

TOP AGENT MAGAZINE

ARUN JAGTIANI



One could say Arun Jagtiani is all heart. That would be true, but it wouldn't do justice to his extensive knowledge, integrity, efficiency and creativity. In the eight years since he opened his agency, Island Real Estate Team (IRE Team), the St. Maarten native has built the largest team on the island.

The seed for Arun's real estate career was planted when he was a teenager. "My mom gave me a lot of motivational books," he recalls. "I read that 80 percent of millionaires around the world made their wealth through real estate, so I thought that might be an industry I'd like to get involved in."

In 2000, Arun was a sophomore at Florida International University and a new father. With money tight, he started selling timeshares, which required that he get a real estate license. In the process, he decided to become an agent when he graduated. At the end of 2002, degree in hand, he moved back to St. Maarten to begin his real estate career.

Arun serves the Dutch side of St. Maarten, a 16-square-mile area. Repeats and referrals account for 70–80 percent of his business—not an easy feat, considering that his competition comprises international brands with multimillion dollar budgets as well as mom-and-pop agencies that have been around for decades. Caring deeply about clients is key to his agency's being able to hold its own against the competition. "The first thing I tell someone who joins my team," Arun says, "is to make it about the clients, and the money will follow. If it's the reverse," he tells them, "clients will quickly realize your motivation and not return."

Arun thinks outside the box, creating marketing campaigns that his competitors have attempted to duplicate. One such campaign was a photo shoot he and his team set up on the beach. "We made

it look like that was our office, with file cabinets and a water cooler," he laughs. "It became the iconic image of our company!" That's one way IRE Team stays in the forefront of people's minds, even generating TV coverage. Arun was featured on the HGTV shows "Caribbean Life" and "House Hunters International," on NBC's "Open House," and as host of his own political talk show on YouTube.

As a local, Arun has an extensive sphere of influence. He caters to the entire world, including those buying second and third homes, and uses his local and global network, social media and print advertising to target the appropriate audience for each listing.

Arun started IRE Team in 2009 during the global recession, seeing an opportunity to position himself as a leader when the market rebounded. But the downturn lasted longer than he expected. Between 2010–12, he had practically no business. "I came so close to going out of business so many times during that period," he says. "At one point I even waited tables at night to pay the bills. The experience helped me learn a lot about my character and perseverance. I don't take anything for granted anymore. I know it can all change if I take my eye off the ball."

He also understands the importance of a balanced life, supporting several charities and participating in an annual food drive, when his entire team takes the day off to collect goods. Sunday is family day, when Arun, his wife and two children go to a beach or the movies, and he and his wife do date night religiously on Saturdays. He also likes yoga, swimming and enjoying the island.

Arun envisions IRE Team growing into one of the strongest brands in the Caribbean, perhaps expanding to other islands. Last year he formed a strategic partnership and launched a new division called IRE Vacations, renting out properties for absentee owners. He'd like to explore development, too. "Whatever happens," he says, "I'm very happy being the leader here on the Dutch side of St. Maarten."



For more information about Arun Jagtiani
of Island Real Estate Team, St. Maarten, please visit
ireteam.com, call +1 721.586.2626 or email arunsxm@gmail.com