

TOP AGENT

MAGAZINE

A professional portrait of a man with short dark hair and a goatee, smiling. He is wearing a grey suit jacket, a maroon dress shirt, and a maroon paisley tie. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with green and yellow foliage.

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Craig Buntin was the general manager at his father's company, a motorcycle parts and accessories distributor, where he handled purchasing negotiations when a friend suggested he get his real estate license. That was back in 2004. Now he's a multiple award-winning realtor at a top-producing agency in Northern California, serving clients from Tracy to Sacramento. Over the years, he has earned a slew of designations demonstrating his expertise. He holds certifications in everything from short sales and REOs to eMarketing and distressed properties.

Sixty percent of Craig's business is based on repeat clients, while another 30 percent is comprised of referrals and the other 10 percent is new business. He believes clients continue to return, in part, because of his superior communication skills. "When I got into this business," he says, "I knew I wanted to be available 24/7 so my clients could sleep easily at night." When Craig purchased his first home, he was anxious and full of questions about the process. Once five o'clock rolled by, having those questions answered became nearly impossible. "Purchasing a home is a large milestone in a person's life, and yet, often times you hear of realtors who simply aren't present," he says. Craig, on the other hand, delivers a level of service and genuine commitment to his clients that's slightly infectious. His energy fills the room, and he makes expectations clear from the start.

Craig is an avid user of the F.O.R.D. technique, which stands for family, occupation, recreation, and dreams. It's a powerful communication tool that allows him to easily engage with clients and show them he cares. Helping clients is his favorite part of the job. With over 10 years of industry experience under his belt, many of his first clients now have children ready to purchase their own homes. Craig is the first person they call to help them through this process. "It's important clients know you're always there for them," he says. For Craig, this means developing a relationship with clients that extends beyond the end of a transaction—being a resource for anything from recommending a contractor to a hotel for a visiting family member. When clients move out of state, it's not unusual for them to ask Craig to refer them to a new real-



tor. "It's a sign of trust," Craig says, "when a client feels so well taken care of they know you'll place them safely in the hands of someone who can do the same."

When it comes to marketing, Craig finds a recipe for success in balancing digital strategies targeted at millennials and traditional print-based strategies targeted at an older

audience. This balance is important, because though the bulk of today's homebuyers begin their search online, many still discover properties from direct mailers and advertisements in local newspapers. From luxurious estates to quaint cottages, he uses professional photography to ensure the property shows its best.

Craig runs his business out of Elk Grove and works hard to give back to his community. He sponsors and volunteers at many local events, hosting movies in the park or horse-drawn carriages around the holidays. It's important to him that people want to stay in this community—to raise families here—and the vendors he works with, like home inspectors and mortgage lenders, participate as well. Craig raises his own family in Elk Grove, and when he's not working, he can be found outside gardening or spending time with his children. Craig has spent 20 years cheering on his children in their many traveling sports and activities as well as sponsoring many of their teams and team events. "Being an active member of a community gets your face out there in a way that's more genuine than any piece of marketing," he says.

If one thing has become clear during Craig's time in the industry, it's that he's a natural with an innate ability to bring people together. "I'll probably never retire," Craig says. "There are many pitfalls and lots of rejection that comes along with this career, but if you love what you do, it's all worth it."

To learn more about Craig Buntin,
visit craigcansell.com,
email cbuntin1@gmail.com,
or call 916-897-7856