



STYLE

# The Art of Unburdening

ESTATE LIQUIDATORS BRING STYLE, PROCESS AND RESPECT TO THE MESSY TASK OF UPROOTING.

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Pictured:  
GARY NEWTON & KIM RUSSELL



Just inside a nondescript Alameda bungalow sits a pop-up boutique of the wildest imagination. The cupboards have the artful arrangement of a gourmet grocer. A pile of vintage magazines fanned out on a table awaits nostalgic discovery. Pristine, mid century Heath ceramics and Knoll furniture populate the room. The care with which these things are displayed – for maximum attractiveness to the savvy collector – is what separates a PEERLESS estate event from just any old tag sale.

“Mid century modern is the new antique,” says Gary Newton, owner of PEERLESS Estate Sales.

### A work ethic steeped in service

Newton is a man of action. He cleans while he chats, pricing and styling an inordinate amount of household items that have accumulated in this Northeast Portland home. The son of a classical musician and an English teacher, Newton was raised in upstate New York schlepping heavy trays in the massive dining rooms of the Catskills’ Borscht Belt resorts. From there he moved into the hospitality big leagues, spending his early career with Four Seasons Hotels.

“Our service motto was ‘If it is possible, we will do it,’” Newton said. “I took that to heart every day and knew if a guest wanted her bathtub filled with soy milk, we were going to deliver!”

After relocating to Portland with his partner, Newton tried his hand briefly at being an antique dealer. It didn’t take long to

realize the real thrill, the sweet spot where he could combine a commitment to serving people and a flair for producing a sales experience, was where the antique dealers were doing their shopping – in the mines -- at the estate sales.

### First research, then merchandising

Newton has executed over 1,300 sales in his 18 years running PEERLESS, and his energy and focus haven’t waned. With new houses and new clients every week, he sets a high bar to ensure the team gets the right prices for a lifetime of possessions. Newton has a generalist appraiser on staff who spends hours researching the value of both unusual and everyday items.

“We make sure the process is as stress-free as possible for them – and as lucrative,” Newton said.

As for the events themselves, Newton likens them to a pop-up shop with a different vibe every week, the success of which has earned him a nation wide reputation. Mid century mavens, antiques aficionados, devotees of the ‘70s – he arranges their things, drawing on his deep knowledge of merchandising, a topic he presents at the EstateSales.net National Conferences.

### Family matters

Newton makes a deep commitment to his clients – and his employees. In nearly two decades in business, he’s had zero staff attrition. One of his long time employees, Kim Russell, is a veteran of the home decor industry who started in the business as a “gleaner,” a person who works in tandem with estate agents as a clearinghouse for items that don’t move at sale or auction. Russell now owns a franchise of PEERLESS.

“Gary was, and is, such an amazingly loyal and committed business colleague. He is so well respected in the industry,” Russell said. “When he agreed to make a franchise arrangement with me to handle an overflow of business, I was so honored – he’s changed my life.”

This familial approach extends to the company’s clients for the duration of their relationship, and as a way to help clients navigate what can often be a difficult life transition. PEERLESS has honed a process that helps clients let go of what’s weighing them down, bringing relief to what can



Collectible Mid-Century Studio Art Pottery, \$10-\$85



Set of Design Museum miniature PANTON chairs, SOLD: \$85

often be a stressful time in their lives. Deaths in the family, divorce, downsizing, once they hear their clients' stories, the PEERLESS team doesn't want them to end up in the wrong industry hands.

"We're just as concerned with a positive and successful outcome as they are," Russell said.

In an ongoing commitment to communication and efficiency, the company is investing in a custom web-based tracking and reporting application to give clients immediate access to sale results, and an inventory database in the hands of every team member.

### The weird, wonderful, touching world of estate sales

Newton and Russell are well aware of what happens when the estate sale shopper's thrill of the hunt meets the fantastic world of the private collector. As the first to the scene, they are privy to the most private of responses to a lifetime of accumulation, where precious beauty resides alongside true human stories.

Newton shared a rewarding memory of when the team was hired to clean out the derelict home of an older man living alone for years. The most unique of his collections filled the living room: organs of all things! Of every size, plus a handmade harpsichord they unburied in the corner. In the final hour of the sale, one of Newton's musician friends (a regular customer) sat down to play one of the organs. The elderly man happened to come by at the very moment Newton started to sing along. He entered his old sitting room, heard this beautiful music coming from one of his old friends, steadied himself with both hands tightly on his cane, and wept.

"It's the cycle of life here, and it's a privilege to be part of it," Newton says. "We have a poster we hang at our estate sales that reads, 'It's not clutter. It's the evidence of life.'" 🏠

>> For more information, visit: [PeerlessEstateSales.com](https://PeerlessEstateSales.com)



The PEERLESS team sorts, cleans, merchandises, prices and sells everything in a home leaving the property empty and clean all in one weeks time.



A collection of "smalls" marks a lifetime of travel, \$8-\$39