

Caroline Carter is Greater Washington's house whisperer

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By Soe Han Tha



JOANNE S. LAWTON

Caroline Carter, CEO, Done In A Day, Inc. shopping at her favorite store, Home Depot

For those moving into a new home, [Caroline Carter](#) is a fairy godmother.

Her company, Done In A Day Inc., designs and stages homes to help them sell faster while also supervising the owners' moves to their new homes. Carter describes the process as "total home transition," which starts when she meets a home seller and ends when the seller unpacks the last box in the new space.

Carter's first customer was a family friend from San Francisco planning a move to D.C. 14 years ago. At the time, Carter had just gone through a separation, and the mother of three was looking to return to work to support her kids. Carter took charge of the family friend's coast-to-coast move, setting up the D.C. home with new items as well as the items from California.

Today, the CEO and founder serves as the Bethesda-based company's only employee; she contracts up to 25 employees at a time, depending on demand.

The executive tried her hand at being a real estate agent in 2008. The episode lasted for five months. Carter realized that she prefers helping clients through their home transition, rather than wrangling the real estate side. It's a talent that has paid off: The company's 2017 revenue approached \$1 million, according to Carter.

What was your hardest lesson learned? That not everyone is a truth teller. Early on in the company, clients were able to roll the cost of our services to the closing table. An

attorney owed me \$13,000 at closing, but he took advantage of a loophole in our contract. He would not pay the full amount and agreed to settle for \$8,000. Afterwards, I worked with another attorney to draw up a strong contract so it would never happen again.

What is your biggest work goal for 2019? I'm getting ready to release a book called "Smart Moves: How to Save Time and Money While Transitioning Your Home and Life." It's designed for sellers to understand exactly what the transition journey is all about. This book provides the bridge from where you are to where you are going.

What is it like to work for you? I'm definitely fun. I have a great personality. But I'm tough. I'm a perfectionist.

What was your first job? I was a mother's helper in my neighborhood. I was 8 years old. A neighbor just had a little baby boy, and I got paid 50 cents an hour to be a mother's helper. But if I were paid nothing, I still would have done it because I was fascinated with babies.

As a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? A loving, caring and stylish mom. It never occurred to me that I'd found and run a company. Had I never been divorced and put in that position, I would have never known that I was capable of building a business that has increased exponentially every year. Now, I want the time to mentor other women in a position similar to where I was in 2005.

What is the biggest misconception about Done In A Day? That our job is easy. This is a brutal process that families go through to design their home to sell and moving. In order to do this process properly so that it makes the most sense, you are actually decluttering your house strategically while also packing for a move at the same time.

What do most people not know about you? That I get up at 4 a.m. every day. I take a nap every day. I don't schedule anything between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. and I get into my bed, read and nap.

Where can you usually be found on weekends? I wander the aisles at Home Depot and see what's new. I love physical retail therapy, where I'll walk through home goods at a T.J.Maxx, a Marshalls or a Target. I use that to stay up to date in terms of current trends and style.

The basics

Caroline Carter, Founder and CEO, Done In A Day Inc.

Age: 55

Residence: Bethesda

Education: Bachelor's in psychology, Rutgers University

Family: Children Cecilia, 22; Grace, 20 and Harrison, 18