

REAL ESTATE

## Stephanie Anton's new mission: enhanced marketing, tech in luxury real estate

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*Stephanie Anton is president of Luxury Portfolio*

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

Stephanie Anton takes over from Paul Boomsma as the newly installed president of Luxury Portfolio, a Chicago-based organization whose marketing backing helps luxury real estate brokers with their high-end listings.

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Previously executive vice president, Ms. Anton filled the slot vacated by Mr. Boomsma, who is now CEO of the **Leading Real Estate Companies of the World** organization. Based in Austin, TX, but always on the road, she is expected to maintain her high profile and help luxury Realtors better connect with their affluent prospects through innovative marketing and technology.

"Most great agents will tell you that the majority of their business comes from personal referral, and there is a reason for that," Ms. Anton said. "When you can be a terrific resource, and you represent a client well in likely the largest transaction of their lives, well, they want to tell their friends about that.

"That is part of why some marketing and technology changes have come to real estate so slowly because real estate people are, first and foremost, great with people," she said.

In this interview, Ms. Anton discusses her vision for **Luxury Portfolio**, the state of the luxury real estate market, what affluent home buyers want and how marketing and technology are changing the real estate market. Please read on.

You're taking over from Paul Boomsma as president of Luxury Portfolio. How do you feel?

I am looking forward to the challenge of taking over for Paul and am very excited, and very ready.

I have a terrific team behind me, the backing of our board of directors, and I still have Paul available as a fantastic resource. It's really the best situation I could ask for.

Paul's been elevated to running Leading Real Estate Companies of the World. What was his legacy at Luxury Portfolio and how will you continue working with him?

I would say Paul's greatest legacy at Luxury Portfolio is having built a spectacular program, basically from nothing, and maintaining and growing that program each year in the 12 years since we launched.

Our relationship won't change much in that we have known one another and worked well together for many, many years now. We trust each other and I very much know when to pull him into things versus when I can take risks on my own.

What is Luxury Portfolio's mission?

We have a dual mission. It's to serve our real estate broker members and to assist them with all of their needs as it relates to the marketing of their high-end listings and helping them grow their market share in the high-end.

At the same time, we always keep the consumer in the forefront of everything we do, to ensure we are providing today's affluent consumer with access to the high-quality content, statistics, research, data and insights related to significant luxury real estate, at a global level, which we know they demand.

Do you have a specific mandate at Luxury Portfolio?

My mandate is to continue to grow and build upon what we have already built, but to never rest on our laurels.

Luxury Portfolio has always been about taking risks and doing things a little differently in the luxury real estate world, and I absolutely plan to continue that legacy.

What would you like to see happen in the first 100 days and then the first year?

We are in the process of putting some very exciting new marketing tools in play, both as they relate to our brand as well as some of our tactics for reaching today's high-net-worth, everywhere from New York City to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

I can't go into them in detail, of course, but suffice it to say, we have some game-changing things on the horizon which I am very excited to see roll out, in the first 100 days, and beyond.

What is the state of luxury real estate in the United States and overseas?

In general, it is a very good time for the luxury real estate market.

Worldwide personal wealth is at an all-time high and people with significant means, around the world, continue to see real estate not only as a good investment for their family, but also as a good financial investment.

Today, we see more cross-border that is country to country business than we have ever seen.

As the world gets smaller and smaller, and as technology leads to more transparency in the property market, we anticipate cross-border business continuing to grow exponentially, led by the high-end of the market.

At the same time, the lower end of the market in most developed nations has begun to be fueled by younger Gen X buyers and sellers, and older millennials who are finally beginning household formation.

So between our older generations retiring, downsizing, selling and beginning to drive the resort markets, and younger buyers and sellers with means driving the upsizing market, it's a very strong outlook for the luxury real estate market in the near and far term.

How has marketing real estate changed in the past decade?

Marketing real estate has changed significantly in the past decade, though at a much slower rate than the marketing of so many other things.

Real estate tends to lag a little behind with a lot of tradition often held onto by people who have been in the business for a long time.

Finally, though, we seem to be emerging into today's day and age, with even traditional agents beginning to embrace new tools like retargeting, social marketing, digital fencing and more.

It's such an exciting time, in part because the opportunities are so endless.

Realtors have many digital tools at their aid. Yet what remains their most successful sales tactic?

At the end of the day, the most successful real estate professionals are very, very good with people.

Being a great businessperson, knowing how to work a market, finding the perfect gem for a picky client, reaching the right potential buyers for a difficult property, whether through creative marketing or their own sphere, navigating a negotiation and, ultimately, making a client happy, is the very best sales tactic.

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When you can be a terrific resource, and you represent a client well in likely the largest transaction of their lives, well, they want to tell their friends about that.

That is part of why some marketing and technology changes have come to real estate so slowly because real estate people are, first and foremost, great with people. That ability is their most successful sales tactic.

How do you see luxury real estate marketing evolve in the next couple of years?

I think we are on the precipice of some very exciting times in the luxury real estate marketing space.

There are a lot of young, new players entering the real estate game and it seems venture capital has really begun to take note of the white hot real estate market.

Between that kind of money coming into brokerages, and significant investment into online players, development of AI [artificial intelligence] in real estate, and even really out-there things being developed like homes being printed with 3D printing saw it with my own eyes at a property show in Dubai late last year I believe the next few years have the potential to be game-changing for the marketing of real estate, and I can't wait to see what's next.

Tell us something about yourself that we wouldn't have known.

Well, I grew up wanting to be a fiction writer, in part as an outlet for what my mom affectionately termed my "active imagination" i.e. I had a terrible problem with lying.

Writing was a terrific way for me to act out the worlds I imagined and led me to writing/directing theatre in high school and studying film in college.

Working in marketing, as it turned out, was the perfect combination of writing, storytelling and creativity.

If only my mom could have predicted that my "imagination" would have led to such good in my life, perhaps I would have been grounded a whole lot less?