

A full-page photograph of two women standing on a modern staircase. The woman on the left is wearing a tan blazer and matching trousers, with her hand on her hip. The woman on the right is wearing a green blazer and black trousers, with her hands clasped. The staircase has a black metal railing and a white brick wall in the background. The text 'TOP PROFESSIONALS' is overlaid in a white box at the top left, and '• UNDER 40 •' is below it. A large paragraph of text is on the left side, and a photo credit and page information are at the bottom.

# TOP PROFESSIONALS

• UNDER 40 •

These Columbus REALTORS® members were selected for our 2024 Top Professionals Under 40 through our Young Professionals Network. This year, the recognition highlights two members as outstanding individuals in their area of expertise. These members are well-rounded, client-oriented and take time to be impactful members of their community. From helping people buy homes to volunteering at non-profit organizations, they find the time to do it all - and we applaud and acknowledge their achievements.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: DEVEN GRUPY



# CANDACE CAULKINS

## Why did you obtain your real estate license?

At a pivotal moment in my life, as my son was preparing to start kindergarten, I decided it was time to pursue a new career path. I began my journey in real estate as an administrative assistant at The Raines Group. Through this role, I discovered a profound passion for the industry, revealing a career I hadn't previously recognized as my true calling.

## What previous experiences have helped you become successful in real estate? Why?

Working in the service industry for 11 years taught me the importance of delivering exceptional customer service. I learned how to communicate effectively, handle diverse client needs, and resolve issues promptly. These skills are directly transferable to real estate, where understanding and meeting clients' needs is crucial to building trust and securing deals.

I also worked as a telemarketer for a mortgage broker, this is where I honed my ability to communicate clearly and persuasively. This involved reaching out to a wide range of potential clients and building relationships over the phone. This experience has been invaluable in real estate, where networking and maintaining strong relationships with clients, lenders, and other industry professionals can significantly impact success. This skill helps me in negotiating deals and providing clear guidance throughout the buying or selling process.

Both the service industry and telemarketing require resilience and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. I've learned how to stay motivated, handle rejection, and adjust strategies as needed. These qualities are essential in real estate, where market conditions and client needs can change rapidly.

Overall, my previous roles have equipped me with a solid foundation in customer service, communication, relationship building, and industry knowledge, all of which contribute to my success in real estate.

---

My journey to real estate has been a colorful and unconventional one. As a child, I spent hours rearranging my room furniture, a practice that surprisingly laid the groundwork for my spatial awareness and design skills. From there, I ventured into the world of waiting tables, where I learned the art of multitasking and the importance of exceptional customer service. My time as a telemarketer and mortgage processor—before the market crash—taught me resilience and adaptability in a fast-paced environment.

Later, as a bartender and manager at Roosters, I honed my skills in handling diverse personalities, managing high-pressure situations, and keeping a cool head—all of which translate seamlessly into the world of real estate. Each of these roles contributed to the development of a skill set that is perfectly suited to navigating the complexities of the real estate market.

What drives me is a genuine passion for my work. When you love what you do, it doesn't feel like work—it feels like a thrilling adventure every day. This enthusiasm fuels my commitment to delivering exceptional service and creating positive experiences for my clients.



# EMILY SMITH



## Why did you obtain your real estate license?

I got my real estate license because I wanted to be someone my clients can trust to feel comfortable, taken care of, and well-informed throughout one of the biggest decisions of their lives—buying or selling a home. But beyond that, I also saw it as an opportunity to make a meaningful impact on my local community by contributing to its growth and helping people find a place where they can truly thrive.

## What has been your greatest challenge in real estate and how did you overcome it?

One of the biggest challenges I've faced in real estate was entering the market in 2021, when homes were selling almost instantly. Recently, with homes not selling as quickly, I had to relearn how to navigate the market successfully for my clients. Many of them, understandably, expected the same fast results, and I had to have difficult conversations about how the market had shifted. One particular situation involved working with close friends, which presented an unexpected challenge. I saw a side of a friend I hadn't seen before, and I had to remind them that in this setting, I was their Realtor and a business professional, not just a friend. The way they were speaking to me was unprofessional, and I had to address that. Although we ultimately received an offer and closed on the home, the situation didn't end well personally. I overcame this challenge by being transparent and proactive. I made sure my clients knew all the feedback I was receiving, kept them updated

daily on the market, and shared comparables and insights into similar homes in the area. I also over-communicated throughout the closing process to ensure they felt comfortable at the table. From this experience, I learned to set expectations early, especially with friends. Now, I start conversations with my sphere of influence by reminding them that this is a professional working environment, and if they wouldn't speak to a colleague in a certain way, they shouldn't speak to me that way either. It was a tough but valuable lesson that has made me a better Realtor and advisor for my clients.

## What previous experiences have helped you become successful in real estate? Why?

My background in communications and marketing has truly set my business apart by allowing me to effectively connect with clients and elevate their listings. Through my social media business, Every Bit Social, I've been able to utilize social platforms to stay in contact with clients, market their homes, and find homes for sale. Additionally, with my experience in new construction, I have a deep understanding of the entire process, from breaking ground to handing over the keys. I stay informed by regularly communicating with sales representatives, which allows me to know about upcoming communities and new developments before they hit the market. I also understand the key questions to ask and the details to look out for, ensuring my clients are well-represented and fully informed throughout the process. This knowledge helps my clients confidently navigate the option of new construction, knowing they're in good hands.

---

When I entered real estate, I was advised to brace for a tough first year, and I took that advice to heart. However, I've never been one to settle for the status quo. I set my sights on success and work tirelessly—often harder than most—because I refuse to accept defeat or give up. I don't believe in just meeting expectations; I aim to exceed them.