

that's what our company is built on today: long-term, trust-based relationships."

How the Company Works

Focusing on what's in the clients' best interests is of utmost importance to Ralston. We'll talk more people out of buying and selling their home every week than you could imagine," she says. "A lot of real estate people look at the business as transaction-based. We see it as helping people transition in life. We're not just help-

ing someone buy or sell a house. There's always a story to it. If last year we helped 110 families, 15 of those had a divorce or blended a

family. Another 10 had an unexpected death of a spouse, mother or child. We're counselors. We're advocates."

As far as clientele goes, the firm still helps the medical community, but has also blossomed into helping Boise State professors, Micron executives and beyond. "They all run in the same circle and know each other," she says. "I love helping companies and recruiting people to come here because I love where I live. It's a joy for me. And I enjoy helping their children buy their first home as much as I do selling a \$1.5 million home. There's not a dollar value on it. I think we have four generations we're helping at this

point."

Ralston recognizes her strengths as a hard worker, good listener and ability to remain calm under pressure as assets to her success as a business leader. "I can usually help calm everyone around a situation and get to a solution. I get joy out of helping people see their potential, whether in business, relationships or how they can contribute to our community," she says. She also says choosing to see the positive side of things is key. "I choose happiness. I was always taught it was a choice, so that's my approach. When I see something disappointing, like a realtor from another firm selling a house for the wrong

reasons, not keeping the client's best interests in mind, I try to have compassion regarding how or why that happened."

Looking Toward the Future

While Ralston doesn't have a formal succession plan in place, she does think finding someone who believes in her firm's brand would be a great way to keep it going when she retires. "If I can find that person, I'll give them opportunities just like people did for me when I was starting out," she says. Aside from that, she wants to spend more time with family and to become even more involved in the community. "I'm going to keep my eyes and ears open to stay connected and to help people as much as I can," she says.

When asked if she had to focus on one group, she sets her sights on seniors. "They deserve it," she says. "They've worked long and hard. If I had all the money in the world and access to buy land, I'd start designing and building thoughtful senior living communities. It would be a true com-

munity, not the senior living we have now. Something that would create a sense of family.

I'd spend time and energy just creating that next step, that last chapter in life, making it more special than it is currently. That'd be fun."

In a way, it all stems back to what Ralston learned as a young woman growing up: how to listen well and to earn trust, how to be part of a team — whether in sports or business — and to do so over the long term. To really care about those you love and those you do business with. To see what's best for them and to act accordingly. To spread happiness. Those are the keys to her success.

"Care about those you love and those you do business with. See what's best for them and act accordingly."