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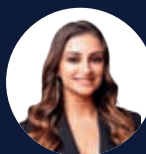


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To our 2026 Top 500 agents, be sure you are registered for our Toast to the Top Event—it's one you won't want to miss! And as always, if you have ideas

for feature stories, event locations, or ways we can make this community even better, I'd love to hear from you.

Here's to a bright, successful year ahead and an amazing spring season filled with new possibilities.



Michele Kader

Owner/Publisher
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Chantell GWIN

For Chantell Gwin, real estate is more than a career. It is a lifelong passion rooted in family, relationships, and service. As an Executive Title Representative with Ticor Title, Chantell has spent more than three decades building meaningful partnerships and supporting real estate professionals throughout Orange County.

Raised in San Luis Obispo, California, Chantell grew up in a close-knit family grounded in hard work and generosity. Her father was a builder and developer, and her mother devoted herself to raising their family while caring for others. “My mom was one of the kindest, most selfless humans I have ever met,” Chantell shares. “She helped raise two of my cousins and one of my nephews. Watching her give so freely shaped who I am today.”

Chantell is the middle of three sisters, with one eight years older and the other just 16 months younger. Family was always central to her upbringing, and those early values continue to guide her personal and professional life.

After graduating from San Diego State University in 1992 with a degree in fashion merchandising and a minor in marketing, Chantell moved to Orange County to pursue her dream of becoming a buyer for Nordstrom. She began working in retail at South Coast Plaza and gained valuable experience in sales, customer service, and branding. While she enjoyed learning the business, she soon realized her heart was pulling her in a different direction.

“I knew something was missing,” she recalls. “I wasn’t fully happy with the path I was on.” Everything changed when a close friend, who had recently entered the title industry, encouraged Chantell to interview with her company. “She told me, ‘All you do is take agents to lunch, bring donuts, and make a lot of money,’” Chantell laughs. “That definitely caught my attention at the time.”

More importantly, her friend recognized Chantell’s natural ability to connect with people and build lasting relationships. That interview marked the beginning of her career in title.



“

When things
get hard, that
purpose keeps
you moving
forward.”





“The course of my life changed,” she says. “I have been in title ever since.”

Today, Chantell proudly serves as an Executive Title Representative with Ticor Title, where her role has continued to evolve alongside the industry. When she first began in the early 1990s, relationship-building focused largely on lunches, office visits, and networking events. While those connections were valuable, Chantell soon felt called to do more.

“I wanted to add real value to my clients’ businesses,” she explains.

This led her into a more strategic and marketing-focused role. She began working closely with agents to help them farm neighborhoods, plan campaigns, and coordinate marketing materials. She created structured calendars and systems to help agents stay consistent and visible in their communities.

As the real estate landscape shifted, Chantell adapted once again. Today, her focus is centered on deep title knowledge and hands-on problem-solving. She takes pride in understanding preliminary reports, navigating complex transactions, and guiding agents through challenging files.

“I wear many hats,” she says. “From marketing support to technical guidance to emotional support during stressful deals. And I truly love every part of it.”

What truly distinguishes Chantell, however, is her genuine care for the people she serves.

“I believe my compassion sets me apart,” she shares. “I truly care about each and every client. This is not just business to me. It is about friendship, trust, and partnership.”

She takes time to learn about her clients’ families, goals, and motivations. She celebrates their successes and stands by them during difficult moments. Her relationships are built on authenticity and mutual respect.

In an industry that can often feel transactional, Chantell’s approach creates lasting loyalty.

“The real estate industry is tough,” she admits. “From the outside, it looks glamorous. But behind the scenes, it takes discipline, resilience, and heart.”

When mentoring agents, Chantell always begins with one essential question: What is your why?

“I have found that the agents with the strongest ‘why’ are the ones who succeed long-term,” she explains. “When things get hard, that purpose keeps you moving forward.”

Her second piece of advice is consistency.

“This business rewards people who show up,” she says. “Over and over again. Even when it is uncomfortable. Even when it is slow, consistency builds trust, and trust builds careers.”

Chantell’s passion for real estate runs deep. Coming from a family of builders and developers, she was immersed in the industry from an early age. Her father built more than 400 homes and multiple shopping centers, leaving a legacy that continues to inspire her.

“I have such a love for all things real estate,” she says. “One of my favorite parts of my job is touring homes. Every property has a story, and I never get tired of seeing them.”

After more than 30 years in the title industry and many successful

partnerships at Ticor Title, Chantell remains as enthusiastic as ever.

"I wake up every day feeling grateful," she says. "I feel blessed for the career that chose me. This truly feels like what I was meant to do."

Through her experience, compassion, and commitment, Chantell Gwin continues to be a trusted resource for agents across Orange County. She builds relationships, strengthens businesses, and reminds everyone she works with that success is best when it is built together.



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COVER STORY

A photograph of a man and a woman standing in front of a large glass window. The man, on the right, has short grey hair and is wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and light-colored trousers. The woman, on the left, has long brown hair and is wearing a bright yellow long-sleeved top and black trousers with a black belt featuring a gold buckle. Both are smiling at the camera.

Shawn & Helena
NOONAN

Born to Shine: How Shawn and Helena Noonan Built a Business Fueled by Joy, Grit, and Unapologetic Authenticity

BY CHRISTINA KITCHEN

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When you sit down with Shawn and Helena Noonan of The Noonan Team at COMPASS, you quickly realize you are not just talking about Real Estate. You are talking about energy, intention, and a deep belief that life responds when you say yes to it.

Helena began her Real Estate career in 2000, but her journey started long before that in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. An only child raised in a home filled with music, dancing, and love, she grew up with very little money but an abundance of joy. “I didn’t even realize we were poor until I was 13,” she says. “What I did know was that I wanted to help my parents and create a different future.” At 13 years old, she made a decision to “become.” She knew she did not want to live in financial struggle, and she knew she wanted more. Her father took a second job to pay for her private high school education, where she studied computer science. She listened.

Before Real Estate, Helena wore many hats. She worked as a computer programmer, a swimwear designer with her own showroom at the Miami Merchandise Mart, and later a high-end shoe designer. She even worked as an international flight attendant for United Airlines, flying home to Rio. Each experience added another layer to her understanding of people, business, and possibility.

One pivotal moment still stands out. Riding the bus with her mother to pay rent in person, Helena looked up at a tall, beautiful office building and said she would work there one day. Her mother smiled politely. At 18 years old, Helena was working for that very company. “I put things out there,” she says. “I tell myself what I want, and somehow things happen. My life truly works.”

Real Estate came into the picture almost by accident. A friend told her she would be great at it and suggested she get her license. True to her nature, she said yes. “As soon as I started, I realized I would love this business,” she says. “In the computer world, I knew it wasn’t for me. It was cold, physically and emotionally, at that time; things were different from now. I needed people. I needed connection. And I loved not knowing where my next paycheck would come from. That gets me going.”

Today, Shawn and Helena are Principals of The Noonan Team at COMPASS and closed 52 million dollars in volume last year. It wasn’t a good year for us, we had many distractions with our personal lives, good and bad.

While they are primarily listing agents, Helena still gets emotional handing over the keys to buyers. “I get goosebumps every time,” she says. “I truly believe we change lives.”

One of the biggest shifts in their business has been choosing who they work with. “If we would not want to have them in our home, we do not want to work with them,” Helena says. “It took time to get there, but now we only work with people we love. I don’t feel like I’m working when I’m talking to our clients.”

Preparation is a cornerstone of their success. The Noonan Team provides complimentary staging and redesign for all their listings. Their exclusive stager and designer, Sharona Druckmann, is a key asset. Because the team owns its own furniture, the process is efficient and seamless.

They are also supported by what Helena calls an irreplaceable duo. Operations Manager Jeni Yeager and Client Relations Manager Keri Inzer, who are sisters, allow Shawn and Helena to stay focused on relationships and strategy. “There is nothing they cannot do for our clients,” Helena says.

Working together as husband and wife gives the Noonans another competitive edge. They are completely different in personality and perspective, and that balance helps them navigate a wide range of client situations. “We can understand just about anything our clients are going through,” she says.

Family remains at the center of everything. Their two sons are their pride and joy. They still call them “mamae” and “papai,” Portuguese for mommy and daddy, which Helena says fills her heart. Their older son, Ian, recently earned his real estate license and is in the process of joining the team. “Not so easily,” she laughs. “He has to go through the process.”

When they are not working, the Noonans invest in relationships. Helena is proudly



extroverted and energized by people. She prioritizes time with friends, weekend trips with Shawn, and constant personal growth. “Better every day,” she says. She reads, she learns, and she remains curious.

Her favorite quote is from Marianne Williamson about not shrinking so others feel comfortable. “We were born to shine,” Helena says. “I absolutely love who I am.”

That authenticity defines both her life and her leadership. Helena openly shares her knowledge with the agents on the team and others. When someone once asked if she was afraid of giving away her strategies, she simply responded, “I sleep at night.” What others choose to do with the information is up to them.

For Helena, success is not measured in volume or awards. It is inner joy and fulfillment. Her greatest achievement is raising two incredible boys. Her greatest advice is simple. Be yourself and never give up.

Looking ahead, The Noonan Team is growing. They currently have six agents and plan to expand to ten. Helena describes herself as a mentor at heart. “I need to see people around me succeed,” she says. “It’s my drug of choice.”

Personally, she and Shawn are focused on nurturing their marriage as they enter a new phase of life as ‘empty nesters’. Fun, connection, and joy remain non-negotiable priorities.

If there is one message Helena hopes people take away, it is this. Success in business and life requires truthfulness. People can sense when you are not genuine. And life becomes extraordinary when you choose the right people to surround yourself with, especially your spouse.

“Life can be so amazing,” she says with a smile. And if you spend even a few minutes in her presence, you believe it.



“I need to see
people around
me succeed,”

TEAM MEMBERS:

Helena Noonan

Shawn Noonan

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DAN SMITH:

Building Leaders, Not Just Businesses

BY CHRISTINA KITCHEN

PHOTOS BY JENNY MCMASTERS PHOTOGRAPHY

After nearly three decades in real estate, Dan Smith has seen the industry from almost every angle. From selling his first company to Keller Williams in the early 2000s, to writing three books, speaking internationally, and running a national real estate training business, his career has been defined by growth, reinvention, and an unwavering commitment to people. In 2020, alongside his wife Melody, Dan founded Anvil Real Estate in Orange County, marking a new chapter focused not on personal production, but on building others.

“This is my 27th year in real estate,” Dan says. “And every season has taught me something different.” Before selling his company, the Wall Street Journal named Smith the number nine solo agent in the United States after his 321 sales in 2006. The years between selling his first company and launching Anvil were spent writing, traveling, and teaching thousands of agents. Those experiences shaped his leadership style, which is direct, emotional, and deeply driven by a commitment to success.

For Dan, leadership is not glamorous. It is demanding, exhausting, and intensely personal. “It means working hard every

ANVIL

real estate



single day,” he says. “Putting others ahead of yourself. Making decisions for the good of the team, not your own comfort.” A leader, in his view, must be part coach, part accountability partner, part therapist, part parent, and part friend, sometimes all in the same conversation.

His path into brokerage leadership was not planned. After selling his first company, a non-compete agreement forced him to explore new directions. During that time, he met Melody, who was actively selling real estate. As his speaking and coaching career grew, it became clear that returning to production no longer made sense. When they launched Anvil, Dan made a defining choice. He shut down his national coaching business to devote himself fully to his own agents.

“That was a little bit of a leap of faith,” says Smith. “At the time, we only had six agents. Fast forward to now, with nearly 100 agents, it’s an easy choice. Then, it was very scary.”

Mentorship has played a critical role in his journey. His first mentor, Tim Wood, laid the foundation for much of his success. Neil Schwartz, another longtime influence, remains a trusted advisor and friend. And above all, however, Dan credits Melody as the main influence to inspire him. “Watching her day in and day out is a sight to behold,” he says. “Her drive, creativity, and execution. She’s just an animal. Simply incredible.”



At Anvil, Dan’s role is clear. He does not recruit, produce, or manage administration. His entire week revolves around training and coaching. “I call myself a kingmaker,” he explains. “My purpose is to make others powerful. Kings in their neighborhoods. Everything I do revolves around that.”

Anvil’s model reflects this philosophy. With strong lead-generation systems and partnerships, agents are supported even during slow periods. But when it comes to selecting team members, production numbers matter far less than character. “We look for grit,” Dan says. “Determination. Coachability. Work ethic. People who want to be held accountable to doing something great.”

Culture is another cornerstone of Anvil's success. The firm operates on high standards, shared responsibility, and a deep sense of mutual accountability. "I've got your back, that's why I'm on your back," is one of Dan's favorite sayings, and it perfectly captures his leadership philosophy. Support and accountability go hand in hand. Agents are encouraged, protected, and championed, but they are also challenged to grow, stretch, and raise their own expectations.

At Anvil, mediocrity has no place. Hanging a license is not enough. Every agent is expected to treat their business as a true career and to pursue excellence in both performance and professionalism. Dan believes that greatness is built through consistent effort, honest feedback, and a willingness to be coached. The culture is one of high performance, high trust, and high care, where success is celebrated, setbacks are addressed directly, and everyone is committed to becoming better than they were the day before.

Motivation, Dan believes, must come from within. "You can't motivate an unmotivated person," he says. In his view, lasting success cannot be forced from the outside. It has to be chosen every day by the individual. No system, script, or incentive can replace personal drive and personal responsibility.

His role, therefore, is not to push people forward, but to create an environment where motivated people can thrive. Through consistent coaching, honest feedback, and steady encouragement, Dan helps agents sharpen their skills and strengthen their confidence. He challenges them to think bigger, work smarter, and hold themselves to higher standards.

Ultimately, ownership belongs to each individual. Anvil provides the tools, training, and support, but each agent must decide how fully they will use them. When people take responsibility for their own growth, Dan believes, they unlock their true potential.

Leadership, he warns, comes at a cost. It is not a title or a position. It is a 24/7 commitment that does not pause for holidays, vacations, or personal milestones. "Say goodbye to your free time," Dan says. "Your phone is going to ring somewhere between 20 and 21 hours a day, seven days a week, all year long." For him, leadership means always being available, always listening, and always ready to step in when his agents need guidance.

During a recent 25-day tour of Southeast Asia, Dan lived out that commitment in real time, waking up at 2:30 a.m. each day to stay connected with his team in their California time zone, then checked in again later in the day, their evening. "When I travel, I still dedicate at least 90 minutes twice a day to my agent partners," he explains. "That doesn't change just because I'm in another part of the world."

He believes many aspiring leaders underestimate the personal sacrifice involved. "People see the outside and think it's glamorous," he says. "They think it's meetings, recognition,

and influence. But there's very little glamour. It's just hard work." Birthdays, vacations, and holidays do not pause the responsibility. The needs of his agents remain constant, and so does his commitment to them.

For Dan, leadership is not something he turns on and off. It is who he is and how he lives. "If you don't love being a leader," he says, "you shouldn't be one. Because you have to be a leader all the time, not just when it fits your schedule."

His wife, four adult children, his father (whom everyone calls Papa), and the agent partners form what he calls his "business family." They are his sounding board, his support system, and his motivation on the toughest days.

For Dan Smith, success is not measured in transactions or awards. It is measured in people—how far they grow, how strong they become, and how well they are supported along the way. Through his "Building Kings" mindset, he focuses on developing confident, capable leaders who lead with character and purpose. By doing so, he has created something far more lasting than a company: a culture rooted in accountability, excellence, and genuine care, where people are challenged to rise and empowered to succeed.





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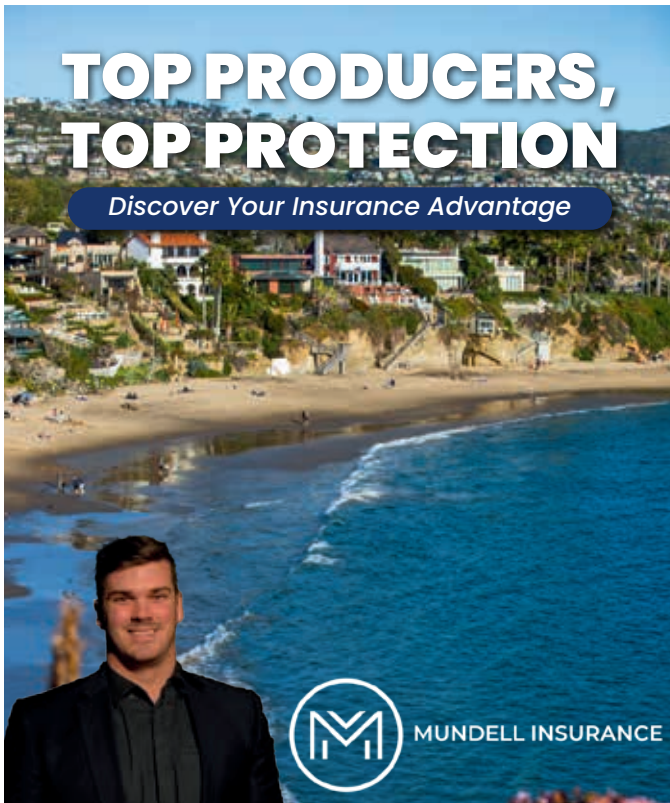


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