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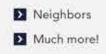


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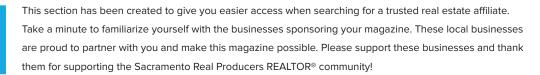
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LEO WHITTON

FOUNDING MEMBER



LEO WHITTON NMLS #225498 | DRE# 01172313 MANAGING PARTNER 916-804-4768 LEO@EMPIREHOMELOANS.COM Leo's decades-long career in the mortgage industry has been inspired by his commitment to people. As a mortgage advisor, Leo's goal has always centered around "forging meaningful relationships with his clients, becoming a trusted mortgage advisor and even their friend." Since 1993, he's done just that, guiding aspiring homeowners as they navigate the ever-changing landscape of the housing market and the various economic seasons at play.

He has spent nearly 20 years in wholesale, supporting hundreds of mortgage brokers, and managing large teams of Account Executives throughout Northern California. At this time, his wholesale personal production has exceeded more than \$4 billion. This experience has helped him transition back to being a loan originator.

A pillar in the lending community and stalwart in Sactown's business scene, Leo has been a longtime member of the California Association of Mortgage Professionals (CAMP) since 2005. His energy and love of the industry soon caught the attention of his peers, who voted him a board member for the Greater Sacramento Chapter in 2007. Leo then went on to become the president of that Sacramento chapter and served four terms as president. In 2017, he was named vice president of the California Association of Mortgage Professionals at the state level, a distinct honor and achievement.

Early 2019, Leo stepped into the next phase of his career as a founding partner of Empire Home Loans alongside Anthony Lombardo and Julie Yarborough. Combined, the trio has an impressive 75 years of industry experience and is taking the independent lender channel by storm. As Vice President of the rapidly growing brokerage, Leo is motivated by the return to his roots as a mortgage broker. "I've spent the last 20 years educating and supporting others, so I felt it was time for me to jump back into originating so that I can give my clients more personal attention." Teaming up with Julie Yarborough and Anthony Lombardo to build Empire Home Loans has made the decision to return to loan origination an easy one for Leo. What started as a crazy idea among three friends in Sacramento is now an awardwinning independent mortgage brokerage with offices from sea to shining sea.

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> announcement **Common Questions About** Sacramento **Real Producers**

Real Producers is a national concept currently open in 125 markets across the country. As we just past our third anniversary of Sacramento Real Producers, I wanted to take the time to answer some pretty common questions.

What is the purpose of Real Producers magazine?

The mission of Sacramento Real Producers is simple. We strive to inform and inspire the top-producing real estate agents in the Sacramento market and connect them socially. We do this by telling their personal stories. How they have succeeded and failed. What drives them to achieve year in and year out. Where do they spend their time when they are not working and what are they passionate about other than real estate. We give local top-producing REALTORS[®] a platform to tell their story in a way they have not been able to do so before.

The secondary focus is to provide an avenue for our affiliate partners to create and continue relationships with these top performers on a level that they might not be able to achieve on their own.

Who receives this magazine?

This magazine is mailed to the top 500 producing agents in the greater Sacramento area according to volume each year. This is based on the 2023 MLS; the ranking is annual and resets every year. This year, the minimum production level for our community was over \$7.7 million. Just to be included in this group is an accomplishment that testifies to your hard work, dedication and proficiency.

What is the process for being featured in the magazine?

It's really simple — you can nominate other REALTORS® (or yourselves!). We will consider anyone brought to our attention; we don't know everyone's story, so we need your help to learn about them! A nomination currently looks like this: You email us at katie.macdiarmid@realproducersmag.com with the subject "Nomination: (Name of Nominee)." Please explain why you are nominating them to be featured. It could be that they have an amazing story that needs to be told; perhaps they overcame extreme obstacles, they are an exceptional leader, have the best customer service, or they give back to the community in a big way. The next step is an interview with us to ensure it's a good fit. If it all works out, then we put the wheels in motion for our writer to conduct an interview and write an article and for our photographers to schedule a photo shoot.

What does it cost to be featured?

Zero, zilch, zip, nada, nil. It costs absolutely nothing! We are not a pay-to-play model whatsoever. We write real stories about Real Producers, so nominate away, friends!

Who are the preferred partners?

Anyone listed as a "preferred partner" in the front of the magazine is a part of this community and a top professional in their industry. They will have an ad in every issue of the magazine, attend our events and be a part of our online community. We don't just find these businesses off the street, nor do we work with all businesses that approach us. One or many of you have recommended every single preferred partner you see in this publication. We won't even meet with a business that has not been vetted by one of you and "stamped for approval." Our goal is to create a powerhouse network, not only for the best REALTORS® in the area but the best affiliates, as well, so we can grow stronger together.

How can I refer a preferred partner?

If you know and want to recommend a local business that works with top REALTORS®, please email us to let us know at katie.macdiarmid@realproducersmag.com.



Still have questions? Don't hesitate to reach out!

Katie MacDiarmid



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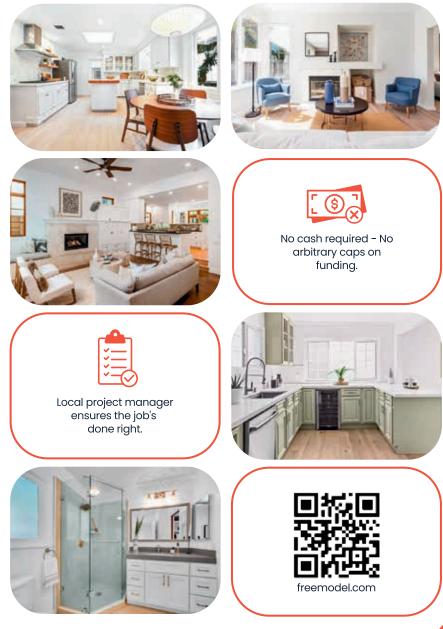
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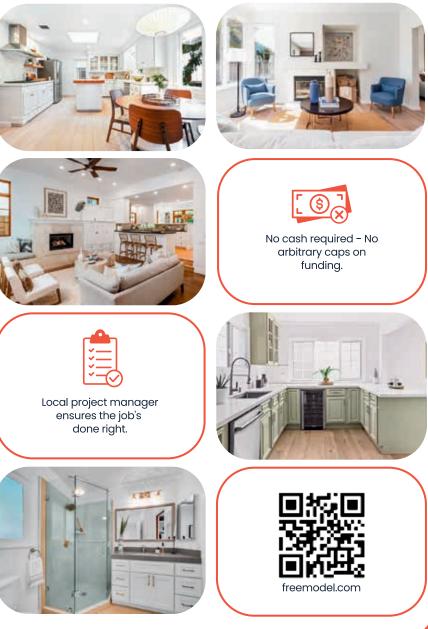




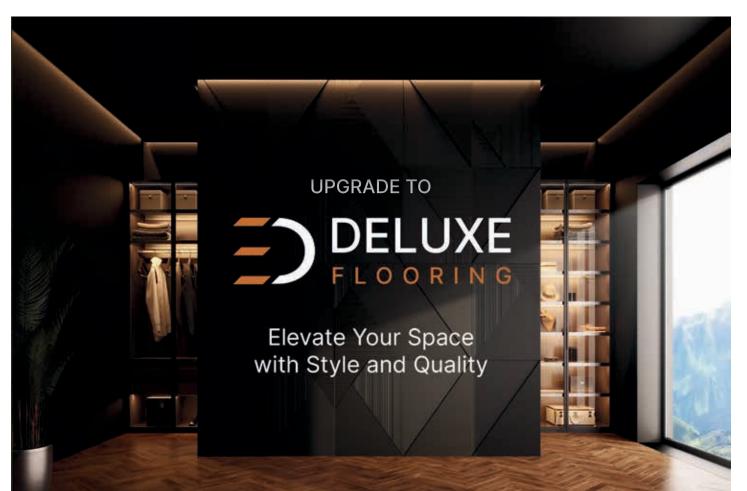




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Paul Mesa Handyman Services Paul Mesa

My name is Paul Mesa, and I own

Paul Mesa Handyman Services. I live in Granite Bay along with my wife Denise, our daughter Jacque and our son Nico. We have two dogs, Prince and Snowy. I started my business seven years ago because I was asked by an acquaintance to help him out with an issue related to his construction business. After several various requests for repairs, he suggested I should start my own Handyman business. With 30 years of electrical, construction and homeowner experience, it made sense to put my skills to use. In the beginning, I only worked for his business. It quickly grew through personal references. My business has since grown to assisting REALTORS® with preparing homes for sale. This has become an exciting venture, as I know how important it is to get the home to market, rapidly. I have kept my overhead low, which allows me to offer competitive pricing. This also allows for a bigger return on the customer investment. I take great pride in providing my clients an extraordinary customer experience, knowing the work done was completed, correctly and affordably. My clients also know that I am available to help them at any time. No project too small. No project too big. How can I help you?

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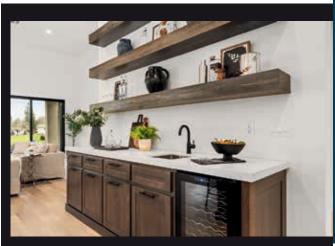
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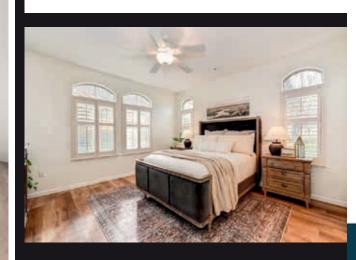
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MEET KELLEY DUHAIN of The Dana Miller Real Estate Team with GUIDE Real Estate. Simply being of service is Kelley's driving motivation. "Whether I'm assisting someone in finding their dream home or guiding them through a sale, it's incredibly humbling to be part of their journey. Seeing their excitement and knowing I played a role in that makes it all worthwhile", Kelley shares. Join us as we dive deeper with Kelley and her real estate journey.

How many years have you been a real estate agent? How did you enter the field?

I kicked off my real estate journey in 2016 as the Director of First Impressions at Keller Williams in Calabasas, CA — essentially the fanciest title for a receptionist! With a background in customer service and client care, the transition to real estate felt like a natural fit. I often heard that I would make a fantastic agent, so when I returned to my hometown of Sacramento, I decided to take the plunge, got my real estate license, and joined a team in the spring of 2020.

What are you most passionate about right now in your business?

Right now, I'm really passionate about cold calling and door knocking — I'm focused on making connections and building my database while establishing my name in the community. Surprisingly, I'm grateful for this down market! Starting my career during the wild COVID market was an incredible experience, but it wasn't exactly realistic. This current market is giving me the chance to truly grow my sphere and lay a solid foundation for the future. It's a fun challenge, and I'm here for it!

What has been your biggest challenge as a REALTOR®? In entering the industry?

Entering such a saturated industry! It was a learning curve, especially figuring out how to say, "I'd love to be your backup agent if things don't work out." Plus, getting comfortable with hearing "no" constantly before those glorious "yes" moments was definitely tough. But every challenge has taught me resilience and creativity, and I've learned to embrace the journey and stay positive.

What is your favorite part of being a REALTOR®?

Definitely the people! I love helping clients find or sell their homes and getting to meet such incredible individuals from all walks of life. Being part of one of their biggest life decisions is

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truly rewarding — it's a privilege to guide them through that journey. Every day brings new stories and connections, and I wouldn't trade that for anything!

To what would you attribute your rapid success in the industry?

I'd say my rapid success in the industry comes from always wanting to be the "dumbest one in the room" so I can learn as much as possible! I started on an amazing team that offered the tools, training, and supportive environment I needed to grow. Fast forward to today, and I'm fortunate to have Dana Miller as my team leader, who has become like a best friend. She truly embodies success in this industry, and I'm grateful for her mentorship and encouragement to always strive for my best.

What sets you apart?

I've primarily built my career as a Buyers Agent. While I absolutely enjoy helping sellers and co-listing with Dana Miller on listings, my true passion lies in working with buyers. I thrive on the hustle and effort it takes to find the perfect match for them. Every buyer has a unique story and vision, and I love diving deep into their needs and desires to find a home that truly fits. Plus, the joy on their faces when they find "the one" and we have the winning offer, makes every moment worthwhile!

Tell us about your family.

I have a 16-month-old daughter named Kennedy and a spirited 4-year-old golden retriever named Liberty, whom I rescued. As a single mom, balancing my real estate career with family life can be challenging, but it's also incredibly rewarding. I'm fortunate to have my parents nearby, who offer invaluable support, along with my three sisters. Growing up in Sacramento, my dad was a top news reporter at KCRA, a local celebrity when news anchors were like actors back in the day. My family heritage runs deep here; my fathers side of the family co-owned the first hotel in Old Sacramento with William Land, held sections of downtown, and donated the Mother Goose statue in Fairy Tale Town. It's a privilege to continue that legacy as I carve out my own path in real estate!



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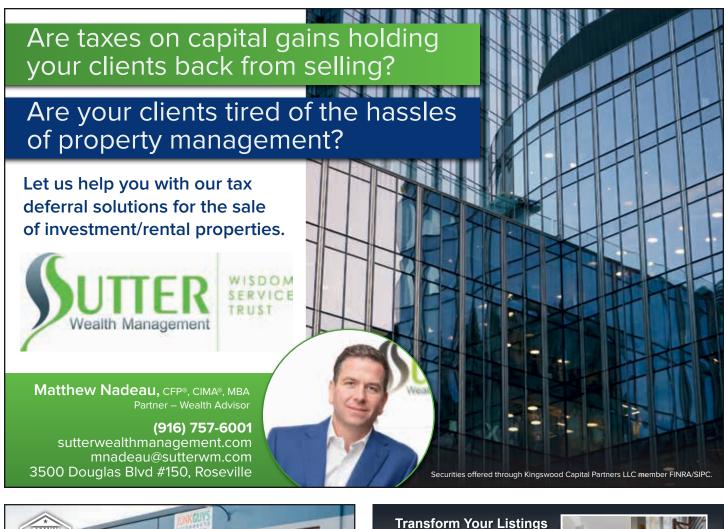


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>> partner spotlight

By Nick Ingrisani Photos by Rachel Lesiw – Indulge Beauty Studio

PREMIERE HOME STAGING

Nicole Runkle

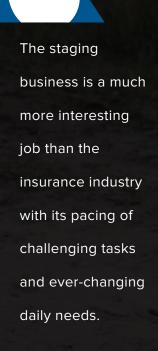
Building on Her Mother's Staging Business Legacy

Nicole's story is one of resilience, passion, and dedication. After taking over her mother's real estate staging business in 2016, she has worked tirelessly to not only maintain its success but also expand its footprint and reputation across the local area. Today, Premiere Home Staging is one of the largest and most respected staging companies in the tri-county area. Nicole grew up in the Sacramento area and currently resides in the same house her grandparents built back in the '60s that has been handed down through the generations. After a 12-year stint in the insurance industry, she took the reins of her mother's staging business when she passed, going from a steady corporate job to something much more dynamic.

"The staging business is a much more interesting job than the insurance industry with its pacing of challenging tasks and ever-changing daily needs."

Although the business was well-established when Nicole took over, she had a different vision for the future and sought to make it her own. When her mother started the business in 2005, it was a onewoman show in the business's early years. She did most of the management, administrative work, and staging herself.









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As the business grew, staff was needed and sought out through friends, family, and referrals she met through casual meetings. However, Nicole decided to take the structure of the business in a new different direction, with a goal to transition her own role from "not working in the business, but on the business." By fostering a culture of creativity and collaboration, she has managed to retain top talent, with her most tenured employee having been with the company for an impressive almost 10 years now!

"I have focused more on creating happiness and fulfillment within our team. Because we're a large business, we have multiple jobs per day. So I need to create an environment where people want to come to work. It's not just showing up. We're having a good time at the office and we try to do things outside of work to aid in that camaraderie."



Under Nicole's leadership, Premiere Home Staging has flourished into a renowned staging business in the greater Sacramento area. The company's unique approach is centered on creating an emotional connection between the potential buyers and the beautifully curated homes in which they stage.

"Being able to make that emotional connection to a wide range of buyers is so important. You don't want to limit the buyer pool any more than the price already does. Everyone loves to see a beautifully staged home, and it's very easy to tell when a home is poorly staged because it shows the home in a negative light and we don't ever want to do that. It is our job to market that home in the best light possible and we try to achieve that each and every time"

By carefully curating each design to highlight the property's best features, Nicole and her team have honed their ability to market homes to a broad range of buyers, resulting in swift sales and satisfied clients. Their staging designs play into a home's unique architecture and appeal to ensure that everything flows effortlessly. Otherwise, people may gravitate toward noticing the negative aspects of the home they want to change, which only adds money to the overall cost.

"We want someone to walk into a home and notice the unique, warm features of the home. Not to distract them from flaws, but rather help them envision their life in the home, so they fall in love with it! Entering the home, you're entering a living room where you can imagine yourself conversing with family. In the dining room, eating with your family and guests... we're helping to create that flow throughout the house, without getting stalled on issues with flooring or tiling."

When asked about her plans for the future, Nicole expressed her commitment to continued progress and an ever-expanding footprint in Placer, El Dorado, and Sacramento Counties.

Her dedication to her craft, ongoing professional relationships built over the years, and her team's expertise, cohesion, and creativity have been instrumental in making it all possible.

Outside of work, Nicole cherishes time with her family, dogs, and personal garden. Through her career, she has learned to strike a balance between her professional and personal life, recognizing that enjoying life is the ultimate goal.

"As a business owner, we can easily work 7 days a week, but the only reason we're "working" is to afford what we want to do to enjoy THIS life. Why work so hard, so much, and NOT have time to enjoy it?! A tip: Prioritize and delegate parts of your business that you do not like to do or maybe just bad at doing, then devote focused set time for your working hours. Your priorities should not falter. They are your reason 'why', so reevaluate ever-so-often, but always keep them in focus."

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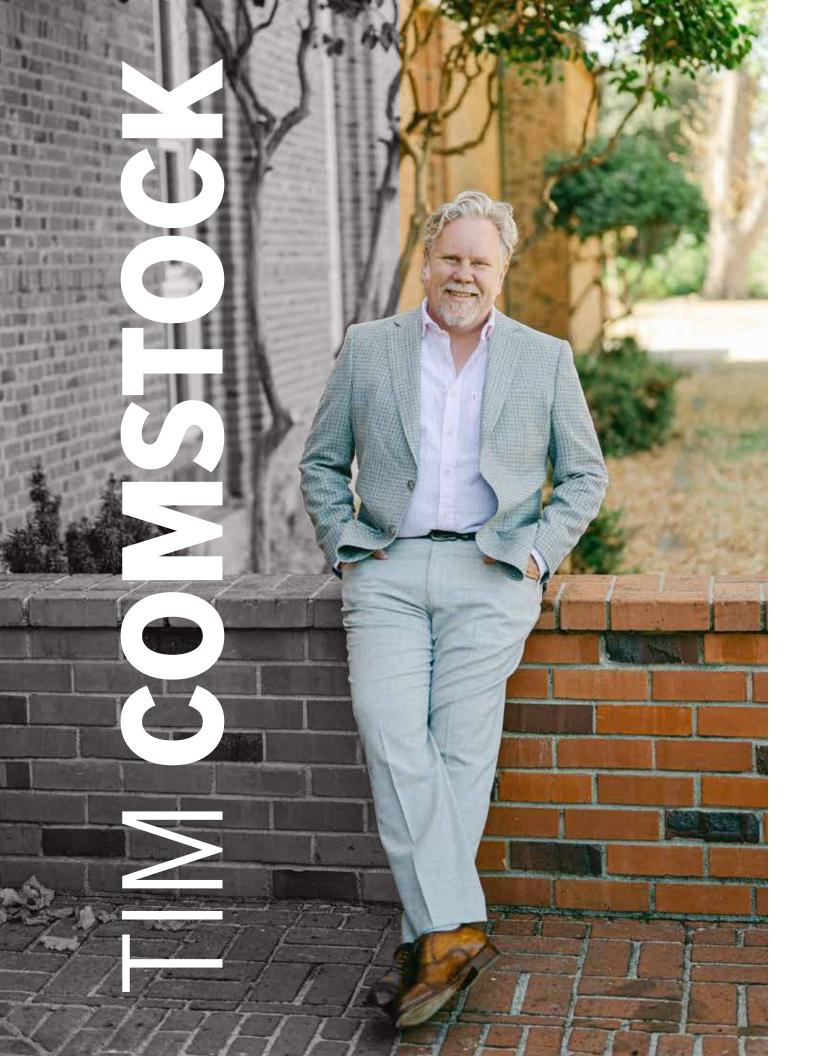


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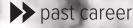
LIGHTS, CAMERA, REAL ESTATE

Tim Comstock may not have found his fortune as a movie producer, but he's found it in buckets in real estate. A top-producing REALTOR® for Coldwell Banker, Tim is a fifth-generation Sacramento native who enjoyed a career in film production before becoming a REALTOR®. That included a successful six-year stint as a film producer for Big Joe Productions in Los Angeles before his oldest daughter, Josie, inspired him to switch careers.

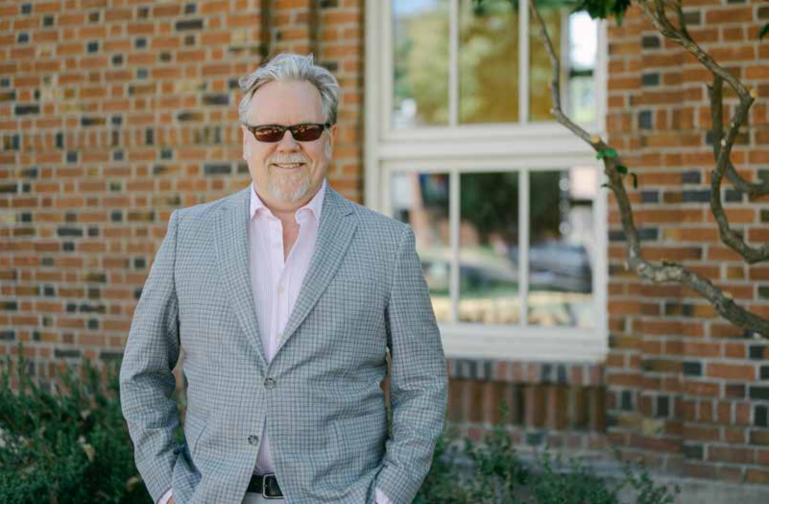
"Courtney and I were new parents with a baby girl living in Los Angeles during a lull in my film career," Tim says of his wife and daughter. "Film, like real estate, can be a hot and cold business except it's harder to make it in film than in real estate and real estate is plenty hard."

He says there were reasons other than money that led them to move to Sacramento, the biggest of which was wanting to raise their children closer to family. "So, in 2010, we packed our bags and moved. I got my real estate license and haven't looked back."

Understanding that every client and every sale is unique has been a key to his success, Tim says. "My goal has always been to exceed my client's expectations. That's a big reason my business is referral only and my success is thanks to my clients and our successful transactions."



By David Cornwell Photos by Ashley Maxwell Photography



Another big reason for his success, he says, is Courtney. "Without her love and support, none of this would be possible," he says. Married in 2006, the couple have two daughters, Josie (15) and Ellie (12). Rounding out the family are a Boxer named Buster and a Chug named Chug.

A graduate of UC Berkeley — where he earned a History degree — Tim explains the choice of his major was heavily influenced by his parents. "My dad was a History major and my mom was an English major so that kind of narrowed my options meaning I've always enjoyed reading and writing but let's just say you'd never find me in a chem lab."

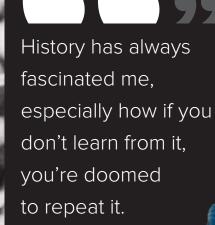
"Plus, history has always fascinated me, especially how if you don't learn from it, you're doomed to repeat it. I believe that." He did three of his four years at UC Berkeley, taking his third year of classes at the University of Sussex in Brighton, right on the English Channel about 45 miles south of London.

"I had such a fantastic time in England and decided that after I finished my senior year at Berkeley, I was going to go back," he says. "I had a girlfriend over there and some great friends and just decided I was going to live over there, bartend and have a good time."

Returning to the U.S. for new adventures after a couple of years, he ended up in Los Angeles and pondered what he wanted to do next.

"I thought the movie business sounded fun," he says. Using the research skills he had honed in college, he studied the industry, took some film classes and landed a job as a production assistant at the company that produced Band of Brothers and My Big Fat Greek Wedding. Then he co-created Big Joe Productions as a film producer and worked there for six years during which he produced and co-produced several moderately successful films. The sports documentary *This Old Cub* was rated 8.3 out of 10 on IMDB.com while another documentary, *All Things Must Pass*, chronicled the rise and fall of Tower Records. The 2008 full-length feature *Jake's Corner* was selected for the Sedona International Film Festival, among others.

"We had started *Jake's Corner* several years earlier, with hopes of landing an agreement with Blockbuster for distribution, the boost many independent film companies at that time needed to survive," he says. By the time *Jake's Corner* was finished, though, poor business decisions and ever-increasing options for streaming killed Blockbuster. Tim and his fellow producers found that hitting film festivals to promote their film simply wasn't enough to garner significant distribution.



I BELIEVE THAT.







"We put a lot of heart into that movie. We had some solid performances from talent like Richard Tyson, Danny Trejo and Diane Ladd. We also had a great soundtrack featuring Grammy Winning legend BJ Thomas and Nashville artists."

Rather than dwell on what might have been, though, he dwells on the success that is. He's particularly proud of being immediately responsive to his clients, having built great relationships with contractors, vendors, handymen, and other professionals to meet any client need.

"If they are in a hurry to make a move and need something done ASAP, then I will make that happen ASAP. My clients know that they can contact me anytime, day or night. There's never a too late or too early."

"The flip side of that is I will never pressure them to sell or buy before they're ready. I always work at their pace and respect, honor and support whatever is in their best interests." Tim's most proud of the relationships and friendships he's made with clients over the years, friendships that grow from mutual trust.

"Any success I've been privileged to enjoy is directly related to my clients' trust in me. It's something I'm extraordinarily grateful for and do not take for granted."





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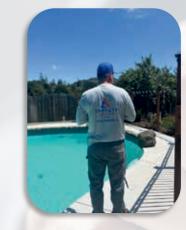
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EMPOWERING OTHERS: PARM ATWAL'S PATH IN REAL ESTATE AND LENDING

Growing up, Parm Atwal always assumed she would be an attorney. A straight-A student who completed her MBA at just 20 years old, Parm was well on her way to achieving her dream. Before she was even of legal drinking age, she had taken her LSAT and been accepted to law school, but when an opportunity to enter the mortgage lending business arose, she veered onto a new path, accepting the new challenge and beginning a career in lending.



cover story

By Zachary Cohen Photos and Cover Photo by Sarah Nelson Photography



It's now been over two decades since Parm began her career in the real estate field. She spent sixteen years in lending before transitioning to real estate sales over the past eight years. Meanwhile, she's seen the market go through several boom and bust cycles, started a family, and clarified her purpose.

"Lending and real estate became my career and passion," Parm shares. "Now, my goal is to see each of my team members growing into the role they truly want. I do what I do for two reasons: to be a good example for my two kids and a good example for the people I work with. I've had the pleasure of being in this industry for 24 years. I'm happy where I am. So now, it's about driving the success of others."

THE ROAD TO REAL ESTATE

Parm's entry into mortgage lending wasn't entirely a surprise. She holds a bachelor's degree in business and an MBA in finance. Meanwhile, her brother was already a successful mortgage lender, so she saw the opportunity available.

"Lending turned out to be a great fit," Parm shares. "My background was in finance, and there was a big push at that time for the American dream. In 2000, the housing boom was in full swing. It was a great time to start."

Parm thrived lending for the next 16 years, overcoming the challenges of the Great Recession and moving into management. However, by 2016, she was ready for a change.

"I got to a point where I wasn't having the connection with clients I wanted. I was in management and managing a branch office, so I was working the hours but not so much with the end consumer," Parm explains.

Parm's decision to shift into real estate sales also had a lifestyle aspect. By that time, she had two young children, and being a REALTOR® offered much more flexibility than her role in lending.

"I wanted to be more community based, more local, and more rooted here," she adds.

Although she was faced with building a business from scratch, Parm was able to successfully transfer her skills from lending into a successful real estate business.



I do what I do for two reasons: to be a good example for my two kids and a good example for the people I work with.



SERVING THROUGH REAL ESTATE

Today, Parm leads the Parm Atwal Real Estate Team with Keller Williams Realty. The team closed an impressive 107 homes for \$56 million in 2023 and is tracking to exceed those numbers in 2024.

"I lead a phenomenal team of people. We are a family outside of my family. We see each other on a daily basis, we support each other, and we enjoy working with each other. That's what keeps us going, even in the ever changing landscape of real estate," Parm says proudly.

Parm says systems and processes have been key to her success. By implementing a repeatable system, each client gets the same level of care, challenges are handled efficiently, and clients learn what to expect.

"As long as we adhere to that model, it brings us consistency," Parm says. "Of course, we have to pivot and problem-solve, but the systems are the backbone."

FAMILY FIRST

While Parm is proud of her accomplishments as a REALTOR[®], her greatest pride is her family; she and her husband, Naval, have a son and daughter. If she's not at work, you'll find Parm on the sports fields watching her kids' games, enjoying a quiet evening at home, or traveling.

"The days are long, but the years are short," Parm reminds us. So be grateful. Be grateful when we are busy and grateful when we are not.

"My legacy is what I leave behind-turning two little human beings into good people and empowering my team to get one step closer to their goals."



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"Despite the two challenging obstacles we were faced with our credit, Matthews unwavering commitment and belief in our ability to overcome those hurdles truly impressed us!" -Joseph and Stacy C., Buyers (2023)

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