

power couple. They are sitting together and shaking with laughter when I arrive at the dimly lit booth in Andy's favorite sushi haunt, Café East. Louise shakes my hand and sits up straight, folding her hands calmly on the table. Andy slaps me on the back and starts waving his arms, chattering away about eleven different subjects. Somehow we find the time to order California rolls before he starts again.

The waitress, who approaches the table with a practiced caution in order to avoid Andy's wild hand gestures, interrupts us. She slides his plate to him, and he immediately dumps a thumb-sized blob of wasabi into a shallow dish of soy sauce. Louise looks at him and shakes her head. "You're going to burn yourself out." Andy shrugs. "I do that every day."

Andy is joking, although they live and work inside and outside Lancaster seven days a week and sometimes fifteen hours a day. And though they aren't technically coworkers (they are individual sales agents), they connect as partners. Their own coworkers say they're inseparable, constantly talking prices, contracts, and inspections- always reading blogs, books, and industry publications. "I get dizzy with these two," says one, who asks not to be named, "Andy spins in his chair rattling off figures and Louise marches into the office ("I do march," she confesses) and starts hammering him about twists in her deals." Louise isn't surprised to hear this. I do get a little bit huffy puffy - passionate - about what I do. But I try to keep that within the office." Andy laughs. "I'm always calming her down. When she's getting you a home, she's gonna GET you that home!" Louise pounds the table. "I want what i want for my clients!" She lowers her voice. "A house is your safety net. It's your zone. Home is where you're in charge of things."

Louise is one passionate female voice among a horde of farm-bred brutes; she's the only lady in the office. She's up not only against Andy's feverish momentum, but also the intensity of black-suited real estate salesmen at work. But she isn't worried. "Oh, they're very respectful," says Louise. She shrugs. "But I could take them. At home I wrangle five boys and I never

lose." Her oldest kid, her husband, loves Andy. "He says I calm her down," says Andy, and laughs.

"We don't do real estate," says Louise, smiling. "We do Esbenstate." This procedure is all about details. Missing even one can leave a buyer or seller vulnerable.

The two grown-ups in her life represent her two most important values: family and work. "My priorities are very simple." Simple, but delirious with activity; Louise is a Doris Day in a contemporary "Please

Don't Eat the Daisies." She laughs. "People come and go constantly. The boys dig in piles of dirt. The dog digs up the yard!" Despite the constant activity, Louise stays true to one motto: "If you genuinely care about people and if you are always trying to provide the highest level of service, the rest will fall into place," she says.

Andy is no less passionate. He thrives on living in Lancaster and the constant change and excitement of the business. When he's home, Andy's family (Mrs. Esbenshade and a veritable barnyard of critters) is

Continued on next page

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Continued from previous page

very patient. "Four horses, one dog and one cat," he says, counting them off on his fingers. If he's always busy, he doesn't mind. "I can't be doing nothing. Either I'm sleeping or I'm kayaking or shoveling manure or riding my bike." Or maybe he's wrangling pruning hooks at the Landis Valley Museum, which boasts "the largest collection of early American farm implementation in the country!"

Despite their differences in personality, Andy and Louise are real estate nerds at heart and very particular about how they do business. "You can't be a control freak," says Andy, yet partly credits his success to a tailored process he's built to handle the administrative part of the business. "We don't do real estate," says Louise, smiling. "We do Esbenstate."

This procedure is all about details. Missing even one can leave a buyer or seller vulnerable. "It's tough to let go," says Andy, frowning. "Once I went on vacation for two days," he says, "and left a nearly-complete sale in the hands of another realtor (who no longer works here)." Andy sighs and makes a checkmark on the table with his chopstick. "He forgot to check the box—the one that limits buyer liability. My guy wasn't protected, and he lost twenty thousand dollars." This hasn't happened since; Andy and Louise work each other's sales when the other is away.

They've mastered the accounting and paperwork (over fifty grueling pages of signatures per deal, sometimes more), but spend most of their time winning sales. "We're still going," says Andy, "The fact that we're still here and making sales in the down economy is a testament to the reputation we've built." Louise points her chopstick at me. "Integrity and honesty!" she says. "If you don't have that, you don't have anything."

"She's not kidding," says Andy, "Last year she turned down a \$300,000 sale because the buyer wanted to back date the contract to get a tax credit." Louise shrugs. "You've got to wonder about another realtor who's asking you to do illegal things." That realtor lost not only a sale, but also their reputation. In a market flooded with people fighting to succeed in the business, integrity and honesty make the difference.

Poseurs advertise everywhere and aggressively pursue potential buyers. I was still marking down spam from my initial home search before I found Andy. Neither chase after clients. "We do 95% of our business from referrals," says Andy. "People find out I'm a realtor because I'm always talking about interesting houses. They ask me questions. I'm not trying to sell, but it happens." Andy shrugs. "We just talk about what we enjoy; we aren't pushy, just enthusiastic!"

I ask them what the future holds, and they look at each other. "Expansion," says Louise. "We're gonna grow," says Andy. For him, it means seeking out more and more interesting things. "I've just done some bronze casting. Check out my Facebook!" For her it means reaching beyond the sale of real estate and into something greater. "I did some work for Habitat for Humanity when I lived in New Jersey. I'm going to continue that work here until everybody has a place to call home."

Twin buzzing erupts from their phones. They stare collectively at the yellow LCD screens and take a breath. It's been two hours and they're back to work. They look at each other and wave back to me as they walk out, chattering about adjustable-rate mortgages, depreciation, and finicky mortgage brokers. 🐛

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