Former Nordstrom Shoe Buyer Charles Brickell Marks 26 Years of Service-First Real Estate in South Orange County

The Compass broker associate applies the retailer's service standards, learned over 11 years, to selling homes in Laguna Niguel, Dana Point, and Laguna Beach.



DANA POINT, CA, UNITED STATES, September 8, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Charles Brickell, a broker associate with Compass serving Laguna Niguel, Dana Point and Laguna Beach, began his working life on the sales floor when Nordstrom opened its Santa Ana store in 1987. Twenty-six years into his real estate career, he points to the eleven years he spent with the retailer as the foundation of everything he does for buyers and sellers on the South Orange County coast.

Brickell rose steadily at Nordstrom, first managing the shoe department at the Montclair store, then serving as shoe buyer for the Brea location and later for the Westside and South Coast Plaza stores. Along the way he earned the company's Customer Service All-Star award, a recognition he attributes to listening closely, focusing on small details and treating every interaction as a chance to exceed what was expected.

He still tells the story of one afternoon in the spring of 1989, when a customer came in looking for black shoes to wear to her husband's funeral the next day, something comfortable enough for a long afternoon of standing. The right shoe was in stock, but not in her size. Brickell called other stores until he located the pair, drove to pick it up when his shift ended and delivered the shoes to her home that evening. Her daughter met him at the door, grateful for the effort during one of the hardest weeks of the family's life.

"I had the privilege of working around members of the Nordstrom family, and Bruce Nordstrom had a saying that never left me," Brickell said. "Do something right for a customer and they might tell one person. Do something wrong and they will tell ten. Twenty-six years into real estate, I still run every decision through that filter."

Brickell moved into real estate in 2000, looking for an entrepreneurial career that could combine his commitment to client service with a lifelong appreciation for architecture and interior design. The service habits came with him, and many would look familiar to anyone who ever worked a Nordstrom floor.

He writes handwritten notes to his sellers after important showings, acknowledging the work it takes to keep a home ready for the market. He shows up on moving day with fresh pizzas for clients and their moving crews, because the kitchen is packed away and everyone forgets to eat. He sends birthday cards and home anniversary cards year after year, and he holds himself to a simple communication standard: calls and texts get returned fast.

The same approach governs the difficult moments. When an appraisal comes in low, Brickell studies the report, pulls comparable sales and gets the appraiser on the phone to challenge discrepancies, coordinating a second appraisal when the numbers warrant it. When an inspection turns up a surprise, he is already gathering contractor quotes or calculating a credit designed to keep the transaction on track.

Sometimes the standard costs him money. After a recent closing, a plumbing repair the seller had completed during escrow failed once Brickell's buyer moved in, and a shower faucet began to leak again. Rather than send his client into a dispute over a finished deal, Brickell called a plumber he has worked with for years, had the defective part replaced that same afternoon and paid the bill himself.

"Closing day is not the finish line," Brickell said. "If something is not right after my clients get their keys, I make it right. I did not learn that in real estate. I learned it at Nordstrom."

At times the job means advising against a purchase entirely. Brickell recently guided a buyer out of escrow on a remodeled home she loved after inspections raised concerns he believed made the purchase unwise for her family. She followed his advice and canceled.

That style of representation has compounded. Roughly half of Brickell's business today comes from repeat clients and their referrals, including families he has represented across multiple transactions and whose children and friends now hire him for homes of their own. His retail past keeps resurfacing as well. Several customers from his Nordstrom years have retained him as their agent, among them the former store manager of the Mission Viejo Nordstrom, who hired Brickell when relocating from Los Angeles.

"People know what the Nordstrom name stands for, care that feels personal from start to finish,"

Brickell said. "I spent eleven years learning that standard from the inside, and I have woven it into every part of my practice. Whether a sale is effortless or hits a few bumps, I stay beside my clients and manage every detail until they get the experience they deserve."

About Charles Brickell

Charles Brickell is a broker associate with Compass (DRE# 01271569), serving Laguna Niguel, Dana Point, Laguna Beach and the surrounding South Orange County communities from his office in Dana Point. A third-generation Californian who has lived in Orange County for 60 years, including more than three decades in Laguna Niguel, he was named Realtor of the Year by the Laguna Board of Realtors in 2014 and has served as president of the board and of its Charitable Assistance Fund. He is currently vice president of the Monarch Beach Rotary. More information is available at www.CharlesBrickell.com.

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