



Fame & Fortune: Barbara Corcoran

'Jersey girl' trumped Trump with street smarts

By [Jay MacDonald](#) • Bankrate.com

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As a girl growing up in tiny Edgewater, N.J., Barbara Corcoran would gaze across the Hudson River at the Manhattan skyline, little knowing that one day she would reign as the queen of New York residential real estate.

After all, she was hardly a born deal maker; severe dyslexia earned her nothing more than straight D's in school and dire warnings from the nuns. But what she couldn't accomplish in school she made up for with a winning personality and a way with people.

Fresh out of college in 1973, she borrowed \$1,000 from her boyfriend, quit her waitressing job at a Greek diner and started the real estate company that would become to Manhattan residential property what Donald Trump was to commercial development.

During the next 25 years, The Corcoran Group became the premiere New York real estate agency, with 45 offices, 2,150 sales associates and employees, and an almost unfathomable \$5 billion in annual closings. Along the way, she invented the "one-day sale" that once saved her company from disaster, and successfully trumped "The Donald" in court.

In 2001, Corcoran sold her company to real estate giant NRT to concentrate on her next conquest: to become America's multimedia real estate authority through a series of brand-savvy books and frequent television appearances.

Rags-to-riches stories don't get much richer than Corcoran's. Bankrate spoke with the real estate diva about how to take Manhattan -- and then the world.

Bankrate: You were one of 10 children. Where did you fall in the mix?

Barbara Corcoran: Second oldest, but I always felt like the oldest in the family because my older sister was very young in spirit, heart and maturity, so she was constantly in trouble. She created a great foil for me, quite honestly. She made me look like the mature one.

Bankrate: Were you the mature one?

Corcoran: You know what I was? I was the serious one because I was so busy trying to keep a low profile, if not in my family certainly in my life, because I had that reading problem (dyslexia). I was always trying to hide that I couldn't read and write. I think that kept me undercover all the time trying not to be noticed.

Bankrate: Did your dyslexia cause others to doubt your intelligence?

Corcoran: I never thought of myself as smart; in fact, I really did take on a label that one of the nuns gave me when she said I'd always be stupid if I didn't pay attention. I really did

embrace that label that I was stupid and fell for it. But, on the other hand, I always had a really wild imagination, so I had this whole other world going on in my head, in the classroom and out of the classroom. I always had a great movie show going on and could imagine things better than the other kids. It was downside and upside. The older I got, the more I focused on the upside, thank God.

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