

The Relationship Side of Real Estate

An Interview with Leighton C. Candler,
Licensed Associate RE Broker, The Corcoran Group

EDITORS' NOTE *Leighton Candler first came to New York more than three decades ago to attend Parsons School of Design, after which she spent three years in Paris directing a U.S.-based interior design firm. Upon her return to Manhattan, she worked as Vice President and Head Designer for the prominent firm of Elizabeth Draper, Inc., and shortly after started her own interior design company. Soon thereafter, she decided to leave the business of furnishing the properties for a career helping her clients find the right ones. After a decade as a top broker at Brown Harris Stevens, Leighton joined The Corcoran Group in 2001.*



Leighton C. Candler

COMPANY BRIEF *Founded in 1973, Corcoran (corcoran.com) is the leading residential real estate firm in New York. After expanding into other luxury markets, acquiring leading firms in New York, the Hamptons, and South Florida, the firm now operates 42 offices and employs more than 2,200 agents.*

What has made Corcoran the right place for you to be able to grow and lead?

The tools, market intelligence, and unparalleled relationships that Corcoran offers have fueled the growth of our business, and development and retention of our team. Our clients know that they have access to my team's expertise both uptown and downtown, and also to the company's technology and marketing savvy.

Corcoran's digital leadership means that we have the internal tools we need to be the most effective advocates for our clients, and that properties are featured in the best 360-degree online experience, from web to mobile to social media to 3D models. When you combine this technological prowess with our team's old-fashioned approach to full service and creating a bespoke experience for our customers and clients, we find it's pretty unbeatable.

Is having a team important when it comes to delivering the type of service you want and how do you build that?

Having the right team is critical to me. I spent many years as a successful solo practitioner. However, over the past decade, the

market has grown, real estate as an asset class has become more meaningful to clients' portfolios, and the footprint of New York City luxury offerings has expanded.

I responded to the evolution in the market by evolving how I do business. By forging a team alliance with Jennifer Reardon, who has been building my business with me for 14 years, and Alatia Bradley Bach, who lives and breathes downtown, we can more effectively meet the needs of discerning clients, whether they

want a home on Central Park, Beekman Place, or Bond Street.

What is it about the business that tends to be very suitable for women?

Whether it is in our DNA or something we absorb culturally, women often excel at multitasking. This is a job that requires one to process enormous amounts of information, maintain good working relationships with hundreds if not thousands of brokers and buyers, calibrate the benefits of different deal points, and respect the financial, practical, and emotional needs of entire family ecosystems.

I also feel fortunate to be part of a company that is gender blind. Pam Liebman is a great CEO, as well as the mom to two extraordinary daughters. She has led the company to only have a preference for talent, integrity, and hard work. This is a very appealing professional environment. By now, women should enjoy that in every field, but it's simply not the case. I'm proud to be part of an industry where women have true earning potential and unlimited opportunity.

What type of talent is coming into the industry?

These favorable circumstances are attracting and retaining more top talent, like Alatia Bradley Bach, to my team. Increasingly, I work with varied investors, who are purchasing properties with different criteria in mind. We have to know what the rate of return is, how to secure appropriate financing for a project, and be responsible for advising on the build-outs to maximize returns in the chosen marketplace. The work is more rigorous and complex, and the rewards are greater. This is attracting young professionals who are stimulated by the challenges and opportunities.

Could you have imagined some of the areas of Manhattan would have become what they have?

Yes, although it is still gratifying to see these urban treasures burnished and appreciated. Park Slope is an unbelievable area with a European quality of life. The combination of classic and contemporary architecture in the Flatiron District is a delight. FiDi is the cradle of our nation in so many ways, so its "new-found" appeal makes sense. But none of it is surprising – cities are dynamic organisms and to stay alive, they need to constantly change.

How important is the ability to service clients at all levels?

I'm always confounded when prospective clients feel that because we are fortunate to do very large deals with some frequency, we aren't intrigued and excited by deals that are smaller. We just love real estate. I'm interested in anyone who likes interesting apartments. I love every single aspect of real estate. Every home purchase of any size reflects that someone has worked hard, even if it's his or her first studio apartment. It's even more fun now that people are more open to exploring different neighborhoods, because each search is an adventure.

This is one of the most personal purchases someone can make. Does it always come back to the people part of the business?

The "people" part is the most important. We take the intimacy and importance of our job seriously; it's a big deal to help choose the right place for someone. Even with the technology available for searching, it's still about working with an expert who can listen, research, think, plan, and strategize.

When I was an interior designer, my broker insisted I see a rental in an area I decided I would never live in. But it was fabulous and I would have never thought of it. I ended up living there for years and years. It's not that someone doesn't know what they want, but it's very hard to come into any city and figure out where that is without having the benefit of a professional's knowledge and expertise.

Do you ever appreciate what you have been able to accomplish?

This is what is great about the team. We do happy dances in the office a lot, always to celebrate a job well done and a happy client. We want to dance a lot for every client, again and again and again. ●