

# Vicki Etherton

PRESIDENT

LANDMARK TITLE ASSURANCE AGENCY



### What words do you live by?

**VE:** I would rather ask for forgiveness than ask for permission.

### Think back to when you first started your career at Stewart Title in Tucson. What advice would you give yourself?

**VE:** I would tell myself not to worry so much. I now know, it always works out one way or another.

### What is your morning routine?

**VE:** I like to start with a cup of my favorite coffee (Mexicali by Aruckle, from Tucson) and watch the morning sunlight on Piestewa Peak, walk my puppy, Finley, and then tackle the day.

**T**itle insurance has been a big part of Vicki Etherton's world since she was a young adult. "During high school, I started working part-time after school at Stewart Title," says Etherton. "My mother was my first boss, and I did everything from answering phones and making coffee to filing and delivering commission checks to realtors. It was a great introduction to the business and how it worked."

**STARTING POINTS** Etherton's professional trajectory has taken her from those early days at Stewart to president at Landmark Assurance Agency, running its operations. "In addition to our Esplanade office, we have operations in the Southeast Valley, and North Scottsdale at Kierland," she says. "Landmark offers a full line of commercial and residential title and escrow services."

**THE JOURNEY** The evolution of Etherton's success can be traced to lessons learned from her parents. "They were both hardworking and managed successful businesses, which served as a great example to me and my sisters," she says. Etherton's biggest break, though, stemmed from a relationship she formed shortly after entering the industry. "A few years into my career, I had the good fortune of meeting and working with Pam Tighe, a premier commercial escrow officer in Tucson," Etherton recalls. "Pam became my friend and mentor as I transitioned from residential escrow to commercial, which was my first 'aha' moment. She taught me the ins and outs of commercial title and escrow, which is quite different from residential."

**LEAPS** Etherton and Tighe worked together at Lawyers Title Insurance Company for two decades, growing the firm's commercial business in Tucson. "My second big advance was the decision to relocate to Phoenix in 2001 and expand the Lawyers brand footprint," she says. "In both cases, I left successful, established situations where I had name recognition and I had to start over. It is easy to stay where we are and remain comfortable, but when we push beyond our comfort zone and challenge ourselves, it is empowering."

**DYNAMICS** Establishing a distinguished name in commercial real estate is a challenge for any professional. For a woman, the obstacles can seem insurmountable in a largely-dominated male industry. "Commercial real estate, especially in title and escrow, has made great strides since the 1970s in developing more woman leaders, but we need to continue to do so," she says. "I am very grateful to be a part of that. I have worked with and hired some incredible women that are managers and executives on my team."

**LANDMARK** In 2013, Etherton and Tighe reunited with a merger of the Phoenix and Tucson offices under the Landmark umbrella. "We had different strengths that complemented each other," says Etherton. "We forged a great partnership over many decades. Pam is now retired, but I often think, 'how would Pam handle this?'" **|||** Landmark's position in the marketplace continues to strengthen with large-scale transactions including the sale of the Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain Resort; the 1,100-acre Bella Vista Farms in Pinal County, and Block 23, a highly anticipated mixed-use project in downtown Phoenix, targeted for completion in 2019. **|||** "My mentors along the way have taught me that to succeed in a service industry, it takes more than being capable and able to get the job done for the client," Etherton says. "It is about building strong relationships and doing things better than others, so clients know that they can count on you."

**LESSONS** Etherton's success rests on core fundamentals, which she has depended on throughout her career. "I always keep myself open and look for opportunities; I am willing to take risks. At the same time, I am flexible and able to adapt to change as situations unfold," she says. "If you haven't failed, you haven't tried hard enough. Failing makes me appreciate my successes more."

**CONCLUSION** The future is full of promise for Landmark Title, as Etherton and her team advance their operations and gain market share. While she is proud of the company's growth, Etherton says she hopes she is also remembered for the impact she's had on others. "I hope my legacy is defined by the opportunities for success I helped foster in my staff and the service we as a team provided our clients," she says. "Personally, and professionally it is about the wonderful relationships I've built with the many people in my life. That's what really matters." ■

