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Fortune Favors the Bold

Having mastered the art of reinvention, Michelle Armato, Resa Giacoppo, and Gina Spaziano lead innovative businesses designed to guide clients through some of life's most stressful transitions.



Michelle Armato, Resa Giacoppo, and Gina Spaziano share many commonalities. Each possesses an entrepreneurial spirit, the ability to lead teams, and a strong desire to make a difference in their respective communities. At the same time, each of their stories is unique, with each woman having blazed a different path to the same destination: growth, independence, and reinvention.

Mover and Shaker

Michelle Armato spent more than 20 years as a global communications executive for health care companies such as Johnson & Johnson, Novartis, and Sandoz. Having grown up with dreams of becoming a doctor, she found that working in health care fulfilled a deep-seated desire to help other people. Her career trajectory took an abrupt turn in 2018.

"They say significant change generally comes from significant moments in life," Armato says. "For me it was the loss of my father. My dad was an adventurer; he had a pirate's spirit. He was 65 and at a pivotal moment in his life when he thought he was going to travel and sail on a boat, and his life completely changed. What he said sticks with me to this day: 'There's so much more to do.'"

"Before then I wasn't considering doing something different [with my career]," she continues. "I was happy and content working in the corporate sector. What happened to my father snapped me out of my corporate security. I had spent so much time working for someone else, and I started thinking about what else I can bring to life."

She knew she wanted to forge her path as an entrepreneur, but she also realized she needed some guardrails to keep her on the right track. By 2023, after several years of investigating different

franchise opportunities, she found what she was looking for in Pink Zebra Moving. Her business, which turned out to be Pink Zebra's first franchised location in the Northeast, officially opened its doors in March 2024 and has been going strong ever since. She attributes her success to Pink Zebra Moving's focus on delighting the cus-

tomers and commitment to focusing on customer experience, and disrupting an industry that hasn't changed much in the last 50 years.

"With Pink Zebra Moving, our goal is to make the customer experience as easy as it can be," she says. "No one is going to work harder than us to make sure they have a smooth experience and an enjoyable one. Our aspiration is to make moving fun. It's a lofty goal, but it's something we work toward every day for our clients."

When Armato launched Pink Zebra Moving of Somerset, she focused her efforts on central New Jersey, but has her sights set on growing to include southeastern Pennsylvania and parts of northern New Jersey. She's also in the process of expanding services beyond but connected directly to moving day; her vision involves providing value to "all the touchpoints around that moment and how we service all the clients' needs."

"There's so much uncertainty when it comes to moving," she says. "If you've ever talked to someone who has moved, you've heard the horror stories about being charged astronomical amounts, or companies breaking or losing items and then disappearing. Being able to reduce that uncertainty is where we come in. With Pink Zebra, you will have a partner from the start. We're not going anywhere."



Michelle Armato

Designed to Succeed

Resa Giacoppo studied communications in college with aspirations of becoming "a Barbara Walters type." Her journey ultimately led her into the family business of banking, where she built a 25-year career marked by leadership roles in private banking, human resources, and commercial banking, among others.

Though successful in banking, Giacoppo felt called to something more fulfilling. In 2023, she launched Happy Egg B+B in Princeton, offering thoughtfully curated vacation rental homes, while also exploring opportunities in franchising.

"I believe in brands and the power of proven playbooks," she says. "I was considering everything from med spas to window washers, and I had attended 'discovery days' with different franchises. At one point my husband said, 'Why not do something you're passionate about? You love the design element of what you do with the rental homes. Why not go in that direction?' Starting from scratch as a designer seemed daunting, so when I found Linden Creek, it felt like the perfect way to follow my passion while building on my business and banking background."

Linden Creek LLC is a boutique home



Resa Giacoppo

staging and interior design franchise that creates a luxury client experience focused on tailored designs and genuine relationships. Giacoppo felt drawn to Linden Creek's established systems, which are designed to uplift franchisees and help their clients achieve their goals. She opened her franchise earlier this year, rooted in the Princeton community. Her territory has since grown to include New Hope, Pennsylvania, and Morristown, New Jersey, though she has also worked with clients at South Jersey's shore points—all serviced from Giacoppo's 5,000-square-foot warehouse in Lawrence Township, New Jersey.

"On the staging side, we make things as efficient as possible," she says. "It's not just about decorating a house; we're an extension of the seller agent's marketing team. We're taking the best parts of a home and making them shine. Our goal is to strike a chord with as many buyers as possible, so the staged home looks beautiful but doesn't lean super modern or super traditional."

Home staging often yields handsome dividends for sellers. Giacoppo cites data from the National Association of REALTORS, suggesting buyers spend an average of 40 minutes in a staged home, compared

with just six minutes in a vacant home. More importantly, properly staged homes also tend to sell significantly faster than non-staged homes and yield a higher return on investment.

In addition to home staging, Giacoppo offers three levels of interior design services. Her Consultations provide 10 hours of expert guidance on paint, renovations, furnishings, and styling, complete with sourcing and floor plans. Builder Selections help clients choose cohesive exterior and interior finishes for a custom home. For those seeking a more comprehensive approach, Giacoppo's Full-Service Interior Design package allows her to immerse herself in the client's vision and manage every detail from start to finish, delivering a space that is beautifully styled but also ready for the rigors of daily life.

"Having worked in various capacities of banking and earning an MBA really brought me to where I am now because I learned how to run a business," she says. "The service I'm providing is exponentially more valuable than I ever imagined. I've had clients who have been brought to tears walking into a home after they see what we've done for them, and I love being part of that experience."

Focused on the Next Chapter

Gina Spaziano grew up surrounded by the real estate business. When she began thinking about her life and career, however, she chose a different path. Spaziano, who has a master's in psychology, went into education and taught for a year before coming to the realization that she was meant to do something else.

In 2006, she transitioned into a business she knew all too well—real estate—and cut her teeth selling newly built condominiums in Philadelphia's Old City neighborhood. Not only did she sell all available units in the challenging environment leading up to the Great Recession, but she also learned "how to conduct business the right way." In the process she earned a reputation as an effective marketer and a reliable problem solver.

After her time in Philadelphia, she spent the next 17 years as a Realtor serving clients in Bucks County and surrounding suburbs. She also went on to play a leadership role in her family's real estate practice. Earlier this year she branched out on her own, as owner and broker of Gina Spaziano Real Estate & Concierge Services.

"I wanted to forge my own path and write my own plan," she says. "I'm fortunate in that I've been doing this for a while, and the experience of running an office and getting to work with and learn from some great people has been invaluable. Being on my own has reinvigorated me."



Gina Spaziano

Based in Newtown, Spaziano's office works primarily with clients in Bucks County and across the river in Hunterdon and Mercer counties. Given the word *conierge* is in her business's name, it should come as no surprise that she considers "an elevated level of service" as her calling card. She strives to be a "one-stop shop" for any need pertaining to the sale or purchase of a home. In addition, her commitment to clients does not end at their day at the closing table.

"I have clients who text me out of the blue, years after I've helped them," she says. "The best agents always do what's best for their clients and don't make it about them, and that's always been my approach. Moving into a new home is stressful and has a lot of moving parts, so I try to take the emotion out of it. I tell each of my clients, 'Let that be my burden so you can focus on the next chapter.'"

Spaziano's skill as a marketer and creator extends to *Curator*, the print and digital publication she produces on a seasonal basis. *Curator* is not only an effective tool for promoting current listings, but also an innovative way to shine a spotlight on the communities she serves; stories from previous issues have featured everything from dogs and cats available for adoption to local restaurants to the joys of beekeeping.

"In this business, it's important to be adaptable and creative, but also be true to yourself," she adds. "I'm here to be a resource for anything

people need, and I don't charge extra for that kind of service; it's just who I am."

Just the Beginning

All three women have much more in common than their entrepreneurial initiative, appetite for autonomy, and desire to help others. They support each other by sharing ideas about marketing, operations, and leadership. Also, given the fact that their respective areas of expertise intersect, they often collaborate with one another.

Spaziano can refer her buyers and sellers to Linden Creek for staging or interior design, or to Pink Zebra for a reliable mover. Giacoppo has used her design skills to transform part of Spaziano's Newtown office into a showroom for meeting with clients. Armato serves as the sole furniture mover for Linden Creek. The women expect to find more opportunities for collaboration as their businesses grow and flourish.

"One of the hardest things about business is having people you know you can trust who will be by your side when you need them," Armato says. "I feel that way about Resa and Gina.

They're both forces of nature. If there's one thing I know about them, they are going to keep doing more amazing things. I'm so excited about the future and what it will bring for all three of us. This is just the beginning of the story." ■

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