

TOP AGENT

MAGAZINE



Russ L. Robinson

Fulfilling His Destiny

by Jaymi Naciri • photography Mike Moreland

There are those who seek out a career in real estate because they feel they are well suited for it. And then there are those who are so well suited for real estate that the career seeks them out.

Russ L. Robinson hadn't planned on becoming a real estate agent. As a retired business owner, entrepreneur, and real estate investor, he was simply looking for a way to increase his personal portfolio. But perhaps that objective was lost on his friends, family, and colleagues, because as soon as Russ was licensed, they began lining up for his professional advice and guidance. Thus, a whole new career was born.

"I had sold three companies I owned in Atlanta for 14 years, and had started investing in real estate," said Russ. "I got my license as a means of giving me better access to the real estate databases. But I soon had people asking me to analyze properties. I quickly got so busy with people wanting me to represent them that I decided to become a full time agent. Initially, getting licensed was simply going to be a vehicle for my investments, but it turned out to be a whole lot more."

Russ's representation of his clients was so superior that, before he knew it, the man who was clearly predestined for a real estate career was beginning his record rise to the top of the industry. Each year, he has been in the Top Five agents statewide for Re/Max and the Top 20 agents in all of Georgia. Last year, he was ranked the #1 agent in all of the Southeast; he is also ranked in the Top 20 in the United States and is ranked #56 in the world for his company, and was the first individual Re/Max agent in the company's history to achieve Diamond Club status—achievements that have branded him as a true expert in his field, and an agent who is universally admired by clients and peers alike.

"As a real estate closing attorney, I am keenly aware of the importance of having strong people working on all aspects of the closing process," said Cheryl Conner King, a Partner and Managing Attorney for Morris | Hardwick | Schneider, the largest real estate closing firm in the nation. "Beginning with the listing period or a buyer's initial property search, it is vital to involve people with the utmost competence in order to arrive at a successful closing. I have had the pleasure



of working with Russ Robinson for many years. I trusted him to handle the purchase transaction for my sister, as well as the purchase and sale of property for my mother-in-law and many friends. I look forward to many more years of cohesive teamwork. He guides his clients to reap the rewards of a strong market and traverse the terrain of a challenging market. He is truly a professional.”

High praise and awards and honors may come in droves, but ask Russ what accounts for his impressive achievements and stellar reputation, and you won't get a complicated dissertation. Instead, Russ provides an easy explanation of the basics of business success—attention to detail, ongoing education, honesty, determination, knowledge, tenacious negotiating skills, excellent follow-up, and a dedication to excellent marketing to support his listings.

“My business plan has called for a growth mode every year,” said Russ, who shares his secret to success with new and trained agents by leading panel discussions for the Atlanta Board of Realtors and discusses market conditions and buying trends and patterns on the Joel Miller show on 1160 a.m., which can be heard on Saturday from 3 to 4 p.m. “I've been implementing systems and strategies using innovative marketing ideas and outstanding tracking systems. I also spend four times more than my next closest competitor on advertising for my listed properties. When the market begins to change, it is more important than ever to be able to help your clients stand apart. I provide them with an incredible marketing package, which has been a critical element in helping my business grow every year.”

And grow it has, from the inside out. The postcards you get on your doorstep listing an agent's year-to-date sales? You won't find one from Russ. He concentrates his marketing dollars squarely on his clients, and depends upon great word of mouth.

“My business is driven by referral only,” he said. “I don't do any 'Just Sold' postcards. I rely on providing my clients with world-class service and hopefully I'm giving them more than they expect, so, as a result, they refer me a lot of people each year, and my client roster continues to expand.”

Russ's reputation for excellence has grown in lockstep with his roster, and as his renown has spread, so has his geographical areas of expertise, as well as his niche business.

“I represent approximately 12 different builders as a consultant,” he said. “As the market tightened, a lot of builders and developers began contacting me to come and analyze their property or project and give them an



overview of what I would recommend they do in order to drive more sales.”

Most of these projects are in the Atlanta area, where he has lived for 50 years, although Russ is also in demand for consultations on multi-million dollar projects in North Carolina and Florida, where he is licensed and assists clients with inventory on a limited basis. Within North Georgia, Russ applies his broad knowledge of individual neighborhoods, together with his depth of understanding of the real estate market as a whole and pricing trends and inventory, to help his clients achieve their goals.

“Local knowledge is critical,” he said. “I believe that only with all the information can anyone make an informed decision. I remain well versed on all the factors that can impact a particular area of the city and help my clients make the right decision—schools, shopping, design. I make sure I know everything there is to know so that I can identify what areas best fit my buyers' needs and any factors that may affect my sellers.”

No matter where his clients take him, Russ continues to

specialize in the ultra luxury product that put him on the map and continues to inspire his excellence.

“I consider myself an ultra luxury specialist,” he said. “I have been living in Atlanta for 50 years, and I have a database I would put up against anyone’s.”

That database includes entertainers, athletes, sports agents, attorneys, accountants—the “gatekeepers for high-net-worth clients,” he said.

As a result, these individuals have developed relationships with Russ based on a high level of trust and the understanding that he will handle their clients in the appropriate manner and provide them with uncompromising service.

“Over the years, as a lot more high-end inventory has been built in Atlanta, the need for this type of representation has increased dramatically,” he said. “I tend to get a lot of sports agents, managers, and the like requesting that I work with their client.”

No matter whom he is representing or where the property is located, Russ’s mastery of all aspects of real estate transactions, from market analyses to contract law to creative financing, allows him to work through complex transactions and achieve positive outcomes. Explained client George Paras, who has worked with Russ on several projects ranging from the sale of a home, to a purchase of a second home, to the purchase of a commercial building for his business, and





the lease-up of a building, and has experienced firsthand his unsurpassed service.

“Over the years, I have worked with numerous real estate agents, but I have never seen anyone able to approach Rusty on his ability to close deals and to complete projects. An example tells the tale: We reached an agreed upon price on a home purchase on a Sunday morning. Rusty had bank representatives calling us that afternoon. On a Sunday! He can bring together all of the people that might be needed—appraisers, inspectors, bankers, carpenters, electricians, lawyers—in order to successfully complete the purchase or sale of a property. He is a master at solving problems and is a consummate professional. This translates to a fast property sale, something that is a difficult task in a difficult real estate market.”

For Russ, consistent results that are achieved in spite of challenging conditions are intrinsic to his genuine desire to help his clients achieve their goals. A dichotomy of professionalism and down-to-earth friendliness, Russ is as acclaimed for his expertise as he is appreciated for his charm. Call him, and he’ll answer his own phone. Speak with him, and he’ll quickly tell you to call him Rusty, as client George Paras does. He may be the top agent in the state, but his success is entirely without pretense.

“I have two assistants who help me with the administrative functions of my business so I can concentrate on servicing my clients,” he said. “I do all the listing and selling, and I answer my phone 24/7. One of my pet peeves when I call someone is not being able to reach them, so I make sure I make myself available, even if that is not the norm in our industry.

“Seventy percent of business in real estate is done on weekends and in the evenings,” he continued. “Most people we represent have jobs with traditional hours, so I have to be available to them when they get home, and I do. If you call me, as long as I am not in a bad cell area, I will answer. My wife doesn’t love it; she has been known to give me a hard time when I hang the phone on the shower door so I don’t miss a call, but she is tolerant and understanding.”

Russ’s commitment to his family, which includes his wife of 12 years, Jenna, and five-year-old twin sons Bradford and Corey, is such that he carves out daily and special occasion family time—a favorite pastime is family travel—whenever possible. He is the first to admit that balance of work and family life is critical to long-term success in any business, but, more importantly, to a happy life.



“My wife would say that balance is not my strong suit, but it is something I am continually working on. I try to be home in a position to put my boys to bed each evening, and I am there when they get up in the mornings,” he said. “The time I spend with them is quality, away from the TV. We do things together. I know there isn’t always enough of me to go around, and there are constantly a lot of demands on my time, so my free time is all about my family.

“It makes it easier to work the hours I do knowing I have their support, and also feeling the way I do about real estate.”

he added. “I love being able to do creative, out-of-the-box deals and work through challenging situations to help my clients achieve their real estate goals. It is rewarding every single day.”

He may not have pursued real estate in the conventional way, or for conventional reasons for that matter, but Russ L. Robinson has achieved success and fulfillment beyond expectations. His name is on the lips of Atlanta’s most discerning clients, his results put him in a league of his own, and he is at the top of a game he didn’t even set out to play.

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