

# JESSICA BAKER

TAKING IT ALL ON

▶▶ REALTOR® feature

Written by **Chris Menezes**

Photography by **Caitlin Thomas of Caitlin Thomas Photo**





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**Jessica Baker is a top-producing individual agent selling \$8 million just last year. The secrets to her success are building good relationships with fellow agents, showing buyers the true potential in houses, and helping sellers make their houses look the best, often years before they sell them. She also attributes her success to having first-hand experience with the kinds of problems her clients face.**

Last year Jessica acted as general contractor on a full restoration of the Victorian house where she now lives with her husband and two small children. “I designed the entire house and hired and managed all the subcontractors myself,” she says. “I learned so much in that one year. Taking a house down to the studs and completely rebuilding it taught me more than I could have imagined. Because I was the general contractor, my job was to coordinate the mason, carpenter, plasterer, dry-wall installer, hardwood floor installers, roofer, electricians, plumbers, HVAC installer, and so on. If something didn’t work because the timing was off, the guys came to me to fix it.”

The Pittsburgh market is full of old houses; maybe not all are as run-down as the one Jessica and her husband Doug bought, but they could stand to be updated. “An important part of my business is helping clients see the possibilities in an old house,” Jessica says. “Our particular old house had been abandoned for years, but I could see where I wanted the kitchen sink to be and where the half bath would go from the first time I walked through it.”

Jessica’s credibility with buyers and sellers has increased with such a large renovation under her belt now. “I have a much better sense of how easy (or difficult) it would be to take out a particular wall in a house, or some simple ways to refresh an old kitchen to get a house ready to sell. I’ll help buyers take a second look at a house they may have passed up before because the house was dated, and I’ll try to work through the different ways to revamp it and make it work for them.”

In addition to being able to work with her clients’ design problems, Jessica attributes her success in real estate to her personal style. She learned early on that it’s essential to build good relationships throughout the transaction process. When she was starting out eight years ago, at the age of 25, some more seasoned agents didn’t

take her seriously. “I remember even two years into the job, when I was already very competent, that other agents would assume I was inexperienced. They’d make that assumption based on just my age or my voice. It was frustrating, but I got through it.”

She overcame this by learning to “make a friend” with each transaction. “I always get to know my clients beyond how many bedrooms they need and what their budget is. The same applies for other agents. When I get a contract to come together with another agent, I always try to make a friend early on and get to know them a little bit, which just makes things smoother and easier throughout the whole transaction.”

This more personal approach to real estate led Jessica to move her busi-



ness to her current brokerage, Achieve, after her first year. “I was so glad I moved to Achieve when I did,” Jessica says. “I got the support and attention as a new agent that helped me turn my business into what it is today. I think of the owners of Achieve, Kristen and Lawton Stokes, like family. They believed in me when I was totally green and welcomed me to their brokerage. If I hadn’t made the move when I did, I’m confident I wouldn’t have the business that I have today.”

After managing all aspects of her business on her own, for the past eight years, Jessica finally hired a personal assistant. “I know this is key in growing my business, but I’m such a micro-manager! Learning to delegate is very hard.” She is also working on her broker’s license so she can be an associate broker at her firm and ultimately grow her own team.

“This business is constantly changing, even if we don’t always notice it,” Jessica says. “So many things have moved online—not just listings, but advertising too, and even staging is digital now. I spend a lot of time thinking about how to keep up with these rapid changes. But I also remind myself that people don’t change that much, and it’s my commitment to them that matters most.”

As Jessica continues her journey in real estate, constantly pushing herself, learning, and growing along the way, it will be exciting to see everything she is able to build.

*You can follow along for more of her Victorian restoration on Instagram: @jessica.pgh.*

