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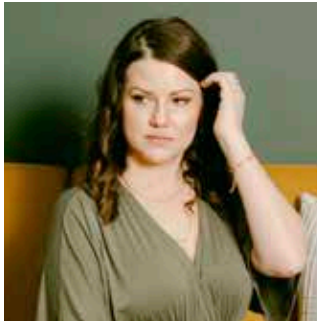


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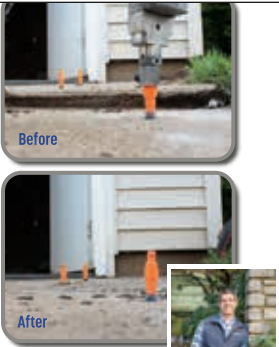
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SARAH ZABAWA

►► on the rise

Written By Brett Rybak
Photos By Kristen Ellis



For Sarah Zabawa, making the switch from a career as an aesthetician to one in the world of real estate has proven to be beneficial both for herself professionally and her family. The mother of three credits her supportive husband, Jared, and children for making the move a smooth transition that has in turn created opportunities for the family to flourish and grow closer together.

Zabawa had worked in aesthetics for 10 years, as well as running her own makeup business. During that time, Sarah and Jared had built their first house, sold it and bought another house. Through those transactions, Zabawa fell in love with the world of real estate. When she felt it was time for a change in her career, the move was appealing.

“My husband was the one who inspired me to go into real estate,” Zabawa said. “He felt it was something I could try and dip my feet into. Maybe it was something I could do part-time. So I figured I’d try it.”

Zabawa moved forward with the transition, earning her license in early 2021 before quickly falling in love with the industry.

“I really was able to grow right off the bat in my first year,” Zabawa said. “I met my cap within seven months at Keller Williams while still working full-time as an aesthetician and being a wife and a mom to my kids. It was busy but I really feel like I thrive when I’m busy. My sister has a saying ‘if you want something done, give it to a busy person’ and I believe that fully holds true for me.”

From there, Zabawa moved to The Brokerage in March of 2022. She capped in three months and left the aesthetic field completely. Now going into her fourth year in real estate, she couldn’t imagine doing anything else.

But it’s not just the actual business and industry that has proven to be rewarding for Zabawa. It is what the job has provided outside of work hours that has been of the biggest benefit to the mother of Ashlynn (13), Riley (4) and Owen (1).

“The freedom and flexibility to go to all of my kid’s events is easily the best part of being a REALTOR®. I was a single mom for a long time when it was just Ashlynn and me, I was working multiple jobs and therefore I missed out on a lot of things for a long time. Now I can go to every event, function and field trip and be involved – sometimes too involved – with them growing up. The freedom and flexibility is great just to be able to have that family time. My kids and family are the most important things in my life.”



The Lexington native sees that flexibility as being a major contributor, along with the overall enjoyment of the industry, to her happiness on and off the job. When she's not continuing to grow professionally, it's important for her to set aside time as a family and for herself.

"We love to hike, take the kids to the park and go on quick weekend trips as a family," Zabawa said. "Outside of that, I'm really into health and fitness but I'm also still very interested in my previous life in aesthetics. I don't do

much of it any more but will pick up a random wedding or give skincare or makeup lessons on the side."

While her family drives her, Zabawa is also motivated by having the ability to continue to build relationships with her clients.

"It's all about communication and relationship-building," Zabawa added. "I pride myself in building lasting, long-term relationships. I want people to call me for anything they need and

become repeat clients. So many have become my friends and some become like family to me. It's not just a job to me when I work with people because they're trusting me to guide them when making one of the biggest decisions of their life."

While assisting her clients with some of their most important decisions, Zabawa can continue to thank her decision to jump into real estate for a quality work-life balance that has benefited her and her supportive family.



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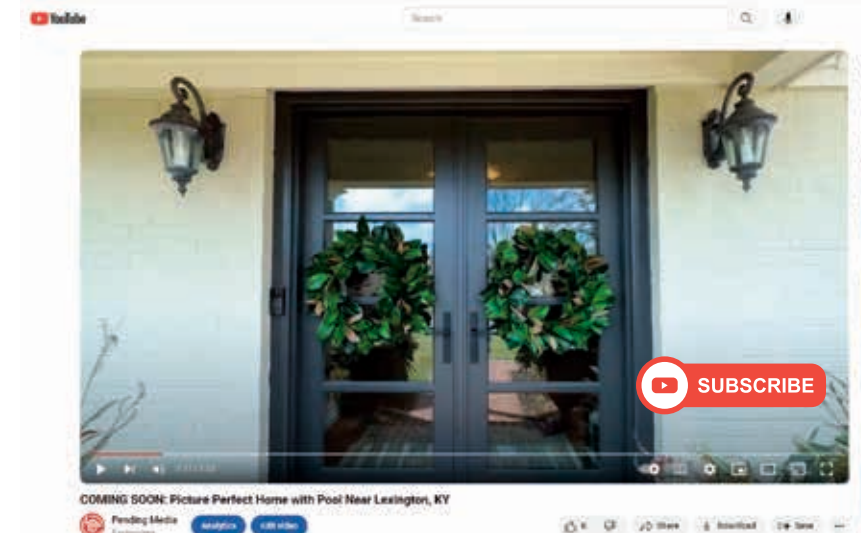


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CARLOS ELLIOTT

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Growing up in Chicago, Carlos Elliott of Tru Life Real Estate recalls his humble beginnings. “We grew up poor in a tough city, but I never knew that. We always had everything that we needed,” he says. His childhood made him who he is today.

“It helped me later in life, for sure,” he says with a heart of gratitude.

Carlos appreciates the sacrifice of his loving single mother, who went to work faithfully and took care of her family with excellence. “That made a big impact on me,” he smiles. “She was always there to help out. My father was a very good man as well. He preached education to us.”

Carlos attended college, graduated, and was instructed to “as successful as possible”. Taking their advice to heart, Carlos attended Bluegrass Community and Technical College, before starting his career.

Carlos had one dream in life. “I always wanted to be a police officer,” he says. He became a corrections officer in Lexington for 3 years before growing tired of the third shift. A single father to a young daughter, it wasn’t conducive for work-life balance.

“After that, I started working in industrial type jobs,” he comments. He excelled as a distribution

manager for a company, where he worked for 15 years with 9 years in management. It gave him a solid financial footing, enabling him to purchase his first house at the young age of 21 and opening his mind to further career possibilities. “I became very intrigued with real estate,” he says.

Real estate was also on his mind during college and Carlos earned his minor in Real Estate, along with his Business Management degree.

Rise in Real Estate

“In 2018, a friend of mine, a retired REALTOR® gave me a push, asking me to think about real estate as a career,” he says. “I started studying for my real estate test again.” Seeing promise and potential in this career field, Carlos went on to earn his real estate license in July 2019.

“I started with Keller Williams part-time,” he shares. “I still had a full-time job with over 50 employees as distribution manager.” In 2020, the pandemic left everything in uncertainty, which was the perfect time to pivot to the next chapter in life.

“I got a lot of referrals from friends and people I went to church with,” says Carlos. “I had a great year in real estate.” In March 2021, Carlos decided to go full-time into real estate. “It was tough, but I leaped out in faith.” He left his “good paying job” and benefits to emerge on the real estate scene.

“The rest is history,” he smiles.

“

We grew up poor in a tough city, but I never knew that. We always had everything that we needed.

”



That doesn't mean the road was easy. After exhausting his connections, he questioned where to get his business from after the first 2 successful years of business. Carlos comments, "After you go through your contacts, friends and family, and associates, I wasn't sure what to do." That was his biggest challenge in 2021.

"I started doing real estate coaching," he points out. "I got ideas from that and started learning more and more about the business." Learning as he went, he was able to relax. Instead of just one way of getting leads, Carlos found seven innovative ways, including social media advertising, Google advertising, paid leads, and business cards. It paid off.

Life Lessons Through Real Estate

Real estate has helped Carlos in work and in life. "I learned to market myself a little better," he admits. "I reach out to people." He has learned to expand his social circle, connect with those he comes into contact with, and market himself naturally as a REALTOR®.

Now he has repeat business through his satisfied clients. People calling him and trusting him with their family and friends means the world to this Top Producer. "They trusted me and know I did a good job," he says. Making a difference is what it's all about to Carlos.

Happily Married

When not working, Carlos enjoys quality time with his wife. "Having a good marriage is number one," he comments. "My wife Rosa is my biggest cheerleader, and I wouldn't be here without her. She makes sure that our children are properly raised and have the proper upbringing. She makes sure that they are taken care of."



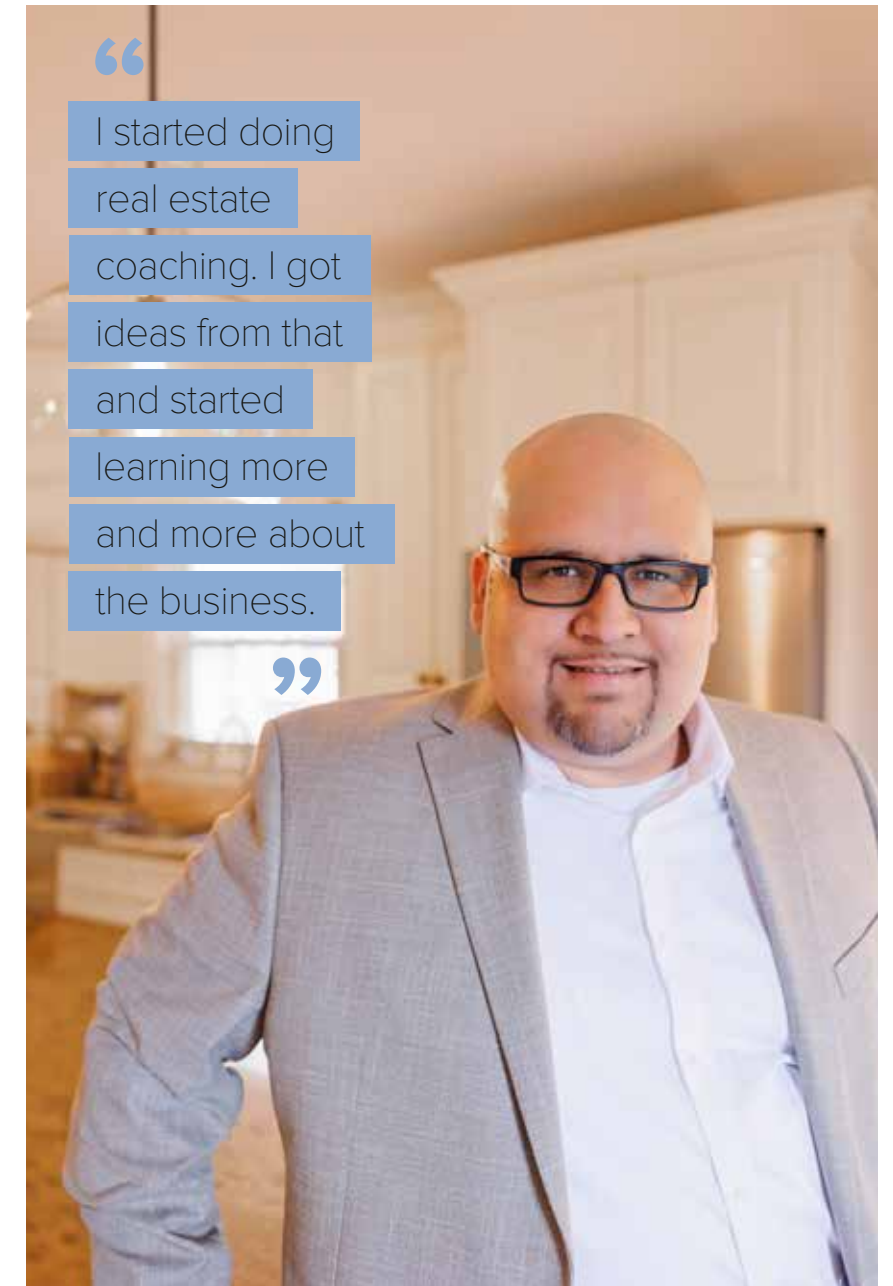
“It was tough, but I leaped out in faith.”

Carlos and Rosa have been married for 13 years now. They are blessed with three daughters, Kaytlyn (25), Adeline (12) and Carlie (8). It's all about family time to Carlos, a loving husband and a dedicated Dad.

"I probably don't spend enough time with my friends," he candidly comments. However, he does spend time reaching out and making the community a better place, especially with the bus ministry at church that he and Rosa do together.

"We pick up kids from all parts of Lexington, which we have been doing collectively for 16 years," he says. Known as the "bus grandparents," kids have had kids and now they ride the bus to church.

"We aim for consistency in the kids' lives. We are here for them and it's a big part of their lives. We visit with the kids on Saturdays and bring them to church on Sundays. We also touch base with the kids throughout the week." With one child, whom Carlos and Rosa had known since he was 5, they were touched to take him to the training center for the AirForce. Seeing that moment together was nothing short of priceless.



“I started doing real estate coaching. I got ideas from that and started learning more and more about the business.”

Sports and More

To relax, Carlos loves sports. "I'm a big-time sports fan for Chicago sports," he smiles. "I loved the Chicago Bears and the Chicago Cubs." He also loves the UK Wildcats. His love for sports dates back to his childhood days, when he played backyard basketball, baseball, and football. He still watches sports today, which is a great way to relax and unwind from real estate.

"I still have that competitive spirit within me," he shares. That fuels his desire for real estate and moving deals to the closing table.

Looking Forward

Looking forward, Carlos wants to continue to grow in real estate. "One day I want to form a team and help the newer agents who come in. I want to show them how to be properly trained in real estate. That's one of my goals for sure."

Carlos is a game changer in the world of real estate. He loves his clients and is eager to help them in any way that he can. An expert problem solver, master negotiator, and skilled communicator, he has helped countless clients and many more to come.



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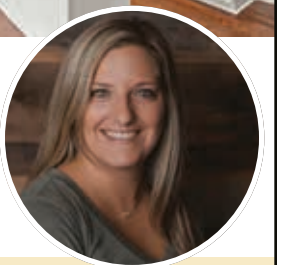


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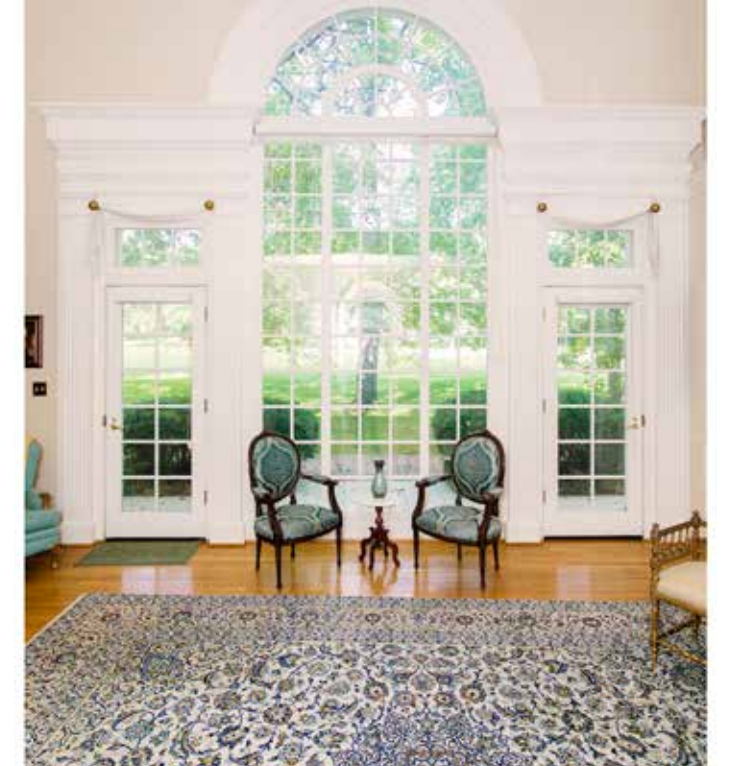
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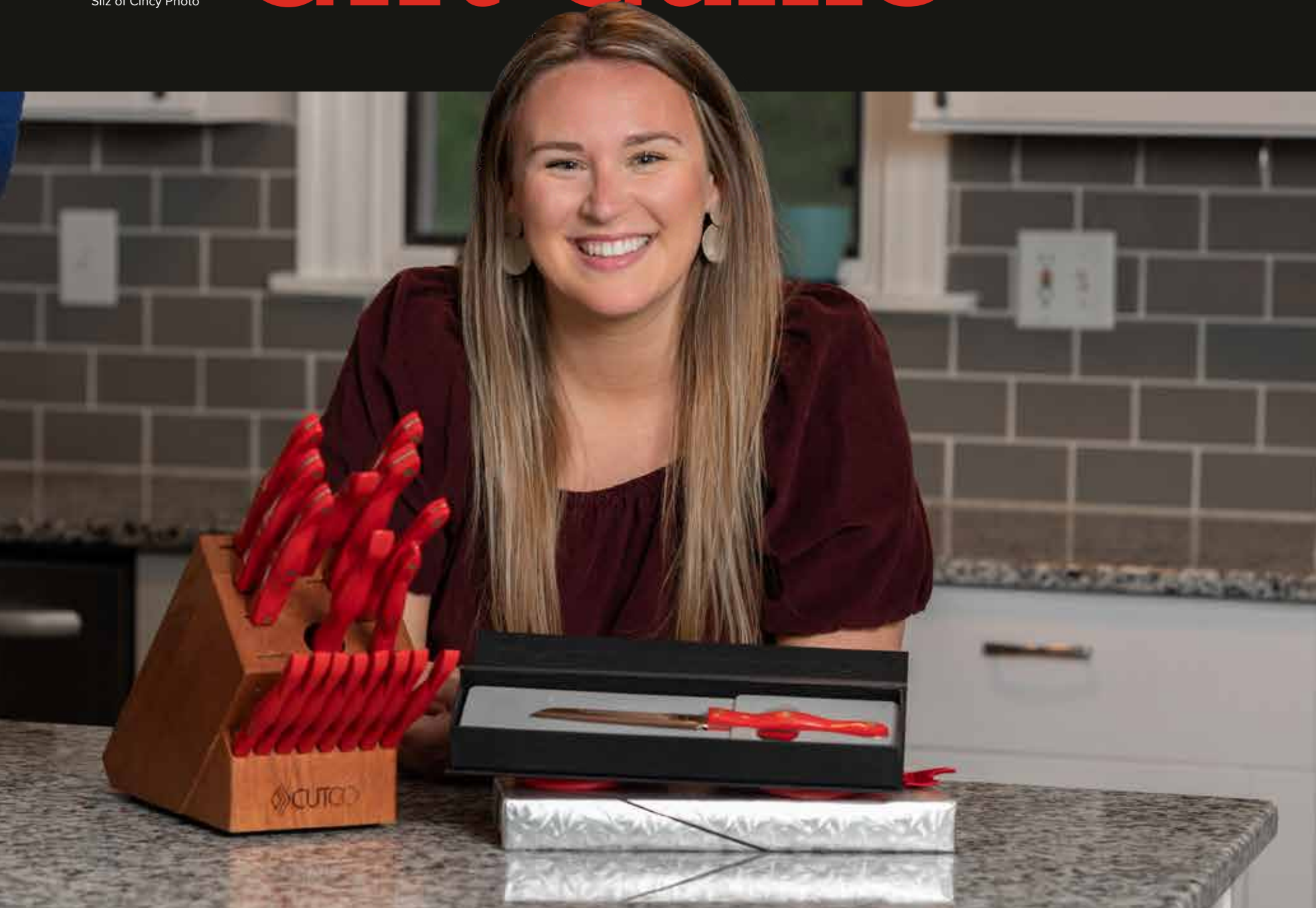


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Gift Game

Written by
Elizabeth McCabe
Photo Credit: Krista
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leave a lasting impression with your sharpest friend

Want to be remembered long after a real estate closing? Consider giving clients a gift that will last for years to come. Emmi Abel-Rutter, a sales representative with Cutco Closing Gifts, offers closing gifts that are a cut above the rest.

“We recommend that REALTORS have a grab-and-go gift system in place that saves them time, in addition to engaging and appreciating their clients,” says Emmi. Instead of giving a consumable gift – such as a bottle of wine or a gift card – why not give them a gift they can cherish for years to come? “Get a gift system in place that moves the needle in your client retention and referral generation.”

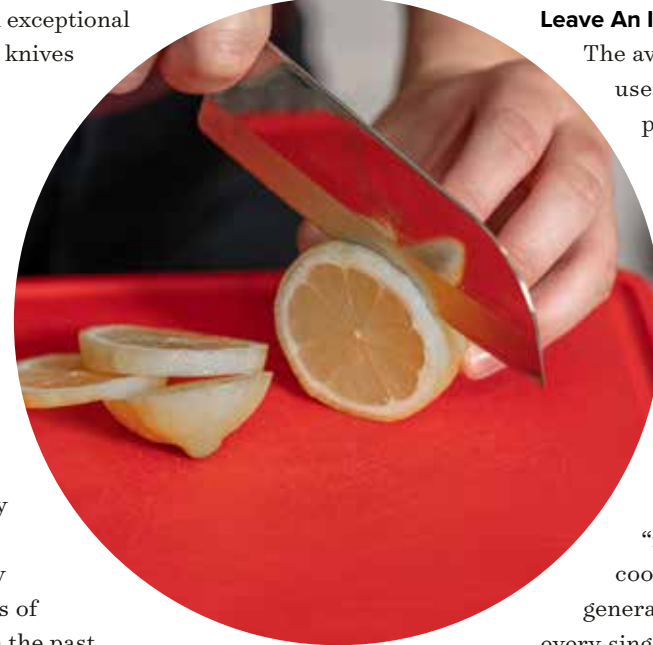
A household name in cutlery, Cutco has been in existence since 1949 with over 16 million customers. With exceptional craftsmanship, these knives were built to last.

Have you ever had a knife with a broken tip or a melted handle? Cutco is proud to have a Forever Guarantee, which includes free sharpening services and replacements for any damaged products. Emmi has personally sharpened thousands of her clients’ knives in the past decade, all offered as a free service. She even hosts private Sharpening & Sales Events for clients to bring their products in to be sharpened and take advantage of event specials.

“In the last decade, I’ve seen anything from a \$1,600 set burned in a house fire to a knife tip

breaking off from being dropped on a tile floor, all replaced for free because of the Forever Guarantee,” she says.

She believes in the product and has even visited their factory in Olean, New York three times. I get asked all the time why I’m still selling knives, and why I don’t sell something with higher commissions...that’s why. The people, the product, and the service is a unique experience.”



Leave An Impression

The average American uses a knife 200+ times per year, regardless of whether they describe themselves as someone who “cooks.” They brand the knives with the agents’ logo, tagline, and name, which helps keep them top of mind for years to come. As Emmi says, “for someone who cooks often, that can generate over 300 touches every single year. Our agents are paying for advertising ONCE that lasts for the lifetime of their client. That’s wild.”

In addition to staying top of mind, branded gifts are 100% tax deductible as advertising for real estate agents, as opposed to the \$25 Gift Deduction on non-branded items allowed by the IRS.

A CUT ABOVE THE REST?

What Cutco products does Emmi recommend? The Santoku Shear Utility Set is a very popular product, says Emmi. Those who are looking in the \$100-150 price point can choose a one-piece set, such as the Santoku-Style Trimmer or 5" Santoku Chef Knife. Emmi reassures clients, "We've picked out the six most popular Cutco knives, that have space for your branding, and are used the MOST by the average person, and those are what the majority of our 1-2 Piece Gift Sets consist of. You can't go wrong with anything."

Improve Client Retention and Generate Referrals through Cutco Closing Gifts.

The results speak for themselves. Emmi says, "A client gave an engraved knife to a seller who moved to California. Seven years later her job moved her back, and she called the same agent to buy a home. The agent asked her client how she remembered her name, since her marketing admittedly hadn't been awesome, and she said, 'You've been in my kitchen with me every day for the past 7 years.' Commission from retaining that ONE client, paid for 3 years worth of her closing gifts."

"The kitchen is the most used room in the home, and knives are used every day," she says. "What gift is going to be brought out and actively used at Summer Barbecues, Thanksgiving Dinner, and Taco Tuesday?"

Emmi recalls one REALTOR's client who reached out to her, "She had received the gift from her REALTOR 2 years prior and called me about Christmas gifts for her kids. Cutco

is now her go-to gift for Christmas, Weddings, and Showers," says Emmi.

Cutco Knives also stand the test of time while business and post-cards cards often do not. "One of my REALTOR's client's friends asked for a REALTOR referral, and the client sent her friend a picture of the knife branded with the REALTOR's name and number," she laughs. "Your business card is going to get lost, but your knife is always in the kitchen."

Affordable Options

Real estate agents will find Cutco products affordable, especially since this isn't a new expense for most agents. Instead, they're reallocating money already being spent on consumable

items and "swag" to high quality gifts that get a better long-term return.

Most agents stock up with a 6 or 12 month supply of gifts that fit their budget and their business, making their gifting a decision that they only have to make once or twice a year, versus before each individual transaction. They can split the cost into 6 or 12 payments, interest free, so they have all their gifts on hand and ready, but they don't have to pay for them all upfront.

Let's Connect!

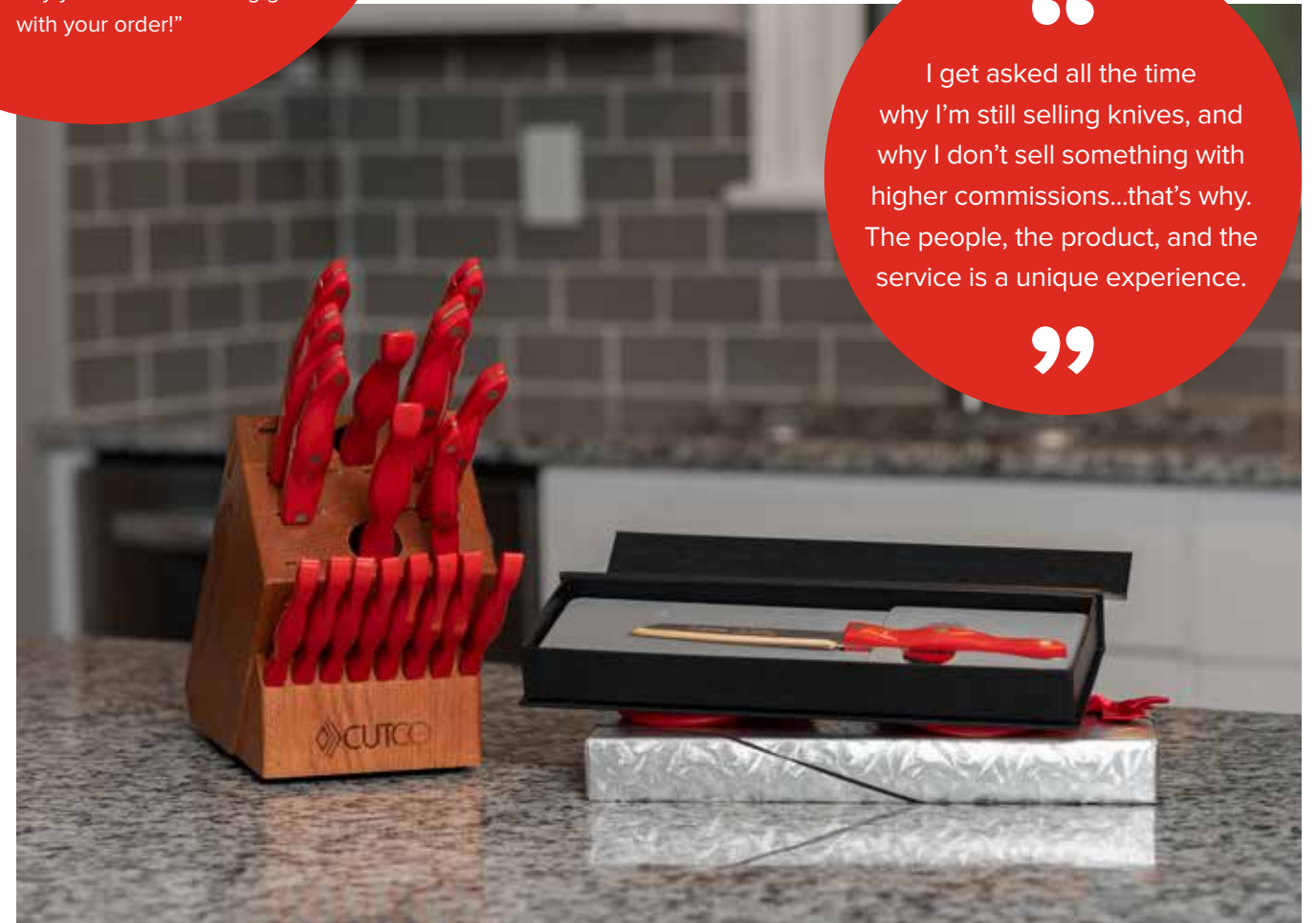
Emmi has created a "Gift Script" to make giving your Closing Gift more impactful and less awkward - whether you gift with her or not, email or text Emmi at Emmi@YourSharpestFriend.com, 513.687.0635 with the words, "Gift Script" to get a copy!



To save Emmi's contact information, set up a meeting, view gift options, or connect with her local referral partners, go to www.YourSharpestFriend.com.

Emmi concludes, "Woah! You're still here?! Amazing. As a "thank you!" For taking the time to read this article, reach out this month and mention you read this article, and I'll buy you an extra closing gift with your order!"

“ I get asked all the time why I'm still selling knives, and why I don't sell something with higher commissions...that's why. The people, the product, and the service is a unique experience. ”





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