kevin Hill Team has been able to donate and sponsor various causes, including the Sunshine Kids, The Charitable Foundation, the Sun & Sail Club, and numerous local school programs.

ALWAYS LEARNING

Kevin's commitment to continuous learning and staying abreast of the latest industry trends is readily apparent. He attends workshops and seminars, and

engages in business coaching with Patrick Ferry (Tom Ferry's brilliant brother) to keep pace with new technology advances, AI, and the latest real estate software. He notes his dedication to learning is a core part of his business philosophy and he strongly urges new agents to do the same.

For up-and-coming real estate professionals, Kevin also emphasizes the importance of humility and respect. "Never think you know it all," he advises. "Always respect the agents that you work with; clients come and go, but

agents will be there for another transaction — you don't ever want to burn any bridges."

As for the future, Kevin has no plans to rest on his laurels. His passion for real estate is infinite, and he intends to continue helping clients navigate the complexities of buying and selling homes for as long as he possibly can.

"Everyone keeps asking when I'm going to retire," he concludes with a laugh. "But I like real estate so much that I plan to keep working quite a while, and eventually just fade away; I have



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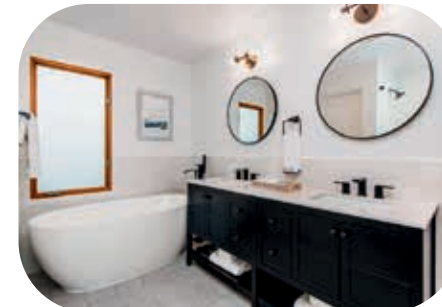
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