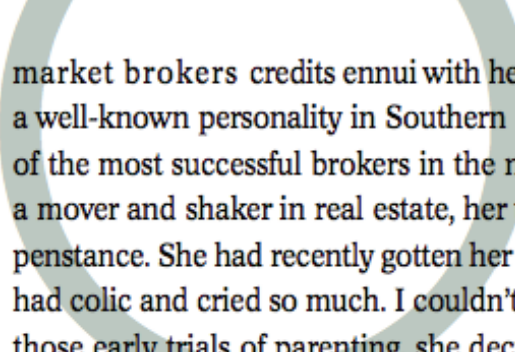


INDEPENDENT WOMAN



ONE OF LOS ANGELES' TOP HOUSING market brokers credits ennui with her start in real estate. Tami Halton Pardee is a well-known personality in Southern California. She consistently ranked as one of the most successful brokers in the nation, according to REAL Trends. But for a mover and shaker in real estate, her transition into the business was a bit happenstance. She had recently gotten her MBA and had her first child. "My daughter had colic and cried so much. I couldn't physically take it." To distract herself from those early trials of parenting, she decided to get a real estate license. • "I sold \$32 million my first year," she said. • Pardee explained that she has always been interested in real estate. "My parents were builders, so I'd had a contractor's license since I was 18," she told *California Real Estate*. Initially, after college, however, she went into television and movie production. An Oregon native, she was attracted to the climate and "busyness" of the Los Angeles region. "I thought there was more opportunity down here for me as a woman."

A TOP L.A. BROKER TALKS ABOUT HOW THE SELLING MODEL IS CHANGING

Opening Her Own Shop

That was 12 years ago, with RE/MAX. "I realized I didn't need them," she explained. "I thought the way real estate was being done was broken," she explained. "Real estate agents are like lawyers in that a lot of people look down on the profession."

Pardee saw a real opportunity to change things. She left RE/MAX to establish Halton Pardee + Partners.

"I knew I needed to become a brand," she said. "Real estate is unsustainable the way it is because everyone is buying the people instead of the brand."

Unlike the traditional broker model, Pardee's company emphasizes her agents are just that—employees. She splits profits

on sales 50/50 with her agents and spends \$150,000 annually on marketing. Currently, her company is 70 employees strong.

Does the model work?

Well, Pardee's employee agents' average annual salary is \$200,000 to \$250,000, while her top buyers' agents make as much as \$450,000 per year.

The L.A. broker said the industry pays too much attention to percentages. "What matters?" she asked. "What percentages you get or what you're bringing home?" At Halton Pardee, it's definitely the latter.

"The agent model is that they're all entrepreneurs, and they have to do everything for everyone," she pointed out. "The

L.A. BROKER'S STATS

TAMI HALTON PARDEE

Top-producing broker, speaker, philanthropist

Age: 45

Biggest Strength: I have very good intuition. I really feel things if they're right or wrong in my body.

Biggest Weakness: I try to take on too much. I need to be instead of just doing all the time.

Very First Job: Picking strawberries in the fields in Oregon when I was 8-years-old.

Most Recent Purchase: I just bought a piece of Charles Arnoldi art. He is both a friend and client.

Can't Live Without: My four kids for sure.

#1 On Your "Bucket List": I want to go helicopter skiing in Iceland.

Career Choice No. 2: I like to be around people. I'm a big connector. I'm an entrepreneur at heart. I guess I'd be a rock star.

Best Advice Received: "To thine own self be true."

buyer's agent should only be working with the buyer."

Pardee will be the first to admit, however, that what she's doing isn't easy. When she started her business in 2009, she did so by bringing on five or six friends and family members. "Something like this almost has to start organically," she noted.

The Market Ahead

Pardee also realizes she works in a challenging market but believes the recent election will be a positive for the Golden State's real estate market. "Honestly, I think people were more freaked out about not knowing the outcome of the election," she said. "The unknown is always the biggest factor in real estate."

That said, she doesn't see a lot of growth in the coming years in L.A. Rather, it's Palm Springs that is burgeoning. "A lot of people are moving there. They like the desert, and they like the idea of retiring there," she explained.

Pardee is also seeing a definite trend in what people want from their homes. "They want housing with a soul," she said. "They don't want cookie cutter houses." As to why, she added, "People are spending more time in their homes and are so isolated on their phones. They at least want comfort when they're at home."

And while southern California doesn't have quite the housing issue the northern part of the state does, Pardee said buyers still feel the crunch in the lack of housing and lack of affordable housing. "It's definitely on the radar in a way it didn't used to be," she suggested. "There's no land left. That's the problem. The only real opportunity is in-fill, but the cities don't own that much land."

Giving Back

Pardee's deeper passion, deeper even than real estate, however, is the Life-Changer Program she founded when she started her business in 2009.

Pardee has plenty of reason to want to give back. Her own personal health experiences have made her grateful for every day of health and joy she can find.

She was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2001. "It really made me plan what I wanted to do," she explained. "I really wanted to be more present and make enough money that if I became disabled, no one would have to take care of me.

"When I left RE/MAX, I was paying about 10 percent to them just for being there," she said. "I decided it would be nice to use that money to give back to the community."

Initially, she began to give a percentage of the profits from every sale to a charity chosen by her client, but that eventually became too cumbersome and the money didn't always stay local.

"Every quarter, we give a lump sum to a local charity," Pardee said. The last donation of \$70,000 went to Harvest Home. Pardee said her firm has donated \$870,000 since the Life-Changer Program started. "I wanted to keep it in the community." ♦

Deborah R. Huso is a freelance writer, editor and columnist.

