

## **Melanie Thompson**

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Anyone stepping in to the real estate business at any level needs to understand and plan for the fact that there are wonderful highs and debilitating lows. Managing those expectations allows you to maneuver with little to no damage. Now the market is back to where we were just after the last slow market and I feel sure we will not see the unnatural highs we experienced.

It was a good lesson in running expenses the leanest while not skimping on the things that matter most. There are many things that will make a huge impact but require little in funds. One thing for me was just working alongside my agents, doing what I could to help make sure every single transaction made it to the settlement table even if it was a difficult short sale or a foreclosure. Many times when the buyer or seller wanted to throw in the towel it was my trained agents who made the difference.

It's a lot like the stock market: you have to plan on being in for the long haul. Living through a downturn is no excuse for not being ready for good times. I read real estate and business news constantly, and from my volunteer roles in the state and national associations along with my brand, I have a huge network of real estate friends across the country to bounce ideas off of and learn from how they run their companies. Staying abreast of aspects of social media certainly has been a help.

I plan on focusing my attention on two details that will surely carry me the next two years. Yes, based on the reports of shadow inventory I really do not see a totally normal market until then. In 2012 I plan on working to provide my sales agents and staff all the newest tools and systems that they need to take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself to help our community of home buyers and sellers. This is the perfect time to update the company and institute new ideas. Naturally this provides my second focus, our considerable customer and client base, the best experience possible.

A large ship turns slowly. In real estate it's the first-time home buyer who allows the young couple expecting their second child to move into a larger home. That encourages a busy family to move to their dream home, and eventually that sale makes the perfect plan for the empty-nester to get into that community with a smaller yard and conveniences tailor-made for the quality of life they have strived for. With the price of homes and mortgages at an all-time low, it's that first part that is missing. Encourage your children and grandchildren to live in a home they own, not rent. Invest in this next generation by helping them.