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By Amanda Matkowski
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Erin Fester & Jodi Smith

A CELEBRATION OF DIFFERENCES



Although Erin Fester and Jodi Smith approach real estate in different ways, they have found a way to harness each other's strengths and, as a result, created a successful business together. "We are both lead agents and equal partners," Jodi explained. "We help each other when needed for a specific situation or client, and we share resources and support staff. We trust each other and have each other's backs!"

The two agents initially crossed paths in 2010 at a company meeting. Jodi was overwhelmed with listings and buyers and could use some help. Erin, meanwhile, had her twins during the recession and spent that time with fewer clients by building great systems. "We both recognized each other's skill set, and I needed what she had!" Jodi said. "Right away, we just started working together, hardly knowing each other."

Jodi and Erin quietly partnered that year, and in doing so, their businesses began to flourish. "We saw each of our businesses grow by 40% from our shared encouragement, and as it turns out, our systems were able to handle the very high volume," Erin recalled. In 2011, they officially launched GR Home Team and hired their first assistant the following year.

Over the years, Erin and Jodi have weathered all sorts of challenges within the industry, but their willingness to do any difficult or demanding task is a mindset that the two of them share. "Both of us are highly creative with enough tenacity to try new things and stick with them, even when things are hard," Erin said. "We are both tough and feisty but also soft and patient when needed." Jodi agreed and added, "We both really care about doing the tough stuff that matters for our clients."



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and 63 houses in a single day for the expansion of Grand Valley State University’s downtown campus. As for the two associate brokers, Erin was ranked by GRAR as a Top 100 agent in 2021 whereas Jodi was the president of GRAR’s board of directors in 2021.

At GR Home Team, everyone works collectively toward its success. “We have a flat hierarchy,” Erin explained. “We are very collaborative and think that shared ideas, best practices and respect will lead to the highest service and benefits for our clients.” Jodi also showed appreciation for the team’s Operation Manager Heidi Tobin and Marketing Coordinator Lisa Jekel. “They do a lot of the behind-the-scenes work for two agents who have the same goal but a different way of doing it. I sometimes feel sorry for them,” she joked.

Currently, Erin and Jodi are passionate about using GR Home Team to create an impact in their community. Their main goal in particular is to mentor other agents and provide leadership within the industry. “It is humbling to be able to step into people’s lives as a trusted coach during times of great stress and change,” Jodi said. “We are also partnering with agents who are looking at retirement, helping them hand off their legacy in a manner that is honoring to them but in a way that also has financial longevity.”

Erin and Jodi also contribute to the community through their charity involvement. “We have great passion for organizations that provide housing resources, especially to single mothers, because we both have been single moms at one point,” Erin said. “Our volume and sales goals are built around the amount we want to give away, not earn.” They also support organizations such as Mel Trotter Ministries, Compassion International and Pregnancy Resource Center. In addition to donations, Jodi helped launch the REALTORS® Community Fund through the ICCF Community Homes, and Erin is currently the board chair for West Michigan Youth For Christ.

When Erin and Jodi aren’t working or helping their community, they enjoy spending time with their families. Erin and her husband, Joey, have one

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Both agents will go the extra mile for their clients, but Erin jokes that their contrasting personalities are reflected in the type of clients they service.

“Jodi’s clients are fun, social and not super detail-oriented; they want an agent who they trust and rely heavily on that. I seem to attract attorneys, engineers, accountants, teachers and anyone who wants and appreciates a good spreadsheet,” she said, laughing. “In celebrating our differences, it has taught us how to recognize the different needs — from communication to actions — of our clients and how to best serve them at a higher level.”

Since it was established 11 years ago, GR Home Team has achieved a wide range of accomplishments and is now brokered by eXp Realty. The team has a career volume of over \$300 million and closed \$23 million in sales last year. It also consistently receives Top 100 volume awards from the Greater Regional Alliance of REALTORS® (GRAR). In 2013, GR Home Team sold the single largest residential transaction in Grand Rapids history when they closed 126 transaction sides

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son and twin girls. “We are often hiking, camping and hosting friends,” Erin shared. They also love to travel to Florida as frequently as they can. Like Erin, Jodi and her husband also have three children, but they have five grandchildren as well. When Jodi has free time in her schedule, she enjoys biking and golfing.

and workload. “Those are all important things, but we feel that the conversation should start by asking yourself what you bring to a team and what you are willing to commit to the relationship and to the growth and output,” Jodi explained. Erin added, “You have to really know who you are and have good people around you, supporting you to succeed in this industry.”

Erin and Jodi are often approached by other agents who admire their teamwork, hoping to replicate the success of GR Home Team, but the two of them agree that it’s much more than figuring out splits

Although Erin and Jodi had met during a chance encounter over a decade ago, they still encourage and challenge each other — personally and professionally — to be better than yesterday. “It’s been great to have each other during our individual journeys,” Jodi concluded.

