



# Firm Positions itself as the Nordstrom of the Property Management Industry

By Jana Adkins – Reprinted with permission.

A Santa Clarita Valley property management firm which launched in the shadows of the housing market crash has grown from a small office and a handful of employees to one with three offices, managing over 90 homeowner associations and employing 38 people within the period of time it took the economy to recover.

Former executives with KB Home, Brad Watson and Jim Carr, launched Property Management Professionals LLC (PMP) in 2009 as new home construction was grinding to a halt. Watson was director of land acquisition and forward planning, and Carr served as senior vice president for the L.A.-Ventura division of KB Home.

Parlaying their experience sitting on homeowner boards while the properties were in development, Watson said they saw an opportunity to build a firm that offered their clients not only building industry expertise, but also a focus on customer service to the market. Carr largely operates as a silent partner today, while Watson serves as the face of the company.

“We saw opportunity because the majority of management companies did not offer the level of service that homeowners, especially the sophisticated homeowners in Santa Clarita, deserve and expect with a focus on customer service,” Watson said.

Saying the industry was lacking and that HOA management companies often positioned themselves as barriers or adversaries to homeowners, the two part-



PMP President Brad Watson and Director of Community Management Tina Nakamura stand at the reception desk of their corporate offices in Valencia. – Photo by Katharine Lotze

ners set out to focus on service to the volunteer homeowner board members and homeowners alike. That focus has catapulted them to success, he said.

Within six years, PMP outgrew the 3,000 square feet of space it had expanded to in its former building. And so last fall the company moved into over 8,000 square feet of space on Turnberry Lane. It also opened another 2,000 square feet worth of space in offices located in Los Angeles and Thousand Oaks in Westlake Village. And PMP is also now looking at entering a fourth market – Inland Empire – within a year, Watson said.

“Santa Clarita will always be our home. I do business here and in other markets and I’ve worked out here since 2001. Santa Clarita’s a great place to do business,” Watson said. “Our corporate office in Valencia will continue to serve as our central hub for our accounting and our escrow department and customer service will all be based in Santa Clarita. We’ll keep growing our team from local SCV residents.”

PMP also switched up the hiring model, Watson said. It looks for “extraordinary talents” by pulling people from diverse industries; not just the property management industry. The entire staff



also attends ongoing certification training so that they're knowledgeable in their field and can actually help to solve problems, not just take messages.

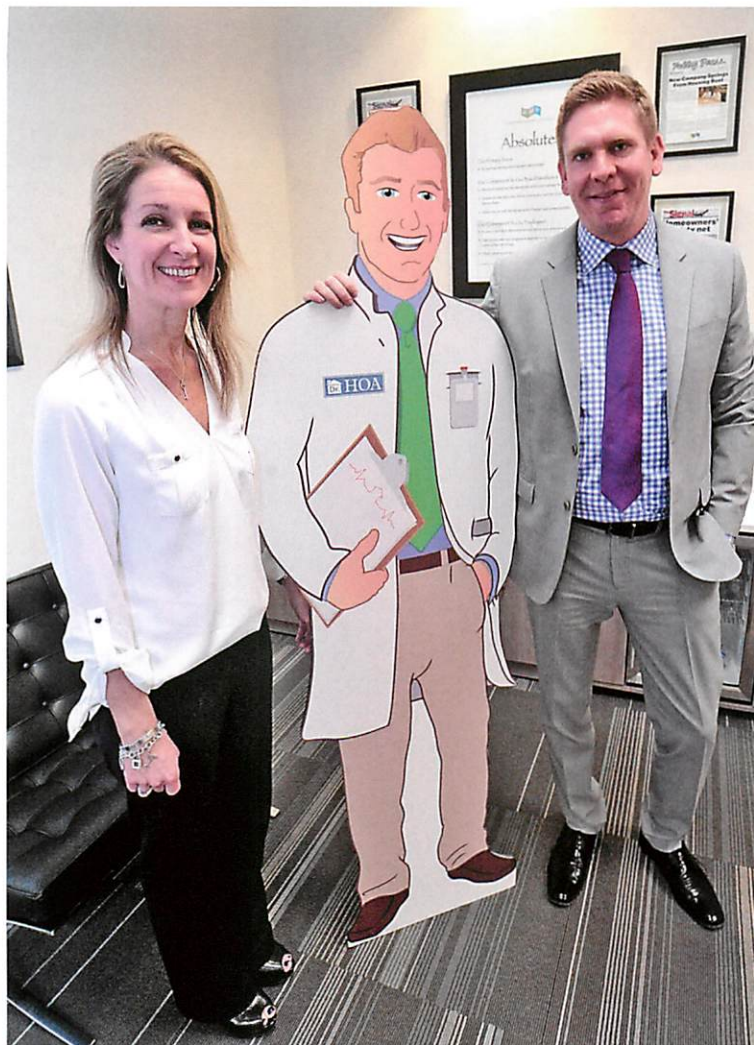
"Others just recycled employees from their competitors," he said. "We rely on people with background in home building disciplines, customer service, mortgage, construction, everything. It's a dynamic and unique approach to community management and we feel the best way to provide a service to our clients."

Just having marked their six-year anniversary since landing their first account, Watson said the whirlwind of growth has been based on great partnerships with developers and builders. But with the return of the housing market, Watson said those partnerships with developers like Newhall Land and builders like The New Home Company, Beazer, DR Horton and more has paid off.

"We're now the largest management company in the SCV," he said. "We couldn't yet say that two years ago, even with the number of employees we had."

At the end of the day, everyone has the same interest and that's that homeowners are happy, Watson said. But, he said, the HOA management industry as a whole doesn't always understand its role.

"It seems like the industry doesn't understand that we're a service industry; if we're not treating all of our clients well then we're failing."



PMP's Director of Community Management Tina Nakamura and CEO Brad Watson stand with Dr. HOA at their corporate offices in Valencia. Dr. HOA is the name of PMP's column in The Signal. — Photo by Katharine Lotze

To that end, PMP focused not only on service but how it treats HOAs board members, homeowners and internal employees as well, saying if their team members are treated with the utmost of respect they'll focus on great service with clients. In one of the conference rooms, thank you letters to employees from homeowners are posted on a bulletin board and the employee receives a \$100 gift certificate to be spent wherever they want, he said.

As for homeowners, the focus has also been on access. A live person is available for every single call to PMP, he said. They not only also provide online

access, but the firm launched its own smart phone app, a complimentary download, that allows homeowners to pay bills, submit photos or ask questions. Everything — online or smart phone app — is integrated and interactive which helps in meeting clients expectations and gives the company a significant competitive advantage in the industry.

Homeowners are also greeted by an open door policy at the office where a mini-fridge stocked with cold water, and treats and candy sit out in the reception area encouraging people to walk in for help. That's rare in the industry where most HOA property management companies require an invitation or appointment to the firm's office.

"An HOA functions better when homeowners feel like they're part of the association and that entire property management team believes, and has a vested interest, in what you're trying to do collectively," Watson said. "We work at direction of Board of Directors; but at pleasure of all homeowners."

As for managing its rapid growth, Watson said the firm plans to continue growing in the Santa Clarita Valley as well as its sub-markets. But as for accelerating the firm's growth, he waits for it to occur naturally.

"Success comes from organic growth, not pushing things. Things are going to grow at the speed they're going to grow," Watson said. "We want to be able to deliver on our promises."