



# THE PFS FAMILY ALBUM

*Milestones and Stories of the People at Premier*



**“My life has taught me that you have to learn to improvise, adapt and overcome in order to be successful.”**

**- Juan Garcia,**  
West Coast Sales Manager

## **We Recognize Juan Garcia: Premier’s West Coast Connection Over the Past 18 Years**

The laid-back, counter-culture and sometimes wacky world that often defines our nation’s “left coast” may be an unlikely environment for success for a buttoned-up Marine who was born and raised in the fast pace of New York City. But over the past 18 years, our West Coast Sales Manager, Juan Garcia, has ignored all of the cultural stereotypes, and pushed far beyond whatever barriers have stood in his way, to achieve his personal and professional goals. In fact, that’s the story of Juan’s entire life...and the reason why he’s such a valued member of the Premier family.

Juan’s parents, who did not speak English at the time, moved to New York from Puerto Rico in 1960. As his father sought work to support his young family, Juan lived in Brooklyn, Bronx and Manhattan. Growing up, life in America was not easy, and according to Juan, “I was not a good kid. I was a troublemaker, and did a lot of things I shouldn’t have.”

But Juan’s life took a dramatic turn one day when he and some friends were cutting high school, hanging out by the corner deli. Two Marines – dressed in their khaki tops, dress blue bottoms and white hats – walked by and said hello to the group. Juan claims that single moment shocked and inspired him. “Their demeanor and confidence were so impressive, and just by the way

they conducted themselves and said hello to us, I could see that there was something special about them.” Juan turned to his friends and told them he was going to enlist in the Marine Corps. They all laughed at him.

## **Juan’s 13-Year Career As A U.S. Marine**

Juan signed a contract to join the Marines when he was 17, and in 1981 he attended basic training at the age of 18 on Parris Island, South Carolina. It was an experience he clearly recalls as both physically and mentally intense, and one that changed the course of his life.

Although military hot spots can occur around the world at any time, Juan was fortunate during his 13-year tenure in the Marines. His deployment – often described as a “Liberty Cruise” – involved training and non-combat assignments in exotic locations that included Hawaii, Japan, Korea, Australia and Guam.

Following his deployment, Juan served as an enlisted aide for a 2-star general. In addition to looking after the general, Juan learned many valuable skills – including protocol and etiquette – that would benefit his future career. At the



Juan (r) in a USMC Honor Guard



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encouragement of the general, Juan also attended college during that assignment. Following the general's retirement in 1988, then "Sergeant Garcia" attended the Marine Corps Computer Training Center, where on the first day of class he amused the other, mostly 18-year-old students by innocently asking the instructor, "What's a cursor?"

Over the balance of his military career, Juan also gained extensive experience managing and training his unit, which combined with the self-discipline and confidence he had gained as a Marine, served him well when he traded the khaki top and dress blue bottoms for a jacket and tie in 1994, at the age of 31.

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### **Civilian Life: Introducing "John" Garcia**

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Starting out in civilian life, Juan moved to England to be near the family of his wife, who had been working as an English nanny when they met in Virginia, while he was attending computer training as a Marine. Translating his military experience into business world accomplishments on a resume was no easy task, and Juan faced other obstacles as well. As he recalls, "I sent out a lot of resumes, and didn't get a single phone call. Then it dawned on me what the problem was. As soon as I changed the name at the top of my resume to "John" Garcia, the phone started ringing."

Juan applied for a job at Daewoo Motors, the South Korean car company that was just launching in the U.K. Daewoo had a very different business model: the manufacturer owned the sales process, and there

were no dealerships owned by individuals. He interviewed for a position as a customer service representative, which was basically a sales position, but there was no commission structure. The head of HR for Daewoo, a former British Army officer, was impressed by the way Juan conducted himself, and told him, "I'm sure you'll do very well here, John." Juan replied, "Well, actually, my name is Juan," and he explained the circumstances... which did not affect the job offer.

Within a short time at Daewoo, Juan was promoted to a managerial position, where he traveled all over the U.K. and Northern Ireland to ensure that every sales center complied with the company's standards for operations, marketing, physical appearance and salesmanship. In 1999, when Juan's



Juan at Bentley Motors Crewe UK

boss at Daewoo went to work for Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, he followed him there, landing a position as the Academy Programs Manager, with responsibility for training and development for Rolls-Royce and Bentley dealers worldwide. When offered the position, Juan asked them, "What do I know about this job?" Their reply was, "You trained Marines, right? So how hard could this be?" Juan took the job.

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### **Juan Packs Up The Rolls-Royce And Moves To Beverly Hills**

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"It never dawned on me at the time," according to Juan, "but here I was, a Puerto Rican from the inner city, serving as the public face for Rolls-Royce and Bentley Motor cars. It was a crazy situation, but it worked out really well for me." In fact, many of the Rolls-Royce dealers from this period in Juan's career still work with him today, and rely on his deep knowledge and appreciation of the marque.

In 2001, Juan was promoted to Vice President of the Western Region for Rolls-Royce, and resettled with his family in California. In that role, one of his responsibilities was to find a general manager for the Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Aston Martin dealership in Beverly Hills. But when Juan learned the attractive compensation for that position, he went to the dealership owner and told him, "I'm your guy." The owner agreed, so Juan resigned from Rolls-Royce, and became general manager of what now is the O'Gara Beverly Hills dealership.

Juan accumulated several entertaining stories involving celebrities during his tenure working in Beverly Hills, but he refuses to provide details on any of his current or former clients, regardless of their fame. He also believes that every client is a VIP, and recalls that, "I had to quickly retrain my staff. I told them we don't ask for autographs. We don't take pictures with them. And we don't shut down the dealership for a movie star. A VIP is any person who actually buys a car."



Juan also trained his staff to understand that they are professionals, and to communicate from a position of strength. He told them, "A billionaire may walk into the dealership, who is great at mergers and acquisitions, but you're the expert when it comes to understanding and selling these kinds of cars, and you need to take control of the transaction."

## Juan Joins Premier As A Road Warrior

After two years of selling luxury cars to well-heeled customers in California, Juan's reputation had reached the East Coast. Premier had worked with Juan on lease transactions, and Premier's CEO, Mitch Katz, had met him and been impressed with his ability to connect with people. Juan recalls one of the occasions that influenced his decision to join Premier: "When my father passed away, I was still working at the dealership. His funeral was in the Spanish Harlem section of New York City. I stepped out to get some air, and my sister called to tell me that there was a gentleman at the service she did not recognize, and it was Mitch. Premier had sent flowers, and Mitch spoke with my mom. Those gestures meant a lot to me, and gave me some insight into the type of people who work at Premier."



Since he joined Premier in 2003, Juan has been responsible for the West Coast, which includes California, Oregon and Washington state. According to Juan, it's more than a job, it's a lifestyle. "You have to be a road warrior. It's all about building relationships – whether it's with dealers or customers – meeting with people face-to-face to earn their trust, so they give you a shot at their business."

Juan points out that, "Premier is not about one-off transactions. We're in the business of hitting singles and doubles consistently; not just swinging for the fences. Our leasing program is really unique because it allows customers to get in and out of a car easily. And all of my customers and dealers know that they can reach me, literally 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

## A Snapshot Of Juan's Personal Side

A self-proclaimed "gym rat," Juan has always loved working out and staying in shape, which includes running an occasional road race. He recalls competing in the Hartford Half Marathon in 2007 with Mitch Katz, who crossed the finish line at least 10 minutes ahead of him. Juan was unfazed because, "I might die, but I'm always going to finish a run. That's my mindset."

He also loves fishing, both freshwater and saltwater, and enjoys playing golf. Most of all, he enjoys spending time with his family, which includes his 81-year-old mother – who survived a bout with COVID – and



Juan with his six children

his six kids, and four grandkids, Juan notes that, "I wish somehow I could have bypassed being a parent, and gone right to being a grandparent."

## Juan's "Semper Fi" Outlook On Life

True to the Corps' "Semper Fidelis" (Always Faithful) motto, Juan credits his training and experience as a Marine for his self-discipline, strong work ethic and refusal to make excuses for anything less than an all-out effort at all times.

Those who know Juan, however, understand that the Marine Corps can't claim full credit for his success in life. Juan's generous heart, ready smile and ability to listen are the main reasons why people have always trusted Juan, enjoy working with him, and value their relationship with him.

Looking back, Juan says, "My life has taught me that you have to learn to improvise, adapt and overcome in order to be successful." His advice to others is that there are no dress rehearsals in life. "Live your life one day at a time. Learn from your mistakes and remember that fear is simply false evidence that appears real."

Oorah!

**Celebrating its 24th anniversary in 2021, Premier continues to grow and succeed for one simple reason: great people like Juan Garcia work here...and they stay here.**

