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Partner Spotlight: Golden Roofing

Rising Star: Sonya Ashford

Inspirational Agent: Simon Fort

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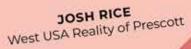
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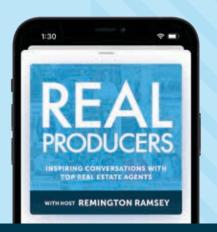
Kelsi-Ann Gould



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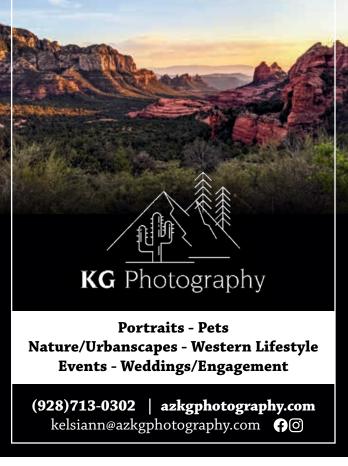
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Billie McGraw

Peak Experience Realty
The secret to success is...not a secret, it is consistency and persistency. The Bible states it like this. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Gal 6:9

Sonya Ashford

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices
Arizona Properties
"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant" — Robert Louis Stevenson

you reap but by the seeds that you plant" — Robert Louis Stevenson I love this quote because it is a reminder that we should navigate life and gauge our success not by what we receive but what we give.



Adriana Najera

Golden Roofing

"If you tell the truth, you don't have to

remember anything." — Mark Twain Just being honest with people carries so much weight while building relationships with family, with members of your community, and especially in business.



Simon Fort *Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices*

Arizona Properties

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come from people that were so
determined, so focused, and despite
opposition or naysayers still made
incredible lives for themselves and

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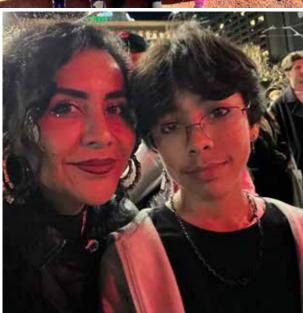


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How Did It All Start

"Passionate about everything she does" is perhaps the most accurate way to describe Adriana Najera, the Owner of Golden Roofing.

Adriana bought the business out from her former partner in 2023. While Leo, a master roofer and founder of the Company, is still a definite asset to the business, Golden Roofing truly took off under its sole female boss.

Adriana learned about the importance of hard work, good reputation and living legacy from her entrepreneur parents. Both parents ran a variety of businesses, and her father ran a construction company.

She credits her father with instilling the importance of honesty and accountability in her. She shares with us how her clients truly appreciate both of those qualities in the way she does business. Not surprisingly, her favorite quote is Mark Twain's "If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything".

Big Big World

Being a female business owner in a male-dominated business was one of the challenges which Adriana took in stride. She puts emphasis on the importance of community. She prioritizes building and nurturing strong and personal relationships with her clients and with REALTORS®. She focuses on supporting them "with services from small jobs to big jobs and just anything tailored to their needs, when it comes to roofing".

Adriana describes how her woman-owned business goes above and beyond to help both her clients and the REALTORS®. No job is too small of a job. "If they call me last minute on a Sunday and I am in town, I'm gonna jump on it." Golden Roofing clients perceive Adriana as a person and human being, rather than only a business owner. She believes that this is one of the reasons why the company is in such a good place right now.

She also shares how we can't really run any business well according to a script. "Every person, every client, every REALTOR® is different". And she does not lack creativity in her business approach.

The Crew That Delivers

Adriana is extremely proud of her crew. "They take pride in what they do, they do not cut corners" and "they will make sure that every detail is taken care of", she says. She shares how reciprocal the relationship with her amazing crew is. "If I eat, they eat. It is the way I run my company". When you open the roof, you often discover the unexpected. This is when her crew knows that they are going to get paid for what needs to be done. "I take care of my people, and they take care of me."

As with any job, mistakes happen. "If we make a mistake, we are gonna fix it", she says. She practices this approach in both her professional and personal life and she also holds her team up to those high standards.

Stronger

We can react to obstacles in two ways: by succumbing to them and giving up, or by overcoming them and, as a result, becoming even stronger.

It is obvious that Adriana's head-on attitude makes her belong to that second category.

Once she realized that her former business partner had a very different business philosophy, she decided to buy the business out. When she was told that she was facing some health-related issues, she accepted that and simply pursued her goals, nevertheless. As a successful business owner, she also overcame her

natural shyness. She knew that great communication skills were focal, so she took that challenge head on, as well.

Being a Single Mom

Adriana is extremely proud of both of her children. She is the sole provider for them, and she shares how being a parent is her absolute priority.

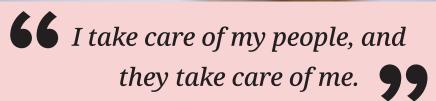
13-year-old Leon is a great student, a social butterfly, and a loving and caring son. He is very empathetic, loves baking and helping his mom with cooking and cleaning the house. He loves to play piano and is learning how to play saxophone.

15-year-old Laila is very smart, and a straight A student, who is very quiet and loves science. She loves hanging out with her grandma and she loves dogs. She is passionate about snowboarding. She is a multi-instrumentalist, plays piano, drums, guitar and the cello. She is taking automotive college classes to become an automotive repair specialist. She envisions pursuing a career within engineering or automotive.

Both children are bilingual (Spanish and English).

While Adriana does not have much leisure time, she still enjoys taking community college classes and learning in general (anything between photography and science of happiness classes to a bookkeeping class for her business), listening to audiobooks and podcasts, taking care of her indoors plants, dancing and singing (at Yavapai College, she accepted the Outstanding Student of the Music Department Award). She enjoys the company of her two Yorkies, Teddy and Honey. They come to work with her every day and the three of them take long walks after work. For vacations, the family likes to explore new cities, where they can enjoy going to local museums.

Her 2025 goals are to grow her business and give back to the community, as well as to continue learning for the fun of it. Adriana wants to be remembered for following her dreams and overcoming obstacles and never-ever giving up.





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Real estate is a people-driven industry. No matter how many times it is stated, its truth never diminishes. Billie McGraw, owner and broker of Peak Experience Realty, captures this importance in every action. Her dedication to her clients and community drives her every day.

Discovering Community

Billie was born in Alaska, moved to Massachusetts when she was six, and finally to Arizona when she was twelve. "I have always been a hard worker with my first job at twelve where I cleaned a dozen horse pens a day seven days a week so I could trade for a half-hour riding lesson each week. My first paid job was at 14 when I worked at the roller rink in the snack bar."

She has always genuinely enjoyed working and bought her first house at 19. With college never on the horizon for her, she jumped into her first career. "I worked for a chiropractic group down in Phoenix for 10 years. I ran the business side of the clinics. As the district manager, I was responsible for management training, teaching the Chiropractic Assistant Certification classes, keeping statistics, services, billing, and clinic promotions, our practices were referral-based and grew through client education and excellent care."

She shares how she absolutely loved that career, but left it in 2005 when she chose to be a stay-at-home mom with the birth of her son. This is also when she and her family made the move to Flagstaff. With her son born in 2005 and her daughter born in early 2007, being a stay-at-home mom was a full-time position. For the next eight years, she made certain to expose them to every adventure she could.

"When I first came to Flagstaff, I was new to my Christian faith. I plugged into a local women's bible study and grew significantly in that area of my life. It shaped who I am because prior to that point, my life and career were about what that could do for me and my family versus a change in thinking of









how and who we can impact as part of a bigger picture, God's plan."

Client and Community Care

With a distinct lack of a chiropractic industry in Flagstaff, she was forced to seek new horizons when she decided it was time to return to work. "I had been heavily involved with the PTO at Cromer Elementary School where the kids were attending and had gotten to know the PTO president. Her husband was a Broker of a local boutique brokerage here in town and he encouraged me to get my license."

Billie admits that she had always been interested in real estate. With an aunt who is a big producer in Massachusetts, real estate was already in the family. "I was not sure then what it entailed,

but I love people, have great customer service skills, and a strong work ethic," she shares.

She started real estate in 2014 and has served wholeheartedly ever since. "The most fulfilling part of real estate is the people. I was put on this earth to encourage and champion others. Having the opportunity to walk alongside buyers and sellers during one of the sales or purchases of the single biggest investment for most people is an honor. It is extremely rewarding and very personal. First-time home buyers are my absolute favorite."

"With buyers, I educate them and walk alongside them throughout the transaction. I am listening for ways I can make the process memorable or



easier on them, and based on what I learn I will offer that to them at closing. Sometimes it is a mover, or a deep clean, or a connection in the community."

"When helping sellers, I take the burden of preparation off them by coordinating a staging consultation, the actual staging, a deep cleaning, and will typically assist them with anything else that feels necessary in presenting their home in the best light. I am always thinking 'How can I take the pressure off of them and make this a better experience?' Whatever the answer is, I do that!"

Family-Centered

Billie and her husband have been married for 21 years. Their two children, Gage and Bailey, are 19 and



The most fulfilling part of real estate IS THE PEOPLE."

18 respectively. "We love to vacation together, participate in shooting sports, and golf together. The boys do a lot of hunting and fishing and Bailey and I can be found getting pedicures together and maybe a little shopping." Although both children still live at home, Billie knows that she and her husband are on the verge of being empty nesters. "We are so thankful to have a close relationship with our children who are now young adults."

"Spending time with my family is my favorite thing to do, and if I am not spending time with my family, I enjoy hiking and flower gardening and faith-based activities like bible study and church services on Sundays and serving in the community. My mom is one of my favorite people to spend time with and we love to travel, try new restaurants, drink wine, and play Scrabble together, we could have fun in a box! Hiking the Grand Canyon is on my bucket list." She also mentions that she takes an annual trip with her best friend to somewhere they have yet to visit.

Billie McGraw's love for others is undeniable as she frequently goes beyond for all of her clients. "People are where it is at. We need each other. We are better as a community. God created us that way. In personal life or work life, it is all the same — people are what is important. In business, being client-focused and doing what is best for them is always the answer. I absolutely love my community in Flagstaff and want to be an asset here pouring out into the lives of others for the betterment of my clients and community."

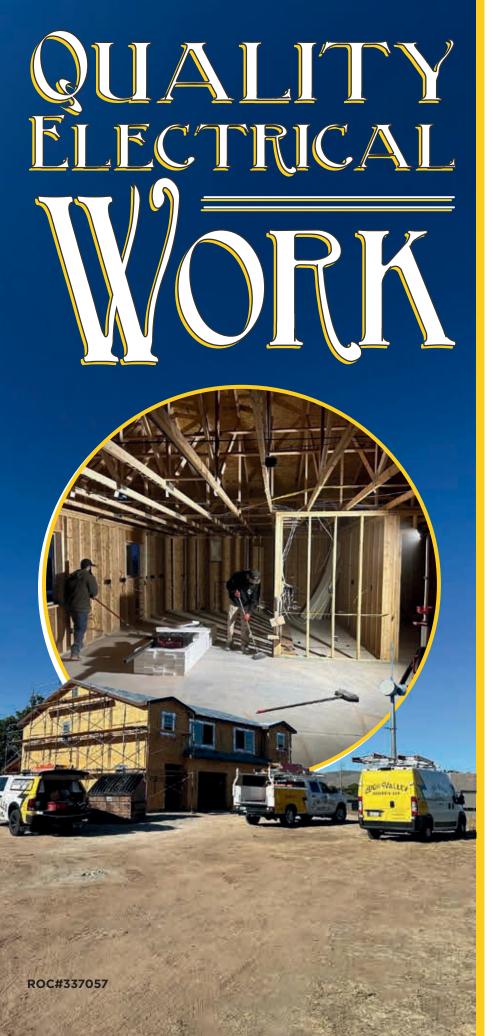
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"My idea of success is constantly changing as I learn and try to achieve more. The more I know, the better I strive to be, and I am constantly trying to level up so success parallels my growth." This is how Sonya Ashford with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices AZ Properties views success. As a newer agent in the industry, she continues to prove herself as she quickly learns and adapts to every situation thrown her way.

Service Focused

Sonya's family moved around frequently when she was young, but they settled in Jerome by the time she was eight. She shares how despite its small population of 500, Jerome attracts people from all over the world. "I felt like I was able to learn so much from their stories and it gave me much more perspective than

what someone may be exposed to in other very small towns."

While attending Northern Arizona University, she worked in the service industry in restaurants and bartending. After earning an interdisciplinary studies degree in human behavior and management, she worked a short time in the behavioral health field but found it lackluster compared to her previous career. So, she returned to the service industry at a family-run restaurant group in the Verde Valley.

Working in various positions at various locations under this family-run group, she refined her interpersonal skills. She continued with this group from 2008 and all the way to 2020 when the industry was hit hard by the pandemic lockdown.

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During this same time, Sonya and her family were expecting their second child. "I had returned to work as the restaurants were reopening, but because this was still the initial height of COVID, business in the daytime brunch cafe I was working in was much slower in the summer months. It didn't make sense for my family at the time to have me working outside the home, even though I was just newly pregnant."

About a year later, she decided that it was time to return to the workforce, but she did not want to return to the restaurant industry. "I started considering options of what else I could do. I didn't want to return to behavioral health. I had even considered going back to school on a completely different path and pursuing dental hygiene, which would involve another lengthy degree and commute. Getting my real estate license then came on my radar as I was looking for options that would require less time to begin, and still be in a field working directly with people."

Continuous Growth

"As I started to research the logistics and what was actually required to become licensed and start practicing, there was much more that appealed to me and I began to feel like I would be a good fit for this career. I loved the process when I bought a home a few years prior to making this shift, not being stuck to an office and getting to show homes in this beautiful area seemed like it would be fun." Sonya soon started in real estate in April of 2022.

"Now that I feel like I am starting to get my bearings in the business, showing properties is definitely fun. Selling real





estate in Sedona is a dream, but working with clients on particularly hard sales and helping them through some of the biggest transitions of their lives has been what I found to be most fulfilling."

"It is easy to forget that not all transactions are joyous or exciting and that many times our clients are dealing with the aging or loss of a loved one, a separation, or a financial/medical burden. While it is very exciting getting to advise on investments or helping with the purchase of a bigger home for an expanding family, being a resource and guide during trying times drives my passion."

She recognizes that not all transactions are the same and that each process

needs a personal touch. "Ultimately, what I strive for in my business is being relationship-focused rather than retailoriented. I have found that when the first priority in my business is people and building authentic connections in a giving spirit, the business follows."

"The people, the networks, the connections we form, and the good we can bring to other's lives is what drives me. While I am driven to build a successful business and wealth for my family, I have a much softer approach to how I am accomplishing that."

Family Driven

Sonya and her husband, Scott, met in 2011 and married in 2016. Scott is a firefighter and medic for Verde Valley



Fire District. "We have a smart and outgoing daughter, Cora, who is about to turn seven and was just skipped up into second grade. She is in dance and soccer and we love going as a family to support her in her games and recitals. Her little brother Sullivan (Sully) is almost four and loves to run and get dirty. He will be starting his first year of tee-ball this season."

"It is so satisfying to both work in a career where we are serving the members of our community, friends, and neighbors. We find ourselves very busy with work and the kids' extracurricular activities during the school year. However, during the summer we love going to many of the beautiful swimming spots in the area, hearing a local band, or catching dinner in Old Town Cottonwood."

Sonya Ashford makes it readily apparent just how much she has come to love this industry. Her continued growth in both her business and her community is undoubtable as she continues to make her mark.

Website: sonyaashford.bhhsaz.com

Why, Why, Why, Why, Why?

BY GARRETT HAMLIN



A magazine article cannot change your life, but YOU can! In this series, I teach you how to show up as your best self, every day, in each area of your life.

New Year, Same Situation

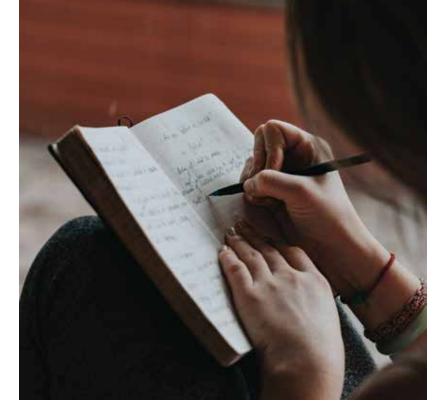
Every new year, we as agents go through a goal setting exercise, or even write a new business plan. "Make your goals SMART and you can conquer the world!" Or so they say. Here is the problem with that. What goals or resolutions did you set at the beginning of this year? Did you write a shiny new business plan? - How is that working for you? If you are human, there is a 64% chance that by now you have already stopped making progress. And this is only February!! Perhaps you're among the 36% still progressing—congratulations! Is that goal WHAT you really want for your life? This is a tough question, and it takes deeper introspection, but without an answer you are at risk of "climbing the ladder only to reach the top and find it was leaning against the wrong building."

The implication is that you will probably never make significant lasting progress if you quit one month in. Is that goal even aligned with your real purpose? How can you be certain that in the end, the very end when you are old and dying in the hospital, your last wish will not tragically be "I wish I spent more time with family when I had the chance" or some other deep regret? So I ask you, WHY did you really choose the goals you set for yourself?

Get to the Root of It

Here is what I want you to do: Dig down to the root of the matter by asking yourself why, then asking why again, and again, and again, and again, until you have probed deeper five times.

As an example, suppose one of your big goals for this year is to take a two-week vacation; that is your WHAT. To dig down into your WHY, ask yourself "why take a two-week vacation," and you might answer "to recharge." Ask yourself "why recharge," and you might say "to improve my well-being." Ask "why improve my well-being," and you might say "to have better relationships." Ask "why have better relationships," and you might answer "to improve my relationship with (name)." Finally, you would ask yourself "why improve that relationship," and you might say it is all because "I want to feel more love in my life." Did you observe your progression from a simple vacation idea to a deeper longing for love? This example was simplistic but try it with an actual goal of your own and see where you end up!



Get Alianment

If, after doing the dig-down exercise, you realize in your gut that the goal does not fit your life's purpose, you are making progress! Seize the moment and replace that off-target goal with one that fits you better, a more enduring destination. The more you align your goals with your life's purpose, the more likely you are to accomplish them. And the higher your life's purpose, the greater lasting satisfaction you will experience from your aligned goals. This principle applies whether your goal is small or big – to market online, to take a vacation, or to change careers.

Let's talk about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic goals, which focus on personal growth, meaningful relationships, and self-fulfillment, are associated with greater well-being and life satisfaction. In contrast, prioritizing extrinsic goals like financial success, fame, or appearance has a negative effect on well-being. In life, we must balance both kinds of goals, but it matters which one we prioritize in first place. Intrinsic motivation is what will pull us through in the

Hit the Road

I will take this theme one step further and state that effective intrinsic motivation consists of two parts: A worthy destination, and an honorable journey. When your WHAT is a worthy destination, and your WHY ties to your life's purpose, you will be driven to purposeful, lasting success, far beyond where an extrinsic new year's resolution, SMART goal, or business plan can take you. We will talk about an honorable journey in a future article.

Are you showing up as your best self and living your life's purpose every day? Please do the dig-down exercise for yourself. If you want to share your results or have questions, I would love to hear from you. Email me at garrett@garretthamlin.com







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iving back to the community in one way or another is something that all agents should strive to do. Agents have a unique position that can unite communities on a nearly unmatched scale. Simon Fort, Associate Broker and REALTOR® with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Arizona Properties, readily accepts this role.

People First

Simon grew up in Prescott and knows the area well. "We are extremely lucky that over the years Prescott has maintained its small-town feel despite our growth," he shares. "Small business is the backbone of this community and there isn't a single business owner in this town who isn't dedicated to making sure that we maintain our unique feel. People still wave to others, they stop and talk with their neighbors, and we all have a sense of gratitude that we have found such a great place to live."

With a strong history in the casino industry prior to his real estate career, he eventually reached his peak. With the death of his brother, Simon took a step back and reevaluated his career. "Working for the gaming agency was a positive move for me with cultivating those community connections and relationships. Over time I was climbing a ladder that really didn't fit my goals any longer," he explains.

As the Marketing Director and Interim Acting Casino General Manager for Bucky's and Yavapai Casinos in Prescott, he decided to step away and pursue something else. "My love for the Prescott area and marketing led me to believe that I could succeed in real estate. I have lived here over 40 years of my life and have been to many nooks and crannies that few have discovered."

Now, with a decade of real estate experience under his belt, his only regret is not jumping into the industry sooner. "The most fulfilling part of being a real estate agent is that you immerse yourself in other people's lives. Sometimes at the best of times



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and sometimes during struggles. We generalize these terms in real estate and call it 'upsizing' or 'downsizing' but there's usually a life event attached to the reason why people are making the change: divorce, death, sickness, children moving away, or moving back home, change of job, relocating, etc. All of these periods of time are usually difficult, and to have an advisor to help get through what many consider a stressful process anyway, I think is our true calling as real estate agents."

Bringing the Community Together

The Prescott office for Berkshire
Hathaway HomeServices Arizona
recently sponsored a golf tournament
at Antelope Hills, with thousands of
dollars going towards the Sunshine Kids
Foundation. Simon, an avid golfer, had
previously coordinated other alumni
and charity golf tournaments, so when
his Branch Manager, Rachele Brooks,
prompted him for community activity,
he shared his previous experience.
Together, he and his wife, Tara, chaired
the event with the support of many
agents at their office.

"We decided to make it pretty grand scale this first year so that we could bring a lot of golfers in who would want to attend again next year." He shares that they had multiple large prizes including a truck from Findlay Toyota and a \$25,000 cash prize sponsored by Prosperity Mortgage for holes in one. "We have an amazing group of agents who willingly contributed their money, time, and effort, and worked with their local business affiliates so that we could donate to Sunshine Kids."

Sunshine Kids Foundation is an organization focused on providing events and camaraderie through group outings and activities for children going through cancer treatment, much like the well-known Make a Wish Foundation. "The Sunshine Kids organization puts together outings and events where kids going through this time can meet other kids and share their experiences. It makes them feel less alone in their battles," explains Simon.

Additionally, the Prescott office was fortunate to have representation from Sunshine Kids Foundation support the golf tournament in person. The representative came out from Texas and gave a small speech at the event. Simon wants to recognize that the event was only made possible by the people behind the scenes beyond himself and Tara, including the golf staff at Antelope Hills and their F&B Manager/Director of Sales Dawn Bugenhagen. He adds, "As coordinators, there's a lot of back-end stuff I think that people just don't know about. It's like starting another business. I'm glad we made it look easy, but it was the support of our office and community that made it a success."

The company as a whole looks forward to holding this golf tournament as an annual event.

Community and Care

It is clear that Simon, as well as all of the agents and figures within Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Arizona, cares deeply for others. While the Sunshine Kids Foundation will always be a group he wants to support, he looks forward to involving more charities in the future — particularly local ones.

While an agent often has the means and networking to coordinate large-scale events, their greatest point of impact is in the work they do each and every day. "If what I do in this life has an impact on anyone's success, I think that is a big win. Whether that comes through finding a place where a family can thrive, helping someone move into their

next adventure, helping someone get through a difficult transaction, or even just playing out scenarios that might help create some insight, those little wins along the way add up."

Simon Fort's love of Prescott and its small-town-esque community cannot be doubted. He enjoys forging and maintaining the connections that he cherishes.

"The secret has been out for a long time that Prescott is an amazing place to live. I'm not revealing my cards at this point, but when you have a place that you love and friends and business partners that support you, this business becomes a lot of fun."

Simon Fort: simonfort.com, 928-910-9484 Sunshine Kids: sunshinekids.org



TIPS and TRICKS for **Retaining Tenants in Rental Properties Long-Term**

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BY DAVID WEISS

Retaining reliable tenants is the cornerstone of a successful rental property business. Long-term tenants mean consistent income, fewer vacancy periods, and reduced turnover costs. Here are some tips and tricks to help you foster strong tenant relationships and keep them renewing their leases year after year.

Maintain Clear and Open Communication.

Effective communication is the foundation of a positive landlordtenant relationship. Make it easy for tenants to reach you with questions or concerns, and respond promptly when they do. Being proactive — such as sending friendly reminders about lease renewals or upcoming maintenance can further demonstrate that you're an attentive and considerate landlord.

Keep the Property Well-Maintained.

No one wants to live in a home that feels neglected. Regularly schedule inspections to ensure the property remains in excellent condition, and address maintenance requests quickly. Preventive measures, such as servicing HVAC systems or checking for plumbing issues, not only keep tenants happy but also protect your investment.

Offer Incentives for Lease Renewals.

Sometimes, a little extra incentive can encourage tenants to stay. Offering perks like a small rent discount, professional cleaning services, or minor upgrades (e.g., a fresh coat of paint or new appliances) at renewal time shows tenants you value their loyalty.

Respect Privacy and Boundaries.

While staying engaged is important, respecting your tenants' privacy is equally crucial. Always provide proper notice before entering the property, as required by law. In Arizona, 48 hours is

the minimum notice necessary. Tenants who feel respected are more likely to view their rental as a true home and remain long-term.

Be Fair with Rent Increases.

Raising rent is sometimes necessary, but doing so excessively or without justification can drive tenants away. Research local market rates to ensure your pricing remains competitive. If you must increase rent, provide ample notice and explain the reasons clearly, whether it's due to rising property taxes, utility costs, or market adjustments.

Create a Sense of Community.

Tenants are more likely to stay if they feel connected to their neighbors and the property. Organize occasional community events, like a holiday gathering or summer barbecue, to foster relationships among tenants. Even small gestures, like leaving welcome gifts for new tenants, can make a big impression.

Be Flexible When Possible.

Life happens, and offering flexibility in certain situations can go a long way. For example, if a tenant requests a shortterm extension or needs to negotiate payment terms during difficult times, consider working with them to find a mutually beneficial solution. Flexibility fosters goodwill and strengthens the landlord-tenant relationship.

Invest in Upgrades and Modern Amenities.

Keeping your property modern and comfortable is an effective retention strategy. Simple upgrades like energyefficient appliances, smart home technology, or improved landscaping can enhance the property's appeal and make tenants feel like they're getting value for their money.

Address Issues Professionally.

When conflicts arise, handle them calmly and professionally. Whether it's a noise complaint or a late payment, approaching the situation with understanding and fairness can prevent escalation and preserve the relationship.

Solicit and Act on Feedback.

Encourage tenants to share feedback about their living experience and show that you're listening by making improvements when possible. This not only builds trust but also signals that you're committed to providing a highquality rental experience.

By prioritizing tenant satisfaction and creating a positive rental experience, you can build lasting relationships and ensure your property remains occupied for the long term. A little effort can go a long way in transforming tenants into loval, long-term residents.



Since 2004, David has gained extensive expertise in real estate by managing his own properties and participating in various transactions, including wholesaling, rehabs, sales, and rentals. He excels at analyzing market trends and developing investment strategies for clients seeking both short-term and long-term gains. David is the Owner and Designated Broker of UNLimited RE, northern Arizona's premier property management-only brokerage.

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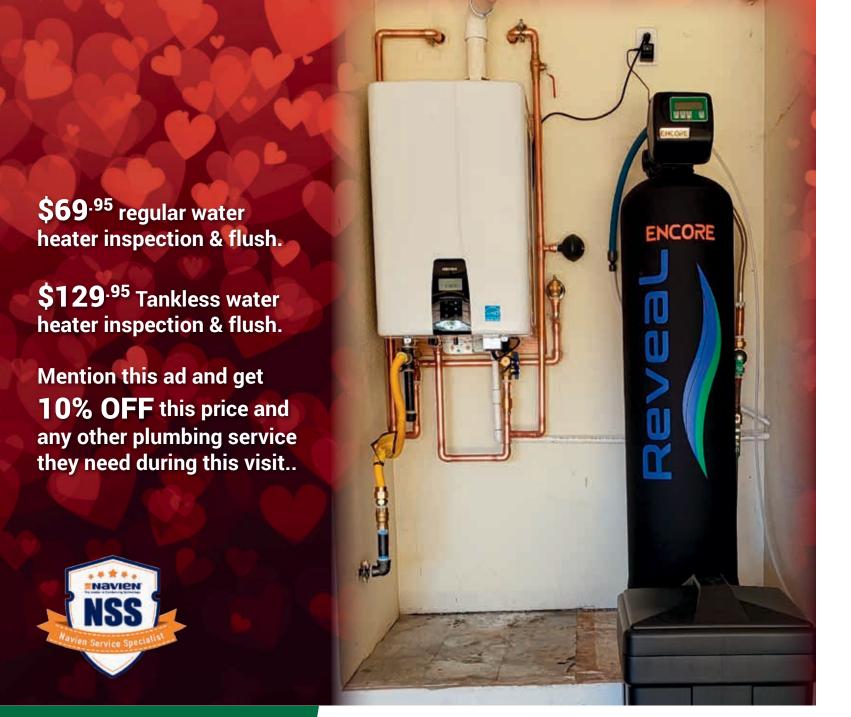


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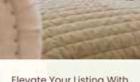
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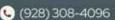
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MINDSET MATTERS FINDING Your WAY BY JACKI SEMERAU TAIT Planning out your success strategy. Most of us began the year with our 2025 business plan ready to go. We're not even that far into the year, and I'm sure that many of us already have areas of our business that not going as planned. We adjust and we try moving the ball forward by doing the things we've been trained to do, the things that have brought success in the past. At the end of the day, we may be left feeling drained if those things just aren't working.

Maybe that has left you running around feeling at a loss of what to do next. Maybe it's not just a little struggle, but a massive setback. I can't help but think that the answers are right there just waiting to be noticed. Is our success in the past holding us back from the success that awaits us in the future?

You may be familiar with Captain Jim Lovell. Lovell is best known as the captain of the Apollo 13 space shuttle that never made it to the moon and almost didn't make it home.

In his book, *Lost Moon*, Lovell shares a story of flying his plane and coming in for a landing on his aircraft carrier. The carrier was operating with no lights. Lovell's homing signal was blocked, actually leading him away from where he needed to go. Suddenly, a short in the electrical system on his aircraft caused all of the instrument panel lights to go out. He was thinking of ejecting into the ocean when he looked up past the blacked out systems panel. There he saw the phosphorescent glow of the plankton in the ocean being churned up in the wake of the carrier on which he needed to land. He made the point that if the lights hadn't gone out, he never would have seen the path that led him to a safe landing.

Circumstances that seem disastrous are actually the very things needed to bring us to a better place. Throughout the course of my career, I've noticed many agents who have faced diversity and ended up with a successful adventure, myself included. The thing we all seem to have in common? We found our adventures because of a so-called "failure." A so-called catastrophe. A so-called defeat.

My current success was launched years ago when I was down to only \$4 to my

name. In the midst of the struggle, I was forced to recreate my business, look for new opportunities, and dig in deep to find the grit to create a successful business.

I never would have done it without the extreme struggle I went through.

Maybe you're in the midst of a struggle. I want to encourage you to begin to see your circumstances as positive, no matter what.

So how can that be accomplished?

Remember the blessings.

No matter what is going on around you, I guarantee that there are things to be grateful for. Every day, make it a priority to focus on these things. There are many ways to maintain an attitude of gratitude: Make a list and write down the top 5 things you are thankful for. Say a prayer of thanks to God for specific blessings before you go to bed. Sit with your family members and share the highlights of your day with each other. Keep a journal focused on blessings rather than drama.

Know what you really want out of life.

What are your long term goals? When you have the answer to that, you can start to see how the things transpiring today can benefit those goals in the long run. Take the opportunity while life seems to be up in the air to make the necessary changes that will lead you to your dreams.

Be willing to learn the lesson.

Every struggle or so-called failure has a lesson attached to it. Open up your mind

and let yourself recognize what that lesson is. Life has a funny way of repeating hard lessons until we actually acknowledge them, lear n from them, and grow as a result of them.

Stop worrying about what other people think.

Why do we, as a society, get so wrapped up in living a life based on comparison? We strive for bigger, better, more. Here's the thing: the people that really love and care for you don't care where you live, what kind of car you drive, or what your net worth is. And the people who do judge you by these things don't really matter anyway. Let go of what others think, and you will be surprised how free you are as a result!

Accept the challenge of change.

Be willing to change your marketing, your business strategy, or even the way you measure success. Challenges can be beautiful transitions in our lives, but we'll never know it if we're too busy clinging to our preconceived notions on how our lives are "supposed to be."

Embrace the changes going on around you, maintain an attitude of gratitude, and be willing to shift your thinking. Things may not be as challenging as you thought. In fact, they may be better than ever.



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