

Special Advertising Feature

The Thousand



Specialties,
Special
Services Drive
Home Sales

by Joseph Dobrian

Homebuyers and sellers appreciate both generalists and specialists. In some markets, a broker can flourish through an ability to handle any type of property for any client. In other markets, clients gravitate to companies that provide a service or market knowledge that can't be duplicated. Real estate professionals can also develop different niches — and dramatically different customer bases — at different stages of their careers.

Ben Caballero, founder and CEO of Addison, Texas-based HomesUSA.com, says his business is not like a conventional broker. Rather, he provides a cloud-based platform that manages new home listings in Multiple Listing Services (MLS) for homebuilders at mainstream price points. By offering this service, HomesUSA handles many transactions and high-dollar volume.

"Custom builders don't need us," Caballero explains. "They can manage their listings in-house or list them with a broker."

But if they are listing hundreds or even thousands of homes a year, managing changes efficiently for price, completion date, availability, photography or any of the other of the 200-plus data fields becomes nearly impossible. "Our platform has profiles and templates that enable builders to generate a listing quickly and easily. To avoid errors, we have 32 validations that make the most common mistakes nearly impossible," he says.

"We provide professional photography and multiple reports generated in seconds. For example, one report tells builders what properties brokers are selling in a specified ZIP code and price range," he adds.

Currently, HomesUSA operates in the Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, San Antonio and Austin areas. "Our platform is scalable, so we're capable of serving any market if there's sufficient building activity," Caballero affirms.

IT'S ABOUT THE WIND

While Caballero specializes in a unique (for now) service, Neal Norman, broker at Hawaii Life, specializes in a unique region: the north shore of the island of Kauai, the "Garden Island." He reports that selling on Kauai — or on the other islands — requires esoteric knowledge of minutiae that might never be considered in other markets.

"My number one secret of success is developing trust with buyers and sellers," he declares. "Clients know I understand wind direction and proper building techniques, which is one of the first things we talk about, because you want a house that faces a certain direction on account of wind, rain and sun."

"This is not a primary market where people buy a home to be close to work," he adds. "I sell to people because they've fallen in love with a paradisiacal place. They're not driven by logic, but by desire and emotion."

Norman says his average sale last year was \$10 million or more, but average days on the market are much longer than in a primary market. "The best properties usually wait for the right buyer," he says.

The trick to selling on Kauai and the state's other islands, he says, is helping buyers understand the market's intricacies, the culture and the traditions. His clients tend to be well-informed and intelligent; he gets a lot of business from referrals.

"These buyers want a knowledgeable and trustworthy friend to tell them, 'You gotta work with Neal,'" he says. "He's super-connected; he knows his way around; he will not steer you wrong."

DON'T GET MARRIED TO A SPECIALTY

John Murray, broker-owner of Key Realty headquartered in Rockford, Illinois, says he has had to change his specialty from time to time, depending on sea changes in the market. For example, he noticed in 2003 that income was not appreciating at the same level as housing. Thus, he decided, a housing bubble was inevitable.

"I started building a foreclosure machine, buying and selling properties, while everyone else focused on new construction and flipping," he explains. "The crash of 2008-2010 was disastrous for most people, but I had built Noah's Ark."

When the foreclosure market dried up, Murray shifted his practice to traditional real estate. Now he has shifted again, looking at Puerto Rico.

"MLS does not cover the majority of the island," he notes, "and there are thousands of homes in disrepair or delinquency. I can help people get back in, post-hurricane, in a systematic way and help bring efficiencies and revenue to municipalities. I'm bringing stateside expertise to build an organized real estate marketplace. Puerto Rico also has massive tax breaks for those who qualify."

LUXURYREALESTATE.COM™
WHO'S WHO IN LUXURY REAL ESTATE



Grimentz, Valais, Switzerland
In the charming Swiss village of Grimentz, a paradise for skiers and hikers, the Guernér's alpine residences provide "ski in & ski out" access, with panoramic views. All apartments offer a sophisticated alpine setting, combining luxury and authenticity. Concierge services, amenities of the nearby luxury hotel and spa, as well as letting management service. From CHF660'000. sales@guerners-alpineresidences.swiss.



Ross, CA USA
Completed in 2010, the architectural 5-bedroom, 6.5-bathroom masterpiece stands boldly amid sprawling level grounds, heritage trees, a 20-yard saltwater pool and children's sports fields. Steps from The Ross School and Ross Commons, this compound offered at \$22,000,000 is a lifetime opportunity to live the elevated Marin lifestyle in privacy, comfort and convenience. [Neal Ward](mailto:NealWard@compass.com) — neal@compass.com, [Carey Haglund](mailto:CareyHaglund@compass.com) Carey.Condy@compass.com.



Lanikai, Oahu, HI USA
Wake up to breathtaking sunrise views between the Mokuia Islands in majestic Lanikai, Oahu. This charming Oceanfront home has a 4-bedroom, 3-bathroom main house, separate 1-bedroom cottage, and studio with an enclosed 2-car garage. Featuring beautiful Koa wood floors and a private staircase leading to gentle turquoise waters. [Alesia Barnes](mailto:AlesiaBarnes@barneshawaii.com), [Barnes Hawaii Group at Elite Pacific Properties](mailto:BarnesHawaiiGroup@ElitePacificProperties.com), [808.397.7928](tel:8083977928), alesia@barneshawaii.com, www.barneshawaii.com.



Huntsville, AL USA
The Ledges — A luxury golfing mountain community with beautiful views of the valley! \$3,150,000. [Julie V. Lockwood](mailto:JulieV.Lockwood@broker.com), Broker Associate, Van Valkenburgh & Wilkinson Properties, Inc. [256.797.4028](tel:2567974028), [256.539.0505](tel:2565390505).



Belvedere, CA USA
Exquisite bayfront 3BR/3BA home with bay views from nearly every room! Boat dock. Land lease. 87WestShore@aol.com. \$3,000,000. Compass, [Jill Gumina](mailto:JillGumina), [415.265.1717](tel:4152651717) or [Stephanie Ahlberg](mailto:StephanieAhlberg@compass.com), [415.271.5117](tel:4152715117).



Carmel, CA USA
Capture the Carmel Lifestyle! Beautifully re-designed large 4 bedroom, 3 1/2 bath home just a 10-minute stroll to town. \$3,095,000. [Stacey Schradler](mailto:StaceySchradler@compass.com), [831.917.6081](tel:8319176081).



Los Gatos, CA USA
Amazing contemporary 56-acre estate in Silicon Valley with panoramic views. \$15,950,000. [Olivia Hsu Decker](mailto:OliviaHsuDecker@sothebysrealty.com), [415.720.5915](tel:4157205915), Olivia.HsuDecker@SothebysRealty.com. www.AztecEstateLosGatos.com.



Pacific Palisades, CA USA
One Coast is a unique collection of luxury residences with breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean. From the \$3Ms and offering 2,800–5,000 sq ft of living space. [Sales Office](mailto:SalesOffice@onecoast.com), [310.230.0101](tel:3102300101) or onecoast@etcohomes.com.



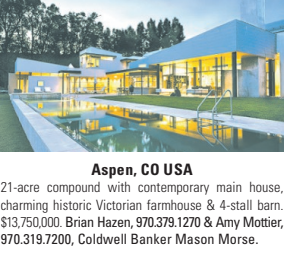
San Francisco, CA USA
Magnificent Edwardian in Pacific Heights with 4 bedrooms, exceptional grace and captivating designer finishes. \$5,995,000. [LawtonSF.com](mailto:LawtonSF@compass.com), [Patricia Lawton](mailto:PatriciaLawton@compass.com), [Compass](tel:Compass), [415.309.7836](tel:4153097836).



San Francisco, CA USA
Elegant Heights co-op apartment with private garden. Pacific design with exquisite details. Iconic building with doorman. \$2,995,000. [LawtonSF.com](mailto:LawtonSF@compass.com), [Patricia Lawton](mailto:PatriciaLawton@compass.com), [Compass](tel:Compass), [415.309.7836](tel:4153097836).



San Francisco, CA USA
Cow Hollow. Sleek and stylish 2-unit building + studio garden unit. Impeccable taste in design. Penthouse has panoramic Golden Gate Bridge view roof deck. \$4,800,000. [LawtonSF.com](mailto:LawtonSF@compass.com), [Patricia Lawton](mailto:PatriciaLawton@compass.com), [Compass](tel:Compass), [415.309.7836](tel:4153097836).



Aspen, CO USA
21-acre compound with contemporary main house, charming historic Victorian farmhouse & 4-stall barn. \$13,750,000. [Brian Hazen](mailto:BrianHazen@coldwellbanker.com), [970.378.1270](tel:9703781270) & [Amy Mottier](mailto:AmyMottier@coldwellbanker.com), [970.319.7200](tel:9703197200), [Coldwell Banker Morse](mailto:ColdwellBankerMorse).



Rehoboth Beach, DE USA
Lovely 7BR/7.5BA updated Victorian features gracious, wraparound porch, generous living spaces. Large modern kitchen. Located 1 BLOCK to OCEAN. Rental income 100K+. \$1,998,000. [Debbie](mailto:Debbie@debbiereed.com) [302.227.3818](tel:3022273818).



Fort Lauderdale, FL USA
Southern Coastal inspired Estate on nearly 2 acres with approximately 500' of ocean access waterfront and multiple yacht dockage. \$22,495,000. [Julie Jones-Bernard](mailto:JulieJonesBernard@luxuriousproperties.com), Florida Luxurious Properties, [954.328.3665](tel:9543283665).



Hillsboro Beach, FL USA
Sited on Superior Hillsboro Mile offering 100' of ocean front and over 120' of direct intracoastal, this waterfront property offers a truly rare opportunity to create something magnificent. [Michelle Howland](mailto:MichelleHowland@compass.com), [Compass](tel:Compass), [954.658.4712](tel:9546584712).



Kauai, HI USA
Nearly 5 acres plus an extraordinary residence on Tunnels Beach. \$14,000,000. [Joyce Wright Funk R\(S\)](mailto:JoyceWrightFunk@elitepacificproperties.com), [Hannah Sirois R\(B\)](mailto:HannahSirois@elitepacificproperties.com), [Sean Ahearn R\(B\)](mailto:SeanAhearn@elitepacificproperties.com), Elite Pacific Properties. Info@KauaiHP.com, [800.880.4093](tel:8008804093).



Kauai, HI USA
Tropical residence, 3 poolside pavilions, garage and accessory buildings above golden Secret Beach. \$6,800,000. [Hannah Sirois R\(B\)](mailto:HannahSirois@elitepacificproperties.com), [Sean Ahearn R\(B\)](mailto:SeanAhearn@elitepacificproperties.com), Elite Pacific Properties. Info@KauaiHP.com, [800.880.4093](tel:8008804093).



Kauai, HI USA
Ralph Anderson designed vacation rental compound with a main residence, pool and guest house in sunny Poipu. \$7,750,000. [Hannah Sirois R\(B\)](mailto:HannahSirois@elitepacificproperties.com), Elite Pacific Properties. Info@KauaiHP.com, [808.742.1191](tel:8087421191).



Kauai, HI USA
Stunning ocean view estate adjacent to the National Tropical Botanical Garden offering the finest in privacy, luxury and lifestyle. \$5,295,000. [Hannah Sirois R\(B\)](mailto:HannahSirois@elitepacificproperties.com), Elite Pacific Properties. Info@KauaiHP.com, [808.742.1191](tel:8087421191).



Lake Forest, IL USA
Built in '05, historic presence and exquisite details encompass this English residence located just steps from Lake Michigan. 5+1 bedrooms, 7.4 baths. 745Woodland.com, 3,950,000. [Ann Lyon](mailto:AnnLyon@8478289991), [847.828.9991](tel:8478289991).




Lake Forest, IL USA
Spectacular home, built in '09 with Smart House tech, 6-car garage, Sport Court, geothermal heating, pool/spa, elevator and guesthouse. 7 bedroom, 7.2 bath. \$4,950,000. [Ann Lyon](mailto:AnnLyon@8478289991), [847.828.9991](tel:8478289991).



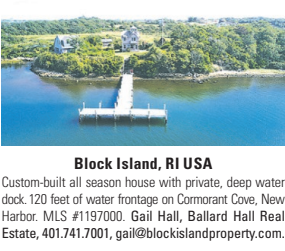
Lake Forest, IL USA
On 5+ acres with 425+ feet of Lake Michigan beach. Illinois' most architecturally significant estate! 12 bedrooms, 11.4 baths. 405MayflowerRoad.com, \$8,950,000. [Ann Lyon](mailto:AnnLyon@8478289991), [847.828.9991](tel:8478289991).



Lake Forest, IL USA
Architectural masterpiece on Lake Michigan with 2,500 SF boathouse and 400' of beach. Built in 2001 around historic Great Hall w/ 6 bedrooms, 6.2 baths. 77Stonegate.com, \$12,000,000. [Ann Lyon](mailto:AnnLyon@8478289991), [847.828.9991](tel:8478289991).



Old Field, Long Island, NY USA
18,000 SF mansion on 10-acres with 3,000 ft of beachfront. Location has Smithtown Bay on one side and Long Island Sound on the other. 90 min from NYC. \$16,888,000. [Coach Realtors](mailto:CoachRealtors@kz.com), [Andrea Kozlowsky](mailto:AndreaKozlowsky@kz.com), [516.650.6870](tel:5166506870).



Block Island, RI USA
Custom-built all season house with private, deep water dock. 120 feet of water frontage on Cormorant Cove, New Harbor. MLS #1197000. [Gail Hall](mailto:GailHall@ballardhallreal.com), Ballard Hall Real Estate, [401.741.7001](tel:4017417001), gail@blockislandproperty.com.



Puget Sound, WA USA
72 ft. no bank, south-facing beachfront. Vassos Demetriou-designed residence of utmost sophistication. Luxurious master, sublime finishes, showplace kitchen. Mt. Rainier views. \$2,995,000. [Ewing & Clark](mailto:Ewing&Clark@2063222840), [206.322.2840](tel:2063222840).



Seattle, WA USA
Queen Anne Hill. Industrial-farmhouse styling w/panorama of Downtown Seattle, Elliott Bay, & Mt. Rainier. Walnut millwork, Calacatta and graphite marble, curated modern lighting. \$5,990,000. [Ewing & Clark](mailto:Ewing&Clark@2063222840), [206.322.2840](tel:2063222840).