

Lesson learned: Why you truly have to get to know your clients

DJK Residential's Barbara Ireland provides game-changing services to her Manhattan market

BY CHRISTY MURDOCK EDGAR |  |  TODAY 2:00 A.M. 

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Barbara Ireland

In this weekly column, real estate agents across the nation share stories of the lessons they've learned during their time in the industry.

With a focus on Battery Park City, Barbara Ireland creates a client-focused process that keeps people coming back — and telling their friends and family. How do you bring the personal touch to a huge metropolitan market like Manhattan? We asked Ireland for her advice.

How long have you been in the business?

In 2011, after 26 fabulous years with a major financial services enterprise, I felt that I was due for a change. I wanted to be my own boss, have flexibility and focus on my passions. I found that real estate was a perfect fit for my next step as I love interior design, and New York City has every style you can imagine.

I started my real estate career at DJK Residential because of its entrepreneurial spirit, leadership and guidance provided by the DJK management team. For

seven years, I have specialized in residential rentals and sales in my neighborhood — the unique community of Battery Park City.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

I've enjoyed my career in residential real estate and the quest to find my clients their perfect home. Over the next five years, I plan to expand my focus to the evolution of the Lower Manhattan landscape. Many new developments are underway in the area, and I'm excited for the new opportunities ahead.



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What's one big lesson you've learned in real estate?

The financial aspect can be secondary to the [emotional needs](#) of your clients. Take time to sit down and listen to your clients carefully and understand their lifestyle and priorities.

How did you learn it?

For one of my clients, I thought I had found a condo that was a perfect match to what they were looking for. It had the right price, view and square footage, and the seller even overheard my client say: "This is the place!"

I prepared the written offer and was inquiring for my client's supporting documents. However, they were not financially prepared for all of the upfront financial details needed for the application, as well as the costs to apply and buy [a New York City co-op](#).

Additionally, there was the added uncertainty of the co-op board's approval process that would take a few months.

It was a rookie move on my part and very emotional for all parties involved. Had I taken time with my client to go over all necessary documentation and fees, I would have understood that my client needed to find an apartment to rent instead for their first year in New York City. I wasted time searching and showing places that were not best suited for their needs.

Clients can get caught up in the excitement of finding their apartment and overlook the financial requirements and process of the purchase or rental. It's my job as their real estate adviser to make sure they know all aspects and obligations of the property before moving forward with the process.

What advice would you give to new agents?

Allocating time is critical. You must be fully prepared before taking your client out to see any properties. You must study the listings, buildings and the sale or rental history. Make sure every property satisfies most of your client's top needs/priorities. Map out your showing schedule to be more time efficient as you show your client various properties.

You must also be knowledgeable about your exclusive listings. Take the time to prepare by reviewing the apartment with the owner, and [collect the current building documents](#). Preview the building before showing it to your client.

Lastly, remember that we cannot be all things to all people. You must find [your niche](#) and become an expert to be successful in the industry.

Are you an agent with a story everyone can learn something from? Reach out to us (contributors@inman.com). We look forward to featuring more of our best agents and brokers in a future edition of "Lesson learned."

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