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COMMIT

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Connecting with
**RICHARD
BRODTKIN**

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NEWS





RICHARD BRODKIN

Photography by: Connie Palen

“Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.” — Andrew Carnegie

As the co-owner and CEO of Home Connect America, Rich Brodkin certainly has a lot of responsibility. He and his partner Jan O’Brien, both longtime real estate industry veterans, only recently combined their considerable talents and opened their newest brokerage.

But at the heart of the business, and in the partners themselves, is the concept of being a valuable member of a team. Brodkin said that’s the only way he wants to operate.

“To use a sports analogy, I love high-fiving in the locker room,” he said. “I love drinking champagne and winning together, and I don’t like winning by myself. I’m team-driven—when you achieve something as a group, there is no greater high than that.”

Brodkin’s first team was his tight-knit family growing up in New Jersey. His mother had married at the age of 18, and later became a homemaker and a mother to three boys, but Brodkin says she was so bright, she could have achieved any level of professional success she desired.

His father, he said, had an incredible work ethic as a cake deliverer who, when his truck broke down, would hire taxis to make sure his product made it to its intended destination as promised. Brodkin’s older brothers were accomplished athletes and scholars.



Home Connect America Co-Owners
Jan O'Brien & Richard Brodkin.

“This is what I came from, and I wouldn’t change a thing about it,” he said. “My brothers and I were the first to go to college in my family. I love my family so much—they showed me the love of family and commitment, and I’m proud of it.”

Brodkin attended Rutgers University after high school, and upon graduation began his 1st career, in Corporate America. While in “beverage business,” working for major brands Pepsi, Snapple, A & W Rootbeer, and Arizona Ice Tea, he even served as Vice President and General Manager for Laura Scudder’s Snacks in Anaheim. Richard traveled the world at a rate of more than 100,000 miles a year, made multiple relocations and decided, after 31 years to make a significant career change in 2000.

It was a very demanding lifestyle, full of stress and leaving him little time to spend with his own growing family.

“At the age of 53, I knew I wasn’t going to make it to 60 if I stayed in that industry,” he said. “I had moved 11 times in 15 years, and even though I knew that was part of the drill, I really wanted to make a change. That’s when I decided to move to Las Vegas.”

For his entire adult life, Brodkin had worked for someone else. In the more than three decades he had worked in the beverage industry, he had been the steward



Mother's 70th Birthday Party

Richard, Dad Eddie, Mom Rose, Uncle Seymour, Brothers Dennis & Bart.



Richard (pictured center) receiving the Spirit Award from the Special Olympics Foundation from Rafer Johnson, 1960 Olympic Decathlon Gold Medal Winner. (Rich was VP & GM of Laura Scudder's Snacks, in Anaheim, CA at the time.)

Interesting fact: Rafer Johnson was with Bobby Kennedy at the Ambassador Hotel when Kennedy was shot; held his head.

of a brand, with the primary responsibility of growing the brand and making it more profitable for stockholders.

But he had always felt he had an entrepreneurial spirit, and deep down knew that he was never going to achieve his dreams of independence as an employee. His fraternity brother at Rutgers University and best friend since childhood was working in a local Las Vegas casino and arranged for Brodtkin to visit and meet with Senior Executives for the property.

He had a proposition for them: He would work for them for a year for only one dollar, proving himself, and in return, they could provide him with on-the-job training in the hotel/casino business. This was a bit too creative for their corporate mindset, so they declined his offer. Not one to look back with regret, Richard wasn't daunted and sought out another direction for his new career and considerable talents.

"That's when I got into real estate," Brodtkin said. "I had purchased a home from a friend who was a really great Realtor, and I gave him five referrals. In turn, he brought me five different flavors of Bundt cakes." Brodtkin recalls with a smile.

While the cake gifts from the thoughtful agent were appreciated, Brodtkin began to think that maybe there was something more to be gained from being in the real estate business.

That's when his Realtor friend introduced him to his broker, who happened to be Jan O'Brien. Richard became an agent under Jan soon after, and a mutually respectful relationship that would 15 years later evolve into a partnership was born.

Later, when Brodtkin went to work at Realty One, O'Brien was a senior executive there, and the two renewed their professional relationship. Two years ago, she became a consultant/trainer/coach to his team, the Brodtkin Group, and when he saw how well their methods and philosophies matched, he began thinking about how they might develop some type of a business together.

"I'm 15 years older than she is, and the way I saw it, I had three choices for my (eventual) exit strategy," he said. "One, I could sell my business, and I have been offered a large sum for it; two, I could keep my business the way it was; or three, I could find someone who sees the business the same way, who is like-minded and has the energy, drive, and skill set to take it to the next level."

When the partners opened Home Connect America at the end of July of this year, O'Brien brought to the table 26 years of experience as a real estate broker, coach and industry leader, while Brodtkin contributed 15 years of industry experience and his 31 years of corporate business knowledge. What they both have is a shared desire to teach and mentor the agents who work with them, and provide them with the opportunity to work as an integral part of a true team.

Brodtkin says that with the name they chose for their company, Home Connect America, the keyword is "connect," as in with the agent, the client and the consumer. That human connection is something he asserts is missing in today's society.

"It's time for people to be kinder and nicer to each other, and to communicate better," he said. "We need to bring civility back to our country. That's why this company is about respect, dignity, trust and helping others, and not lowering our standards in those areas."

To encourage the collaborative atmosphere they have instituted, the partners ensure that the agents who come to work with them understand that they are the real assets of the business. When they come to work with Home Connect America, Brodtkin and O'Brien first help them determine if real estate is the right industry for them, with a combination of a personality profile they developed and a program they call Team Connect.

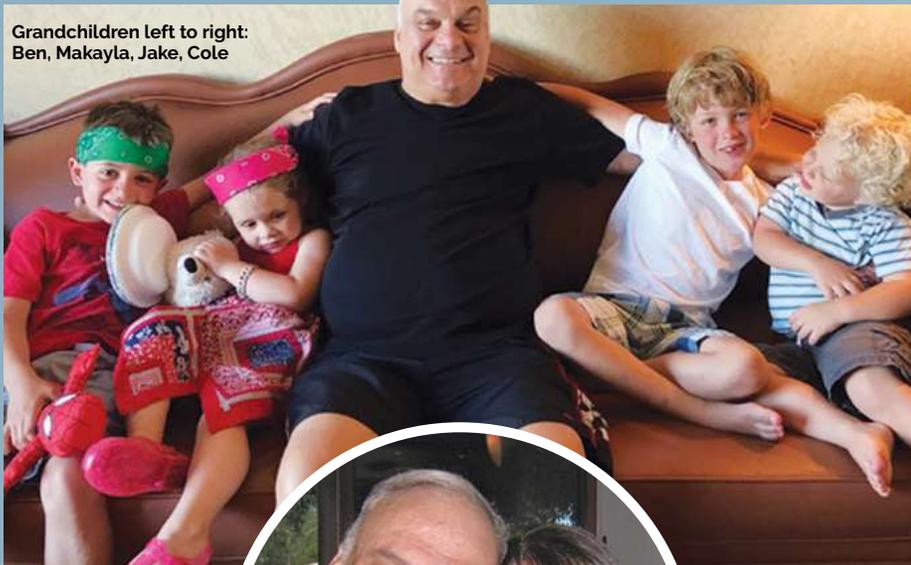
The key to the success of the Realtors who flourish in their system is primarily the one-on-one mentoring and continuous coaching and support. A team concept, where the success of one depends on the contributions of many, is something both partners embrace, and O'Brien relied on daily during her previous career as a Black Hawk helicopter pilot with the United States Army.

She says that when Brodtkin first approached her about starting the new company, he was well aware that her dream was to start her own real estate industry coaching company that focused on teambuilding and running a business as a true business. That is now one of the aspects of Home Connect America that makes it so unique, and especially valuable to new agents.

"The interesting thing for me is that I was so sure I didn't want to be in the brokerage business anymore that I actually let my broker's license expire," she said. "However, the coaching I was doing focused on teams, and ultimately, the work



Grandchildren left to right: Ben, Makayla, Jake, Cole



Rich with wife Rena

I was doing with Richard (at the Brodkin Group) the last couple of years was really about fine-tuning the business systems. We both knew that sometimes you grow out of things, and the freedom you have when you have your own company—that model is the foundation of Home Connect America.”

They both say that they employ a “Fit, not fix” policy when it comes to training. Not everyone is cut out to be a successful agent, but there are plenty of other careers in the real estate industry for those who don’t excel in sales—recruiting, training, administration, assisting others—there’s a place for anyone who has the desire to learn and work as a part of a team.

O’Brien says that she had always envisioned that she would have a team-building model and would write a book to teach people how to do it, but she’s happy that she’s actually doing it right now in partnership with Brodkin.

“I think we both really enjoy seeing the energy and desire in people, and the coach in me loves the people who are like, ‘Just show me what I need to do,’” she said. “What we love about what we’ve done at Home Connect America goes back to that point about bringing them in to help them find out where they fit. We’ll help them find something they’re good at.”

Both partners say that the three core values of their new company are freedom, connection, and respect. The freedom allows people in their company to make their own choices about the direction of their career path; connections are what they say their business is all about, a people-centric industry and the connections

made with those people; and respect for each other in their workplace is imperative, both with each other and with clients.

Brodkin says that he and O’Brien take teaching new agents about the importance of those core values very seriously. “The reason many agents fail is that they’re a secret agent,” he said. “They don’t let people know what they do, and people do business with those they like and respect. You are the product, and you’re selling yourself.”

The partners are in the process of building their business but are not looking to grow too fast, too soon. Brodkin achieved quite a bit of success with the Brodkin Group; Top 1% nationally in transaction volume and total revenue, with almost \$100 million in sales in 2017. He did that while following his credo of treating others with respect and kindness, even when disagreeing with them, something he says he’s sad to see many Americans not currently doing.

That’s why they are particular about the agents they bring in to possibly be a part of their organization. Brodkin says that they want to create an environment where everyone not only flourishes but also holds responsibility for their future within the company.

“If you want to help people reach their potential, you do it with accountability,” he said. “I’m not everybody’s cup of tea—I’m a New Jerseyan, we’re not stealth, we’re direct. It’s straight up and honest, and if you don’t want to be held accountable, this is not the place for you.”

Both he and O’Brien feel that what they

offer to the agents, culture, leadership, and support, are an integral part of the agent creating their own successful business within the framework of a team environment. That’s why their company motto is, “We’re the home for teams.”

At home, Brodkin also practices what he preaches about kindness and teamwork. He has been married for 26 years to Rena, a dental hygienist, and is a father to three strong, accomplished young women. He says his family means the world to him. One is a fifth-grade teacher in California, another is working in sports and entertainment marketing, and the third is in her second year of law school in Illinois.

Brodkin says he has no doubt that when the time comes for him to walk away from the business and retire, the day-to-day operations will be safe in O’Brien’s very capable hands. “This path for me leads straight to the coast,” he said. “I love the beach, and I want to eventually be in Newport, Laguna or San Diego and spend as much time with my children and my four grandchildren in that environment as I can. Jan (O’Brien) will tell me when it’s time to go.”

Family



Three daughters:

| | |
|---|--|
| left to right | Executive) |
| Oldest: Jill (retired schoolteacher, wife and Mom) lives in San Marcos, CA | Lives in Castle Rock, CO |
| (Second oldest) | Laura Second year law student University of Chicago |
| Jennifer (Marketing | |

To reach Richard or for more information about Home Connect America, visit <http://joinhomeconnectamerica.com> or call 702-858-9191.

Offices located at: 8689 W Sahara Ave #200, Las Vegas, NV 89117

Home Connect America
 GV Address
 7100 Green Valley Parkway Suite 120
 Henderson, NV 89074