

TOP AGENT MAGAZINE



Ione McCarthy

It took her three careers to get there, but Ione McCarthy of Coldwell Banker is now right where she belongs. She's in her home city of Seattle, selling real estate and building a beautiful quality of life for the people she works with.

After graduating from the University of Washington, she took the path most people do, which meant working for someone else. As an apparel buyer, she was a model employee—conscientious, personable and dedicated. She possessed a flair for fashion and a head for business. Still, it wasn't a good fit for her. "I realized the corporate structure wasn't for me," she says. "When other people took credit for work I had done, that didn't make me happy. I wanted to steer my own ship." So she started a travel agency, and was wildly successful, cultivating the business until she had three locations and had 40 employees.

"I loved the travel business, but I didn't love having employees," she says. "When it was just six of us, we had so much fun. We kept growing, and where there were 12 of us, we still had a good time." When there were 20 or so employees, McCarthy began to feel the pressure of too many people tugging at her sleeve. "I found myself telling people they'd have to talk to accounting if they wanted a day off, and I didn't like that. I didn't want to turn into part of the corporate world."

So McCarthy sold the business at a profit and took five years off. She spent those years doing something she loved—remodeling and selling houses. Other people might see that as work, but she considered it a privilege and a chance to play. She is very hands-on by nature, feeling quite rightly that her way is the right way when it's her money on the line. McCarthy found that the ever increasing load of physical labor associated with remodeling was getting to be more than she wanted to do.

"It began to wear on me, and I decided that the real estate

part of it looked a lot more interesting," she says. So McCarthy took all that experience—as a business owner, a creative person and an entrepreneur—and put it all toward building a reputation as a real estate agent. These days, she uses her experience in remodeling homes to point out attributes and potential concerns her clients might never have thought of. She still uses her artist's eye, too—she operates her own staging company. In that capacity, she works almost exclusively for her own sellers, although she does partner with select agents to help them move their properties quickly and at a premium price. She's good at her job. She knows it, and so do the people she works with.

"I have a devotion to my clients, to the point that I become like a family member," she says. "I work with whole families, getting passed around from person to person." The biggest payoff, though, is not the commissions she earns, but the personal relationships. "What I value most is how many people I can call friends," she says. From clients to contractors to carpet cleaners, McCarthy is able to make the most of these relationships to help one friend help another. "The closing isn't the most critical part of a home sale," she says. "The relationship goes on far beyond that." Five years down the road, it's not unusual for someone to call McCarthy for advice on cabinetry experts, painters or reputable landscapers. "If people need work done on their home, they know that I'll know who to call."

McCarthy has traveled the world several times over, and there are few places on the globe she's never been. Still, there's no place she would rather be than in Seattle. She loves the atmosphere, the culture and the people.

"I absolutely adore Seattle," she says. "And I'll never leave. I'll still be here helping people find homes when I'm 90."

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