

Broker of the MONTH

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# R. CRAIG COPPOLA

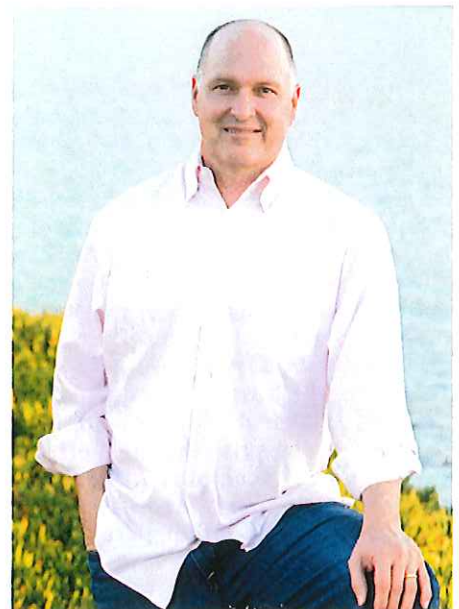
EXCEEDING GOALS

## R. Craig Coppola may be the world's most interesting broker.

On the surface, he looks like your average real estate legend, MBA, former professional baseball player, Taekwondo World Champion, ultra-marathoner, author, backpacker, world traveler and family man,

**but Coppola is  
even more than that.**

**H** He is a master at the art of setting goals and exceeding them, while remaining positive through whatever curve balls life throws at him - and that's exactly why he's this issue's "Broker of the Month." /// Coppola's distinguished career includes more than 30 years of brokerage experience and feats such as the top producer of all time at Lee & Associates, where he is a Founding Principal of Lee & Associates Arizona. He has completed over 3,500 real estate transactions, totaling more than 13 million square feet valued in excess of \$3.5 billion. He has been nominated and won numerous awards, including six-time "NAIOP Broker of the Year," two-time "NAIOP Transaction of the Year," and holds the top three industry designations: CCIM, CRE and SIOR - less than 40 people in the industry hold all three. Coppola does nothing in moderation, and best of all, he is just getting started. /// He credits his successes today to the first long-term goal he ever set and accomplished for himself: being drafted by Major League Baseball. "I always look back to the year I got drafted to play for the Minnesota Twins organization as the 'Ah-ha' moment, because I realized at that moment if I set a goal, grind through it for a long period of time, I can be successful," Coppola says. "Running a marathon is the same process. If you can do the training miles, you can do the marathon. Same for earning the grad school degree, and of course for our business." /// Coppola reached his goal of being drafted, but was later released from the Twins. However, the experience itself taught him the power of goal setting, and he continued to use that lesson to lead his next endeavor: Commercial Real Estate. /// Coppola's first job in real estate was in 1983 at Equitec in Chicago, where he would cold-call prospect clients in the hopes of making deals. He then moved on to land a job at the legendary Grubb & Ellis. His first major deal was with Colonial Penn Insurance, where he negotiated a 30,000-square-foot transaction. His



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hard work paid off as he was named "Rookie of the Year" and became a Senior Marketing Consultant within three years. /// "All my career, I have cultivated grit. At the time, being successful for me in 1985 meant you were making \$30,000-\$40,000. I could live on that money. I lived in a studio apartment; I didn't have many expenses. I didn't travel like I do now," Coppola says. /// After enjoying success in real estate at Grubb & Ellis for seven years, Coppola and eight other Brokers made the decision to start their own firm, Lee & Associates Arizona. /// "In 1991, when we started Lee & Associates Arizona, it was pretty bold. The market was still in recession, and everyone was questioning why we would take the risk," Coppola says. "But in hindsight, it turned out to be perfect timing." /// Adding to the pressure of starting the Arizona Lee office was the arrival of Coppola's first daughter, while simultaneously studying to get his MBA at Arizona State University. Somehow he also found the time to add marathon runner to his schedule. Nevertheless, the motivation to make the firm successful never died. This "Broker of the Month" is not the type of person to settle for anything less than success. /// "It was very scary at the time. I was one of the young guys at Grubb & Ellis, an up-in-comer. It was a very difficult decision, but I saw the opportunity to be an owner, which was always something I wanted to do," he says. /// As with every leap, it was a life-changing risk. But, it was a risk that paid off. After Coppola helped start Lee & Associates Arizona, the market started to take off. Coppola was in a perfect position with his experience working through recessions at previous jobs.

He worked tirelessly adding quality clientele to the roster to build up Lee & Associates to where it stands today. /// "Everybody has to constantly disrupt their own business. I think it's really important to take the time to look at the business and change it as needed," he says. "What we can accomplish today is 180 degrees different than what it was years ago. The process we execute daily for our clients would have been considered phenomenal 10 years ago." /// It's not always so cut and dry, though. Coppola admits that he is not always an easy person to work with. He pushes his team to the best of their capabilities. In fact, the title of Coppola's fourth book is *Chasing Excellence* and is scheduled for release in December. Coppola co-wrote it with Lee & Associates Founder, Bill Lee. /// As he is starting to head toward the latter part of his career, he still remains on top of his game. It's been a formula for great success that has led him to authoring three additional books: *The Art of Commercial Real Estate Leasing*, *How to Win in Commercial Real Estate Investing* and *The Fantastic Life*. He was recently inducted into the Taekwondo Hall of Fame for being a part of the 2004 World Championship U.S.A. team. Coppola credits much of his success to the support from his wife of 26 years, Tracy, his four children, and his team: Andrew Cheney, Gregg Kafka, Chelsea Clifton and Michael Marsh. /// "I think you should always make your future bigger than your past. So, I'm just getting started," he says. "Everything I've done today is a warm up for what's next. I have lots of things left to accomplish." ●