

KANSAS CITY

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**TEAM
PAPA**



▶ top producer

By Heather Pluard
Photography by Tiffany Matson

team PAPA

papa's in the house

By any metric, Keller Williams REALTOR® Brad Papa is a huge success. He's sold more than 1,000 homes, has an excellent referral base, and he and his team average \$30 million a year in transactions. But after 16 years of hard work and tremendous hustle, Brad doesn't measure success by numbers. For him, it's the ability to live life on his own terms.

"Real estate is a give-and-take, and I've reached a point in my career where I can weigh the opportunity costs and readjust as desired," Brad says. "Quality of life is my primary goal now."

Although his career path took several turns, Brad has consistently followed the maxim of doing the right thing for the right reason. Realizing he didn't want to be an engineer after spending two years at the University of Missouri-Rolla, Brad transferred to KU and graduated in 2000 with a degree in Math Education. Instead of becoming a teacher, he entered the corporate world at State Street to become a trainer.

"Sitting behind a desk was boring, and I hated it," Brad says. "I figured out how to program a computer to run all the reports we needed while I was gone, which ended up saving the company a lot of money, and yet I received a very small raise comparable to everyone else. That's when I knew I wanted to get into sales. I liked the idea of performance-based pay, but I didn't want to make people buy something they didn't need. Real estate was a natural draw because it's a way to truly help people reach their goals."

In 2004, Brad used his two-week vacation time to go to real estate school. After obtaining his license, he gave himself a birthday present he'll never forget; he quit State Street. "I had to cut the cord," he says. "I only had enough in my bank account to pay my bills for one month, so I quickly adopted a whatever-it-takes mentality. All I cared about was establishing connections, building rapport, and turning strangers into clients by really getting to know them."

The strategy worked. Brad sold 10 homes in his first full year in real estate, and he wasn't shy about finding clients. "I studied the statistics before jumping into the business, and I learned 78% of people end up using the first agent they came across," he says. "So I handed out my business card everywhere, including Home Depot. I targeted first-time home buyers, went to happy hours where I could network with people my age, and advertised free home-buying seminars on Craigslist. Even if only three people showed up, the odds were at least one of them was a potential client."

While Brad was brilliant about drumming up leads, he knew he had a lot to learn about real estate. "The first office I worked for was only five minutes away from where I lived, and I was in there all of the time, learning by osmosis. My best advice to new agents is to find someone to shadow, especially if you are starting out with zero real estate experience."

It wasn't long before Brad was selling 50 homes a year by himself. He also developed a unique approach to the business. "I make Top 10 lists on why clients shouldn't buy a particular home," he says. "I talk a lot of clients out of buying, but I'm not trying to be a buzz-kill. It's about doing the right thing and giving them everything they need to know to make a good decision. My clients often tell me they feel like they are looking at homes with a friend, not a salesperson. I'm in this for the long-term relationship, not the quick sale."

In 2013, Brad launched Team Papa and almost immediately doubled his annual production. The team now averages 125

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Photograph Courtesy
of Studio 178

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Having a reliable team increased Brad's quality of life, but he had to hire a coach to find real work/life balance. "Your phone can blow up a million hours a day, even with a team," he says. "Working all of the time is a hard habit to break. My coach helped me take ownership of my choices and set healthy boundaries. Now I have designated 'no-phone' times where I am fully present for my wife and kids. I'm also clear about vacations, setting expectations before I go. That way, I can come back refreshed instead of feeling like I was just working in a different location."

transactions a year and includes three full-time agents and a transaction coordinator. "I started my career as a bit of a control freak, but I realized that was the wrong mindset," Brad says. "If you surround yourself with the right people, everything will be okay. That's why I hire based on character. My team is like a family. We support each other and have a lot of fun together."

While Team Papa continues to enjoy success by any measure, Brad's time with his wife of 13 years, Kelly, and their three children, Tanner (10), Cole (8), and Kinley (5), is priceless. He loves to watch his kids play sports, relax at the lake with extended family, and keep "dating" Kelly. "I can always make more money," Brad says. "But some life experiences are one-time things that I don't want to miss out on just to close another deal. I'm thankful to be in a position where I can choose what to do with my time."

BRAD PAPA

913.526.4985
Brad@PapasInTheHouse.com
PapasInTheHouse.com

