

Accidentally, With Purpose

Debbi DiMaggio finds herself in demand as an expert dedicated to helping new agents thrive and collaborate.

Realtor. Author. Speaker. Philanthropist. This is not a snapshot of Debbi DiMaggio's past resume; rather, it's only an abbreviated list of her current endeavors. When asked how she embarked on these paths, she answers the same way each time, sounding surprised by her own answer. "I discover everything kind of by accident," she laughs. Whether talking about how she became a Realtor after several brief stints in vastly different realms, such as working for the U.S. Supreme Court and at a magazine, or describing her love of SoulCycle, it's clear that DiMaggio turns each of her accidental pursuits into a passion.

DiMaggio and husband/partner Adam Betta have grown their Bay Area luxury real estate firm, Highland Partners, from just seven agents in one office in 2009 to more than 80 agents in two offices (Piedmont and Montclair Village, California) today. Along the way, they have discovered and cultivated their personal niches — Adam is the managing broker, while Debbi is marketing director — and have grown dedicated to helping new agents navigate high-end markets.

"I like helping other Realtors. I find that really enjoyable and fulfilling," DiMaggio says. "I recently had a conference call with a brand-new agent in Palm Springs. He follows my blog and just reached out to talk to me about the industry." She and Adam stress several key points to young agents within their own team and beyond, including the importance of creating structure within their day and engaging face-to-face with co-agents and clients. "This is a relationship business. You need to build trust and confidence with your clients from the beginning; you can't hide behind the Internet and social media," she says.

The client-focused business practices upon which the pair successfully grew Highland Partners (they turned a recent Piedmont listing at \$899,000 into a sale at \$1.27 million) have resulted in the creation of a vast personal brand for DiMaggio, encompassing philanthropy, book writing, and speaking engagements nationwide at events such as Inman Luxury Connect 2015. She embarked somewhat casually on her first foray into writing (a stunning coffee table book called "Contained Beauty") as a side project when her first child left for college. The project helped her to network with professional photographers worldwide and resulted in subsequent deals. She and Adam co-authored "The Art of Real Estate," published last year; her most recent book, "Real Estate Rules!," will be published early in 2016 as part of the "Rules!" book series by Brigantine Media.

As her multi-faceted career progresses by

leaps and bounds, DiMaggio maintains a down-to-earth demeanor, a genuine desire to continue learning and innovating, and a professional outlook in which she views everyone as a potential collaborator. These characteristics will bode essential in the future as she hopes to delve into the Los Angeles luxury market. "Communication and being kind are key in this industry. Adam will answer questions from agents from other offices, and I always offer to help and share," she says. "It is so important that all luxury agents work together as a team. We're not competitors." **UH**



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