

# Amy Lessinger

## Co-owner, RE/MAX Realty Affiliates



Amy Lessinger became a residential real estate agent at 23, when most of her competitors were in second careers and were about twice her age.

But Lessinger didn't let that get in her way. Within six months, she had to hire an assistant. Within four years she became a Certified Residential Specialist – a designation held by fewer than 5 percent of agents. And in five years, Lessinger was one of the country's Top 30 Realtors Under 30 by the National Association of Realtors.

A decade after she entered the industry, Lessinger is broker/owner of RE/MAX Realty Affiliates with husband, Brian, and partner, John Fisher. The Lessingers teamed up with Fisher, who owned the RE/MAX Realty Affiliates offices in Carson City and Gardnerville, to open a Reno office last year, which has quickly grown to 40 agents. The family of offices is the second-highest producing real estate agency in northern Nevada, according to the Northern Nevada Regional Multiple Listing Service.

Lessinger didn't plan to go into real estate. She graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno with a degree in speech pathology and audiology. But as she weighed whether to go to graduate or medical school, she realized she couldn't imagine working for someone else. Even when she worked part-time jobs in retail during college, she found herself thinking up ways the companies could be better managed. Lessinger quickly realized she wanted to run her own business.

"I don't ever want to sit at a desk and be unhappy because of the person across from me," she says. "I want to look in the mirror and instead and say, 'If you're not happy, you better get to work to change it.'"

Her dad, a developer and licensed broker, loaned her his real estate books, and Lessinger met with a family friend to learn more about the business.

"I decided to give it three years," she says. "And I absolutely fell in love with it."

Lessinger took as many real estate courses as she could, wore a suit to work everyday, and marketed herself to first-time homebuyers. Her youth actually became an advantage. She started seeking out younger clients, and as the Internet changed the way real estate is marketed, she says, she was able to adapt more easily than some older, longtime agents.

"I was just amazed by her at the beginning," says Jari McKnight, an agent with RE/MAX Realty Affiliates. "She understood it, and she'd set her goals, and she'd get there. She had the confidence, and she was able to back it up. I knew she would never be just an agent."

Charisma set her apart, too. "She's got such a winning personality, and she's great on follow-up," says Tim Ruffin, senior vice president and managing partner of Colliers International.

After Lessinger worked in a real estate training office for 18 months, Gary Canepa, former owner of RE/MAX Realty Professionals, recruited her

to his agency. Canepa says his agency's vision was "to do what's right," and he looked for people with commitment to the highest ethical standards.

Lessinger, he says, fit that model well.

Lessinger admits she was nervous. Moving to RE/MAX was a step up, but she found the other agents were quick to offer help, and she benefited from the company's opportunities to further her education.

A few years later, Amy's husband, Brian, joined her at the agency, and they formed The Lessinger Team. With an MBA and finance experience at Fortune 500 companies, Brian had a head for business. He was great with people, though, and real estate was a natural fit.

Both are extroverts, but Amy likes to focus on the big picture and overall vision, she says. She's a driven, Type-A personality, while Brian is more laid back. Amy heads the brokerage, and Brian handles the sales side of The Lessinger Team, which comes under the umbrella of RE/MAX Realty Affiliates.

Brian says the partnership works because they trust one another, they are committed to moving in the same direction, and they're able to separate their work from their personal lives. The couple have two children, Zachary, 9, and Sydney, 4.

Says Amy: "We're very clear about his strengths and my strengths, and we accept each other."

She admits she's a "recovering perfectionist," and has had to learn to dele-

gate and let go. "As women we tend to hoard work," she says. "We have this false impression we can make a copy better than someone else."

She also tempers her drive with downtime to prevent burnout – a lesson she learned a few years ago as she juggled the demands of work and parenting two small children. "It was all about work and home. I remember telling Brian, 'I don't know what I'd do if I had free time.' It felt like a grind."

She even considered quitting real estate, but instead reduced her hours, started horseback riding on the weekends and hired a career coach, who helped her set goals. As she regained balance, her energy for the real estate industry returned.

Now, she says, she's careful to take time for herself and enjoy simple pleasures, whether it be buying fresh flowers or camping with family.

In the next few years, Lessinger says she wants to recruit more agents to the RE/MAX Realty Affiliates office in Reno and grow the business, all the while following her mentor Canepa's vision to "do what's right." She is proud of the

office's designation as a "Miracle Office," with agents donating a portion of every closing to the Children's Miracle Network, and of sponsorships to the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure and the Reno Rodeo.

Her philosophy for success?

"Design your life. Get clear on what you want on all aspects, and then go do it," she says. "That's it – go do it."



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