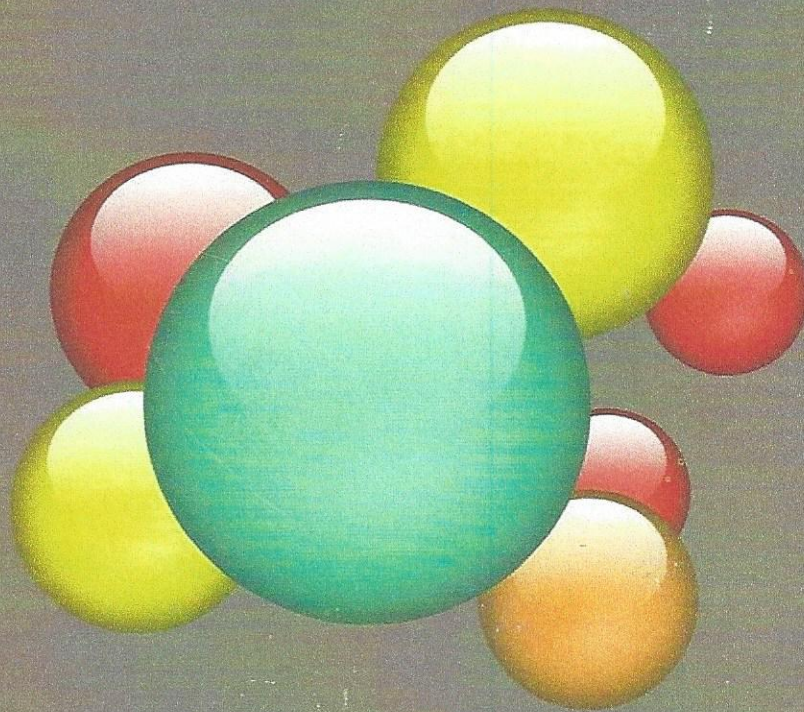


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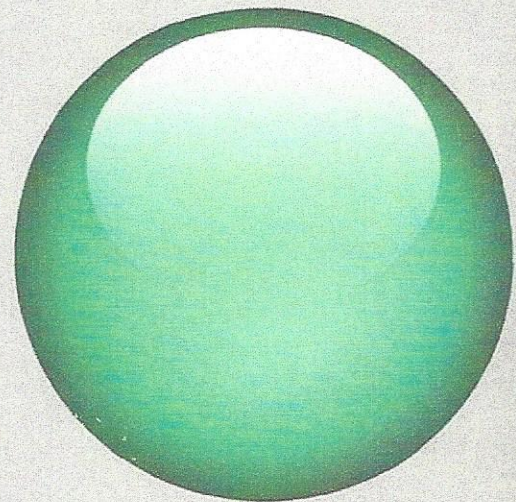


Bruce Gardner

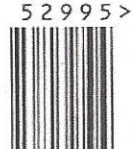
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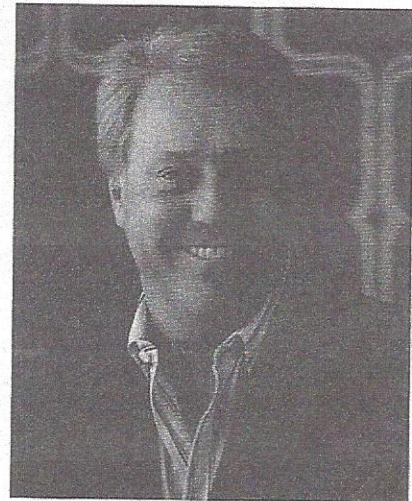


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About The Author

Bruce Gardner received his real estate license in Colorado in 1992 and joined RE/MAX the same year. He has earned the ABR, CRS and GRI designations, and he is a Member of the RE/MAX Hall of Fame. He served on the Board of Directors of the Aurora Association of Realtors for 6 years and has served on the Metrolist Board of Directors since 2002. He was chosen as the Aurora Association's 2008 Realtor of the Year.



He began coaching real estate agents full time in 2007 and has focused on matching an agent's individual strengths and talents to a clear and effective business strategy. He is currently the Director of Agent Development with Your Castle Real Estate in Denver, Colorado.

He is a co-author of "Thrive: How Realtors Can Succeed In A Down Market", and "Unlocked: The Eight Secrets of Highly Efficient Sales Professionals".

His passion is helping real estate agents find their natural Success Style and to build businesses that help them accomplish their professional and personal goals, and lead intentional lives.

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EXPERT STYLE: LAURA BOYAJIAN

Bruce: Laura, how long have you been in real estate in Phoenix?

Laura: I'm entering my 7th year.

Bruce: And do you have a focus or a specialization in your business?

Laura: Yes, historic homes in the central and downtown Phoenix area.

Bruce: How big of an area is that?

Laura: That's a good question. I don't know exactly but in the thousands for sure. Really downtown Phoenix is pretty big. The areas that I work in border Scottsdale, parts of West Phoenix and all of the way through downtown to the ballpark, and up through North Central Phoenix.

Bruce: How did you end up choosing that? What was it that kind of led you in that direction?

Laura: You know I grew up in older homes in Chicago and to me it was really no big deal growing up in an older home, but when I moved to Phoenix and I started learning was about the historic districts out here and that they have more value. There's a higher demand for them because there are fewer of them in number in comparison to the rest of the valley. So much of Phoenix is cookie cutter and with the amount of people moving here from the east coast and the Midwest, I saw a demand for people who like the charm and the character of older homes.

Bruce: Ok.

Laura: Because that's what they're used to growing up in, kind of like me. They don't want cookie cutter, they want charm they want cool older homes and I was no exception to that. I didn't want cookie cutter, I wanted a nice established neighborhood, I wanted a house with some character and charm and I realized that the demand for that is extraordinarily high. So there lots of people that the first words out of their mouth are: "I don't want cookie cutter. I want an older established neighborhood, I want something with charm, I want a Tudor home, I want a colonial home." So they're forced to come to the downtown Phoenix area. Although there are some historic areas in other cities, smaller, like Scottsdale has some historic areas but not so much historic districts. There are some Historic districts in Tempe but again very limited.

Bruce: So your clients are really interested in buying a home that's in one of those areas for a variety of reasons, but they want to live there?

CITY: Phoenix, AZ

WEBSITE:

www.HistoricCentralPhoenix.com

PRODUCTION: 26 transactions in 2009, about \$100k

AUTHOR'S NOTES: Laura is a perfect example of an agent who has merged a passion for a specific kind of real estate into a productive career as an Expert. Her Ideal Clients are drawn to working with her because of that expertise, and they find her organically through her website which is targeted right at her Ideal Client. She is enjoying the success of this strategy in one of the toughest markets in the US.

Laura: Absolutely. They won't settle for anything other than an older home with charm.

Bruce: So they, and the people that live in those homes, they really enjoy the fact that they're historic and they have some specific value and uniqueness to them and all that sort of thing? Is that about it?

Laura: Absolutely. They love it and if they ever have to give it up for any reason, they're really saddened about it, you know? But the people who live in the historic homes absolutely love it, and they take extra special care of their homes and are adamant about loving them. They won't move except maybe for a home with more square footage in a historic district.

Bruce: But they want to stay in those neighborhoods because of what they represent?

Laura: Absolutely; without any question.

Bruce: Do you feel like that you've really positioned yourself as an expert in those areas and in those homes?

Laura: Absolutely.

Bruce: Do you have a special level of knowledge and expertise that would distinguish you from the typical agent who worked as a more generalist?

Laura: Absolutely.

Bruce: What do you think the percentage is of your overall transactions that come to you because of that focus that you have?

Laura: 95%.

Bruce: So that's pretty important to you? That is your business?

Laura: Yes, that's all I do. If I get anything that's in the outskirts of the city, I refer it out because I wouldn't be doing the client any justice in an area that I'm not familiar with.

Bruce: What do you do for marketing as far as positioning yourself to gather new business? What do you do to do that?

Laura: I'm really fortunate. I have HistoricCentralPhoenix.com, and I market my website quite heavily. And I put my website out there in connection with other information that pertains to historic homes and historic anything.

Bruce: Ok.

Laura: My website really automatically brings in a lot of the business for me. And then of course, there are referrals. But the website is very powerful. And the keywords, it's amazing that how many people search for historic homes. They use the word "historic" or "historical" in their search. So when I look at my stats it's historic this, historic that. So the people begin to educate themselves for a specific historic district. Then they say, "I want to live in that particular historic district." And they'll Google that or they'll just start learning about it through my website or, and then I take them on the further education path.

Bruce: Alright so the website is really driving business to you and they are people that you didn't know before that?

Laura: That's correct.

Bruce: What percentage of the transactions that you're doing are coming from that web effort do you think?

Laura: Well I do get a lot of referrals now that I've been in the business for awhile, but I would still say that my website brings in the bulk of it; probably 90%.

Bruce: Wow, that's excellent! Do you also have a blog that's associated with your website or separate or anything like that?

Laura: I do have a blog that's linked to my website. I'm not as good at keeping it updated as I should be. There's a link to my blog on my website.

Bruce: Any other social media or internet related efforts in your marketing? Do you do any like LinkedIn or any profiles on websites or anything?

Laura: Yes, I do them all. I have LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, whatever's out there. I link in with as many sites that are available to me and as many as I can keep up with. You know I do my best to tweet as much as I can, but again I'm probably not as good as I should be in keeping up on it. But I am linked in with everything and I've got my website and my info all connected together all talking about what I do and what I specialize in.

Bruce: So this specialization that basically is the center of your business; this is what it's all about for you, correct?

Laura: 100%

Bruce: Ok. And you enjoy these homes too yourself?

Laura: Oh I love going in them, I love driving the neighborhoods, love checking out the different houses. You know there's 36 historic districts and when you're in an actual historic district home, you always find something different, you know? It's like you can't possibly get into every one of them, but as you're out there with a new client and you're in a house that you've never been in before, you always see something different and unique that you didn't see before. So it's fun to go out and check out the houses. I mean looking at your cookie cutter houses; they're boring, you know. But when you go inside a historic home and there's so many different types and you walk in and you're just wowed and your clients are wowed and you look at the different built ins and you look at the different architecture and all the different types of ceilings, everything. There's just so many unique little factors in houses. And some of them have more charm than others depending on the year that they were built. Even last week alone, I was in two different historic homes that had a certain type of ceiling I had never seen before. It was nothing I'd ever seen and we were just wowed by it. It was so cool! There's always a nice little surprise so it definitely beats doing the cookie thing.

Bruce: Awesome. So, what I'm hearing from you is that your business strategy is really a good reflection of who you are and what you're interested in. And not only has it helped you become successful, it's even fun on a regular basis.

Laura: It is fun on a regular basis because it's different. It's totally different, it's totally unique, it keeps it a lot more interesting and exciting not only for me but my clients too. Perhaps the city that they came from, what they had perceived in their minds as an older home, they still come out here and go wow, this is different, this is cool. We don't have the houses like in Chicago, New York that date back to the 1800's but we do have some early 1900 houses that still fascinate even the pickiest buyer from the Midwest or the

east coast because of it's charm. So there's a difference in the style of homes here than there are in other cities that would be considered historical homes. Even though there's not historic districts per say in the Midwest or the east coast, but when they come here they still see a different style house that they haven't seen before. So, it's definitely different and people love it. And there's plenty to look at and they do move quicker than your average house.

Bruce: And your overall market in Phoenix obviously has got a lot of press for being really distressed and that sort of thing, but you're actually doing ok?

Laura: I'm doing very well. There's a lot of people that call me that want that amazing historic home in one of the best historic districts, and they still think they can get it for 100 or 200,000. And I say that I hate to break it to you but these things are not cheap. Even though our market's in the tank, these homes are still expensive. A lot of times they just don't believe me, and I just have to take them out looking and compare, so they see what's available in what area for what price. And when they compare historic homes to non-historic homes, then they get it, they end up seeing the value difference for the location and the charm of the house.

Bruce: So you really know the market well; you would say you're an expert in this market niche?

Laura: I would, yes.

Bruce: Ok. Do you have a team or other people that help you with this or do you do this by yourself?

Laura: You know I have tried to build a team of people to help me specialize in historic homes. So far I have not been able to find anybody who is capable of coming out and really learning what it takes to become a master at historic homes. It's like there's too much to learn, they just want to do regular transactions and we end up parting ways.

Bruce: That's too bad. Alright, so let's talk about the future for you. Do you have plans on doing something different in the future or adding something to what you're doing or what does that look like for you?

Laura: I'm hoping to go maybe more towards the luxury historic homes and do fewer transactions and make the same amount of money.

Bruce: Do you, when you take a listing in one of these areas, do you do anything unique as far as how you market it?

Laura: Absolutely, I put my listings on my website and I put a lot of ads up, I have a very, very heavy internet presence. I link up with a couple of different historic sites. When you market an historic home, you make sure that the first thing people see is that it is an historic home and I always name the particular historic district that it's in and the year of the house. The first thing that they see is that it's an older historic home, it's built in the early 1920's or 30's and I put that upfront so it catches their eye. And you must have a great photo of the house. The primary photo whether it's in print or online will draw the attention of people. They don't even look at price half the time. They look at the photo and they call simply based on that. I had a guy call me two days ago on a house when he saw the picture, and he didn't even look at the price, the square footage, anything. He just loved the

outside of the house and he called me and he asked how many square feet is it and how big is it and all the information was right there. People just call based on the pictures all the time. It's interesting; it's different, for sure.

Bruce: That's pretty powerful. So what I think what I'm hearing, Laura, is that you're really focused in your real estate efforts. You have a personal interest and passion for the homes, and you use web assets to drive business to you. And Consumers connect to you because of your expertise and your focus and you're just happily doing what you're doing. Is that about right?

Laura: That's absolutely it, and often when people call on historic homes, a lot of times they don't know what's potentially involved. So there's a huge education process that I go through with them. I tell them that there are so many factors other than the house, what it looks like, how cute it is, the charm. What I try to do is I educate. If the house has not been updated you may have to sink a ton of money into it. You can tell and find out whether a house is updated and to what degree just by calling the agent or looking at the MLS listing.

Bruce: I've got a couple questions for you about production levels. How many transactions do you think you did in 2009? Any guess on that?

Laura: In 2009 I did 26 transactions and on 6 of them I was representing both the buyer and the seller.

Bruce: So on 6 of them you actually had a listing that you found a buyer yourself?

Laura: That's correct.

Bruce: And what does it look like for this year? Do you think it will be about the same, better, or not as good?

Laura: This year is not as good only because I took a lot of time off for personal issues. But now that I've gotten those behind me, I am cranking and rocking and rolling again and I'm going to make up a lot for lost time in this last quarter.

Bruce: Ok. Any idea what your gross commissions were last year?

Laura: Last year was just under \$100,000.

Bruce: How long have you really focused on this historic home thing? Has it been since the beginning or has it really come into focus recently?

Laura: Since I went, that was my intention when I enrolled in real estate school.

Bruce: So it's been since the beginning.

Laura: Yes, from day one. Absolutely.

Bruce: Alright, well the book will be read by agents who are looking to take their business to another level. Is there anything you'd like to say to them that you think would be important to help them get there?

Laura: I would just say: have a niche. Have a niche, become an expert in it, I mean a real live expert. Take the time to educate yourself and pass that knowledge along to your clients and do the right thing for your clients, no matter what that is. Look beyond the money, look beyond everything. In historic homes and in historic districts, there are a lot of layers of government to go through. You can't just swap out windows in historical districts, they have to be period matching, so you have to become knowledgeable about that. So you have to get in every sector that's really

not related to the transaction of buying a home but you have to really take extra time out and educate the clients on whatever it is that you choose to become an expert in. And if you're just an agent doing regular cookie cutter houses; I still think it's still important to educate yourself on what they don't teach you in real estate school. Take it to heart, take it to soul, and really truly become an expert in your. But, get a niche and become a pro in it and your clients will be drawn to you. And if you're good at it, your reputation will grow and you'll start working on referrals. But you have to know really what you're doing and be ethical in your work to do the right thing for your client.

Bruce: Now the clients that end up working with you, especially if they didn't know you before they contacted you, they're drawn to working with you because of your expertise?

Laura: They are, they are. It's about protecting your clients, you gotta do the right thing, and guiding them to other experts if necessary that are going to know how to deal with that house and really care about it and do the right thing and not just do it for the money.

Bruce: This has been great, Laura. Thank you so much.