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BROKER★AGENT

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A man with short brown hair, smiling, wearing a light blue dress shirt, a blue patterned tie, and a grey pinstriped suit jacket. He is standing on a carpeted staircase with wooden railings. The background shows a window with vertical blinds and some greenery outside.

Stefan Walker

broker/agent of the month



Stefan Walker

by Shannon Hartsoe
photography by Keith B. Dixon

On Stefan Walker's Web site is the slogan, "Quality is a Universal Language." Essentially, we all want the same things. What does that mean? For Walker, it means simply going the extra mile; to his clients, it means having high expectations met and exceeded; and to his associates, it means working with a consummate professional—a Silicon Valley native whose market knowledge is second to none. "The core of my business lies in providing service to the people that I work for," says Walker. "I go to great lengths to ensure that they are receiving care from me that is better than they would get from anybody else they could possibly hire—in every aspect."

Walker grew up in what were once the orchards of the Santa Clara Valley. Those orchards—replaced by freeways, subdivisions and high-powered companies—were his backyard, the streets of Sunnyvale his baseball diamond, and his neighbors his family members. "There were what seemed like hundreds of kids out in the neighborhoods any given evening," he says. "And if it had a ball, we were into it." Though he admits times have changed, he believes that the area still holds pockets of that small town, community feel and he is proud to be raising his own children only blocks from where he grew up. A second generation native, Walker grew up surrounded by relatives who were self-motivated, disciplined and dedicated to doing their best, and some of them were involved in the real estate business. His maternal grandmother and grandfather were real estate agents, as is his mother, Gloria Walker, and he grew up "listening to war stories from the real estate battlefield," he laughs. "I'm a very conservative person and I didn't want anything to do with a commission-based business, so I decided that corporate America was where I needed to be."

He attended Santa Clara University, obtained a bachelor's degree in finance and went to work for IBM. It only took three years to figure out that corporate America was definitely not a fit for him. "IBM was a very slow-moving, top-heavy bureaucracy at the time," he says. "Very stifling." Suddenly, a career in real estate sounded very appealing. Young and adventurous, when his cousin called from Sonora, a small town in the hills of California's Gold Country, his offer sounded like a dream come true. "He had connected with a developer subdividing ranch property and was selling lots. He had built a pretty successful little company and invited me to join him." Drawn by the flexibility, the earning potential and the ability to own his own



business, Walker jumped at the chance. Ultimately, however, small town life began to lose its charm for Walker, and he headed back to the Bay Area. But, armed with his real estate license and some experience under his belt, he was eager to find a company that fit his vision. He found it in the form of Contempo Realty.

“This is where I really cut my real estate teeth, so to speak,” he recalls. “I would not say that I’m a natural salesperson—but what I am is a natural listener with a knack for negotiations. I really take what I do very, very seriously.” Indeed, his first year saw him earning Rookie of the Year. Clients began to be drawn to him, instinctively aware that he had nothing but their best interests at heart. Quickly, he grew a referral base that sustains him and propels him to this day. “All those games I played as a kid were my

says. Now, according to Walker, the Los Gatos office is consistently a top producing office, not only in Silicon Valley, but for the nation, closing in excess of a billion dollars a year. Why? “It’s a combination of the leadership, and the quality of the agents along with the tools that they give us to do our jobs as effectively and efficiently as possible,” he says.

And Walker continues to grow as well. Always willing to do whatever it takes to get his clients where they need to be, Walker is committed to staying sharp, working hard and providing his clients with the pinnacle in quality customer service. He approaches his business as just that, and consistently works at improving both his knowledge and his approach. He is a master at looking out at the horizon and seeing both the details and the overall big picture,



competitive outlet,” he says. “Now my competitive outlet is real estate. When I put a good deal together for my clients, I consider that a victory.” A two-year dip in the market in the early ’90s took Walker with it, but instead of giving up he saw it through. He worked hard, making connections and “over-preparing” for each and every situation. As a result, Walker has learned to take nothing for granted. “My confidence level helped my clients to have confidence in me,” he shares. “And I worked very hard to earn that confidence.” Once word began to spread of Stefan Walker and his dedication, his career began to skyrocket.

Staying on Top

But eight years ago, as the local industry was experiencing great change and consolidation and Walker again found himself looking for a company that was more in line with his ideals, he found Alain Pinel REALTORS®. “It was the best company in Silicon Valley and the Los Gatos office was the best office within the company,” he

bringing both into a clear, workable focus. That determination has found him in executive-level negotiation classes at Santa Clara University, sitting alongside executives from companies like Hewlett Packard and Apple. Not surprisingly, he was the only real estate professional in the group. And he recently spent a week with Frank Cuddy, one of the principal architects of the current set of California real estate contracts and disclosures. The experience was eye-opening. “He dissected each document line by line,” recalls Walker. “I not only learned more about each particular clause, but how to use it to the advantage of my clients in negotiating and building a powerful contract.”

But equally important is Walker’s understanding of, and experiences in, the community in which he serves. As a lifelong resident, one would be hard pressed to find a neighborhood or subdivision that he isn’t familiar with. In fact, having watched the area evolve from orchards to a subdivision, Walker has worked with many of the local builders. “I can get a very good feel for the

soundness of a home, just by walking through it," he says. "I can also help my clients understand the many variables that come into play in market values from one neighborhood to the next."

Family

And he still considers himself an integral part of life in Silicon Valley. He and his wife, Barbi, own a house just blocks from his childhood home, a five-minute walk from his parents in one direction and a five-minute walk from his sister in the other. It is, he says, a charmed life. "We still get together every week for dinner, and my son plays Little League on the fields where I played Little League," he says. "It seems very contrary to the way most people live their lives today, but we love it. Family is everything." His family includes two "absolutely gorgeous kids," 8-year-old

Shaelan ("a carbon copy of her mother") and 6-year-old Vaughn ("my little clone") and life keeps them pretty busy. Shuttling to piano lessons, drama, baseball, dance and soccer is enough to make anyone's head spin. So for relaxation, the family prefers quiet times together over high-flying excitement. "We don't have much downtime," he laughs. "But when we do, we try to spend it doing something relatively relaxing that we can all do together."

The future? For Stefan Walker, it looks like more of the same. "I'm going to be in this business a long time," he says. "I'm not an old guy yet and I love what I do, this is the greatest job in the world." So, as long as there are houses to be sold, dreams to make come true and customers to serve, Walker will be making friends in the real estate industry. "I can't honestly see myself doing anything else." ★

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