



The Search for *Clients First*

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Mustang Library

She was the third person in line waiting to speak with JoAnn. She wore a proper blue suit, conservative black pumps, and she had her question ready.

We were casually dressed in pressed jeans and comfortable shoes. This was 1999, our third year in the business, and we were known only to our clients. To the 300 real estate agents in attendance, we were like ghosts. We never put our photos on our business cards. Our ads were just for the homes we listed. All the public ever saw were our yard signs, which displayed the words, *THOSE CALLAWAYS*. In northeast Phoenix, we had a lot of signs.

Two hours earlier our broker, Marge, gave us an eloquent introduction. She used the crib sheet I had given her.

“JoAnn takes care of the people, and Joseph takes care of the paperwork. Sometimes Joseph takes care of people, but they never let JoAnn take care of paperwork.”

The audience laughed, even though it was a little corny. But then, I guess we are.

We shared the stage with Russell and Wendy Shaw, who were well known. Russell promotes his real estate business through television and radio commercials and is very entertaining. He kept the crowd laughing, and time flew by.

During the presentation, JoAnn fielded several questions and framed all of her answers around how we take care of our clients.

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How do you get listings? Our clients refer us to their families and friends. *Do you ask for referrals?* No, we don't know how to ask. They just come. *Why don't you run ads about yourselves?* We run ads about our clients' homes. That's what they hire us for. *Do you make cold calls?* No. *Do you call your circle of influence?* Heavens, no. *Do you have a personal brochure?* Never.

The Question

So, this lady in blue was smiling and waiting her turn in the line that formed near the stage after the event. Dozens of audience members wanted to talk one-on-one with the speakers. This woman had been impressed with the panel and was fiercely determined to have her moment with JoAnn.

At last JoAnn finished with the gentleman in front of the lady in the blue suit, and the woman stepped forward. She was in her early 40s, perfectly made up, and she explained that she had been in real estate for almost 20 years. Then this vision in blue asked her question. "Tell me," she said, "what's the one thing you feel is the secret for your fabulous success in so short a time?"

We weren't used to terms like *fabulous*. We just felt lucky. We had no clue how we compared to other agents in the Scottsdale and Phoenix market area, because you couldn't access the data back then. We knew who the local legends were and had completed transactions with a couple of them, but we had no idea that over the previous 12 months we had sold more homes than any other agent in Arizona.

JoAnn seemed not to notice the praise and immediately launched into an explanation of all the things we did to take care of our clients. She told the lady in blue that we put our *clients first* at all times, thus making them feel that to us they are the most important people in the world.

This nice woman waited patiently through it all. She took care to nod at all the correct moments. Then, when JoAnn had finished, with urgency in her voice, she said, "Yes, yes, I understand all that, but tell me, what is the *real* reason for your success?"

It Was Our Fault

Didn't she *get it*? I think if she had, she would have been the one standing on the stage instead of us. She was better dressed. She had worked at least 17 more years in the business. She seemed ambitious and determined. But she just didn't *get it*.

This lovely, well-intentioned woman had been searching for years, her lifetime perhaps, for the secret that would make her a success. We've met thousands of seekers since that day at the Mustang Library, and they all asked the same what-is-the-secret-of-your-success question, and they all dismissed our take-care-of-the-client answer. Were they not listening? No. It was our fault.

We hadn't found a way to explain that real reason. Our answer seemed too simple, too obvious. We didn't have charts or a pyramid diagram or a list of rules. We talked about taking care of clients, and people would say, "Oh, we already do that." Or they would ask, "Is that some kind of customer service thing?" We knew even then that *Clients First* was a two word miracle that, once understood, had the power to change peoples' lives, to transform businesses, and to bring about financial security. We just could not explain it.

For the first half of our lives, we had been just like the blue-suited woman who persevered in her stylish attire. We were fellow travelers. We had struggled with the same question and were left wanting for an answer. We looked for the secret as though it were something others knew and kept from us. We didn't discover *Clients First* until we started to work in the real estate business. Even then, were it not for a dark and stormy night three months into our budding real estate careers, we would still be asking, "What is the real secret to success?"

The Quest

This woman's question at the Mustang Library that morning set JoAnn and me searching for an explanation. We had found something profound, something that changed us and changed our lives. Yet we were unable to explain how it worked.

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The explanation would be a quest, a marathon. It would come after seven years spent interacting with thousands of clients. We would first sell a seemingly impossible billion dollars—plus worth of homes. We would live through the greatest real estate bubble and bust in many generations, and we would survive because of something we named *Clients First*. The answer did not come easily. But when it arrived, it came in a moment of inspiration.

If you have been searching, come along as we seek to unlock closed doors and find a path to immense rewards. You will discover open secrets so hidden that they may as well be buried on a distant shore. You will realize that you don't know what you think you know and that you know more than you think. You will find answers within yourself, and you will know that you can achieve great success, because, as you come to know us and our story, you will realize how ordinary we are and how extraordinary has been our experience. An experience you can share and use as your springboard to wealth.

This is the promise of *Clients First*. It will change you. It will change your future. It will last the rest of your life.

In the pages to come, you will learn that nothing is impossible and that everything is possible for you.

But first we must take our journey. We must search for *Clients First*. We must travel southbound on Interstate 84.