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ON THE COVER

30 The Women of Brands by Integra

Meet the team leaders building thriving businesses and leading with success

Behind every successful real estate professional is a strong support system—one that delivers the tools, infrastructure and guidance needed to empower entrepreneurs to excel. From recruiting and lead development to long-term business strategy, the Brands by Integra network, a family-owned and -operated network of companies created back in 1995 and led by the D’Amico family, brings that support to life. Through an ecosystem of specialized brands, the network was intentionally designed to help real estate professionals—and especially women in leadership—build, scale and lead thriving businesses with confidence. “Brands by Integra is a lot of things, but from the perspective of how our real estate operations are run, it’s all about collaboration with our leaders,” says Brands by Integra CEO/Director/Owner Jim D’Amico. “It’s about our top agents and our top leaders—and it just so happens that most of those are women,” he adds. In this month’s cover story, we’re highlighting two of the women driving success across the network who are raising the bar and redefining what success looks like for those following in their footsteps.

HIGHLIGHTS

44 Introducing RISMedia’s 2026 Real Estate Newsmakers *Riding the Waves of Change*

For anyone working within the residential real estate ecosystem last year, resilience and innovation were imperative to survive 2025’s shifting market dynamics. But despite the many challenges and obstacles put in their path, many found ways to not just survive but thrive. In our ninth annual Real Estate Newsmakers showcase, we recognize some of the industry’s most creative and influential individuals for their accomplishments and contributions to their companies, colleagues and clients. Learn more about our 2026 Newsmakers online in our Annual Real Estate Newsmakers directory at <https://www.rismedia.com/2026-newsmakers>.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

The Next Era of Real Estate



In a world full of opposing views, I think there's one thing we can agree on: Real estate as we know it has changed for good.

As we make our way through the first quarter of 2026, it feels like the dust is finally settling on many disruptive forces of recent years, from inflation to lawsuits. At press time, interest rates continued

their gradual downward descent while inventory continued to rise—a winning combination for real estate professionals and their consumers. In fact, according to National Mortgage Professional, rising household income is outpacing home-price growth for the first time in years. While we have yet to return to pre-pandemic market conditions, and uncertainty is still taking a toll, most agree that 2026 will be an important reset year for residential real estate.

Succeeding this year will depend on much more than market conditions, however, because the real estate business has been fundamentally and permanently altered. From MLS and listing policies to the explosive advancement of AI, the market will never look the same as it did pre-pandemic. That's why an agent's value proposition must also change. How you handled prospects and served clients in years past will need to evolve in order to secure your spot in real estate's new era.

On page 22, you'll find out how the now 25-year-old HomeSmart has evolved to support agent success in this new era, and, beginning on page 44, you'll meet more than 300 real estate professionals who have leveled up to succeed in changing times. We are excited to introduce you to our 2026 Real Estate Newsmakers, individuals whose noteworthy accomplishments in 2025 earned them a place amid the industry's most coveted list. Our 2026 Newsmakers represent those who have confronted change and reinvented themselves as needed in order to not just survive, but thrive in a shifting landscape.

In honor of International Women's Month, our 2026 Newsmakers share the pages of this issue with many of the industry's most dynamic women leaders. We share their impressive journeys along with their sage advice for navigating the never-smooth road to success.

We hope the stories shared in this issue will inspire you to confidently move forward in real estate's new era.

Wishing you continued success,

John E. Featherston
CEO & Publisher

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Maximizing MLS Strategic Partnerships

By Colette Stevenson

For much of my career in real estate, I’ve been told—sometimes directly, sometimes subtly—that there are limits to what an MLS can be. Limits to how flexible it can be. Limits to how innovative it should be. Limits to how deeply it can integrate into a broker’s or agent’s broader business strategy.

Those assumptions are exactly what’s holding our industry back.

As female leaders, we often learn early on how to operate within systems that weren’t originally designed with us in mind. We learn how to listen closely, challenge respectfully and build something stronger without necessarily having a green light. That perspective has shaped how I think about leadership and the role the MLS should play in the future of real estate.

For too long, MLSs have been viewed as transactional utilities: places to input listings, pull data and move on. But in an industry facing rapid change, that mindset is no longer enough.

The MLS as a Strategic Asset

The most forward-thinking brokers and agents today are asking, “How can my MLS support my growth strategy?”

When integrated intentionally, the MLS becomes far more than a compliance tool. It becomes a strategic asset. One that supports expansion across markets, enables smarter decision-making and reinforces professionalism at every client touchpoint. This requires MLSs to operate as partners, not gatekeepers, and to design systems that align with how modern brokerages actually work.

Unlocking the Power of Your Own Data

Data is one of the most valuable assets in real estate, yet it’s often trapped in silos. When data is fragmented, insights are slower, decisions are harder and opportunities are missed.

Breaking down those silos allows brokers to transform raw data into actionable intelligence. It enables bet-

ter forecasting, clearer performance measurement and stronger market positioning.

But that only happens when MLS infrastructure is built to support integration, not isolation.

Winning With Broker-Branded Platforms

Another shift we’re seeing is the growing importance of broker-branded platforms. Brokers want consistent, scalable systems that reflect their brand, unify operations and create seamless experiences.

An MLS that supports this approach empowers brokers to maintain autonomy while benefiting from shared standards and accurate data. It’s a model rooted in partnership. One that values flexibility without sacrificing accountability.

Leadership Means Looking Ahead

The real estate industry doesn’t need more reactionary policies or surface-level fixes. It needs leaders, particularly women leaders, who are willing to question long-standing assumptions and design systems for what’s next, not what’s familiar.

The future of real estate will belong to those who see infrastructure as an enabler, data as a useable/actionable/practical resource and revenue generator, and collaboration as a competitive advantage. MLSs that embrace this mindset can help brokers and agents not just adapt, but lead.

Breaking boundaries isn’t about dismantling standards. It’s about redefining them in ways that empower growth, innovation and long-term success.

And that’s exactly the kind of leadership our industry needs now. **RE**



Colette Stevenson is CEO of REsides, a leading independent, borderless MLS based in Hilton Head, South Carolina. For more information, visit <https://www.resides.io/tier-subscription>.



The Problem Isn't Growth. It's Operations.

By Kevin Pieper

Today, many brokerages feel caught between two priorities: growing the business and protecting the agent experience. Too often, growth wins and service quietly erodes. This results in operational debt that comes to light when the market tightens.

That erosion isn't accidental. Growth fails when the systems meant to support it were built too late. Sustainable scale isn't about adding layers; it's about designing smarter systems from the start. At HomeSmart, we've found that an agent-first mindset, backed by intentional operational structure, drives long-term growth and stability.

Structured Growth Decreases Friction

Scale is often measured by size: more agents, more offices, more transactions. Those metrics are visible and easy to celebrate, but they rarely reflect how well an organization actually operates.

Clearly defined workflows ensure issues resolve efficiently, while technology serves as an enabler—not a substitute—for human support. True scale means agents receive the same

level of support across markets and over time, because systems are designed to deliver it.

For example, in 2025, HomeSmart's centralized service team received approximately 185,000 calls from agents seeking support. Of those calls, 87% were answered within 30 seconds and only 3% went to voicemail. Maintaining service quality at that volume is only possible with structured systems in place.

Smart operations start with streamlined systems that create consistency, paired with localized flexibility that allows teams to respond to real-world conditions. Operational design matters more than rapid expansion because it determines whether growth strengthens or destabilizes an organization.

"Agent-First" as an MO

Being agent-first isn't a slogan or a

promise. It's an operating system. When agent-first thinking is embedded into processes and policies, agents feel the difference. Less time is spent navigating internal systems. More time is spent serving clients. Support becomes proactive instead of reactive—and trust builds as a result.

As part of this approach, HomeSmart regularly measures agent satisfaction. In recent surveys, 97.7% of agents reported their questions were resolved during first contact, with an average satisfaction score of 4.8 out of 5.

Strong Operations Create Resilience

Brokerages built on consistent systems are better positioned to withstand market volatility, regulatory change and periods of growth or contraction. Support teams operate within defined frameworks, reducing burnout and offering increased job satisfaction.

This reduces churn—lowering the costs associated with perpetual recruiting, onboarding and retraining. The long-term benefits are tangible: more sustainable margins, a stronger culture and the ability to scale without sacrificing service quality.

In an uncertain market, brokerages that invest in systems before expansion are better equipped to adapt. Designing operations around agents isn't just good service philosophy, it's a structural advantage.

Brokerages that prioritize agents through smart operational design aren't just growing, they're building organizations that last, regardless of market conditions. **RE**

Learn more at <https://homesmart.com/Franchising>.

Kevin Pieper is senior vice president of Agent



Experience and Operations at HomeSmart, where he focuses on building scalable, agent-first operational models that support long-term growth and organizational stability.



The Value of the MLS

While not all MLSs operate the same way, the value of the MLS is clear and easy to explain to your clients.

- Coverage: A wide, consistent regional footprint reduces gaps when comparing properties across nearby markets.
- Accuracy standards: Enforced data standards and professional input mean fewer errors and more trustworthy comparisons.
- Active maintenance: Real-time updates and oversight reduce mismatches and outdated information.

In practice, this means fewer conversations about why an “available” home is under contract or why pricing data doesn’t align. You’re able to answer questions more confidently because the MLS supports your work behind the scenes, allowing you to focus on advising, negotiating and guiding clients.

How to Share Value With Clients

When explaining an MLS to clients, it helps to focus on how it supports your day-to-day work.

One simple way to frame that conversation is to explain the MLS as the source behind your advice: “The MLS is what allows me to give you the most up-to-date view of the market. It’s a shared system used by licensed professionals to create, update and maintain listings with enforced accuracy standards. That means when I talk to you about pricing or market trends, I’m using information that reflects what’s actually happening.”

As clients begin to understand the MLS as part of the framework behind your advice, the conversation naturally shifts. **RE**

The Source Behind the Search: How to Explain Your MLS to Homebuyers and Sellers

By Shayne Fairley

Buying or selling a home is one of the most significant decisions a person can make. Agents and brokers don’t simply show houses; they identify market signals, manage hundreds of moving parts and protect clients from surprises along the way. Behind every successful transaction is a key ingredient many consumers may not think about—accurate, reliable MLS data. It’s the foundation that allows you to answer questions with confidence, explain options clearly and help clients move forward with certainty.

The Opportunity Is in the Questions

Consumers are more informed than ever, and they’re asking more questions: “Where does this data come from?” and “Can’t I just search for homes online?” These questions aren’t a threat to your expertise; they’re an opportunity to demonstrate it.

Most consumers don’t fully understand how real estate data flows through the market. Consumer-facing portals play an important role in the home-search process. They help people explore neighborhoods, get inspired and begin their journey. Many of those sites display data that originates from MLSs, including Stellar MLS.

What clients don’t often realize is that there’s a difference between where listing information is created and where it simply gets displayed. The MLS is the source where listings are created, updated in real time by licensed professionals and maintained with enforced accuracy standards. Consumer sites are downstream channels, which means there can be delays, variations or gaps between what you see as a professional and what appears publicly.

When you explain the difference between the source and the display, clients begin to understand why your access to the source matters—and why your guidance is essential.



Shayne Fairley is COO (incoming CEO) of Stellar MLS. For more information, please visit <https://www.stellarmls.com>.



Rethinking Brokerage in an Era of Consolidation

By Rob Cleapor

Real estate is in the middle of massive consolidation. Private equity, mega-franchises and roll-up strategies are reshaping the landscape at record speed. Brokerages are being absorbed. Local brands are disappearing. Decision-making is moving farther away from agents and the communities they serve—and closer to corporate boardrooms.

The promise is efficiency and scale. The reality, too often, is higher overhead, thinner margins and operators carrying the weight of systems that no longer serve them.

At Iron Valley Real Estate (IVRE), we chose a different path. Instead of building a brokerage around corporate expansion, we built one around people first, then designed profitability and scale as a byproduct of that commitment.

Recently, our financial software provider, AccountTECH, shared benchmarking data compiled by its CEO, Mark Blagden. His study analyzed 2024 performance from approximately 180 brokerages nationwide, including both independents and franchise systems with reliable accounting records.

The findings were eye-opening:

- Median gross profit margin across the industry: ~18.25%
- Average net EBITDA margin: ~3.6%
- Most large franchise brands operated below a 1.83% net profit margin
- Independent brokerages averaged ~4.44%

When IVRE franchisees' performance was overlaid on the same dataset, we landed above the 75th percentile of all brokerages studied, with a net EBITDA margin between 4% and 4.5%, higher than every franchise in the analysis.

What matters most is *how* we achieved it.

Our gross profit margin averages around 10%, nearly eight points lower than the industry median. Yet we out-

perform at the bottom line. That's not coincidence; it's operating discipline.

We run lean by design:

- Significantly lower office and occupancy costs
- Lower wage and salary overhead
- Minimal unnecessary corporate "fluff"

While many organizations are now scrambling to cut expenses under market pressure, often starting with payroll, our model was built this way from day one. We never believed agents or franchisees should subsidize bloated infrastructure. We never believed scale required excess. And we never believed growth had to come at the expense of autonomy.

IVRE is proving you can scale a brokerage by removing what doesn't serve the field, without sacrificing recruitment, retention or momentum.

That matters in a consolidating industry.

As ownership becomes increasingly concentrated and systems become more centralized, we're moving in the opposite direction: Creating ownership-minded leaders, empowering local operators and keeping decision-making close to the communities we serve.

This isn't about becoming the biggest brand in real estate.

It's about building the strongest one, measured by sustainable profitability, empowered people and long-term impact. Consolidation may dominate headlines. But the future of brokerage belongs to models that respect operators, support agents and put humans before corporate balance sheets.

At IVRE, that future is already being built. **RE**



Rob Cleapor is CEO of Iron Valley Real Estate. For more information, please visit <https://www.ironvalleyrealestate.com>.



AI Won't Take Your Job: Here Are 3 Ways to Use It

By Cameron Swiggett

Everywhere you look, people are asking: Will AI replace agents? It's a topic that's sparked a lot of curiosity—and, let's be honest, a fair bit of anxiety.

Here's the reality: Real estate has always been, and will always be, a people business. Technology will evolve, but nothing can replace the trust, empathy and guidance a skilled agent brings to the table.

That's why great real estate agents will thrive. AI isn't here to edge you out—it's here to give you an edge. By taking repetitive tasks off your plate and freeing up your mental load, AI lets you focus on what really matters.

Delegate to Supercharge

Think of all the tasks that eat up your day but don't actually require your expertise: summarizing 80-page disclosures, taking call notes or even planning your weekly grocery list.

AI is tailor-made for this kind of work. Tools like Follow Up Boss' Call Summaries and Suggested Tasks can generate notes and next steps after client calls so you can lighten your mental load.

Let me be clear, we don't think you should delegate *everything* to AI. You'll need to talk to prospects and clients to deliver that human touch. Those conversations are vital.

Automate Without Losing the Human Touch

Automation isn't new, but AI makes it smarter and more personal. One example is the virtual concierge that can complete tasks from your website while keeping your brand front and center. These have come a long way and there are tons of tools, plugins and integrations to set one up and respond to inquiries 24/7 and schedule showings.

Even with a concierge, you can personalize the responses and set up workflows to ensure you can jump in at any point. Automation strengthens how and when we provide a more human touch in our business. You can

still keep prospects warm without resorting to over-automation or canned templates. Follow Up Boss' Smart Messages dynamically suggests personalized replies based on client activity, saving you time while keeping the human connection intact.

Take Smarter Action With Better Insights

Imagine knowing a client is ready before they do, because AI spotted the signals. When you reach out, you now have the personal touch to layer in: "Hi! I've noticed you've been looking at every three-bedroom near Maple Park. One just hit the market that checks all your boxes. Want to tour it soon?"

With Zillow's suite of tools and insights available through Zillow Pro, launching in 2026, those insights are surfaced in real time so you know exactly who to call, when and what to say.

AI doesn't just have to be an assistant—it can also be a coach. Have it read your emails and documents and ask it for ways to improve. Leverage call coaching software and ask it to analyze your most recent calls.

Bringing It Home: Free Up Your Time, Unlock Your Advantage

One of my favorite Franklin D. Roosevelt lines bears repeating: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." We need to be clear-eyed that our world is changing—and quickly—and meet that change with purpose rather than panic. **RE**



Cameron Swiggett is Zillow's vice president of product management. For more information, please visit <https://www.zillow.com/agents>.



Report: Gen X, Millennials to Inherit \$2.4 Trillion in U.S. Real Estate Wealth Over 10 Years

By RISMedia Staff

Gen X and millennials are set to be the two largest cohorts to inherit \$4.6 trillion in global real estate wealth over the next 10 years, according to data from the Coldwell Banker Global Luxury program's 2026 Trend Report (the report), which finds that the U.S. is expected to capture 52% of that property transfer, funneling a historical share of generational wealth into U.S. real estate.

Drawing on three years of luxury home sales data, insights from global wealth research companies and a survey of more than 100 Coldwell Banker Global Luxury Property Specialists, the report highlights how Gen X and millennial buyers are reframing luxury through lifestyle choices, intentional investment and a renewed appetite for distinctive, high-functioning homes.

"The next generations are inheriting a historic amount of wealth and approaching luxury with intention," said Michael Altneu, vice president of the program. "They are choosing homes that reflect their identity, support their

day-to-day lifestyles and protect long-term financial value. For many, real estate has become a strategic piece of their wealth planning and a sanctuary for their well-being."

As the global wealth transfer unfolds, the report finds that the luxury housing market has begun to diverge from the broader real estate landscape. While higher rates and affordability challenges have tempered activity in some markets, affluent buyers are steadily expanding their property portfolios. Since 2020, global wealth among high-net-worth individuals has grown nearly 40%, including a

29.4% increase in real estate holdings, underscoring real estate's role as a long-term wealth anchor.

The report finds that broader wealth accumulation is further reshaping luxury demand, with buyers viewing real estate as a resilient investment, favoring values- and experience-driven homes, and embracing "living large" over quiet luxury. These shifts are setting the stage for several key trends that will define where the luxury market is headed next.

Report trends for 2026 include:

- Market resiliency is guiding buyer decisions. Luxury markets have remained notably steady even during shifting economic conditions.
- The U.S. is expected to lead the world in new luxury real estate activity over the next 10 years, driven by the Great Wealth Transfer and sustained investment from affluent buyers.
- Luxury buyers are increasingly treating the home as both a lifestyle investment and a core wealth strategy, fueling a rise in what the report defines as a "nest investing" dynamic.
- New luxury hotspots emerge in the South and Midwest. Wealth migration is redrawing the global luxury map, and a new class of cities is emerging as the next-generation safe harbors for affluent buyers. Affluent buyers are seeking out markets based on their stability, long-term real estate value and lifestyle amenities, putting a new crop of cities on the luxury map.
- Affluent buyers are moving beyond understated minimalism and embracing homes that deliver more space, functionality and distinction. Rising demand for larger footprints, multi-use living and estate-style characteristics is reshaping luxury preferences. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.coldwellbankerluxury.com>.



Money Matters: Top 10 States Where People Move to Improve Financial Well-Being

By Michael Catarevas

The ability to pay the bills is one of the most important reasons why people choose to live where they do. According to the 2025 National Movers Study compiled by United Van Lines, some states are clearly cheaper when it comes to budgets. Here are the 10 states attracting the highest percentage of Americans seeking better financial opportunities.

1. Oklahoma 17.10%

Oklahoma continues to rank among the most affordable states in the U.S., landing in the No. 4 spot for lowest cost of living, according to a recent Visual Capitalist article using data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The ranking highlights a trend seen across the southern U.S., where everyday expenses like groceries, rent, energy bills and fuel remain lower than in other regions. Oklahoma's cost of living came in lower than several Midwest states, including Iowa, North Dakota and Nebraska.

At the center of the ranking is a metric called "regional price parity," which compares prices for goods and services across all 50 states to the national average. The U.S. index is set at 100. States with scores below that number are considered less expensive. Oklahoma's regional price parity score was 88, placing it well below the national average and making it one of the most budget-friendly states in the country.

2. South Dakota 14.30%

South Dakota has the 13th-lowest cost

of living in the country. The cost of living in South Dakota is lower than that of five out of six of its neighboring states. If you need your budget to stretch a bit further, you can consider a move to Iowa, which borders South Dakota and is the 8th-most affordable state in the U.S. But don't be surprised to see South Dakota on any list of the best affordable places to live in the U.S.

According to 2022 data from the BEA, the average total personal consumption cost in South Dakota is \$48,997 annually. Put another way, the average monthly expense for one person is \$4,083 in South Dakota.

3. West Virginia 11.10%

West Virginia is one of the most affordable places to live in the U.S. From its scenic mountain landscapes to its strong sense of community, the

state offers a laid-back lifestyle that appeals to nature lovers, families and remote workers alike.

Whether you're hiking the Greenbrier River Trail, enjoying a small-town cafe in Wheeling or attending a football game in Morgantown, life here comes with a lower price tag. The cost of living is about 20.6% below the national average, with especially low housing costs, making it easier to find room in your budget for the things that matter most.

4. Delaware 9.30%

Delaware doesn't top the list of most affordable states, but it's not at the bottom, either. Instead, Delaware falls near the middle when it comes to cost of living, placing 35th among all U.S. states on the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center's (MERIC's) 2025 First Quarter Annual Average Cost of Living Index.

Delaware's cost of living index number is 103.5, meaning it's only slightly more expensive than the baseline number of 100. Utilities are more affordable in Delaware than the national average, while housing and healthcare costs are a bit pricier. According to data from the BEA, the average personal consumption expenditures per person add up to \$57,672.

5. Nevada 8.10%

Living in Nevada is more expensive than the national average. Food expenses run 3% above average at \$412 monthly for an individual and \$1,339 for a family, while utilities, transportation and healthcare costs are 0.5% higher at about \$879 per month for one person and \$1,954 for a household. If you want to buy a home in Nevada, you will find that it is one of the highest-priced residential home markets in the country. The advantages of living in Nevada are many, but the high cost of buying a home is not one of them.

6. Kentucky 8.00%

Kentucky is one of the top five states

where the salary needed to live comfortably is the lowest.

In 2025, the salary needed for a single person to live comfortably in Kentucky was \$83,574.40. This is a more than \$3,000 increase from 2024. But what is the average salary in Kentucky? According to Income by Zip Code, the median income for a single person was \$31,871 in 2024, while the average was \$34,960.

The Bluegrass State fares even better when it comes to the salary needed for a family of four to live comfortably, settling in at \$192,940.80 in 2025. This ranks the second cheapest among states for 2025.

7. Iowa 6.80%

Iowa has the second-lowest cost of living among Midwestern states, beating out neighboring states like Minnesota, Illinois and Nebraska. It also ranks as the state with the sixth-lowest cost of living in the U.S. The average cost of living is \$47,833 per person, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis' Cost of Living Index. That translates to average monthly expenses of \$3,986 per person.

Relatively low housing costs make Iowa one of the best affordable places in the U.S. Iowa has 1,449,340 housing units and a 71.5% ownership rate, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau. And as of August 2025, the average home price in Iowa is \$233,008, per data compiled by Zillow.

8. Nebraska 6.50%

In Nebraska, average monthly expenses include \$1,345 for groceries, \$720 for utilities, \$1,796 for housing, \$397 for healthcare—adding up to \$7,628 per month. That's below the national average. Knowing how these costs compare gives a clear picture of day-to-day living expenses and helps people decide how far their income can go in Nebraska versus other parts of the country.

Monthly living expenses in Nebraska vary depending on whether

people own or rent a home and the size of the household. Homeowners often have higher monthly costs due to mortgage payments, property taxes and insurance, while renters typically spend less—though exact costs can vary widely by location. Family size also makes a big difference. For couples with children aged 6 - 17, the average monthly cost of living is \$8,009 for homeowners.

9. North Carolina 6.20%

The cost of living in North Carolina is 4% lower than the national average. Housing is 14% lower than the national average, while utilities are 1% lower. When it comes to basic necessities such as food and clothing, groceries cost roughly the same as they do in the rest of the country, while clothing costs 1% higher.

Healthcare services such as doctor check-ups and dentistry cost 6% higher in North Carolina compared to the national average. At the same time, non-necessary expenses such as entertainment and grooming services are 1% higher.

10. South Carolina 6.00%

Living in South Carolina is more expensive than the national average, with housing costs 16% lower than average (\$1,008 per month for a single person and \$1,848 per month for a family of four). Food expenses run 0% above average at \$400 monthly for an individual and \$1,300 for a family, while utilities, transportation and healthcare costs are 3.9% lower at about \$841 per month for one person and \$1,872 for a household. **RE**



Michael Catarevas is an
RISMedia senior editor.



Report: Buying Finally Surpassing Renting in Affordability

By Claudia Larsen

Affordability constraints on the housing market in recent years have left more people turning to renting than ever before. But while high expectations abound for market normalization in 2026, the latest data from ATTOM already seems to show that owning a home is becoming more affordable than renting a three-bedroom property across the country.

ATTOM's 2026 Rental Affordability Report found that the costs of homeownership consumed less of residents' income than renting in 57.7% (210) of the 364 counties with sufficient data to analyze. Homeownership expenses consumed more than a third of the typical resident's wages in 65.7% (239) of the 364 counties analyzed.

The Midwest and the South, specifically, are seeing more affordability in homeownership rather than renting. In fact, it was more affordable to buy than rent in 81.5% of counties in the Midwest, and 66.3% of counties in the South.

The most affordable counties to own a home supported this trend. As-

suming a 20% down payment on purchase, the most affordable counties were Peoria County, Illinois (owning consumed 14.5% of typical income); Wayne County, Michigan (14.9%); Mobile County, Alabama (15.1%); Jefferson County, Alabama (16.3%); and Montgomery County, Alabama (16.7%).

The Northeast remains more challenged, but still had a decent 48.8% of counties being more affordable to buy. The West faces the worst gap, as it was only more affordable to buy in 16.9% of counties there.

Wages have also been growing, outpacing both rental and owning affordability. Average wages increased

more (or declined less) than rent for three-bedroom properties in 76.1% (277) of the 364 counties, and increased more (or declined less) than median home prices in 59.1% (215) of the 364 counties.

In terms of rental affordability, renting a three-bedroom property consumed more than a third of a typical resident's income in 76.9% (280) of the 364 counties analyzed. That was 95.4% of counties in the West, 90.7% of counties in the Northeast, 77.7% of counties in the South and 40.7% of counties in the Midwest.

The Midwest and the South, specifically, are seeing more affordability in homeownership rather than renting.

Despite an increase in affordability for homeownership costs, there is still a barrier to entry in the market in the form of high home prices. ATTOM found that in more than two thirds of counties analyzed (69%, or 251 of the 364 counties), median home prices rose faster than rents in 2025.

"Renters looking to put down roots, young families who need more space, professionals relocating for work, and many others are facing a very tough choice," said ATTOM CEO Rob Barber. "The data shows that buying is typically the most affordable long-term option, but as the housing market sets new record-high prices quarter after quarter, affording the initial investment becomes increasingly challenging."

However, recent data from Case-Shiller and the FHFA House Price Index have both shown a deceleration in home-price growth, hopefully leading to more normalization soon. **RE**

Claudia Larsen is an associate editor for RISMedia.



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time to time.

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have the tools
to break through.

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Panoramic Pacific Ocean views meet literary history at this legendary estate.

Oh, the Places You'll Go in This La Jolla Legacy Estate

By Paige Brown

In this edition of Great Spaces, step inside the legendary home of Theodor Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss, where panoramic Pacific Ocean views meet literary history.

PROPERTY HIGHLIGHTS:

Location: La Jolla Country Club Heights, La Jolla, California

Listing Price: \$9,950,000 (Sealed-bid sale)

Features: 1.51 private acres complete with 5,004 square feet of living space that includes four bedrooms, four full bathrooms, a historically designated observation tower, detached pool house, expansive ocean-view terrace and 180-degree panoramic vistas.

Added Appeal: This historic estate includes the original 1920s Spanish

Revival observation tower and private study where Theodor Geisel, known as Dr. Seuss, authored 42 of his most beloved books.



Kendra Gibilisco, Jason Barry, Ryan McGovern

"You'll look up and down streets. Look 'em over with care." And you still won't find a property that rivals

the whimsical provenance of 7301 Encelia Drive. Perched high above the La Jolla coastline on a lot originally chosen for its "magnificent vistas," this 1.5-acre estate is the longtime residence of Theodor Geisel—the man the world knows as Dr. Seuss. The architectural soul of the home is a 1920s Spanish Revival observation tower that captured Geisel's imagination in 1948, leading him to commission architect Thomas L. Shepherd to design a residence that wrapped around the structure. It was within this very tower and the adjoining study that Geisel penned 42 of his most beloved titles, crafting a creative sanctuary that remains the heart of the estate today.

While the primary 5,000-square-foot residence has evolved through thoughtful renovation to offer modern



luxury and a seamless connection to the outdoors, the spirit of imagination remains untouched. Every room is positioned to capture 180-degree panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean, offering the rare sensation of living above the clouds. Now offered via a sealed-bid sale through the University of California, the estate represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to steward a piece of literary history. It is a setting that both humbles and inspires—a place where the past informs the present, and the next owner is invited to write their own legendary chapter.

RISMedia spoke with listing agent Jason Barry of the Jason Barry Team at Barry Estates to learn more about the intricate balance associated with preserving the property’s historical integrity against the modern amenities today’s ultra-high-net-worth buyers expect, and why the sealed-bid sale format is ideal.

The primary 5,000-square-foot residence has evolved through thoughtful renovation to offer modern luxury and a seamless connection to the outdoors.

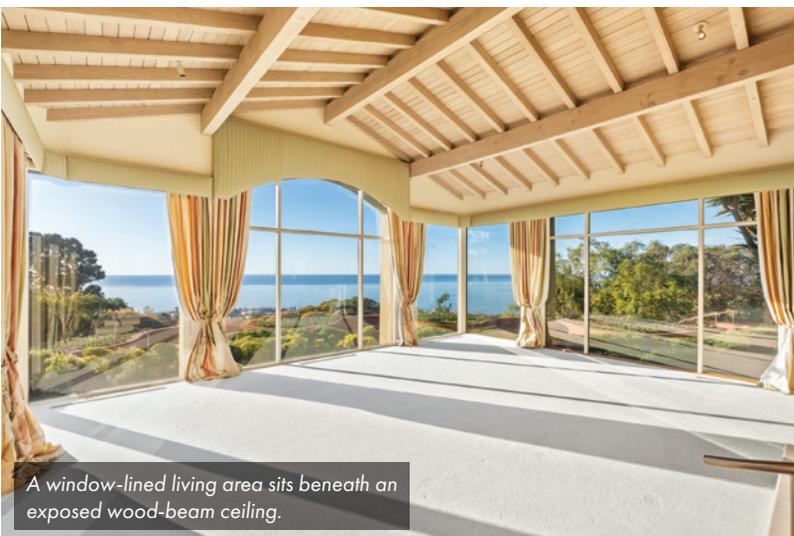


Paige Brown: What makes this a Great Space?

Jason Barry: The 1.51 usable acres boast stunning panoramic coastline views, and the house is a wonderful eclectic Mediterranean-style home positioned nicely to enjoy the views and privacy.

PB: The 1920s observation tower is such an iconic landmark. How did the original design of the home evolve to make that tower the focal point of the entire estate?

JB: The observation tower was there when they purchased the property in 1948; they built the original home



A window-lined living area sits beneath an exposed wood-beam ceiling.

and subsequent remodels around this tower. The intention was for it to always be the focal point when they designed the house.

PB: With 42 of Dr. Seuss' 68 books written on-site, how do the office and study spaces still reflect that spirit of creativity for a potential buyer today?

JB: The view from here is simply breathtaking; awe-inspiring and inspirational to say the least. The office is positioned to perfectly capture the view with huge windows and a direct line of sight down to the whitewater coastline.

“We believe the sealed-bid format is a better format for this sale given the uniqueness of this property; you simply can't replicate the history and views found here.”

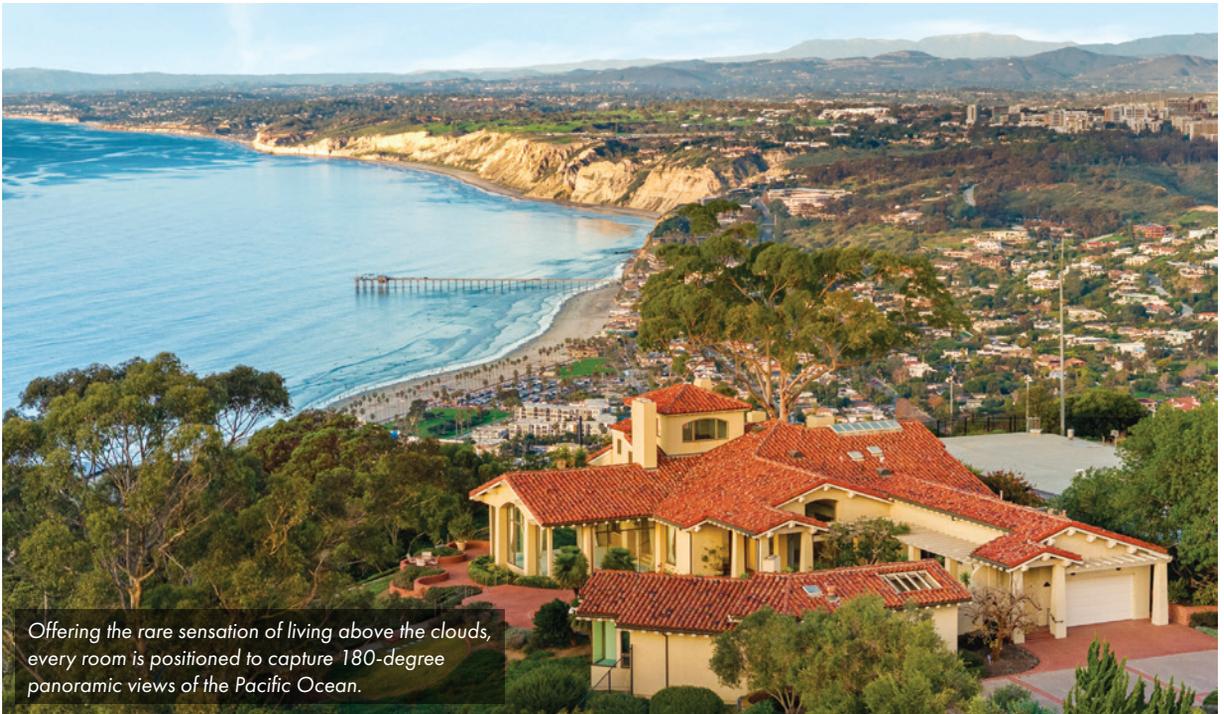
-JASON BARRY,
The Jason Barry Team at Barry Estates

PB: The property is described as having some of the best views in SoCal. From a luxury marketing perspective, how do you quantify the value of a 180-degree coastal vista that feels like “living above the clouds?”

JB: You quantify it with relativity. How many properties in San Diego offer a comparable view on 1.51 usable acres with an ideal private location centered in a luxury community? Maybe six?

PB: The home saw some significant updates in 1992 and 2008. How do you balance preserving the historical integrity of the “Geisel legacy” with the modern amenities today's ultra-high-net-worth buyers expect?





Offering the rare sensation of living above the clouds, every room is positioned to capture 180-degree panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean.



JB: The magic of the Geisel office and observatory tower remain with the current home beautifully integrated. It is wonderful as-is, or lends itself to updating to buyers' desires.

PB: This is a unique "sealed-bid sale" involving the University of California. Why is this specific property better suited for a bid format rather than traditional market listing?

JB: Because the property was donated to the University of California, they have a specific process in place called the Stull Act, which directs the process of selling property valued over \$1M. We believe the sealed-bid format is a better format for this sale given the uniqueness of this property; you simply can't replicate the history and views found here, and it takes time for potential buyers to review the materials that come along with a property of this nature. The process also allows more opportunity and time for interested buyers to come to the table. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://jasonbarryteam.com>.



How Premiere Plus Realty Found the Right Tech Partner

INSIDE REAL ESTATE'S BOLDTRAIL PLATFORM POWERS BACK-OFFICE EFFICIENCY FOR SOUTHWEST FLORIDA FIRM

By Clarissa Garza

When you're running a brokerage with more than 1,500 agents producing \$3 billion-plus in sales volume and over 5,000 transaction sides per year, technology isn't just a nice-to-have—it's the engine that powers everything. For Jillian Young, president of Premiere Plus Realty, that reality became crystal clear as her organization continued to scale.

"We process tens of thousands of pieces of paper every year, and while brokerage operations aren't sexy—it's not the front-facing stuff everyone sees—if your engine isn't moving well, you're going to lose trust from your agents and their customers," says Young.

That's why when Young decided it was time for a technology upgrade, she didn't just look for a platform; she looked for a partner who understood the complexities of large brokerages and could deliver a solution built for excellence.

After extensive evaluation, she chose Inside Real Estate's BoldTrail Platform.

A decision rooted in trust and a shared vision for the future, the partnership has been built on proven results—and a history that led directly to BoldTrail.

Years ago, Premiere Plus Realty explored a newly launched, back-office solution called Brokermint, but the platform wasn't ready for a brokerage its size. Young took notice though when Inside Real Estate acquired Brokermint in 2023, and after investing heavily into its development, it was transformed into BoldTrail BackOffice, an innovative, highly scalable solution designed to solve the pain points of large brokerages.

"Because of Inside Real Estate's legacy of doing great development work with the software they had, we had a lot of hope," she says. "We realized we could actually eliminate overhead in terms of people and other platforms—so much so that it didn't make sense not to do it."

What sealed the deal were the in-depth conversations.

"They let us in on their long-term vision, and we saw that they're investing a ton of resources into making it usable and realistic for brokerage operations," Young explains. "We can have beautiful websites, campaigns and all the marketing stuff, but if the product you're delivering isn't fast, efficient, accurate and effective, you're going to lose trust from those customers, and we'll lose trust from our agents."

For a brokerage operating on a 100%-commission model, efficiency isn't optional. Every process streamlined directly impacts the firm's ability to serve agents at scale.

"Our competitors are using software that reflects that technology budget," says Young, who explains that this is a considerable investment that's going to speed up their ability to serve customers and run their business.

The platform's AI-powered inbox organizer, automated checklists and integrated document processing mean agents move from conversation to signature faster. For Young's 25-person staff, it eliminates countless manual tasks (and human error).

"When you're in the middle of a transaction and a deadline is looming...the agent needs to be able to rely on the technology," notes Young. "This platform will not only allow our staff to work better and faster, it will also help us pay our agents as quickly as possible."

While BoldTrail's CRM platform (which directly integrates with BoldTrail BackOffice) hasn't officially been rolled out to the firm's agents, Young has tested the platform with select agents and received positive feedback about the speed and AI-powered tools to manage the entire client lifecycle.

"With an easy-to-use way to take leads and turn them into listing agreements and contracts, agents will be seen as better professionals and get more referrals," she says.

Young sees the partnership as both a retention and growth strategy—and in an industry where change management is challenging, having the right technology partner makes all the difference. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://boldtrail.com>.

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Barcelona, site of the 2026 LeadingRE Global Symposium, and scenes from 2025 LeadingRE events.



Lauren Fox
Senior Vice President
of Marketing

Todd Sumney
Chief Industry Officer

Katie Cooper
Chief Operating Officer

Matt Widdows
Founder & Chief Executive Officer

Stacey Onnen
President

Bryan Brooks
Senior Vice President of
Franchise Sales and M&A

By Tiffany Mondejar

HOMESMART

The Next Chapter

How the 100% brokerage is poised to storm the industry with a bold new brand, agent-first commitment and a powerhouse leadership team

While bringing a period of quiet uncertainty for much of the real estate industry, 2025 proved in stark contrast to be a year of monumental change for HomeSmart. After spending decades shaping real estate's first and most successful 100%-model brokerage into an industry powerhouse, Founder and CEO Matt Widdows now finds himself in a new role: the orchestrator of the company's future, of what comes next.



Widdows

Photo Credit: Tiffany & Ryland Photography

Hitting the ground running after a year that brought an ambitious brand overhaul, several prominent strides in new tech launches—including a comprehensive new AI-integrated marketing platform and new eDoc and eSign functionality built into transactions—and a major corporate acquisition, Widdows is having real, collaborative conversations about the company's immense potential.

Over the last several years, the HomeSmart founder has assembled a team of power players—both old guard and new—with the right mix of experience, skill and drive to steer the enterprise forward into its next phase.

"The strongest companies aren't built by one voice—they're sustained by many," Widdows explains. "HomeSmart has always been about the people behind the brand. We have an incredibly dedicated team of individuals who are equally passionate about service, growth and our mission to ultimately transform lives through real estate as we take this next step into our future."

A Bold New Brand, Showcasing the Power of Experience

Shortly after joining HomeSmart in the fall of 2024, Senior Vice President of Marketing Lauren Fox was faced with a tall task: leading the company through the very first rebrand in its 25-year history.

Drawing on lessons from prior experience, Fox knew there would be inherent obstacles and opportunities in the challenge. The key was through

brand, competitor and industry research, paired with feedback from a variety of stakeholders: HomeSmart's senior leadership, support teams, franchise partners and agents.

"Modernizing the brand while staying true to our founding principles of 'service-first' was our mandate, and our marketing team absolutely stepped up to the plate," says Fox. "We wanted to give agents a new look and message that they will be instantly drawn to, one that helps them differentiate themselves from the competition and stand out in their local markets."

One major goal of the rebrand was implementing a strong brand promise for both agents and the consumers

they serve: the power of experience.

"HomeSmart and its agents lead with experience in every aspect of what we do," Fox explains. "It's the real power behind the brand. No other brokerage can replicate the decades of experience and trust we've built, the business methods, processes and tools we've refined and perfected over the years and the standard of service we bring to the table with every personal interaction."



COVER STORY



The new HomeSmart branding is designed to reflect who the company really is: modern, cutting-edge and bold.

And all of that creates a powerful story that resonates not only with agents, but with buyers and sellers who place one of the most important investments of their lives in the hands of HomeSmart agents across the country.

Launched in October 2025 at Growth Summit, the company's premier annual agent event, the new brand was an immediate success. Agents flocked to the onsite merchandise shop, buying up apparel and swag to proudly sport the fresh icon and logo. In the weeks and months that followed, agents and franchise partners alike attended branding workshops and started swapping out signage and other marketing items.

HomeSmart's redesigned yard signs, available in both white and black, are the most recognizable consumer-facing shift of the new brand. The wordmark now climbs

vertically along the sign's edge while the new diamond icon repeats in a subtle and sophisticated background pattern, creating a modern and sleek layout that allows the agent's name and personal brand to shine.

Fox couldn't be more satisfied with the outcome.

"The new HomeSmart brand is now a true representation of who we are at our core. We're modern, cutting-edge and bold; we're forward-focused and streamlined in every way to maximize efficiency and success."

Leading With an Agent-First, Service-Minded Approach

As HomeSmart's president and newest leadership addition, industry vet Stacey Onnen found herself drawn to the brokerage's promise of excellence through its unique model and standards of service.

"Through mindful, strategic design, HomeSmart is able to offer real estate entrepreneurs something truly unique: the flexibility to run their business the way they desire, powered by an integrated ecosystem of the right tools and tech—all backed by an essential, human-centered support system," she explains.

Even as HomeSmart continues to improve its platform stack—RealSmart Agent, RealSmart Broker and the Marketing Design Center—to increase efficiency and reduce friction through additional automation and AI integrations, live human support remains the enterprise's non-negotiable differentiator.

"At HomeSmart, we've had tech innovation in our DNA from day one," says Onnen. "It's absolutely integral to operational efficiency and scalability. But agents still want real people behind the software. People

who listen to them, guide them and are in their corner to get a deal to close. That hasn't changed—that will never change. No amount of AI will ever replace the human touch we've established at HomeSmart."

Commanding decades of experience in successfully scaling enterprise growth, Onnen reflects on one essential factor in particular that gives their team the freedom to shape initiatives and investments as they see fit: HomeSmart remains privately owned to this day, a rarity among real estate giants.

"We answer to Main Street, not Wall Street; that sets the tone and strategic alignment for everything we do," Onnen says. "Our priorities are our agents, our teams and our franchise partners—not stockholder earnings. That allows us to continue pursuing our people-first approach as we grow, and maintain that integral culture and sense of community that's enabled us to reach this point."

Providing Trust and Stability, in Any Market Conditions

Coordinating operations across markets in every corner of the nation, not

to mention in collaboration with over 250 franchise locations, is no easy feat. But after taking up the challenge mid-2023, Chief Operating Officer Katie Cooper has it down to an art.

The key to successfully operating a smooth, lean system? Good people, and good culture.

"Each support team at HomeSmart is made up of staff members who are passionate about what they do, dedicated to providing the best possible service every day, and form lasting relationships with the agents they serve," she explains.

During the last few years, Cooper has successfully tackled navigating her teams through industry and regulatory changes, prioritizing clarity, transparency and stability. These focus areas were imperative for agents to retain trust in HomeSmart's platform and operations to maintain compliance, financial stability and confidence to move forward.

"This has become increasingly important to agents seeking a brokerage to call home in this new era of real estate," says Cooper. "Commission stability and transparency still matter more than ever—and those

are fundamentals we've always delivered and will continue to deliver through our 100% commission model. But agents are also paying much closer attention to leadership: how brokerages are navigating industry shifts, who is truly showing up with meaningful support and who is providing training and programs that reflect the realities of today's market. Agents want partners who are actively walking alongside them through transactions, not just offering tools from a distance."

A major initiative for HomeSmart in 2026 is the creation of new programs specifically for agent teams, Cooper reveals. The enterprise has already incorporated several team features into its RealSmart Agent platform for team leads, giving them the transparency and operational efficiency to run their respective teams like a brokerage. These features include a productivity dashboard, team analytics and reports and a recruitment board.

"What this next phase brings is the opportunity to elevate how team leads and team members across all markets connect, collaborate, share best practices and even mentor one another—creating a stronger, more connected team culture within HomeSmart," Cooper says.

Growing Not Just a Footprint, But a Culture

At some point in nearly every business conversation, Senior Vice President of Franchise Sales and M&A Bryan Brooks is asked the same question: What's the catch?

"Everyone wants to know if it's real," says Brooks. "If it's really possible to run a business based on 100% commission and still provide the support, technology and resources agents want—and need—to build a successful real estate career today."

All he has to do is point to the results: thriving franchises and corporate-run



HomeSmart launched its new branding in October 2025 at the company's annual Growth Summit.

COVER STORY



HomeSmart Chief Industry Officer Todd Sumney guides franchise partners on maximizing HomeSmart's tools and resources.

brokerages running coast-to-coast. Teams that evolved into brokerages that exponentially grew to 200, 300, 500 agents and more.

Brooks is eyeing several key markets already in the pipeline for 2026. "Sooner or later, HomeSmart is coming to your city," he tells his prospects. "That much is certain. The only question is, are YOU going to be the one in the driver's seat?"

Often, these potential partnership opportunities materialize in regional and independent brokerages that have proven strength in leadership, but are seeking increased stability, transparency and long-term alignment with growth or transition goals.

The culture fit is a vital part of the process, explains Brooks. "Our franchise partners are buying into more than just a business—they're buying into a community."

HomeSmart's broker/owners gather frequently to share ideas, voice local or regional challenges for group problem-solving opportunities and celebrate successes. It's a culture that the company is determined to preserve and protect.

"Shared values are a big indicator of a lasting partnership," explains Brooks. "We want to grow

HomeSmart through community and industry leaders—partners that will only add to our strength and voice as we guide agents and consumers and set the standards for service."

This is the foundation behind an intentional, strategic franchising and mergers and acquisitions blueprint for 2026, and beyond.

Working Hand-in-Hand With Agents and Franchise Partners

With over 20 years of experience in real estate and marketing under his belt, Chief Industry Officer Todd Sumney is strategically positioned where he has the greatest impact: on the front lines. Whether in local offices or on the national stage, Sumney guides agents and brokers alike on best practices, business growth and tips on utilizing the robust lineup of HomeSmart's tools and resources to exceed goals.

A recognizable name in the industry (and at HomeSmart) for decades, Sumney's charismatic personality and high-energy presentations have the power to motivate and energize his audiences. Making himself personally available to HomeSmart's diverse group of franchise partners, he often receives calls with invitations

to fly state-to-state, hosting education and marketing seminars and workshops.

Sumney leans into real-world experiences from conversations and collaborations over the years, and deftly navigates the challenges posed by industry change by posing practical, agent-first strategies and solutions.

"It's all about self-empowerment, in the end," he explains. "The key to motivating agents to succeed is showing them that they have all the tools to accomplish their goals right now, in their own hands.

"Once they realize they have this power, you can see the transformation, feel the energy in the room completely shift. It's a really awesome and fulfilling feeling."

The Next Chapter

Reflecting on the last several years, Widdows says that with a model that has proven to be fortified to take on any market, and with key leadership and plans now in place, HomeSmart has never been in a more strategic position to take the industry by storm.

"I truly believe there's never been a better time to be a part of this company," he states.

"We set some wildly ambitious goals in 2025 and stuck the landing every time—all thanks to our incredibly dedicated team," Widdows says. "It feels like the possibilities ahead of us now are endless. I can't wait to see what HomeSmart's next chapter brings." **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://homesmart.com>.



Tiffany Mondejar is director of Brand & Communications at HomeSmart.

EXCLUSIVE REPORT:

Back in Business: RISMedia's Contract & Commission Study

Commissions shifted again—who is winning, and how?



RISMedia's fourth annual Contract & Commission Study goes beyond surface-level trends to uncover the truth about how commissions have rebounded, who's thriving, and what's changing for brokers and agents nationwide.

Inside the report:

- Commissions rebound: Who wins
- Productivity vs. pandemic boom
- Buyer contract trends
- Broker splits and fees

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Growing in popularity among buyers worldwide, Dubai is one of the most transparent and tightly regulated real estate markets globally.

Global Spotlight: Redefining Modern Luxury in Dubai

By RISMedia Staff

As global real estate buyers widen their horizons, international opportunities are taking center stage—and Dubai continues to stand out as a top destination. With its investor-friendly policies, tax advantages, strong rental yields and world-class infrastructure, Dubai offers a compelling blend of stability and growth potential.

Here, we explore Destinations by LeadingRE developer Vakson Development, which offers thoughtfully designed new developments in one of the world's most dynamic markets. Vakson's Dubai projects reflect the kind of quality, location and lifestyle appeal today's international buyers are seeking across borders.

Please describe your projects, including scale, target buyer profile and role in Dubai's real estate landscape.

Vakson Development focuses on boutique to mid-scale residential projects that prioritize design quality, livability

and long-term value. Our target buyers include international investors, high-net-worth end users and second-home buyers seeking thoughtfully designed residences in well-connected neighborhoods.

Within Dubai's broader real estate ecosystem, our projects bridge the gap between ultra-luxury and mass-market housing—offering refined living without excess.

What is the guiding philosophy behind your projects, and how does it reflect global luxury trends?

Our guiding philosophy is "livable

luxury." Modern luxury is no longer defined by size alone, but by experience, wellness, privacy and intelligent design. Our developments reflect global trends toward minimalism, flexibility, sustainability and lifestyle-driven spaces that enhance daily life rather than simply impress.

How do you balance sustainability with luxury, and why is it important today?

We integrate sustainability through energy-efficient systems, smart layouts, durable materials and responsible building practices while maintaining high design standards. Today's buyers—especially younger and international ones—expect homes that are both environmentally conscious and luxurious, viewing sustainability as a marker of quality and long-term value rather than a compromise.

What lifestyle amenities and experiences enhance everyday living for residents?

Our projects emphasize amenities that support well-being and community, such as fitness and wellness facilities, landscaped social spaces, rooftop lounges, smart-home features and concierge-style services. These elements elevate everyday living and foster a sense of belonging, not just ownership.

What is the price range of your developments?

Vakson Development's projects typically range from approximately \$350,000 USD to \$3 million USD, depending on location, unit size and level of customization. This range allows us to serve both discerning end users and investors seeking premium yet competitively priced assets in Dubai's luxury market.

What makes Dubai especially appealing to end users and investors?

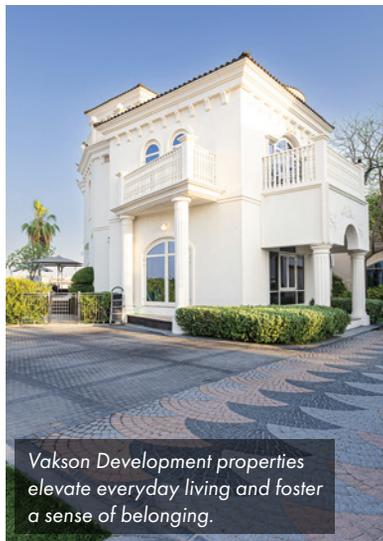
Dubai offers a rare combination of tax efficiency, political stability, world-class infrastructure, safety and global connectivity. For end users, it delivers an exceptional lifestyle. For investors, it provides strong rental yields, transparency and a mature regulatory framework that protects ownership rights.

From an investment standpoint, what differentiates your projects?

Vakson projects are designed with efficiency, location strategy and tenant appeal in mind. This translates into attractive rental potential, lower maintenance costs and strong long-term appreciation. Our focus on design quality and livability ensures sustained demand across market cycles.

What types of buyers are showing the most interest?

We see strong interest from international investors and second-home buyers, alongside a growing number of primary residents relocating



to Dubai for business or lifestyle reasons. The diversity of demand reflects Dubai's global appeal.

What trends are you seeing among international investors?

International investors are increasingly focused on capital preservation, currency diversification and lifestyle-driven investments. Many are seeking stable, dollar-pegged markets with strong rental income—factors that continue to drive demand in Dubai.

Are you seeing growing interest from U.S.-based buyers?

Yes, interest from U.S. buyers is growing steadily. They are typically motivated by higher rental yields compared to major U.S. cities, tax advantages, ease of ownership and Dubai's status as a global lifestyle hub. Many are also drawn by the opportunity to diversify internationally in a familiar, well-regulated environment.

What should international buyers understand about the purchasing process and ownership structure in Dubai?

Dubai offers a clear, secure and foreigner-friendly purchasing process. International buyers can own freehold property in designated areas, with full title deed registration through

the Dubai Land Department. Transactions are transparent, structured and supported by escrow regulations that protect buyer funds.

What misconceptions do U.S. real estate professionals often have about Dubai real estate?

A common misconception is that Dubai is an unregulated or speculative market. In reality, it is one of the most transparent and tightly regulated real estate markets globally, with strong legal protections, government oversight and clear ownership laws.

What development and design trends are shaping Dubai's market?

Key trends include branded residences, wellness-focused design, smart-home integration, flexible layouts and community-centric developments. There is also growing emphasis on sustainability and mixed-use environments that blend living, working and leisure.

How do you see Dubai's luxury residential market evolving over the next five years?

We expect continued growth driven by global wealth migration, infrastructure expansion and Dubai's long-term economic vision. Luxury will become more experience-driven, personalized and sustainability-focused, with consistent demand from international buyers.

What is the key takeaway for U.S. real estate professionals?

Dubai represents a credible, high-performing global real estate market offering strong returns, secure ownership and lifestyle appeal. For U.S. professionals and their clients, it is not an alternative market—it is an essential part of a diversified international real estate strategy. **RE**

Preview select Vakson developments at <https://bit.ly/Destinations-Vakson>.

View Destinations' full portfolio at <https://www.destinationsbyleadingre.com>.



The Women of Brands by Integra

Meet the team leaders building thriving businesses and leading with success

By Paige Tepping

Behind every successful real estate professional is a strong support system—one that delivers the tools, infrastructure and guidance needed to empower entrepreneurs to excel.

From recruiting and lead development to long-term business strategy, the Brands by Integra network, a family-owned and -operated network of companies created back in 1995 and led by the D’Amico family, brings that support to life. Through an ecosystem of specialized brands, the network was intentionally designed to help real estate professionals—and especially women in leadership—build, scale and lead thriving businesses with confidence.

“We cater to the individual needs of the team leaders, so if a team leader wants to grow through recruiting, we can help. If they want to grow through lead development, CRMs or technology, we can help. Whatever it is that’s big for them, we have the resources to business plan as if we’re partners in the business, because we are,” explains Brands by Integra CEO/Director/Owner Jim D’Amico.

Emphasizing a non-traditional broker-agent relationship, D’Amico has developed an operational system designed to promote team leaders above any and everything else.

“Brands by Integra is a lot of things, but from the perspective of how our real estate operations are run, it’s all about collaboration with our leaders,” he adds. “It’s about our top agents and our top leaders—and it just so happens that most of those are women.”

In honor of International Women’s Month, we’re highlighting two of the

women driving success across the Brands by Integra network. Here, learn how Michelle Fermin and Peggy Pratt are raising the bar and redefining what success looks like for those following in their footsteps.

Building Success and a Legacy That Lasts

Accidentally falling into a real estate career to help her mother, an immigrant with limited income who spoke little English, through the home-buying journey, Michelle Fermin—team leader of the Fermin & Fox Group with Massachusetts-based CENTURY 21 North East—has been working in the industry for 27 years. Awarded Rookie of the Year during her first year as a real estate professional, she has been part of the Brands by Integra network since 2014—attributing much of her success to the support and mentorship of D’Amico and the range of real estate products and services she has access to as part of the network of companies.

“When you can work with people who lead with their heart and have the best intentions for you, it makes a big difference,” says Fermin, who points to D’Amico’s leadership style—characterized by humanity and a focus on community service—as having a significant influence on her career.

“Since coming into the company, Jimmy has never stopped being humble. He’s never stopped giving back, and he’s never stopped caring about the important things,



“Brands by Integra is a lot of things, but from the perspective of how our real estate operations are run, it’s all about collaboration with our leaders. It’s about our top agents and our top leaders—and it just so happens that most of those are women.”

-JIM D’AMICO,
CEO/Director/Owner, Brands by Integra

which are providing incredible service and giving back to the community,” she says.

Drilling down further, Fermin

notes that having her voice heard is one of the biggest benefits of being associated with the network.

"A big component of being a successful leader is hearing your people when they say 'we're feeling this way,' 'we need this,' 'this is what we're seeing' or 'this is what we're missing' and being proactive and implementing those things," adds Fermin. That input, she says, directly influences the tools and resources added to the mix—from the CRM currently in use across the network to the platforms and coaching in place today.

Under D'Amico's guidance, Fermin's 60-member team was recognized as the No. 1 CENTURY 21 team in the country last year—a result of strong leadership and support across the organization. She also received the prestigious CENTURY 21 Dick Laughlin award, which is given to one person globally each year, highlighting her dedication to the advancement of real estate professionals and commitment to giving back to the community.

"To be able to get to that level of success, you have to have the right people beside you—those who understand that the vision is excellence and that it's growth without diminishing yourself and without giving up the important things," says Fermin. "And although Jimmy runs his own brokerage, and multiple other businesses, he always takes the time to provide input on the bigger-scale picture when it comes to growing to the next level."

Looking toward the future, Fermin is focused on leveraging existing opportunities, slowing down in order to appreciate her achievements and leaving a legacy that her children can be proud of.

"I'm at the point of my career where instead of simply moving

"When you can work with people who lead with their heart and have the best intentions for you, it makes a big difference."

-MICHELLE FERMIN,

Team Leader, the Fermin & Fox Group with CENTURY 21 North East

forward, it's about identifying the opportunities around me, so there's been a lot of collaboration with other businesses, joint ventures and other team leaders—looking closely at the relationships I've established. And Jimmy's been able to help me open my eyes to that and understand that on a much deeper level," explains Fermin.

"I'm also looking forward to slowing down a little bit and living more in the moment, while leaving a legacy that my kids are proud of—and being alive to see it. I want to be here to say, 'I made a difference, I made an impact,' and I want to be able to be a big part of that."

Empowered to Lead, Built to Lift Others

Peggy Pratt—team leader of the Pratt Properties Team with CENTURY 21 North East—has been changing lives and creating generational wealth within the Hispanic community since getting her license back in 1996. A part of Brands by Integra since 2016, she has found a supportive environment that has allowed her to build a team and grow professionally—crediting the network with empowering her as a strong businesswoman, providing opportunities to overcome challenges in a male-dominated industry.

Throughout her career, Pratt notes that while many brokers viewed her primarily as a revenue-driver and sought to hold onto her for their own benefit, D'Amico recognized her star power and focused on providing the support she needed to grow.

"When you're a strong businesswoman, you're going to run into a lot of obstacles, but this brand has made me feel empowered," says Pratt. "It has given me the tools and has helped erase a lot of those bad experiences in the past, dealing with men who don't like to see strong women in business."

That sense of empowerment is reinforced by the brand's broader reach and commitment to inclusion.

In fact, the network's global presence and initiatives, particularly those supporting the Hispanic community, have proven to be a true benefit for Pratt and her team of five.

"CENTURY 21 is a global name, and just the presence, the name recognition, the tools and being part of a brand that supports its agents are significant advantages," says Pratt. "It's also the only brand I know that has special initiatives for the Hispanic community, including flyers and posts in Spanish, which is both inclusive and progressive."

But it doesn't end there, as Pratt goes on to say that everything she

has access to as a member of the Brands by Integra network helps her stand out in today's competitive market.

"The tools really make you look fabulous," says Pratt. "From the CRMs, the branding, the co-branding and Moxi, it's like a real-estate-in-a-box that supports all of your marketing efforts."

That support has been instrumental when it comes to elevating her profile within the organization and across the industry.

Recognized as a local leader within the network, Pratt has been invited to speak at both national and local events, enhancing her reputation as a leading real estate professional.

"Being given the opportunity to share my knowledge and experience has positioned me as a local expert in the eyes of other agents, which has helped me further strengthen relationships while at the same time gaining the trust of my own team members," she says.

And the future is looking bright for Pratt, who, in addition to running for 2027 president-elect of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals, will also be making moves to grow her team a bit more.

"I started making it all about my team a few years ago because I realized that if they're successful, I'm going to be successful, and there's more than enough money out there for everyone," says Pratt. "There's no 'I' in 'we,' and I really feel that as a team, we'll be much stronger."

Looking back on her 30-year career, Pratt says that it has been nothing short of rewarding.

"It allowed me to raise children, go to their school plays and events, and it allowed me to motivate others to where I've created a team. Just seeing how their lives have improved is a huge thing for me," she says.

Building for the Future: Positioned for What's Next

Having grown significantly over the past five years through the acquisition of multiple Coldwell Banker and CENTURY 21 companies, property management, mortgage and title companies—as well as a real estate insurance company—the Brands by Integra footprint stretches across 16 states today, representing some of the country's finest real estate experts using the most innovative technologies and offering unprecedented support to its clients.

"When you're a strong business-woman, you're going to run into a lot of obstacles, but this brand has made me feel empowered."

-PEGGY PRATT,

Team Leader, the Pratt Properties Team with CENTURY 21 North East

While a mindset shift nearly a decade ago taught D'Amico that he can't control the outcome, it freed him to trust the process.

"Focus on what you can control, and let go of what you can't. It's all about doing the next right thing, providing what people want—not what you think they want, but what they tell you they want—while continuing to move forward," says D'Amico, who goes on to explain that they've received a great amount of support from both CENTURY 21 and Coldwell Banker throughout the years.

"While I do think that a lot of broker/owners struggle in down markets, this business has also changed dramatically. Scalability is needed now more than ever. And with all the changes in the marketplace and industry, it's very difficult for independent owners to succeed," notes D'Amico.

"If owners don't have strategic partners, and if there isn't enough volume, the work is very challenging—and there is never enough left over. The juice is no longer worth the squeeze," he adds. "And so owners sell houses, manage agents, advertise, coordinate tech, legal, insurance, etc. Today, many former broker/owners earn more from getting a great split from a company like ours than they can get from themselves. Many owners are using their sales to pay the bills for the office."

Those challenges are exactly what D'Amico says the Brands by Integra model is designed to solve.

"We've provided a productive ecosystem to come in and make more money without the risk and stress of ownership, and we've had really good results with our owners and team leaders who have stayed with us. Not everyone is ready to let go of ownership, but when the right ones do, it's always a great fit," says D'Amico, who is excited about the opportunities he believes the future holds for continued growth. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://brandsbyintegra.com>.



Paige Tepping is RISMedia's senior managing editor.



Empowering Homeowners With Confidence and Control

American Home Shield video chat with a live repair Expert in app provides personalized guidance and assurance when issues arise

By Paige Tepping

Offering home warranty plans that cover the systems and appliances we all rely on to keep our homes and lives running smoothly, American Home Shield (AHS) brings more than 50 years of experience and insight to protecting what matters most in the home—empowering homeowners with confidence and control.

With approximately 2 million members, AHS is one of the largest home warranty providers, with the largest network of qualified, independent Pros offering maintenance expertise and troubleshooting.

Doubling down on its commitment to help protect homeowners while making their lives easier, AHS continues to revolutionize the home warranty experience with its groundbreaking real-time video chat



Bishop

with an Expert feature—available as a benefit with select plans through the AHS app.

Launched in February 2025, the app connects members in real-time through video chat with vetted Experts (experienced in plumbing, electrical, heating and air conditioning, appliances and a generalist category who average 20 years of experience) to help solve their problems. The app also offers

members a range of other benefits including DIY tips, discounts and more.

Providing members a new way to work through an issue, many of which homeowners can solve on their own without outsourcing additional help, according to Alison Bishop—director of public relations at Frontdoor, Inc.—video chat with an Expert was developed in response to a consistent homeowner need for personalized guidance and assurance when issues arise.

And while early research has found that homeowners related the experience to calling your dad to say, “How do I fix this?” and putting him on FaceTime so that he can see what’s going on and then tell you what to do, Bishop notes that this highlights a desire for trusted, real-time guidance

that traditional service models and static content simply can't provide.

Video chat with an Expert empowers homeowners through real-time support, guidance and education of their home matters.

"We've continually seen this experience dramatically boost homeowner confidence, especially in moments of uncertainty, by turning a stressful situation into a guided, collaborative conversation," says Bishop.

"And when an issue cannot be resolved through video chat alone, homeowners can easily turn this session into in-home help from a contractor, knowing why, what's required and what to expect next—resulting in a more transparent, empowering and ultimately human experience," she adds.

With consumer behavior shifting decisively toward on-demand, mobile-first help—especially during moments of stress—and modern mobile technology having reached a point where live, expert-led guidance at scale is possible without compromising quality or trust, Bishop notes that consumer feedback repeatedly highlights moments where Expert video chat delivered quick relief during high-stress situations.

"The AHS app can help reduce stress by replacing ambiguity with real-time, personalized clarity," says Bishop, who goes on to explain that the on-demand, personalized experience isn't something you can get from traditional channels.

"The ability to visually show an Expert what's happening by simply opening the app and selecting Video Chat helps to remove guesswork and minimize the fear of 'making it worse,'" she adds.

This real-time, visual access to expert guidance alleviates uncertainty while at the same time providing homeowners a sense of confidence and control as they tackle issues.

"The realization that help is right there at their fingertips is exciting, inspiring and empowering. We've

seen our Experts guide our members through everything from helping to find and shut off their water quickly, to providing guidance to fix HVAC units in the heat of summer," says Bishop.

"This convergence of consumer behavior and platform maturity allows AHS to meet homeowners exactly where they're at, emotionally and practically," she adds.

A true differentiator in the home warranty category, video chat with an Expert complements a home warranty with a proactive support system.

Homeowners with select plans gain access to live Experts who can explain and guide in real-time, which can help resolve issues that don't require an in-person visit and provide guidance on small problems before they turn into major repairs. Identifying simple causes of recurring issues, like a breaker that keeps tripping, Experts can offer solutions to those frustrating problems that may have an easy fix you just haven't discovered yet.

"These benefits, in addition to our powerful home warranties, can truly help protect homeowners," says Bishop.

But what does this shift toward self-service mean for the future of home repair and maintenance?

For Bishop, it signals a future where homeowners are empowered with personalized, on-demand knowledge at their fingertips, from real humans with years of real-world experience.

"Every home is different, and every issue is different. With Expert guidance available in real-time, more homeowners can safely handle minor issues themselves, make better decisions about when professional help is truly needed and understand their homes more deeply over time," she says.

Building on this real-time guidance, according to Bishop, the technology is poised to evolve—offering more personalized support and insights that help homeowners stay informed and in control.

"Looking forward, we see this technology continuing to deepen person-

alization and further empower homeowners with knowledge about their homes," she says.

"The AHS app can help reduce stress by replacing ambiguity with real-time, personalized clarity."

-ALISON BISHOP,

Director of Public Relations, Frontdoor, Inc.

"The human touch and personalized face-to-face help from our Experts is a game-changer," concludes Bishop. "Adding these innovative technologies as a benefit to our traditional home warranties will continue to move toward the vision where Experts are the 'frontdoor' to home care, helping homeowners solve problems faster, with less stress and more confidence." **RE**

Video chat feature available as a benefit to AHS members with select plans. See <https://www.ahs.com> for hours and details.

See the plan agreement at <https://www.ahs.com/contracts> for coverage details, service fees, limitations and exclusions. Coverage limits and charges for non-covered items may apply. Terms and conditions subject to change.

For more information, please visit <https://www.ahs.com/realestate> or <https://ahs.com/video-chat/RE>.



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UNITED RESIDENTIAL INVESTMENT PROGRAM

United Real Estate's 'Agents as Investors' Program Takes Profession to a Whole New Level

By Michael Catarevas

As more and more brokerages have joined United Real Estate over the past few years, making it the seventh-largest residential real estate company in the country, agents have universally lauded the state-of-the-art technology and other benefits provided by the progressive national network.

If that wasn't enough, the United Residential Investment program (URES!), which incorporates training courses and a mentorship community where agents are guided on a pathway to become successful property investors, has proven to be a dynamic game-changer.

Designed to build on agents' existing real estate knowledge and skills, the program provides the specific education and resources they need to become investor entrepreneurs. Thus, instead of simply being the middle-man between buyers and sellers, they themselves can invest in properties to

build wealth for themselves and their families.

"URES! may be the most exciting thing we've ever done," proclaims United CEO Dan Duffy. "We've launched millions of lines of code, incredible products and service offerings in addition to opening up in new markets—and while that's all been great, this is fundamentally different.

"Our objective is to change the lives of our agents," says Duffy. "We've gone at that challenge by offering programs to make them more productive, providing a phenomenal culture where they can thrive and ad-

vance what they're trying to do for their families and themselves."

Positioned as a significant differentiator for United, URES! enhances agent retention and recruitment by offering a comprehensive, supportive environment for agents to grow their investment portfolios.

The URES! Intro Course allows agents to enroll in free, self-paced courses to explore:

- Assessing the agent's current knowledge and skills around investing as well as their comfort levels
- How to identify key markets and get started

Subsequent courses cover:

- How to find and evaluate a property
- Financing and renovation basics
- Long-term strategies for renting or reselling

Once complete, the URESI Community awaits—featuring more in-depth training, strategy sessions and a private investor network for collaboration, referrals and support.

The program began slowly five years ago, progressing until United felt it was time to make it a reality.

“We were having conversations with a number of third parties that have built subscription-based knowledge ecosystems that are branded, where you buy their books and attend their events,” says Duffy. “We had a lot of other priorities, and we kept learning and watching. Then, about a year and a half ago, we finally determined that it made sense to go ahead and bring it out of the ground. And a lot of that was because we needed to get some foundation technology in place to be able to do it correctly.”

United built the program in-house because existing third-party real estate investment programs didn’t have the agents’ best interests in mind, whereas United is fully aligned with supporting its agents’ success. Unique in the national real estate landscape, URESI is built by agents for agents, with the full support of a national brokerage. The program also addresses financial aspects, ensuring agents are making sound investment decisions.

“As we looked around, no other brokerage in the U.S. had ever put what I would consider a complete and fulsome offering on the table that allowed agents to take the knowledge they’ve accumulated and become an investor,” Duffy says. “Agents can fundamentally change their financial wellness, which has an incredible impact on the rest of their lives, health and mental wellness.

“It’s one thing for us to recommend that someone take a class or even partner with somebody else, and we actually went down that road early on. But we realized some things very quickly. One is that these third-party companies really didn’t care about our agents’ outcomes. They cared

about selling a subscription or a book, getting more followers on Instagram, creating a culture personality around one or two people. They didn’t have a fully integrated system, pathways and all the resources to increase the likelihood of someone’s success.”

Duffy realized that the answer to what he wanted was right in front of him. United had the goods to make the vision a reality.

“We’re great at training, and we have an LMS (learning management system) platform,” he recalls thinking. “We have the resources, and we can afford to do it correctly and offer it to our agents as part of being in the United community.”

Additionally, United has mentors, people with varying degrees of experience—some who have gone from a single investment property to hundreds of them. Duffy relates how he felt there was some inequity in that agents help investor clients buy properties for a single commission, then do it all over again, while the investor will reap continual financial benefits from that property. Now with URESI, United agents have the opportunity to become investors if they so desire.

Leading the Way

While the URESI word is spread to United agents nationwide, after having extensively researched and audited similar industry offerings, Gabe Salas—member of the training staff at United corporate—has been tasked with building a comprehensive training strategy while working to create a supportive community for agents on their investment journey.

“At its core, URESI is an opportunity to build standard skills for investing, like running comps, financing, scoping and completing renovations and renting. All of that is in the education and training we give agents—a lot of which centers around shifting your mindset from being transactional to wealth-building for yourself, changing your perspective for you and your

family,” he says. “There’s also a big focus on things like embracing discomfort or uncertainty by seeking out information, resources and guidance from peers. While these may seem inherent, they’re things people have to learn and get comfortable with.”

Duffy amplifies the point, noting that while agents have guided hundreds if not thousands of transactions, Salas uses those experiences while adding crucial elements to help them make confident buying decisions of their own.

“Gabe helps to demystify the process by interviewing super-experienced people within real estate who have done a great many transactions,” says the CEO. “There were thousands of hours of conversations, auditing what they did and how they started their journey. Gabe’s expertise is in taking what goes on behind the scenes, how it works, understanding it, inventorying it and making sense of it, then building various modalities of training.

“He brought it all together in a very cohesive 14-course program to create a pathway for success. He is as conversant and knowledgeable as anyone I’ve ever spoken with. He’s built this for the novice, but also with an eye on how you help the people who are somewhat experienced or have had some success amplify their success.”

Salas explains that the core courses equip agents with the tools to make smart, confident investment decisions, a full-court press to start on an investment journey and travel through the steps and milestones.

“We’ve generated incredible momentum in the past few months since URESI’s release, working with individual brokerages to help bring the program to them. We’re meeting with their lending or insurance partners who are eager to educate our agents because they work side by side with us. They’re literally in our offices coast to coast, getting involved and sharing insights,” he says.

“We’re just starting to open the



Blake McKay explaining URESI to an interested agent.

Fostering Meaningful Relationships and Accountability

Along with husband Blake, Bethany McKay is a licensed agent with Benchmark Realty in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, a United Real Estate company. Closely involved with the program's launch, McKay believes that URESI is different and better than other offerings for real estate professionals interested in growing a portfolio of properties.

"My husband Blake and I spent many years going to different conferences, taking classes and looking at the sources available to agents," she says. "The biggest thing we noticed was that there's too much noise and too many podcasts, trainings, eBooks and downloads—so people get the information but often don't do anything with it. What we wanted with URESI was to build a community where people had actual, tangible hands-on help with their investment process.

"A lot of agents don't really dabble. The investor-friendly agent is actually a pretty small niche. A lot of agents don't understand the language of investors. They want to work with them because they're repeat clients, but they don't know how to speak their language and do those transactions. We really wanted this to be built by an agent to train them and teach them how to become investors themselves, and then organically help others as well."

McKay points out that while buyer's and seller's agents know the processes, they must also understand the emotional aspect of the transaction for those involved.

"An agent who has never bought a house cannot understand the emotional process of what a client is going through when purchasing or selling a home," she says. "I'm a better agent to help with this type of program because I've been in the trenches, failed and grown. There's that perspective in this course and the content in general, learning from hundreds and hundreds of transactions."

McKay targets mentorship and

door to connect our audience to those licensed professionals and experts," adds Salas. "All of that combined together is what we're offering, and what we're continuously iterating and improving to ensure we cover the full experience for everyone."

The URESI program is available to all United agents through the company's online Bullseye Learning Academy. They engage with the content and community, with ongoing support throughout their acquisition of properties.

"We have an intro orientation type of training where we teach people about the basics of understanding markets and give them a way to evaluate their knowledge of investing to determine where they should go next. If somebody feels like they're ready to jump right into the process, they get access to all of our resources, training, community, networking and workshops," says Salas.

"Our marketing team has worked hard to ensure agents know this is available to them," he adds. "There are ways they can get information on our internal platform, and ways they

can slow roll the process as they get started."

Raising the Bar and Boosting Productivity

From the outside, it might appear that an agent's time spent accumulating and managing investment properties would detract from their professional responsibilities to United. But it's just the opposite, insists Duffy.

"We expect the agents who commit to the journey are going to spend some time on it, but what we find is that they become more productive. Their personal transaction production working for clients actually increases as a result of the competencies they accumulate as a result of becoming an investor themselves," he says.

"They become better, stronger and faster, so both sides of their business actually grow. By becoming an investor themselves, they sharpen their saw and are able to cut more wood. So their core business of being an agent and serving clients actually improves in volume, and their lead generation strategies are enhanced."

community as key pillars of URESI, with the program fostering meaningful relationships and accountability among participants, helping agents sustain success throughout their investment journey.

"The thing we're seeing most in our industry is shiny-object syndrome," she says. "We wanted a concierge white-glove service from start to finish because agents are so busy; we're wearing too many hats. So we knew URESI was only going to work if we created this community and fostered a collaboration-over-competition-type mindset."

Becoming property owners themselves instead of just helping others achieve this goal is a major mental hurdle McKay hopes URESI helps agents overcome.

"We have become so transactional as real estate agents that we forget that what we're doing every day—helping other people buy and sell property—we can do it, too," she says. "It's a mindset shift of, 'Hey, I can invest in my career and my family legacy while also helping others, and it actually makes me a better real estate agent.'"

"It's going to change agents' lives when they realize that they can do this and change their family legacy. So even though it may be new and look scary, URESI was built to be their go-to resource. We can walk with them, help them through their ups and downs and use our failures to benefit their families and their wealth."

Avoiding Financial Landmines

A common concern for agents buying multiple investment properties is that they may become overleveraged. But Duffy is ultra-confident that URESI's intensive courses, once understood, ease any angst.

"There actually isn't a worry that they're going to get over their heads because of the ecosystem; the community we've built has so many resources and experts available," he says. "If they're an active participant



From left: Blake McKay, Gabe Salas, Bethany McKay and Dan Duffy

in the community, there are systems that allow the agent to get the right advice to navigate those challenges.

"That's the beauty of the way we built it, which is different from what third-party companies have accumulated in some cases, which is millions of followers or subscribers to those programs. They don't have the same degree of connection to the agent. We care about the agent holistically. We're their partner from the very basic training as a result of our brokerage operation. And we go further than that because we're vetting and curating the right lending partners."

Duffy goes on to relate that URESI is transformative for agents who decide that their longtime financial goals must include property ownership.

"If an agent goes through a 20-year career and does a healthy book of business every year, when they get to the end their cash-flow stream stops, and there's no residual income," he says. "If the same agent makes 10% of those transactions for their own portfolio, then they own many properties that are appreciating.

"They have a portfolio that has saleable value and the funds to retire. We think there's around 7.5% of all agents who are intensely curious about doing what some of their clients do—buying residential investment properties, underwriting and financing them correctly. Many of those agents are inside brokerages that do not support such a journey. We're aligned with our agents through URESI. We're already working to make sure our agents have success while changing their financial trajectory for themselves and their families." **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.GrowWithUnited.com>.



Michael Catarevas is an RISMedia senior editor.



How Trestle Powers the Modern Real Estate Market

By RISMEDIA Staff

The tools brokers and agents use every day rely on one fundamental that is often unseen: accurate, timely data. Behind the scenes, the infrastructure that powers this critical data flow is managed by platforms built for reliability and scale.

Cotality's Trestle product serves as the core backbone for nearly 100 MLS organizations and the brokers and technology vendors they support.

The Foundation of Trust

Residential real estate is a data-driven business where reliability isn't optional; it's the foundation of one of the largest asset classes in North America. If the flow of listing data falters or is incomplete, the disruption impacts everything from home valuations to consumer confidence.

Trestle's job is to deliver clean, timely and complete data at scale, direct from the MLS. Jason Romig, senior director of Product Management for Real Estate Solutions at Cotality, underscores this point, stating, "If that flow of data falters, the ripple effect would be felt everywhere, eroding agent and consumer confidence and disrupting the market."

MLSs face constant pressure to keep

pace with evolving data and technical standards set by the Real Estate Standards Organization (RESO). Trestle helps MLSs achieve the latest RESO certification and deliver reliable data at scale.

Simplifying Operations

A critical challenge for national brokers and technology partners is dealing with data pulled from numerous MLSs, creating operational inefficiencies that slow down product development. Trestle addresses this complexity directly. By offering Trestle as a platform of choice, MLSs enable brokers and tech companies to consolidate multiple data feeds into fewer connections.

Protecting Data Through Governance

Confidence in MLS data is confidence in the market itself. To maintain that integrity, Trestle gives MLSs clear control over access and use.

Trestle provides MLSs with the tools to manage and distribute listing data to broker systems and technology partners efficiently while safeguarding it. This includes built-in protections to evaluate new data licensees, flag expired connections and monitor suspicious activity.

Furthermore, features like Trestle Share enable neighboring markets to easily share clean, consistent data. This cooperation breaks down barriers between MLSs, eliminating the overlapping market disorder for brokers operating across different MLS areas.

More Than Listings

Home-buying decisions require local context. Trestle combines listings with location insights, solving a major gap in most real estate websites where neighborhood data is missing due to costly acquisition. Without these insights, clients bounce between portals—and brokers lose control of the lead.

The Path Forward: Next Steps

The resilience and efficiency of the real estate market fundamentally relies on the sophistication of its data infrastructure. As the industry looks ahead, the path is clear for those managing and consuming the foundational listing data.

For the MLS: Cotality says the question is no longer if you should offer comprehensive data distribution, but why would you add friction to the process? Offer Trestle as a platform of choice at no cost to your organization. You do not need to be a Matrix market to use Trestle, and within weeks of implementation, it can begin generating non-dues revenue for you.

For the tech partner/broker: Assess your data access. Use Trestle to connect with the MLSs already using the platform. For those MLSs not yet integrated, contact them directly to advocate for its addition. **RE**

For more information, please visit cotality.com/trestle.

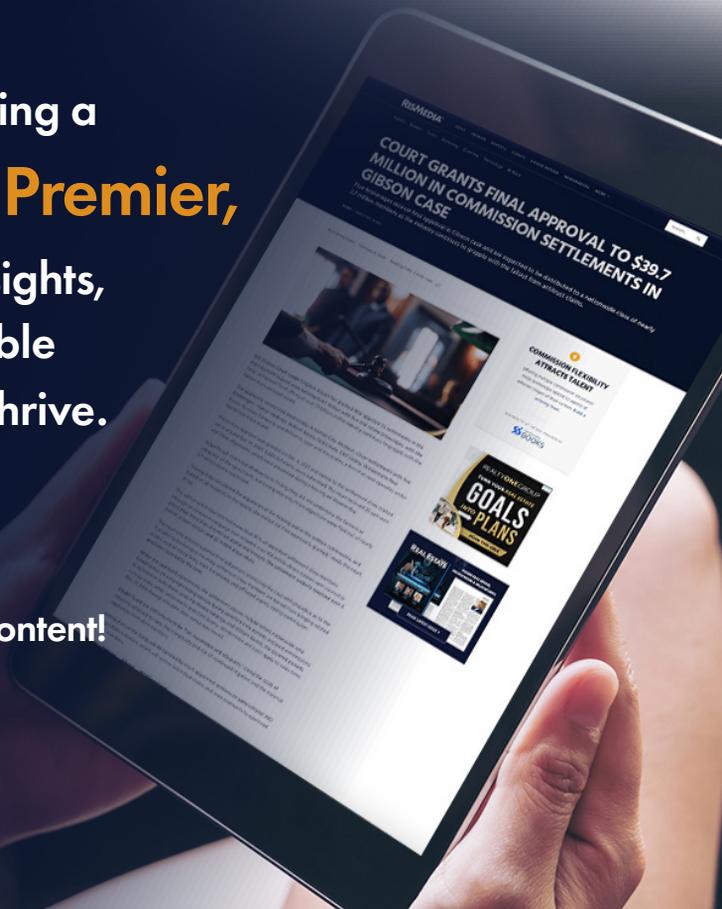


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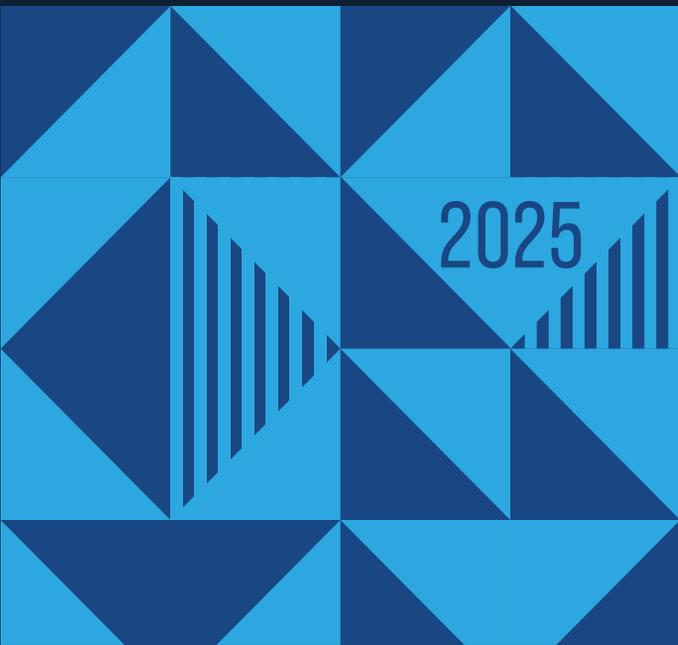
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NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
REALTORS®

ANNUAL REPORT

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MEMBERS ASKED, NAR DELIVERED: THE 2025 ANNUAL REPORT IS HERE

The association's 2025 Annual Report provides a comprehensive and transparent update on the association's progress, priorities and direction—one that reinforces broker engagement.

The National Association of REALTORS® is hitting its stride, delivering a first-of-its-kind annual report just months after passing its three-year Strategic Plan.

"The Annual Report outlines the work NAR undertook last year to better serve REALTORS®, strengthen the organization and position the association for long-term success," NAR CEO Nykia Wright says.

While the strategic plan serves as NAR's "North Star," as Wright calls it, charting the association's path to help members get to their next transaction, the 80-page report details its progress in 2025 and next steps in year one of the plan.

Brokerages are a central partner in making this bold transformation a reality, NAR leadership has often stressed.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The Annual Report outlines NAR's progress across advocacy, legal risk mitigation, financial discipline, research, education, technology, broker and association engagement and efforts to rebuild trust in the REALTOR® brand.

It mirrors the 2026–2028 Strategic Plan, which was shaped by more than **150,000 member voices** and reflects a renewed focus on getting back to basics, supporting REALTORS® in their day-to-day business, operating with financial discipline and communicating with greater transparency and accountability.

NAR is embarking on the largest turnaround in real estate history, and with that comes an unprecedented commitment to transparency and accountability.

“ The work we undertook in 2025 is just the beginning. ”
-Nykia Wright, NAR CEO

REPAIRING BROKER RELATIONSHIPS

NAR's connection to the broker-owner community was frayed at the time Wright joined as CEO. In 2025, NAR made substantial headway in reengaging brokers, bringing on industry veteran Sherry Chris on as special advisor to the CEO. Wright and Chris met with 478 industry organizations and nearly every broker excluded from the settlement. NAR also conducted extensive research on broker needs and challenges—across size and business model—through surveys, meetings and focus groups.

“ There is no more ivory tower, Wright added, saying that NAR would be working to co-create products and services with brokerage houses ... states and locals and everyone in between. ”

NAR launched partner broker summits with state and local associations—providing resources for and attending **47** summits in 2025. In October, NAR hosted meetings in Chicago with **40** broker executives representing more than **700,000** agents.

In 2026, NAR says it will host two broker meetings with enterprise companies, as well as separate meetings for a curated group of boutique and independent brokers, and will continue to partner with state and local associations on their broker summits.

REVAMPED GOVERNANCE

NAR's governance operations was another major focus in 2025. In response to member feedback, NAR refreshed training for committee liaisons, chairs, vice chairs and staff executives and conducted a detailed study to identify ways to enhance communication, clarify committee roles and ensure its governance structure meets member and association needs.

In 2026, the report says, the association will leverage insights from that feedback to refine the governance process to deliver faster, smarter and more transparent decision-making.

“ We will continue to seek feedback on every aspect of the association from all stakeholders while implementing strategies based on stakeholder input. ”



SCAN THE QR
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FULL REPORT ON
nar.realtor



INTRODUCING RISMEDIA'S 2026 REAL ESTATE NEWSMAKERS

Riding the Waves of Change

For anyone working within the residential real estate ecosystem last year, resilience and innovation were imperative to survive 2025's shifting market dynamics. But despite the many challenges and obstacles put in their path, many found ways to not just survive but thrive.

In RISMedia's ninth annual Real Estate Newsmakers showcase, we recognize some of the industry's most creative and influential individuals for their accomplishments and contributions to their companies, colleagues and clients. Nominated by our readers, these more than 300 individuals represent real estate champions of all kinds—brokers, agents, executives, technologists, educators, etc.—because successful outcomes depend on the many, not just the few at the top. In this special section, we highlight just some of their headline-making accomplishments in 2025—be sure to check out their full profiles in our Real Estate Newsmakers Directory at media.com/2026-newsmakers.

We begin our 2026 Newsmakers section by introducing you to this year's Newsmakers Hall of Fame inductees—a select few individuals who have gone above and beyond in service to the industry, their organizations, and the agents and consumers they serve. Their years of dedication to improving the industry and advancing the larger cause of homeownership serves as an inspiration to us all. We pay tribute to them here, and look forward to honoring them in person at RISMedia's Annual Awards Gala on October 1, held during our 38th Annual CEO & Leadership Exchange in Washington, D.C., September 30 - October 2.

This year's class of 2026 Real Estate Newsmakers are a shining example of not letting market conditions dictate the future, but taking control of your own story instead. Congratulations to our 2026 Hall of Fame and to all of our Newsmaker honorees. We are grateful for your leadership and inspired by the example you set.

— The RISMedia Editorial Team

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STEVE MORRIS

FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN EXIT REALTY CORP. INTERNATIONAL

For Steve Morris, the founder and chairman of EXIT Realty Corp. International, the industry isn't just about property—it's about people.

"You are what you believe to be true," Morris asserts, summarizing his affirmation principle. "Whatever you've accepted is what you are and how you act. If you can straighten out your thinking, you can straighten out everything else in your life."

Morris' path to the Hall of Fame was forged through grit and an outsider's perspective. With only a high school education, he educated himself in the "university of the world," transitioning from a floor trader at the Toronto Stock Exchange to the insurance and cosmetic industries. It was in the life insurance business that he discovered the power of residuals—getting paid over and over for work done once.

"I brought that idea into the real estate industry, and everybody thought I was crazy," he recalls.

Undeterred, he spent 13 years at a major franchise mastering the art of recruiting before launching EXIT in 1996. He knew that for an agent to have a true career, they needed a future beyond the next closing. By creating a system of single-level residuals that offered retirement and death benefits, Morris introduced a "family-first" focus to an industry he felt was too often driven by ego.



His leadership style is an intentional exercise in "effective allowing." Morris believes a leader's job isn't to push, but to provide the platform for others to excel.

"You have to learn how to allow people to be the best they can be and not get in their way," he says.

This philosophy has fostered remarkable loyalty; 80% of his head office staff has been with him for over 20 years. Despite suffering a significant decrease in franchises during the 2008 financial crisis, Morris' "Rocky-like" resilience saw him get back up, driven by the conviction that his idea was too important to fail.

Now 80 years old, Morris shows

no signs of slowing down, even branching into the film industry as a producer. He begins every morning with a personal mandate: "Today is an impeccable day, and I intend on living in an impeccable way." It is this commitment to self-mastery and the empowerment of others that defines his legacy.

As Morris reflects on his 30-year journey with EXIT, his focus remains on the "baton passing" of wisdom to the next generation.

"It's about bringing the most and best out of our family," Morris says. "If I'm proud of what I did when I go to bed at night, I've done what I was supposed to do for that day."

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MIKE HICKMAN

CEO/OWNER
SEVEN GABLES REAL ESTATE

Mike Hickman's entry into real estate in 1977 was, by his own admission, an accident. After touring South America with a professional baseball team, he missed the start date for law school and needed a way to earn a living.

"I had a real estate license I'd ac-

quired in college, and I was tired of scooping ice cream," Hickman recalls. What began as a temporary measure turned into a 48-year journey of loyalty and leadership, as Hickman rose from an agent to the CEO and owner of Seven Gables Real Estate.

Hickman's leadership philosophy is rooted in the "Pyramid of Success" taught by legendary coach John

Wooden. As a college athlete, Hickman was mentored by Gary Adams, a close disciple of Wooden, who instilled in him the values of over-preparation, discipline and outworking the competition.

"I was the captain of the team, and I realized later that the similarities of leadership on a baseball field are quite similar to leadership in business," Hickman says. This lesson became the foundation of Seven Gables' culture when Hickman stepped into a definitive leadership role in 1991. "It was a jump-in-both-feet, fire-a-blazing time," he says.

Under his guidance, Seven Gables has become a powerhouse boutique firm that defies the trend of national consolidation. In 2014, Hickman set a bold goal to become Orange County's leader in per-person productivity. By 2019, he reached that pinnacle, and the firm has maintained the top ranking for units sold ever since, often ranking No. 1 out of 100,000 agents in the regional MLS. "In a market where we can't control the pricing, we can control how productive our agents are and how successful they are," he explains.

Beyond production, the firm has been named the top workplace in Orange County for 10 consecutive years—a feat Hickman attributes to a simple rule: "If you think you're close to your people, get closer."

Hickman remains a hands-on educator, leading "Forms Friday" training sessions and launching "THE MIX," a professional podcast studio to help agents produce modern marketing content.

Reflecting on his career as he leads the firm toward its 50th anniversary, Hickman remains focused on the human element. "Relationships matter. You can have all the tech in the world, but if you don't know how to empower the people who work with you, it doesn't matter."

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MARKI LEMONS-RYHAL

SPEAKER, REAL ESTATE AI EXPERT, AUTHOR
REMARKITABLE LLC

Marki Lemons-Ryhal's career is a masterclass in the "no-excuse" philosophy. Growing up in her family's legendary Chicago business, Lem's BBQ—a James Beard Award winner and Barbecue Hall of Fame inductee—she was working by age 10.

This foundation instilled in Lemons-

Ryhal a lifelong commitment to work ethic and a deep sense of service to the community. That grit paved the way for her entry into real estate in 1999, where she quickly became a top-producing broker before pivoting to her true passion: education. Lemons-Ryhal's career has since been defined by an uncanny ability to interpret data and stay ahead

of the curve. In 2006, while others still relied on bench ads, billboards and direct mail, she noticed a massive shift.

"I saw that 80% of consumers were using the internet as a source of information," she says. "I knew then I wanted to be in the palm of the hand of the consumer." This foresight led her to earn her Short Sales and Foreclosure Resource (SFR®) certification while nine months pregnant. "My mindset was: I'm going to take time off to have this baby, so I need to get the education now to leverage it as soon as the child is born."

Today, as one of the industry's foremost experts in Artificial Intelligence, Lemons-Ryhal warns that the era of traditional search is evolving from Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to Answer Engine Optimization (AEO). For Lemons-Ryhal, the technical shift is only half the story; the true reward is the human breakthrough. Having taught over 1 million students, she thrives on the immediate impact of live education.

"Because I'm going to do 100 audiences every single year, it's when I look in their face and I can see that the lightbulb has come on," she says, "that just turns me on every single time."

As she reflects on her journey, Lemons-Ryhal emphasizes that her greatest legacy is the example she sets for the next generation. Coming into the business as an unwed mother, she often had her sons in tow at showings and closings. That experience, which once caused guilt, eventually inspired her son, Skyler, to become a Howard University graduate and an award-winning Realtor®.

"I do this intentionally because you cannot be what you cannot see," she shares. "I want to be for the next generation what I have been to my own child: an example, without any guilt."

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RICHARD HAGGERTY

CEO

ONEKEY® MLS, LLC

Richard Haggerty is widely regarded as a grand unifier of the New York real estate landscape, a reputation earned through four decades of navigating complex regional mergers and evolving data systems. While he joined the industry in 1984, his legacy is not defined by longevity, but by his relentless pursuit of a more

cohesive marketplace. After leading the Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors® through years of expansion, Haggerty spearheaded the landmark creation of OneKey® MLS, bridging the Hudson Valley and Long Island markets to create the largest and most influential MLS in the state.

Navigating such a massive regional

shift required a disciplined leadership style that prioritized member benefits.

“The most significant hurdle was trying to make sure that we kept the discussions at a high level,” Haggerty explains. “It’s very natural to delve into the details before you work out the goals. You’ve really got to focus on the goals to make sure that what you’re trying to create is worthwhile and is really going to bring about true change and true benefit.”

This focus on a clear roadmap allowed him to unite different regions into a single high-performance platform launched amidst the challenges of 2020, resulting in OneKey® MLS. And while Haggerty has overseen a radical technological evolution, most recently integrating generative AI tools like Sidekick for 48,000 subscribers, he maintains that the fundamental mission remains unchanged since his earliest days in the business.

“What hasn’t changed is figuring out how we can best support our brokers and the agents who are affiliated with them in their mission to help guide consumers,” he says. “If you keep to that fundamental mission, it really makes life a lot easier.”

For Haggerty, that mission extends to using the voice of the MLS to advocate for ethics and equity. “The MLS has an obligation to talk about just how important fair housing is,” he notes, emphasizing that technology is now a vital tool in catching “bad players” and ensuring property access is truly achievable to everyone.

Throughout his career, Haggerty has remained characteristically humble, focusing on the empowerment of his board rather than his own executive stature. “I’ve always strived to enable my leaders to have the information they need to make the best decisions for the members. I’ve really tried to make it not about me,” he reflects.

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EMMETT LAFFEY

CEO

**BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOMESERVICES
LAFFEY INTERNATIONAL REALTY**

For Emmett Laffey, real estate wasn't a career choice; it was his environment. Born into the business, Laffey's formal education began at the age of five in the offices of his father's firm. By the time he was eight, he was already sitting at kitchen tables during listing presentations, observing firsthand

the power of accountability and the weight of a family name.

"I was literally born into the business," Laffey reflects. "I saw through my father's enormous clientele the power of relationships and trustworthiness. I even met my wife at a company holiday party when we were seven."

That lifelong immersion allowed Laffey to cultivate a "seat at the table" philosophy that has made him the go-to advisor for New York's ultra-wealthy. Throughout a career that includes some of the most significant transactions in New York history—including the highest-priced house sale in Long Island's history at \$36.5 million—Laffey has maintained that technology can never replace the human element of a referral. To his high-net-worth clients, from Wall Street hedge fund managers to sports figures and icons like Billy Joel, Laffey is more than a broker; he is a permanent consultant.

"I pride myself on bringing to our clients a different experience altogether," he says. "We go out of our way to ensure that when they do business with my firm, they feel they've never had that experience with a brokerage before."

In 2018, Laffey made the strategic decision to align his deep local roots with the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices brand. For a firm that had already completed over 75,000 transactions, the move provided a "global halo effect" that perfectly complemented his luxury-heavy market.

"Brand is very important, but when you have a brand with that level of trust and stability, it resonates perfectly with my clientele," he explains.

This partnership allowed Laffey to champion the "Forever Agent" concept—a commitment to a relationship that outlasts any single transaction.

For Laffey, the true measure of success isn't the size of the commission check, but the daily referrals that come from decades of integrity.

"Nothing makes me happier than getting that text saying, 'Emmett, my friend is buying; they have to deal with you,'" he says. "We're not cocky, we're just very confident—we live it every day."

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ENNIS ANTOINE

Broker/CEO, EA Realty of Georgia

Ennis Antoine's 2025 accomplishments continue to advance equity and fairness in housing. This past year, the broker/CEO of EA Realty of Georgia was honored as a National Association of Realtors® Fair Housing Champion and submitted programs for the ARELLO Fair Housing Award in both the Continuing Education and Total Education categories. He also launched a new, three-hour broker CE course on trust account management and a comprehensive 60-hour Georgia broker pre-license course.

Beyond education, Antoine served as a nominee for vice president of Governmental Affairs for the Georgia Association of Realtors®, advocating for policies that protect homeowners, and continued his work with Habitat for Humanity.

"Whether it's building a home with Habitat for Humanity, teaching future leaders in the classroom or advocating for Realtors® and homeowners on the policy level, I am rewarded by seeing the ripple effect of my work—families thriving, agents growing and communities becoming stronger," says Antoine.



CHRIS CZARNECKI

President & CEO,
Keller Williams Realty LLC

Chris Czarnecki spent 2025 strengthening the company's scale, technology capabilities and agent-first model.

After assuming the role of Keller Williams CEO in March, he guided a strategic investment from Stone Point Capital, providing the resources and stability to innovate and expand with speed.

Under his leadership, KW launched a flagship enterprise partnership with Canva, delivering world-class marketing and branding tools to agents worldwide. Czarnecki also oversaw international expansion, adding El Salvador, the Cayman Islands, North Macedonia, Hungary and Singapore to KW's global network.

By aligning capital, technology and global strategy, Czarnecki has positioned Keller Williams for sustained success, ensuring agents have the tools, reach and resources to thrive in a competitive marketplace.

"I want to learn first and foremost," he says. "One of the reasons I'm excited about KW is just the passion of the people. I want to keep seeing it evolve and grow."



DAN TROUP

CEO, Broker Public Portal

In 2025, Troup spearheaded the AI-powered relaunch of the Broker Public Portal, securing MRED as the first MLS partner and advancing BrokerData technology, creating a consumer-first, broker-owned search platform that preserves professional connections, elevates transparency and sets a new national standard in real estate search.

DEANN GOLDEN

**President & CEO,
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties**

In 2025, DeAnn Golden guided strategic expansion across key markets and the launch of a Luxury Collection marketing suite. She successfully navigated the merger of two large teams, inspiring initiatives like Team Synergy and Launch to Legacy to foster collaboration, succession planning and long-term business growth. She also advanced the Moving Forward Initiative, supporting associates coping with the loss of a spouse and reinforcing a culture of care.

Under Golden's leadership, the company hosted Momentum '25 in Asheville, uniting 14 sister companies for professional development. The event included rebuilding efforts to support communities devastated by Hurricane Helene.

"My greatest privilege as a leader is to help others rise—whether that's an agent who has built a thriving business, a colleague who has persevered through challenges or a team that has worked tirelessly to achieve a breakthrough," says Golden. "Leadership is not about being in the spotlight, but about reflecting it onto others."



NATALIE DAVIS

**Director of Community Growth,
Keller Williams Realty, Inc.**

In 2025, Davis launched Keller Williams' first Virtual Inclusion Summit, hosted the inaugural Affinity Group Community Luncheon and implemented quarterly Inclusion & Belonging Town Halls. Through training, newsletters and a multicultural celebration calendar, she strengthened equity initiatives and fostered a more inclusive community.



MARK JOHNSON

**Managing Partner,
Recruiting Insight**

In 2025, Johnson launched the industry-first Brokerage Performance and Agent Movement Report, empowering brokers with actionable data, and hosted webinars that provided unparalleled insight into market trends. He also trained over 250 real estate students, shaping the next generation of industry leaders.



COLETTE STEVENSON

CEO, REsides, Inc.

In 2025, Stevenson launched strategic tech partnerships with Rayse, Earnnest and the Direct! platform, rolled out tiered subscription plans and oversaw REsides' expansion into Georgia. She also advocated for flexible solutions to industry policy, cementing her role as a transformative MLS leader empowering brokers and agents nationwide.



DOREEN SPAGNUOLO CEO, Long Island Board of Realtors® (LIBOR)

Doreen Spagnuolo spent 2025 in the CEO role advancing a member-first vision that championed collaboration, innovation and strong advocacy for property rights and legislation.

Spagnuolo created a dedicated task force with OneKey® MLS leadership to better serve large brokerages and improve integration of tools and resources, such as broker training aids focused on compliance, risk management and consistency, as well as a new Legal Support Center offering direct access to attorney guidance.

Additionally, Spagnuolo planned LIBOR's largest-ever Education Summit, while launching the association's "Room to Think" podcast.

"It is deeply fulfilling to make decisions that positively impact both our members and the people in the communities they serve—whether that's empowering Realtors® through education and tools, helping first-time homebuyers access grants or guiding our organization through transformative change," says Spagnuolo.



JENNIFER BUTLER Vice President of Government and Community Relations, Zillow Group

In 2025, Butler led Zillow's work on the FARE Act, cutting rental costs in New York, advanced responsible AI in housing finance and appraisals, and championed policies to increase housing supply and affordability nationwide—creating measurable impact for renters, buyers and agents across the country.



KATHY CONNELLY COO, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties

In 2025, Connelly strengthened Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties' partnerships and leadership team, launched the Momentum '25 conference with a focus on giving back to the community, and earned industry recognition for her leadership and impact—continuing her mission to elevate people, performance and purpose.



RAJEEV SAJJA Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer, Bright MLS

An AI advocate in the real estate industry, last year, Sajja consulted with brokerages and MLSs about adoption strategies while personally training agents on the use of AI through his "Real Estate AI Flash" podcast and the Agent AI Mastermind series, and developed custom, time-saving AI tools for agents to use in a variety of tasks.

EMILY DIECKMANN

Owner, Emily Dieckmann Real Estate Team

In 2025, retired U.S. Air Force pilot Emily Dieckmann led multiple community-driven initiatives that brought people together during times of need and celebration. She spearheaded relief efforts to support families affected by the July 4 Texas flooding, ensuring critical resources reached those beginning the re-building process.

Dieckmann also organized a series of widely attended community events, including: Kid Fest, a Pet Parade, free Christmas gift wrapping that engaged local teens in service, the EcoChic Boutique shopping experience for women in need and the Point Venture Open House Extravaganza. In addition to community outreach, Dieckmann strengthened industry collaboration through bi-monthly property tours open to all agents.

"I take tremendous pride in mentoring agents and watching them evolve into confident, thriving professionals," says Dieckmann. "Seeing their lives change—buying their first home, supporting their families or reaching income goals—that's what fuels me every day. It's about building futures, not just closing deals."



DEBRA BEAGLE

CEO/Managing Broker/ Owner, The Ashton Real Estate Group of REMAX Advantage

Beagle spent 2025 championing industry change on Capitol Hill with the Residential Real Estate Council, lending her voice to legislative efforts tied to the Big Beautiful Bill while serving as national first vice president of the Residential Real Estate Council, pairing top-tier leadership with a deep commitment to service.



ERINN NOBEL

Co-Founder & President, ENRG Realty

In 2025, Nobel drove ENRG Realty's rapid expansion into 15 states while introducing industry-first programs like Connect & Thrive™ and ENRG SHINE™, positioning the company as a forward-thinking brokerage built around agent empowerment, psychological insight and scalable innovation.



PAULINE BENNETT

Regional President, Northeast, Coldwell Banker Realty

In 2025, Bennett delivered strong growth for Coldwell Banker Realty's Northeast Region, driving revenue, market share and luxury sales gains while overseeing more than 6,000 agents, expanding leadership roles and championing charitable initiatives that strengthen both the business and the communities the company serves.



ERIK CARLSON

CEO, RE/MAX, Holdings Inc.

In 2025, Erik Carlson guided RE/MAX through a pivotal period of transformation, strengthening its leadership bench and modernizing the organization to better serve agents, brokerages and consumers worldwide. By recruiting accomplished industry leaders to the RE/MAX executive team, Carlson helped accelerate the “pace of play,” fueling innovation and expanding services across the network.

“We’re building a new, modern RE/MAX atop a 50-year foundation of excellence and industry leadership,” says Carlson. “In many ways, we’re shaping the future of real estate for these digital, tech-enabled times.”

Carlson’s leadership centered around a clear mission: helping RE/MAX agents win more listings, save time and grow sustainable businesses. He also led efforts to enhance the RE/MAX value proposition, elevating the customer experience while reinforcing the brand’s competitive edge. A milestone of 2025 was the refresh of the iconic RE/MAX brand, including the launch of a new digital-first logo.



TERESA PALACIOS SMITH

Chief Inclusion & Engagement Officer, HomeServices of America and HSF Affiliates LLC

In 2025, Palacios Smith expanded her influential “Women Who Lead” and “Diversity MATTERS” platforms while spearheading critical DEI training for 23,000-plus professionals. As vice chair of the HomeServices Foundation for Housing Equity, she remains a premier advocate for fair housing.



ANDREW LEVINSON

Senior Vice President & General Counsel, Corcoran

Levinson was instrumental in navigating Corcoran through 2025’s historic regulatory shifts, including the implementation of REBNY’s buyer representation agreements and the NYC FARE Act. His proactive legal guidance and agent training have set a new industry standard for transparency, accountability and ethical real estate practice.



JESSICA INGRAM-BEE

Global Real Estate Advisor, Gibson Sotheby’s International Realty

In 2025, Ingram-Bee partnered with the City of Boston to launch a groundbreaking Co-Purchasing Housing Pilot Program. Co-authoring the city’s guide to shared ownership, she has provided middle-income families with an innovative, community-focused pathway to homeownership.

MARIE CLAIRE NTAM

**Real Estate & Lifestyle Expert | Television Host,
MEHGA Collective of Compass**

In 2025, Marie Claire Ntam expanded access, visibility and opportunity for both aspiring homeowners and small businesses across the Washington, D.C./Maryland/Virginia (DMV) region. Through her signature Keys & Conversations seminar series, co-hosted with Citibank and Lydia's House, Ntam equipped first-generation and moderate-income buyers with practical tools to navigate financing, down payment assistance and the home-buying process.

Ntam also leveraged media for community impact, hosting "The American Dream TV – Selling DMV," where she spotlighted local entrepreneurs, non-profits and organizations, bringing their stories to national and international audiences. She also expanded sisStar, her women's empowerment platform, curating events that blend real estate, culture and philanthropy.

"The most rewarding part of my career is empowering first-generation and underserved buyers to achieve the dream of homeownership," says Ntam. "Combining real estate, media and advocacy allows me to create legacy while amplifying voices that deserve to be seen and heard."



DAVID DEZA

**Managing Director, Miami,
Brown Harris Stevens**

A dedicated advocate for agent development and community service, Deza transformed Brown Harris Stevens Miami in 2025 through innovative onboarding programs and a culture-first leadership approach. His work as a Make-A-Wish volunteer continues to inspire a purpose-driven mission for real estate professionals across the region.



MICHELLE FEOLA

**VP & General Counsel,
Berkshire Hathaway
HomeServices Chicago**

A leading legal voice during a year of industry transformation, Feola revolutionized the firm's consumer agreements and transparency standards. Her commitment to fair housing and agent education ensured that her firm remained a benchmark for ethical practice and consumer-focused service in 2025.



DAN HARRIS

**President & Chief Revenue
Officer, The CE Shop**

Harris directed the launch of innovative real estate publishing products and live online courses that reach 30,000-plus students monthly. His award-winning programs and philanthropic leadership through The CE Shop Foundation have set a new standard for professional excellence and community impact.



LEIGH THOMAS BROWN

Broker/Owner, One Community Real Estate

In 2025, as North Carolina continued to feel the destructive aftermath of Hurricane Helene, Leigh Brown's nonprofit, Patriot Relief (founded in late 2024), was selected as the partner organization for the state of North Carolina and HUD's single-family repair and rebuild program. In this role, she has helped connect displaced homeowners with critical resources to restore their homes and preserve the fabric of their communities.

"I'm driven by solving complex challenges, designing elegant and innovative solutions, and creating programs that inspire engagement and deliver measurable impact," she says. "I find deep satisfaction in seeing ideas take root—when a strategic shift not only works but elevates the people and culture around it."

With more than 25 years in real estate and over 4,000 homes sold, Brown brings deep industry knowledge to disaster recovery efforts, bridging the gap between government programs, local needs and long-term housing stability.



VANESSA MARTIN

Co-Founder, Tether RE

Vanessa Martin significantly scaled Tether RE's reach in 2025, securing major partnerships with organiza-

tions like Bright MLS, Engel & Völkers Americas and Lone Wolf Technologies. These agreements, alongside Tether RE's acceptance into the prestigious 2025 NAR REACH program, have brought layered safety tools—including 24/7 live monitoring and struggle detection—to hundreds of thousands of agents nationwide.

A U.S. Army combat veteran and former medic, Martin's dedication to protection is deeply personal, driven by a desire to ensure real estate professionals return home safely every day. Beyond technology, she has fostered a national dialogue through the TetherSAFE Community, collaborating with industry leaders to embed safety into daily workflows.

"Knowing that our app is being used in real-world situations such as showings, open houses and client meetings—and that it has the potential to save lives—is the most meaningful accomplishment of all," says Martin.



DANIEL JONES

CEO, Hive MLS

A pragmatic visionary, Jones redefined the cooperative MLS model in 2025 through the launch of Hive MLS and the MDX data exchange. By prioritizing data independence and local governance, he has created a scalable, tech-forward community that serves nearly 20,000 subscribers across three states.

CHANDLER CROUCH

Licensed Broker, Chandler Crouch Realtors®

In 2025, Chandler Crouch championed homeowners across North Texas by leading pro bono property-tax protest efforts that helped more than 40,000 homeowners challenge assessed values—saving communities millions of dollars and helping families avoid being taxed out of their homes.

Crouch also played a key role in local policy conversations impacting housing. He conducted in-depth research on a proposed split of the Keller Independent School District, analyzing its potential effects on property values and homeowners. By elevating data-driven insight into the public discussion, he helped inform decision-making that ultimately preserved the district as a unified community.

As a broker, Crouch leads a service-first team. He is passionate about mentoring agents, helping them grow from struggling to thriving professionals.

“The greatest life-changing impact I've seen has been the transformation that happens when an agent on our team is able to make a great living and provide for their family,” he says.



LINDSEY WALLACE

**Vice President of Administration,
MetroTex Association of
Realtors®**

A key driver behind the largest Realtor® association merger in North Texas history, Wallace played a pivotal role in the unification of MetroTex and Collin County Area Realtors® in 2025. Her leadership established a 40,000-member organization, significantly expanding regional advocacy and professional resources for the North Texas real estate community.

CAMERON PAINE

President & CEO, MARIS

Redefining the value proposition of the MLS, Cameron Paine spent 2025 launching a groundbreaking Broker Revenue Share program. The initiative returns data-feed revenue in excess of \$150,000 directly to the brokers who provide the listings, reinforcing the principle that listing data is a primary asset. Under his leadership, MARIS also became one of the first MLSs in the country to fully upgrade to a native RESO Data Dictionary database, ensuring 15,000-plus subscribers benefit from standardized, high-quality data.

Beyond technology, Paine is a visionary for industry-wide collaboration. In 2025, he engineered a joint ownership position in REcore with CRMLS and NorthstarMLS.

“Being able to share a dialogue about our experience with brokers



on my Board of Directors, my association shareholders and amongst the agents representing MARIS' enormous geographic coverage across Missouri and Illinois, is the most rewarding part of my career,” says Paine.



JESSICA EDGERTON

Chief Legal Officer | EVP, Industry & Learning, Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®

Throughout 2025, Jessica Edgerton leveraged her dual expertise in law and professional development to guide real estate professionals through a complex regulatory landscape.

She expanded the reach of the LeadingRE Institute and her Risky Minute video series, translating dense legal shifts into actionable business strategies for brokers and agents. Beyond risk management, she became a primary champion for the value of local and regional brands, equipping independent firms with the tools to highlight their community-driven advantages in a consolidating market.

Edgerton is also a frequent keynote speaker at major national conferences and a mentor to leaders across the global network.

"The most rewarding part of my career is empowering others to succeed," Edgerton says. "I am passionate about ensuring our industry remains resilient and forward-looking, and I feel privileged to play a role in preparing professionals for the challenges and opportunities ahead."



ALEXIA RODRIGUEZ

CEO of KW Cares, Keller Williams Realty LLC

As CEO of KW Cares, Alexia Rodriguez led several forward-thinking initiatives in 2025, most notably the

establishment of a \$14 million Reserve Investment Fund. This strategic endowment ensures the charity's administrative costs are covered, allowing 100% of individual donations to go directly to Keller Williams associates and their families during emergencies. Under her guidance, the organization also saw a 10% increase in market centers meeting their titling goals.

Rodriguez's leadership was especially visible in July 2025, when she directed a \$150,000 donation to support catastrophic flood relief efforts in Central Texas. Her commitment to "Family Helping Family" is personal; she is a frequent presence on the ground during disaster recovery and serves on multiple community boards, including Texas Search and Rescue (TEXSAR).

"Hearing from grantees, and how they appreciate the love and support we provide them during their most challenging times leaves me with an immense sense of purpose," Rodriguez says.



LEE ANN ROUGHTON

National VP of Franchise Performance & Operations, ERA Real Estate

In 2025, Roughton secured the future of the ERA network by overseeing renewals and onboarding totaling \$3 billion in sales volume. Her dedication to the brand's heritage and her launch of "The Spirit of ERA Award" have solidified her role as a champion of culture and collaboration.

TISHA WRIGHT

Sr. Manager of Transitions and Onboarding, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate

Tisha Wright is a cornerstone of growth for Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate, transforming the complex process of brokerage transition into a seamless experience. In 2025, Wright successfully onboarded 10 brokerages—often managing five or more simultaneous transitions—while maintaining superior satisfaction scores. She designed a strategic communication initiative that nurtures newly affiliated agents long after their arrival, delivering timely insights that ensure they are fully empowered to use brand tools and marketing resources.

Wright's leadership is defined by her ability to bridge the gap between sales and operations, building trust with affiliates early in the process. Her cross-functional collaboration with technology and marketing teams has created a scalable model for brand adoption and retention.

"I enjoy helping people feel supported and empowered, ensuring they realize they're not going through this process alone," Wright says. "When you lead with care, consistency and a focus on others' success, it makes a difference."



ABOUT RISMEDIA'S REAL ESTATE NEWSMAKERS

RISMedia's 2026 Real Estate Newsmakers were chosen based on nominations received through an online nomination process on RISMedia.com, and by nominations from RISMedia's in-house editorial team and other industry sources. Nominations for RISMedia's Real Estate Newsmakers are collected on an ongoing basis throughout the course of the year. There is no fee to nominate a Newsmaker or be recognized/featured as a Newsmaker.

Due to deadline and production criteria, Newsmakers featured in this issue may not represent all honorees and/or the most recent information. Please visit our Newsmakers Directory at <https://www.rismedia.com/2026-newsmakers/> for the most current Newsmakers information.

RISMedia's 2026 Real Estate Newsmakers Hall of Fame honorees will be inducted at RISMedia's Annual Awards Gala on October 1, held during the company's 38th Annual CEO & Leadership Exchange, September 30 - October 2, at the Georgetown Fairmont Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Online nominations for 2027 Real Estate Newsmakers will open this summer. Please contact editorial@rismedia.com with inquiries.



SMOKEY GARRETT

Founder & CEO, Keller Williams GO Network

As founder and CEO of the Keller Williams GO Network, Smokey Garrett pushed his team to follow five principles during 2025: “Embracing the empowered consumer; redefining success beyond the transaction; leveraging the digital frontier; crafting a visionary brand and future-proofing the business model.”

That strategy paid off with an increase in the Network’s Private Collections off-market listings. The company also embraced the Texas rollout of Keller Williams’ Final Offer platform, which gives “consumers the optionality they deserve.” The company was recognized in April 2025 as the No. 1 real estate franchise in the U.S. by agent count, transaction sides and sales volume.

“Throughout my career, I’ve been passionate about elevating the real estate industry through innovation, leadership and a deep commitment to the people I serve,” says Garrett. “This nomination is a meaningful acknowledgment of those efforts and a reflection of the amazing work our GO Network team accomplishes every day.”



CAROLINE COLADONATO

Realtor®, REMAX Ready

A regional finalist for RISMedia’s 2025 Rookie of the Year and recipient of multiple 2025 industry honors, Coladonato surpassed \$3 million in sales by midyear. Her client-focused approach and passion for helping others achieve their housing goals continue to drive her growing success in real estate.



STEVE DUBRUELER

Founder & CEO,
Coldwell Banker Premier

In 2025, DuBrueler led Coldwell Banker Premier through two strategic mergers and the launch of a revolutionary “Seller Services” suite. By providing elite lead-generation tools and a rare comprehensive benefits package, he has created a high-growth environment where agents achieve lasting financial stability and market dominance.



MELANIE DE ARMAS

Owner & CEO,
REMAX Advance Realty

In 2025, De Armas oversaw REMAX Advance Realty’s largest expansion to date, completing a strategic merger that grew the firm to 335 agents across nine South Florida offices. A visionary leader and mentor, she continues to drive innovation, growth and opportunity throughout the region’s real estate community.

ANA TERESA RODRIGUEZ

**CEO, ATR Luxury Homes Group
at Coldwell Banker Realty**

Ana Teresa Rodriguez led ATR Luxury Homes Group to record-breaking sales and top team honors in 2025, including No. 1 Small Team in Southeast Florida, Top 1% Teams Worldwide, and multiple top state and national rankings. Her team also set new benchmarks in luxury sales and rentals across Miami.

Closing more than \$272 million in sales from 2021 - 2025, Rodriguez expanded her business footprint with ATR Concepts—offering high-end design, staging, development and property management services—while launching ATR Media, including her upcoming book, “12 Steps to Becoming Successful in Real Estate,” the “ATR Unfiltered” podcast and a real estate academy mentoring future agents.

“Real estate becomes more than a transaction—it is about building legacies, creating opportunities and giving back,” Rodriguez says. “I feel fulfilled when a family finds their dream home, a seller nets a big profit, an investor secures their vision, and when my success allows me to serve others.”



BRYSON TAGGART

**Senior Business Development
Manager, Opendoor**

Taggart spearheaded Opendoor’s nationwide agent expansion in 2025, leading the recruitment and training of more than 850 agents while helping design the company’s new Key Agent™ program. His leadership and innovation have been vital to scaling Opendoor’s agent initiatives, empowering real estate professionals to grow their business nationwide.



SONIA ROHAM

**Broker Associate, Berkshire
Hathaway HomeServices
California Properties**

A former real estate attorney turned top-producing agent, Roham has quickly distinguished herself at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties, closing nearly \$5 million in her first eight months, including representing a buyer in a \$3.9 million multifamily acquisition in 2025.



LEIGH ANN BOGRAN

**Vice President of Operations,
United Real Estate**

Through disciplined leadership and operational innovation, Bogran continues to scale United Real Estate’s systems and programs nationwide, overseeing several pivotal launches in 2025, including the Bullseye Marketplace and the refresh of United’s Talent Attraction Program (TAP).



AARON BUCHBINDER

Principal & Founding Agent, Compass Boca Raton

As a founding agent for Compass in Boca Raton, Aaron Buchbinder achieved more than \$125 million in sales and 100 closed transactions in 2025 while growing The Buchbinder Group's production by 36% year-over-year. His leadership continues to elevate the team's reputation as one of the most recognized and trusted in South Florida's luxury real estate market.

A Boca Raton native, Buchbinder leverages his deep community ties and sharp market insight to guide clients through each transaction with integrity and enthusiasm. Beyond the numbers, his success is driven by his commitment to making every experience personal, meaningful and enjoyable for those he serves.

"Getting my clients to the finish line and being part of those big life moments is what makes this career so fun and meaningful," Buchbinder says. "The relationships you build along the way are what turn a job into a lifelong passion."



BETH DICKERSON

**Global Real Estate Advisor,
Gibson otheby's International
Realty**

In 2025, Dickerson achieved \$87 million in closed sales (at press time), a 40% increase over the previous year, and launched a boutique development in Boston's Back Bay, cementing her position as a luxury leader.



DENNIS CARVAJAL

**Global Real Estate Advisor,
ONE Sotheby's International
Realty**

With over \$850 million in career sales, Carvajal continues to redefine luxury real estate in Miami, recognized in 2025 as the No. 2 Realtor® in Coral Gables by sales volume and No. 3 companywide at ONE Sotheby's International Realty.



JOHN CELLA

**Licensed Associate Real Estate
Broker, Coldwell Banker
Warburg**

Cella exemplifies client-centered real estate, last year guiding a high-net-worth client through the purchase of a Midtown Manhattan pied-a-terre, and hosting a neighborhood event at McGolrick Park, reinforcing Coldwell Banker Warburg's community presence and spirit of connection.

KATE REISINGER

COO, Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®

Kate Reisinger continued to drive global impact in 2025 by strengthening Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®'s (LeadingRE) referral network, ensuring members deliver unmatched results worldwide. Under her leadership, the network facilitated over 15,000 client introductions across 67 countries, achieving an industry-leading 60% conversion rate and reinforcing its position as the gold standard in real estate referrals.

Reisinger also enhanced collaboration among members, refined best practices and oversaw flagship events like Conference Week—fostering innovation, knowledge sharing and relationships across the network. She introduced white-label referral solutions for outside organizations, enabling others to leverage LeadingRE's systems, processes and concierge-level service.

"I take great pride in knowing that the systems we build not only generate revenue but also create meaningful experiences for clients navigating important life transitions," she says. "Seeing the dedication of our network professionals come to life in ways that positively impact both companies and consumers is deeply fulfilling."



JACQUELINE FELDMAN

Global Real Estate Advisor, ONE Sotheby's International Realty

Feldman ranked as the No. 1 Top Female Producer and No. 4 company-wide at ONE Sotheby's International Realty in 2025, reinforcing her status as a top producer with \$220 million-plus in career sales, and her role as an influencer in South Florida luxury real estate.



SUMAIYYA RAZA

General Counsel, MetroTex Association of Realtors®

In 2025, Raza led the historic merger of MetroTex Association of Realtors® and Collin County Area Realtors®, creating the largest Realtor® association in North Texas, while navigating unprecedented legal challenges and protecting members, cementing her leadership position in real estate law and organizational strategy.

"I take great pride in knowing that the systems we build not only generate revenue but also create meaningful experiences for clients navigating important life transitions."

-KATE REISINGER,
COO, Leading Real Estate
Companies of the World®



GABBY MADDOX DAVIS

Operating Partner, Keller Williams West Atlanta

Gabby Maddox Davis has made history as the youngest and first Black operating partner in the Keller Williams Southeast region, transforming KW West Atlanta into a national model for rapid expansion. Since taking the helm of the franchise, Davis has led the market center to become the No. 1 office for net growth across all of Keller Williams International. She is also the founder of The GM Team, where she has consistently ranked in the top 5% of the Atlanta Realtors® Association for over a decade.

In 2025, Davis further expanded her influence by launching a leadership and lifestyle podcast and championing initiatives that support agent education and professional accountability throughout the region.

"I came into real estate from a community with an average income of \$14,000 a year," Davis shares. "Watching people's lives transform and helping families create wealth and legacy is the fuel that keeps me moving."



VIVIANE WOLAK

Broker Associate, ONE Sotheby's International Realty

Wolak solidified her status as a South Florida luxury market leader in 2025, representing one of Miami's top three most expensive homes ever sold—an \$85.2 million Bay Point record—while continuing to deliver exceptional results for high-end clients across the region with a commitment to community and philanthropy.



CHARLOTTE SAVOY

Principal/Team Leader/Coach/Realtor®, The KW Collective

A 2025 growth strategist, Savoy scaled The KW Collective to six profitable offices across three states while maintaining her status as a top 1% national producer. By turning around struggling brokerages and expanding her nonprofit reach, she has successfully blended massive enterprise growth with deep community impact.



KENNY DRYSDALE

Director of Sales/Broker Associate, Douglas Elliman

Drysdale is the recipient of Douglas Elliman's 2025 Ellie President's Circle Award, ranked No. 7 in the country among Douglas Elliman agents for Top Agent by Rental Attractions, and serving as director of sales for the Ombelle Fort Lauderdale condominium development.

JUSTIN LANDON

CEO, MetroTex Association of Realtors®

In 2025, Justin Landon spearheaded a landmark merger with the Collin County Area Realtors® (CCAR), a move that expanded MetroTex's membership to nearly 40,000 professionals, solidifying the organization's position as the largest Realtor® association in North Texas and the fourth-largest in the United States. Beyond simple growth, the merger secured majority control of the North Texas Regional Information Systems (NTREIS), providing members with unprecedented influence over regional MLS data and technology. Landon integrated the two organizations without a single staff reduction or service disruption.

A third-generation real estate professional with a decade of experience in the U.S. Congress, Landon has leveraged his background in government affairs to strengthen the association's legislative clout.

"I've devoted my life to [an industry] that's given my family three generations of opportunity and inspires me to keep building a future where that opportunity endures," says Landon.



AMY GANT

Senior Vice President & Regional Manager, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties

Gant propelled her region to the No. 1 spot in unit sales year-to-date while serving as a Georgia Association of Realtors® state director, and leading humanitarian efforts that provided 20,000 meals to families via the MANNA FoodBank.



ASHLEY CONLON

President, CENTURY 21 Judge Fite Company

Conlon has helped lead CENTURY 21 Judge Fite Company with a company-wide ethos of a "commitment to serve," a culture that has spawned income-boosting training and rewards programs as well as numerous awards and honors among the CENTURY 21 and Anywhere organizations.



MICHAEL SHERMAN

Senior Vice President of Rentals, Zillow Group

Sherman propelled Zillow Rentals to 56% year-over-year revenue growth in 2025, scaling the platform to 36 million monthly visitors. By launching AI-driven leasing tools and expanding reach through strategic industry partnerships, he has successfully positioned rentals as a primary driver of Zillow's billion-dollar growth strategy.



CHRIS LIM

President, REMAX

Chris Lim joined REMAX as chief growth officer at the beginning of 2025, part of the company's efforts to kickstart a "new day" for the year ahead. A 23-year real estate veteran, Lim wasted no time in pursuing his mission. Throughout the year, he led key onboarding to the REMAX network in California, Colorado, New Jersey, Washington and most notably in Hawaii, with the onboarding of the 170-agent, six-office strong REMAX Hawaii (formerly a Better Homes and Gardens affiliate).

Lim played a key role in launching new REMAX initiatives such as the ASPIRE onboarding program. He has made an effort to "Get loud" on social media with brand affirmations, which doubles as encouragement for REMAX agents to follow his example. He's also made a habit of visiting agent open houses every Sunday.

"Helping people find home, and empowering the professionals who make that possible, is what drives me every day," says Lim.



SAMANTHA GIUGGIO

President & COO,
Fathom Holdings Inc. (former)

Giuggio steered Fathom to 36% revenue growth and the top spot for agent satisfaction in 2025. By launching the Elevate platform and expanding operations to 42 states, she successfully balanced aggressive national scaling with an award-winning, agent-first culture.



MISTY BEARD

Manager, Public Relations &
Communications, Better Homes
and Gardens Real Estate

Beard amplified the BHGRE brand with over 5 billion media impressions in 2025 while spearheading the communications strategy that sold out the brand's flagship retreat four months early, and focusing on "radical local expertise" that has successfully positioned affiliates as national authorities on the modern home.



SARA BENTSON

Senior Director of Product
Marketing, Anywhere Real
Estate Inc.

Bentson revolutionized network engagement at Anywhere in 2025 by launching the Canva Enterprise partnership and a first-of-its-kind "Network Activation" strategy, driving product adoption across 200,000 agents and six global brands.

MICAH SMITH

Executive Vice President, TTR Sotheby's International Realty

As a partner with HRLS Partners at TTR Sotheby's International Realty, Micah Smith helped lead the team's strategic move to the brand in early 2025, immediately establishing a new office in Cleveland Park to enhance their Northwest D.C. footprint. Last year, Smith was named a National Association of Realtors® (NAR) "30 Under 30" honoree and the Greater Capital Area Association of Realtors® (GCAAR) Rookie of the Year. His team was ranked as the No. 1 small team in Washington, D.C., boasting a lifetime sales volume exceeding \$2.5 billion.

Additionally, in 2025, Smith was honored among the top 100 Sotheby's agents worldwide, and also welcomed his first child.

"Becoming a father has given me a renewed sense of purpose and perspective," Smith shares. "Every decision I make now carries a deeper meaning for my clients and the legacy I want to build for my family."



NICOLE KONSLER
EVP of Affiliate Services, Americas, Christie's International Real Estate

Promoted to EVP in 2025, Konsler has championed Christies' expansion across the Americas, launching new network-wide education initiatives and integrating five major new affiliates into the luxury brand's global ecosystem.



LANE MCCORMACK
CEO, Ansley Real Estate Christie's International

McCormack navigated Ansley Real Estate Christie's International to a 16% surge in sales volume in 2025, surpassing \$2.2 billion, while recruiting nearly \$200 million in new talent and reinforcing the firm's status as Georgia's premier luxury authority.



ANGEL NICOLAS
Real Estate Advisor, SERHANT

The Nicolas Group at SERHANT continued to rank among the nation's top 1% of agents in 2025 while Nicolas delivered multiple record-breaking luxury transactions across South Florida, including Coconut Grove's highest-priced condo sale.



R MICHAEL FRAZIER

President & CEO, ReeceNichols

In 2025, Mike Frazier led ReeceNichols' landmark expansion into the St. Louis market. By rebranding Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Alliance—one of the metro's top five brokerages—under the ReeceNichols banner, he successfully united two of Missouri's most powerful real estate forces. This strategic move integrated over 250 high-performing agents into the network, including elite teams with annual volumes of \$150 million and \$45 million, respectively.

In 2025, ReeceNichols also reached \$1.5 million in cumulative donations to Ronald McDonald House Charities through its "Gold Key Project" and celebrated a second straight year of raising over \$1 million for "Couture for Cancer."

"We get to do something special in real estate—help clients with one of the most important financial decisions in their lives," Frazier shares. "The deep relationships I share with our agents and employees create a true sense of family, one that makes coming to work each day not just fulfilling, but energizing."



LINDSAY BARTON BARRETT

Licensed Associate Real Estate Broker, Compass

In 2025, Barrett delivered \$143 million in sales, including major new development closings in Brooklyn. With more than \$1 billion in career transactions, she is widely respected for her ethical leadership, legal expertise and trusted advisory approach in New York City real estate.



MARIA DAOU

Licensed Associate Real Estate Broker, Coldwell Banker Warburg

Closing more than \$10 million in sales by summer 2025, Daou continues to rank among Coldwell Banker Warburg's top producers thanks to her trusted approach and referral-driven business, pairing deep market knowledge with lasting client relationships built over nearly 30 years.

"The deep relationships I share with our agents and employees create a true sense of family, one that makes coming to work each day not just fulfilling, but energizing."

-R MICHAEL FRAZIER,
President & CEO, ReeceNichols

LIZ NUNAN

President & CEO, Houlihan Lawrence

Under Liz Nunan's direction as CEO, Houlihan Lawrence surpassed \$5.6 billion in closed sales through August 2025, delivering year-over-year gains while maintaining its leadership position across more than 50 communities in New York and Connecticut. This past year, the firm consistently outperformed the broader market in key regions such as Westchester County.

A respected industry veteran with more than three decades of experience, in 2025, Nunan's strategic vision fueled continued expansion, with more than 90 new agents and teams joining the brokerage.

"I always say, our agents are our secret sauce, and that is reflected in our company's mantra, 'In With the Best.' This mantra underscores both the company's and my own commitment to attracting and retaining talented, collaborative agents who are driven by our core principles of integrity, passion, excellence and community," Nunan shares. "I pride myself in fostering a positive, community-driven culture that prioritizes more than just business metrics."



MARKO GOJANOVIC & REID HEIDENRY

Founders of MR Luxury Group, ONE Sotheby's International Realty

In 2025, Gojanovic and Heidenry delivered multiple high-profile luxury transactions, including a \$22 million Miami Beach sale, reinforcing their reputation as trusted advisors at ONE Sotheby's International Realty.



FRANK MALPICA

SVP of Network Growth, Mergers & Acquisitions, ERA Real Estate

In 2025, Malpica helped drive ERA Real Estate's expansion across U.S. markets, adding over \$2.2 billion in volume and accelerating affiliate growth nationwide. A strategic leader in network growth and M&A, he continues to shape ERA's future through disciplined expansion, innovation and team-driven success.



CHARIS MORENO

Chief Revenue Officer, NextHome

Promoted to chief revenue officer in 2025, Moreno helped drive franchise expansion and strengthen the company's people-first culture, contributing to its ranking as the nation's No. 1 franchise in owner satisfaction. A veteran leader, she is dedicated to empowering entrepreneurs and advancing homeownership nationwide.



JONATHAN LICKSTEIN

**President of Broward Palm Beaches & St. Lucie Realtors®,
COO of LoKation Real Estate**

As COO of LoKation Real Estate, Jonathan Lickstein played a pivotal role in the firm's 2025 growth to over 4,900 agents, surpassing \$4 billion in annual sales volume. He spearheaded the launch of a new commercial division and revolutionized agent efficiency by introducing an AI-driven knowledge base and an "Apple-style" onboarding program.

Simultaneously, as president of the Broward, Palm Beaches & St. Lucie Realtors® (RWorld), Lickstein utilized his technology background to integrate AI tools directly into the MLS. A frequent keynote speaker and media contributor, he provided expert market analysis for the South Florida Business Journal and the Palm Beach Post. His role as a corporate leader and an association president allows him to blend technological innovation with a commitment to mentorship and professional standards.

"Shaping the future of the industry through leadership roles at LoKation and RWorld allows me to create opportunities, remove barriers and push the profession forward," Lickstein says.



ELENA SMIRNOVA
**CEO of The Supernova Team,
Powered by DMT**

A powerhouse in the New York market, Smirnova closed \$17 million in 2025 sales and was ranked the No. 1 StreetEasy Experts agent by volume in July. Her relentless drive and strategic leadership continue to set new benchmarks for growth and excellence within the industry.



**CHAZ & KAYLEEN
MCDOWELL**
**Co-Founder/CFO,
McDowell Real Estate**

In 2025, the Cleveland Plain Dealer named the McDowells' firm the No. 1 Mid-Sized Top Workplace spot in Northeast Ohio for the third year running. Nationally ranked No. 2 in the industry, their commitment to elite training and agent growth has cemented their status as premier Achievers.



ROCHELLE MAIZE
**Executive Director of the
Luxury Estates Division,
Nourmand & Associates**

With over \$3.5 billion in career sales, Maize dominated 2025 by listing the historic \$70 million Robert Taylor Ranch, and serving as a national media expert on the real estate impact of the Los Angeles wildfires and the complexities of "self-insuring" in high-stakes markets.

SHAYNE FAIRLEY CEO, Stellar MLS

In 2025, Shayne Fairley spearheaded the launch of the Stellar Central Dashboard, a secure, integrated workspace that saw over 60,000 subscribers activate within its first 90 days. He further modernized the subscriber experience by introducing the Rayse platform and IO Reports, providing agents with sophisticated location intelligence and transparent client engagement tools. Fairley was also named as the successor to former CEO Merri Jo Cowen, effective early 2026.

Fairley's influence extended globally through Universal Consulting Opportunities (UCO), where he promoted MLS best practices across Europe and South Asia. Domestically, he co-led a transparency initiative to educate subscribers on evolving industry policies through Town Halls and digital outreach.

"I'm driven by the challenge of turning ideas into solutions that simplify processes, strengthen relationships and help professionals succeed in a fast-changing landscape," says Fairley. "Seeing how the tools and systems we build empower our customers to deliver more value to their clients is what inspires me every day."



CLAUDINE AND CARLOS COTO The Coto Group, ONE Sotheby's International Realty

In 2025, the Cotos dominated the Key Biscayne market, ranking as the No. 1 and No. 2 agents by sales volume. The father-daughter duo's record-breaking transactions and industry leadership at global events showcase their unwavering commitment to excellence and their clients' long-term success.



SAMANTHA CURRY Luxury Palm Beach Real Estate Broker, Douglas Elliman

Surpassing \$1 billion in career sales in 2025, Curry ranks among the top 3% of Douglas Elliman agents worldwide. From record-breaking penthouse sales to listing \$44 million oceanfront estates, her strategic insight and creative approach have set a new gold standard for excellence in the Palm Beach luxury market.



TOM DOWNING EVP of Brokerage Services, @properties

Elevated to EVP in 2025, Downing oversees brokerage services for one of the nation's largest firms. By leading a flagship office to \$1.2 billion in sales and spearheading innovative agent development programs, he has proven to be a vital catalyst for company-wide growth and professional excellence.



BILL SCAVONE

President, Weichert Real Estate Affiliates, Inc.

In 2025, Bill Scavone orchestrated a historic milestone for Weichert Real Estate Affiliates, Inc. (WREA), spearheading the brand's inaugural expansion into the international residential market. A 21-year veteran of the organization, Scavone navigated a high-profile licensing agreement with HomeLovers, a premier real estate firm in Lisbon, Portugal, officially marking the first time the Weichert name and its proprietary systems have operated outside the United States. He quickly followed this achievement by securing a second international partnership with the launch of Weichert, Realtors® - Aruba Realty.

These moves signal a strategic shift for the 50-year-old company as Scavone positions the brand to capture the growing global demand from American buyers seeking international property. Under his leadership, WREA was once again named to Franchise Business Review's Top 200 Franchises list.

By adapting Weichert's "recipe for success" for diverse global markets, Scavone is successfully steering the iconic American brand into a new era of international relevance.



MARIA KAZAKOS

President, Berkshire Hathaway Carolinas Companies

Despite a down market in 2025, Kazakos led her team to unit and sales volume growth while expanding the company's new homes division. Her focus on high-level agent support and impactful community programs has solidified her reputation as a powerhouse leader dedicated to both profit and purpose.



VEROUSHKA VOLKERT

Sales Associate, ONE Sotheby's International Realty

In 2025, Volkert made her mark on the Fort Lauderdale market, ranking as the No. 1 individual associate in her office and No. 5 in South Florida. With the year's highest residential sale in Fort Lauderdale, her strategic negotiation skills and global perspective continue to drive elite results for her clients.



DUFF RUBIN

Regional President, Southeast, Coldwell Banker Realty

Rubin propelled the Southeast region to new heights in 2025, overseeing a record-breaking \$1 billion sales milestone in Longboat Key and launching Atlanta's inaugural Global Luxury office. His strategic integration of title and brokerage services continues to enhance efficiency and value for thousands of agents and their consumers.

MORGAN SALAMA

Senior Vice President of Marketing and Franchisee Services, Anywhere Integrated Services

In 2025, Morgan Salama expanded her leadership role to senior vice president of Marketing and Franchisee Services for Anywhere Integrated Services. Salama spearheaded the rapid national expansion of Upward Title & Closing, a fully digital title and settlement company. Under her guidance, the brand successfully scaled its footprint to more than 30 major U.S. markets, delivering a seamless closing experience through cutting-edge technology and collaboration with top industry brokers.

A former management consultant with a background in corporate venture capital, she has been recognized as a 2025 Woman of Influence for her role in reshaping the future of real estate services.

"I'm constantly inspired by the Upward team doing the work on the ground—our partners, closers and sales team—who've taught me how to listen better and lead smarter," Salama says. "There is nothing better than watching talented people trust the vision, lean into the hard stuff and hit milestones together."



MOR ZUCKER

Team Lead and Investment Specialist, LIV Sotheby's International Realty

A specialist in investment and new construction, Zucker propelled Denver's Kensing LoHi project to success in 2025 by selling more than 30% of the units pre-groundbreak. Her strategic marketing and deep market knowledge have made her a premier leader in urban development and luxury sales.

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PAUL BOOMSMA

**President & CEO,
Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®**

Throughout 2025, Paul Boomsma provided a steady hand and a global perspective for a community of over 550 premier firms navigating a transformative year in real estate. As president and CEO of Leading Real Estate Companies of the World® (LeadingRE), Boomsma spearheaded high-impact global gatherings—from the Asia Pacific Forum to the Global Symposium in Prague—to facilitate the actionable, person-to-person connections that define the network’s boutique power.

Under Boomsma’s leadership, LeadingRE significantly expanded its agent-centric resources. He championed the launch of new “grab-and-go” sales meeting content and AI-integrated training curriculums. By scaling automatically branded marketing tools and reinforcing a referral network that spans over 100 countries, Boomsma ensured that the network’s members remain locally dominant while staying globally connected.

“I am deeply inspired by the entrepreneurial spirit of our firms,” Boomsma shares. “Seeing the ways in which our resources translate into real opportunities is what gives meaning to the work I do every day.”



RIEZL BAKER

**Realtor® & Co-Founder,
Luxury Lake Oconee Real
Estate Group**

With nearly \$1 billion in career sales and nationally recognized for her innovation, leadership and philanthropy, Baker stands as one of Georgia’s most influential luxury real estate professionals, named a Top Luxury Real Estate Industry Leader by Modern Luxury in 2025, further cementing her reputation for excellence.



LEAH GIBBONS

**CMO & Senior Vice President,
Howard Hanna Real Estate
Services**

Gibbons led transformative marketing initiatives in 2025, including the Buy & Borrow Bundle program and the Sell Smarter, Faster & for More campaign. She also executed a major brand evolution that modernized the company’s identity while preserving its legacy.



TIFFANY SEARS

**CEO/Broker in Charge,
The Sears Group**

A visionary leader and HGTV-featured expert, Sears expanded her influence in 2025 through the launch of a high-touch relocation service and AI-focused agent training. By hosting community wealth-building workshops and contributing to major local media, she remains a driving force for economic empowerment and professional excellence.

KAMINI LANE

President & CEO, Coldwell Banker Realty

As president and CEO of Coldwell Banker Realty, Kamini Lane spearheaded the national rollout of Transaction Concierge, a no-cost, end-to-end transaction support service for agents and clients. Announced nationally in April 2025, the program has already managed approximately 60,000 transactions, closing tens of thousands with a 95.6% agent satisfaction rate and a Net Promoter Score of 86.

Lane has also restructured the executive leadership team to elevate field leaders, ensuring that local expertise directly informs national strategy. Additionally, enhancements to the Listing Concierge platform—now AI-powered and supported by dedicated human coordinators—have achieved more than 80% adoption in key regions, with participating listings closing at a 2.4% higher commission rate.

“For those in leadership, whether you’re running a brokerage or a team, the real work begins when the market gets noisy, the decisions get harder, and the pressure to perform meets the need to lead with clarity,” says Lane.



KATHLEEN WILKS

Chief Marketing Officer, The Long & Foster Companies

A marketing visionary, Wilks unified the Long & Foster brand in 2025 through the “It’s the One” campaign and a comprehensive corporate refresh. Her leadership in luxury partnerships, agent support services and transparent internal communications has solidified the company’s standing as an innovative, all-inclusive real estate leader.



TODD SUMNEY

Chief Industry Officer, HomeSmart

A marketing powerhouse and industry mentor, Sumney transformed HomeSmart’s agent tools with the launch of an AI-driven, automated marketing platform in 2025. Through his popular podcast, data-driven recruiting initiatives and nationwide mastermind programs, he remains a pivotal force in driving business growth and professional excellence for thousands of agents.



KATHY BAKER

Chief Coaching Officer, Realty ONE Group

A veteran coach and industry influencer, Baker revolutionized Realty ONE Group’s training in 2025 with the launch of the ONE Coaching and Peer Coaching platforms. Her action-based modules and collaborative coaching models continue to empower agents to increase production and deliver exceptional consumer service.



KEITH ROBINSON

Co-CEO, NextHome

Throughout 2025, Keith Robinson solidified his reputation as a vital voice of clarity during a transformative period for the real estate industry. As co-CEO of NextHome, Robinson co-engineered the company's innovative leadership model while providing strategic direction to navigate complex market shifts and commission transparency challenges. He extended his influence through his popular "Real Estate Insiders Unfiltered" podcast and his monthly newsletter, where he translated high-level industry hurdles into actionable guidance for professionals across the country.

Robinson's leadership is defined by a commitment to people over property, a philosophy he champions through every public appearance and panel discussion.

"At the core of our organization is a mindset, a movement, a phrase that keeps us grounded as we continue to serve the people buying and selling real estate—Humans Over Houses," he says. "As long as our people still keep the human at the center of their business, they will continue to find success."



ERIN CAMPBELL

Vice President of Learning & Development, HomeSmart

A dedicated architect of professional growth, Campbell transformed HomeSmart's training ecosystem through proprietary agent onboarding and advanced technology enablement. By delivering dozens of monthly events and implementing high-level leadership curricula, she continues to drive performance and cultivate a vibrant, support-driven culture across the national network.



AMY CORR

Chief Brokerage Officer,
@properties Christie's
International Real Estate

A visionary executive and coach, Corr expanded her influence in 2025 by launching the "Corr Values" podcast and garnering numerous industry bylines. Through her "60 Days of Summer" and "2026 Business Planning" initiatives, she continues to provide the actionable strategies and mindset tools essential for agent growth and leadership.

"At the core of our organization is a mindset, a movement, a phrase that keeps us grounded as we continue to serve the people buying and selling real estate—Humans Over Houses."

-KEITH ROBINSON,
Co-CEO, NextHome

DARRYL DAVIS

CEO, Darryl Davis Seminars

Darryl Davis is a leading educator, coach and advocate for real estate professionals navigating change. As CEO of Darryl Davis Seminars, he has spent over 35 years empowering agents, brokers and industry leaders to thrive through uncertainty.

In 2025, he launched the “Real Estate Unscripted” podcast, connecting agents with brokerage leaders, legal experts and industry innovators to clarify complex topics like Clear Cooperation, MLS rules and the future of commissions. He also created www.NarLawsuit.com, a real-time resource hub offering legal updates, training videos and consumer education.

Davis’ POWER AGENT® Program continues to evolve, providing agents with marketing templates, onboarding tools, vendor partnerships and the groundbreaking Agent Confidence Index (ACI), measuring agent sentiment and business health nationwide.

“The most rewarding part of my career has always been helping agents replace fear with confidence,” says Davis. “I love watching the lightbulb go on when an agent realizes, ‘I can do this.’”



AUDIE CHAMBERLAIN

Head of Strategic Growth & Communications, Rechat

A premier strategist in proptech and luxury real estate, Chamberlain’s leadership at Rechat helped secure major industry honors and widespread market recognition in 2025. Through his mastery of narrative and high-level partnerships, he continues to shape the conversations that define how technology and luxury real estate converge on a global scale.



BRITTA DIAZ

Realtor®, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties

Ranking in the Top 100 for Los Angeles production in 2025, Diaz emerged as a key influencer through her selfless work aiding Pacific Palisades fire survivors. By merging disaster recovery leadership with innovative social media branding and agent mentorship, she continues to define what it means to lead with heart.



MARK SCHNEIDMAN

Realtor/Radio Host, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties/Radio Real Estate

Not just a top real estate producer at his brokerage but also a radio host for 27 years, Schneidman completed his 1,400th broadcast in 2025, while continuing to feature guests from all corners of the industry to discuss Santa Barbara real estate.



MICHELE HARRINGTON CEO, FirstTeam®

Michele Harrington, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and the first female CEO in FirstTeam®'s 50-year history, led the firm through a landmark period of national growth in 2025, expanding the Southern California powerhouse into new markets across Idaho, Washington, Nevada and Oregon. Under her leadership, the firm has not only regained its position as the market share leader in Orange County, but also achieved a historic \$1 billion in recruited volume.

A fearless advocate for the industry, Harrington made headlines in 2025 by challenging the National Association of Realtors® regarding settlement structures that left large independent brokers vulnerable.

Harrington's "Behind the Agent™" philosophy remains the cornerstone of growth, focusing on transforming real estate professionals into true entrepreneurs.

"When I see an agent use discipline, strategy and grit to build amazing careers, it fires me up and keeps me going," she says.



RISA WEISS VP of Agent Development, Kale Realty

In 2025, Weiss transformed agent development by launching the Transaction Coach Program, expanding mentoring and masterminds, and leading impactful live events and systems that improved productivity, accountability and long-term success for agents at every career stage.



ADJINA DEKIDJIEV Licensed Associate Real Estate Broker, Coldwell Banker Warburg

In 2025, Dekidjiev combined top-tier production with industry influence, mentoring agents, shaping rental education initiatives, expanding international collaboration and sharing expert insights through national media, while maintaining a client-first, relationship-driven approach that defines her enduring success in New York City real estate.



YOANN DORAT Co-Founder, Condogrid

In 2025, Dorat led sales and marketing for Hollywood Moon Residences, creating standout momentum through innovative lifestyle events, international broker outreach and a powerful digital presence that generated global visibility, qualified leads and a new standard for luxury pre-construction marketing in South Florida.

ANDY FLORANCE

Founder & CEO, CoStar Group

Under the future-focused leadership of Andy Florance, CoStar Group marked its 57th consecutive quarter of double-digit revenue growth in 2025.

Florance's strategic focus over the past year has been a "residential revolution" spearheaded by Homes.com. Central to this success is the "your listing, your lead" philosophy, a pro-agent model that ensures listing agents retain ownership of their data and leads, effectively challenging the status quo of traditional portals.

2025 was also defined by Florance's commitment to cutting-edge technology, highlighted by the high-profile acquisition of Matterport. This move, combined with the acquisition of the Australian marketplace Domain, has expanded CoStar's global footprint and technical capabilities.

From achieving record-breaking bookings in the apartments sector to skyrocketing Homes.com's unaided brand awareness to 36%, Florance's agility and conviction continue to reshape how properties are marketed and discovered. By prioritizing transparency and agent empowerment, he is rebuilding the trust and efficiency of the real estate ecosystem.



TODD EMERSON

General Manager, Harry Norman, Realtors®

In 2025, Emerson earned Market Mentor recognition and strengthened his influence through weekly market update videos and media insight, providing Atlanta-area agents with trusted, practical guidance to navigate evolving market conditions with clarity and confidence.



CHRIS FOX

Broker/Owner, The Chris Fox Group

In 2025, Fox expanded his influence as a broker and national business coach with his election as a councilman at-large in Clark County, Indiana, blending real estate leadership, mentorship and public service to empower professionals, serve his community and create meaningful, lasting impact.



MICHAEL GUTHRIE

President Emeritus, Howard Hanna Charlottesville

In 2025, Guthrie earned statewide recognition for his award-winning real estate radio journalism, affordable housing advocacy and decades of professional leadership—continuing a 42-year legacy of educating agents, informing communities and advancing the real estate profession across Virginia.



CHRISTINA PAPPAS

President, The Keyes Company

As president of The Keyes Company, Christina Pappas spent 2025 steering Florida's largest independent brokerage through a milestone year while expanding her leadership at the national level.

A third-generation broker, Pappas served as the 2025 National Association of Realtors® (NAR) regional vice president for Region 5, serving 60,000 Realtors® across five states and territories. Her leadership role expanded in April 2025 when she was named president of Illustrated Properties, unifying the leadership of both major pillars within The Keyes Family of Companies.

On the ground in South Florida, Pappas has been an advocate for innovation and agent productivity. In 2025, she spearheaded the rollout of Zillow Showcase across Keyes' 50-plus offices, an initiative that generated a nearly 90% increase in digital listing exposure for her associates.

Whether she is advocating for the industry nationally or locally, Pappas continues to be a leading force for the next generation of real estate.



KYLE BASILA

Vice President,
Realty Executives Associates

Promoted to vice president in March 2025, Basila advanced brokerage marketing and communications through large-scale leadership, culture-building initiatives and strategic storytelling that reinforced the value of real estate professionals in a changing market—blending strategic vision with a deeply rooted people-centered approach.



REI MESA

President & CEO, Berkshire
Hathaway HomeServices
Florida Realty

Mesa continues to guide the organization through thoughtful transformation, operational excellence and sustainable growth in a rapidly evolving market. He introduced the Customer Acquisition Tech Connect Advantage (CATCA) in 2025, a company-wide initiative designed to help sales professionals grow income and relationships.



JASON ABRAMS

Head of Industry and Learning,
Keller Williams Realty LLC

Abrams continued to expand his industry influence as host of the "Millionaire Real Estate Agent" podcast in 2025, delivering weekly conversations that translate proven models and systems into actionable insight for agents focused on growth, leadership and elevated consumer experiences—documenting and demystifying what drives extraordinary results.

ERROL SAMUELSON

Chief Industry Development Officer, Zillow Group

In 2025, Errol Samuelson moved to the forefront of a nationwide dialogue regarding fair access to real estate listings, advocating for a marketplace built on transparency rather than restricted inventory. Samuelson spearheaded a significant public discourse through high-profile op-eds in the Chicago Tribune and across social platforms, arguing against the idea that limiting a home's visibility benefits the seller. Grounded in deep market data, he demonstrated that off-MLS marketing often results in financial loss for sellers and fewer choices for buyers.

His leadership also extended into the technological arena, where he oversaw the integration of conversational AI tools designed to streamline the consumer search experience. Whether addressing peers or speaking at major industry forums, Samuelson remains a vocal critic of private listing networks that create barriers to entry.

"Real estate has the power to transform lives, and that impact is strongest when built on trust and fair access to information," he asserts.



ALICIA KOSEC

President, Northern Ohio & Michigan, Howard Hanna Real Estate Services

Kosec drove strategic growth in 2025 through leadership restructuring, recruiting and listing-focused initiatives, and hands-on coaching—while championing mentorship, community engagement and a culture built on collaboration and continuous development.



LORI LANE

Associate Broker, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties

Lane drove sustained top regional performance for her brokerage in 2025 while advancing luxury marketing, builder partnerships and team development that continue to elevate Atlanta's new homes and luxury sectors, in particular the opening of a new luxury marketing suite.



RUDY LIRA KUSUMA

Founder & CEO, Partner Real Estate

After launching Partner Real Estate in 2025, Kusuma led the brand to 880 closed homes and \$750 million in volume in its first year, building a rapidly expanding, mission-driven company that empowers agents through scalable systems, hands-on coaching and a culture rooted in service and results.



DIONNA HALL

CEO, Broward, Palm Beaches & St. Lucie Realtors®

As CEO of BeachesMLS and the Broward, Palm Beaches & St. Lucie Realtors®, Hall's leadership in 2025 was felt nationally. She served as co-chair of NAR's MLS Policy Risk Assessment PAG, as a member of NAR's MLS Technology and Emerging Issues Advisory Board and NAR MLS Policy Committee, while also chairing several Council of Multiple Listing Services (CMLS) initiatives, including the Nominating Committee, Awards Committee and the CMLS/RESO Merger Task Force.

One of Hall's most visible accomplishments last year was the expansion of the award-winning Only a Realtor® consumer campaign. She also spearheaded licensing agreements with Realtor® associations across Florida and beyond, dramatically expanding the campaign's reach.

In 2025, Hall onboarded the Checkmate compliance system and launched a new analytics dashboard with Solid Earth while further expanding the association's AI-powered Zendesk chatbot, allowing staff to focus on higher-level support while maintaining strong satisfaction scores.



JUDI NIELD

**Director of Marketing,
Legacy Real Estate & Associates**

In 2025, Nield strengthened agent education and engagement at Legacy Real Estate by launching the Word of the Week video series, delivering practical marketing, technology and sales guidance that reached 5,000-plus agent views and reinforced a culture of learning and growth.



CLINT GALLIANO

**Agent, Keller Williams Realty
Bayou Partners**

In 2025, Galliano launched the "RE: Real Estate Podcast," integrated AI into his business and expanded his role as a tech trainer and educator, helping agents and consumers across South Louisiana navigate real estate with clarity, efficiency and trust.



STEVEN GOTTLIEB

**Licensed Real Estate
Salesperson,
Coldwell Banker Warburg**

In 2025, Gottlieb combined nearly \$11.7 million in sales with national thought leadership, philanthropic engagement and ongoing media contributions, reinforcing his role as a trusted voice in New York City real estate.

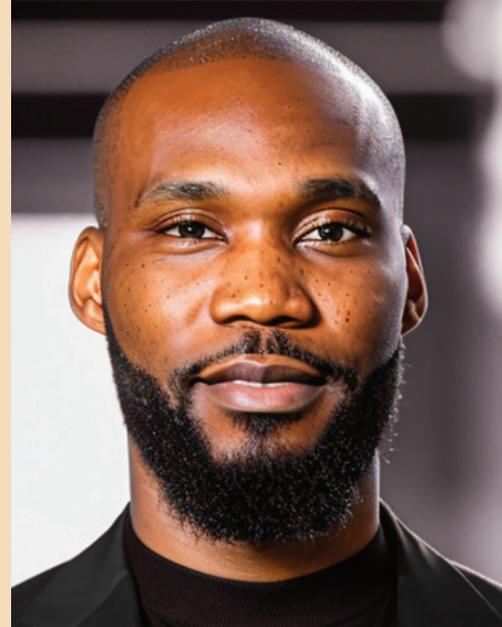
ADRIAN PROVOST

Founder & CEO, Realty ONE Group Terminus

Adrian Provost bridged the gap between residential and commercial real estate excellence in 2025. As the committee chairman for Realty ONE Group Commercial, Provost was instrumental in the official launch of the brand's commercial initiative, a strategic expansion affecting a network of over 500 offices. He developed comprehensive training and development programs designed to equip franchise owners and agents with the specialized skills necessary to scale commercial divisions. This commitment to education was further amplified through the founding of his Transcendental Sales coaching and development program.

Provost also serves as managing principal of LEVEL, an alternative investment firm, designed to empower agents on a larger scale.

"The most rewarding part of my career is undoubtedly seeing the success of others and knowing that I played a direct role in their growth," he says. "My focus has shifted from personal sales to building systems that empower real estate professionals on a massive scale."



ANN KING

President, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty

In 2025, King led her organization of more than 500 real estate professionals across 11 offices with initiatives across different real estate industry sectors to sustained market leadership—achieving 5.49% overall market share and dominating luxury sales—while empowering more than 500 agents to thrive in a challenging market.



MICHAEL PENNISI

Regional Vice President, Coldwell Banker Realty

The 2025 NCIAR Realtor® of the Year and a dominant force at Coldwell Banker Realty, Pennisi pioneered an AI-driven recruitment pipeline while hosting the influential "Growth Mastermind" series. Overseeing \$1.5 billion in sales, he remains a primary architect of strategic growth and professional excellence in the industry.



ANNIE HANNA ENGEL

President & CEO, Howard Hanna Insurance Services; Chief Legal Officer, Hanna Holdings, Inc.

In 2025, Engel drove Howard Hanna Insurance Services to repeat "Best Practices" honors, while providing the strategic legal oversight necessary to navigate a complex regulatory environment and scale the nation's largest company-owned provider.



CHRISTINA PANOS Chief Marketing Officer, Corcoran

With over two decades of leadership at Corcoran, in 2025, Christina Panos spearheaded the evolution of the “Be Home” campaign, featuring photography by Emily Hlavac Green. By showcasing real families and intimate storytelling rather than traditional property-focused imagery, she successfully doubled down on Corcoran’s consumer-first philosophy. This strategic pivot further positioned Corcoran as a premier global lifestyle brand.

Beyond creative direction, Panos played a pivotal role in the brand’s massive global expansion, overseeing marketing across an affiliate network that now spans 10 countries. Reflecting on her 21-year tenure, Panos notes, “Witnessing the growth and creativity of my colleagues has been a highlight of my career. My partnership with our CEO, Pam Liebman, has been a constant source of inspiration and drive.”

Working alongside a dedicated team, Panos remains a visionary force, ensuring Corcoran’s “Live Who You Are” ethos resonates across nearly 50 markets and continues to set the industry standard for brand storytelling.



NICOLE RIDEOUT HARTWICK President, Gibson Sotheby’s International Realty

A strategic leader and prolific communicator, Hartwick guided Gibson Sotheby’s International Realty to \$1.7 billion in mid-year sales volume while expanding her influence through two impactful podcasts. Her dedication to transparent leadership and supporting working parents has made her a go-to resource for industry professionals.



RYAN SCHLEIS Senior Vice President of Research and Analytics, Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group

A data visionary, Schleis expanded Corcoran Sunshine’s analytical dominance in 2025 through AI-enhanced market intelligence and groundbreaking development reports, while remaining a vital resource for national media outlets like The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, where his context-rich insights help shape the national discourse on real estate.



JEFF KENNEDY CEO, Maverix Advisory Group

A veteran advisor and connector, Kennedy transformed Maverix Advisory Group into a top-tier consulting firm in 2025. By bridging the gap between proptech and brokerages, and launching the “Eighty Under 80” awards, he continues to lead the conversation on innovation, growth and the power of strategic partnerships.

RICH LA RUE

Vice President of Corporate Brokerages, Western Region, HomeSmart

As vice president of Corporate Brokerages for HomeSmart's Western Region, Rich La Rue spearheaded the Blue Zones Project initiative in 2025, leading HomeSmart to become the first national real estate company to earn Blue Zones project approval in Arizona. Intersecting real estate and holistic well-being, La Rue's vision for a healthier industry culture now serves as a model for brokerages across the country.

La Rue oversees more than 12,000 agents across the Western U.S. and continues to serve as designated broker for HomeSmart's flagship 7,074-agent Phoenix office. He also served on the 2025 ARMLS Executive Committee and the National Association of Realtors® Broker Engagement Committee.

"I've seen firsthand how the right leadership, support and culture can transform not only careers, but lives," he says. "Watching new agents grow into confident professionals, and seasoned professionals expand their businesses while building stronger communities, continues to inspire me every day."



RAFFI WILLIAMS

Vice President of Communications, National Association of Realtors® (NAR)

A former official for both HUD and the FHFA, Williams led the charge in transforming the National Association of Realtors® media presence in 2025, utilizing live podcasting and strategic advocacy outreach to amplify the Realtor® mission and safeguard consumer interests during a period of significant economic and regulatory change.



MELISSA KING

Chief Operating Officer, OneKey® MLS

A visionary force in MLS leadership, King empowered brokers through the 2025 launch of the OneKey® MLS Broker Dashboard. Co-chairing the CMLS Best Practices Advisory Board and serving on the RESO Board of Directors and Executive Committee, King's expert guidance and advocacy have become essential in navigating the evolving regulatory landscape.



OLIVIA MERRILL

Broker Associate, Team Denver Homes - LIV Sotheby's International Realty

A master of community-centric branding, Merrill relaunched The Denver Look to elevate local businesses while serving on the Lowry United Neighborhoods and Denver Language School boards. Her dedication to fostering deep neighborhood connections continues to redefine the role of a modern real estate influencer.



TIFFANY CURRY

**Owner & CEO, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices
Tiffany Curry & Co., Realtors®**

In 2025, Tiffany Curry was honored with the Meritorious Service Award by Worldwide ERC® for her significant contributions to the global mobility industry, an accolade recognizing her expertise in cross-border transitions. As the 2025 vice chair of the National Association of Realtors® Global Business and Alliances Committee, Curry serves as a vital link between local markets and a global network spanning over 100 countries. Her Houston-based brokerage, the first solely Black-owned and wholly woman-owned Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices franchise in the world, remains a hub of innovation for NextGen practitioners.

Beyond her corporate achievements, Curry is a champion for diversity and professional development. She mentors emerging leaders and advocates for inclusive growth through her Global Division.

"The most rewarding part of my career is connecting people and creating opportunities for our agents and consumers through real estate," she says, "helping build wealth through residential and commercial real estate from a global perspective."



JENIFER MORIN
**Director of Operations &
Career Development,
REMAX Gateway**

A dedicated champion of agent growth, Morin significantly expanded her industry influence in 2025 with the publication of her debut book, "Beyond the Sale: Unlocking Your Full Potential as a New Real Estate Agent," while implementing a comprehensive training calendar and spearheading the "THRIVE 2025" and "Be Great and Elevate 2026" business planning seminars.



JOHNNY MOWAD
**President, MetroTex Association
of Realtors®**

A transformative force in North Texas, Mowad orchestrated the historic 2025 merger of MetroTex and Collin County Realtors®, creating a unified voice for 40,000 members. As a national MLS policy leader and top producer, Mowad continues to set the benchmark for innovation and excellence in the industry.



KEVIN O'NEIL
**"American Dream TV" Host/
Realtor®, Balistreri Real Estate**

As a South Florida Realtor® and a national host on "American Dream TV," O'Neil utilizes positive media to elevate local businesses and communities. In 2025, he balanced his television career with dedicated service on multiple association committees, championing both professional ethics and neighborhood outreach.

DUFFY HANNA

President, Howard Hanna Financial Services

F. Duffy Hanna serves as president of Howard Hanna Financial Services, where he has been a driving force in redefining the “one-stop shop” real estate experience. Throughout 2025, Hanna led the charge in navigating a complex post-settlement landscape by launching the groundbreaking “Buy & Borrow Bundle.” This innovative program directly addresses homebuyer affordability and market challenges by offering significant closing-cost credits to clients who utilize the firm’s integrated mortgage and real estate services. His leadership was further validated when Howard Hanna was named “Most Innovative Brokerage” by Leading Real Estate Companies of the World® specifically for this initiative.

Beyond product innovation, Hanna has overseen the modernization of the firm’s infrastructure, including a major 2025 rebranding that united the mortgage, title and insurance divisions under a single, cohesive identity.

Under his direction, Howard Hanna Mortgage Services earned top honors for customer satisfaction, proving that high-growth scaling can coexist with a personalized, boutique feel.



D.J. PARIS

Vice President of Business Development, Kale Realty

A dominant force in real estate media, Paris’ “Keeping It Real” podcast surpassed 7 million downloads in 2025. With an extensive library consisting of 700-plus episodes, he provides essential mentorship and tactical insights to agents nationwide, fostering industry-wide growth—translating complex industry shifts into actionable advice.



MATTHEW RATHBUN

Executive Vice President, Coldwell Banker Elite

A leading voice in real estate education and technology, Rathbun spent 2025 serving as president of REBI and the Fredericksburg Area Association of Realtors®. Through his innovative AI training programs and “Meet the Moment” podcast, he continues to raise the standard of professionalism across the industry.



ERIC STEGEMANN

CEO, TRIBUS Group

Leading TRIBUS Group to a milestone of 350,000 users in 2025, Stegemann continues to shape the industry through advanced security platforms and enterprise-level identity management, launching major partnerships with industry giants including BeachesMLS, MRED and MetroTex Association of Realtors®.



JESSICA BASKIES Realtor®, SERHANT

Jessica Baskies significantly amplified her impact as a thought leader in the South Florida market in 2025. Known as “the Boca Native,” her informative video content on social media garnered over 540,000 local views in the first half of the year and grew her highly engaged local following to over 11,000. Her mastery of blending market insight with deep community knowledge cemented her role as a go-to real estate expert, resulting in her being featured on local news and securing her invitation to join SERHANT.

This influence translated directly into business success, as she surpassed \$50 million in career sales volume by age 30 and closed over \$10 million in individual sales in the first six months of 2025 alone.

“Being able to seamlessly guide buyers to a place that truly fits their lifestyle and vision is not only what I love most, it’s what I believe I do best,” she shares.



TRISTIN PRINCE Digital Marketing Manager, Coldwell Banker Premier

A standout member of the Coldwell Banker 30 Under 30 Class of 2025, Prince drove measurable ROI for Coldwell Banker Premier by spearheading the adoption of MoxiWorks and advanced SEO strategies across six states in addition to launching Premier Power Marketing and Open House Concierge.



FERNANDO ARENCIBIA JR. Broker/Co-CEO, Avanti Way Commercial

A powerful advocate for commercial practitioners, Arencibia was elected 2026 secretary of Florida Realtors® while chairing the NAR Commercial Federal Policy Committee in 2025. Through his award-winning podcast and extensive legislative leadership, he continues to demystify the commercial sector and strengthen the real estate ecosystem.



DEBBIE DOERN Senior Vice President of Sales, Houlihan Lawrence

Leading a network of 1,450 agents, Doern expanded Houlihan Lawrence’s Hudson Valley presence in 2025 with the opening of a strategic Rhinebeck office. Her focus on collaborative leadership and agent education has been instrumental in navigating market shifts and driving regional growth across New York and Connecticut.

THAD WONG

**Co-CEO & Co-Founder,
@properties and Christie's International Real Estate**

Thad Wong orchestrated one of the most significant moves in the modern real estate era with the sale of @properties Christie's International Real Estate to Compass, a \$444-million deal, finalized in early 2025. He continues to lead both entities as distinct business units, preserving the "soul" and unique identity of the brands he co-founded 25 years ago.

Under his continued leadership, Christie's International Real Estate saw explosive global growth in 2025, adding 10 high-profile affiliates across Mexico, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, Italy and Bulgaria. Beyond expansion, Wong has remained a vocal advocate for "private-to-prominent" marketing strategies, refining @properties' signature off-MLS listing approach.

"When we started @properties Christie's International Real Estate 25 years ago, it wasn't about scale—it was about changing the experience for agents and clients alike," Wong reflects. "Today, that mission has grown into a movement—driven by culture, innovation and the people shaping what's next in our industry."



SARAH ELLIS
**Broker/Owner,
Corcoran Classic Living**

In 2025, Ellis led Corcoran Classic Living to the top of the Athens-Clarke County market, achieving No. 1 status in sales volume with a boutique team of 30 agents. Her commitment to high-level production and community-focused leadership continues to set the standard for independent brokerage excellence.



MATTHEW FERRARA
**Philosopher,
The Learning Network LLC**

A global industry philosopher, Ferrara expanded The Leadership Club™ internationally in 2025 while celebrating a decade of leading the Ascend executive experience. Through his strategic planning and 200th Always Inspiring newsletter, he remains a vital force in unlocking the leadership potential of the real estate community.



NISHIKA GREEN
**Vice President of Corporate
Brokerages, Eastern Region,
HomeSmart**

In 2025, Green empowered 4,000 HomeSmart agents by launching the DMV Elite Group and her "Riches in Niches" training curriculum. By combining intensive skill-building workshops with wellness-focused retention strategies, she continues to drive significant growth and a collaborative culture across the East Coast real estate landscape.



JEMILA WINSEY CEO, The Legacy Collective, REAL

In 2025, Jemila Winsey solidified her role as a thought leader. As VP of U.S. brokerage operations at REAL, she oversaw compliance, growth and operational strategy across more than 18 states. Winsey was also appointed vice chair of strategic planning for Texas Realtors® in 2025, helping shape long-term vision and policy for 150,000-plus association members.

Beyond her national and statewide leadership roles, Winsey launched Booked & Busy™: The \$250K Blueprint educational platform, helping agents reach over \$250K in gross commission income without burnout; in its first year, the “Booked & Busy” Society has attracted about a thousand members. Through social media, she educates and inspires nearly 55,000 real estate professionals and entrepreneurs.

“I get to influence thousands of agents across multiple states,” Winsey says. “The true reward is knowing that my leadership is helping create opportunities, elevating our industry and opening doors for others to step into their own greatness.”



JARED JAMES Speaker/Coach/ Entrepreneur/Influencer, Jared James Enterprises

A global force in real estate coaching, James reached over 30,000 students and generated 50 million organic social media views in 2025. By keynoting for the industry’s largest brands and advising top-tier executives, he continues to redefine modern training and entrepreneurship on an international scale.



MD KAMRUZZAMAN Director of Marketing, REAL New York

A driving force behind NYC’s newest landmarks, Kamruzzaman led the 2025 branding of the 70-story Casoni tower and currently oversees a portfolio of 1,500-plus units. His innovative, multi-channel marketing strategies and creative leadership continue to shape how the world perceives New York City’s evolving skyline.



JONATHAN VEGA Sales Associate, ONE Sotheby's International Realty

One of South Florida’s premier content creators, Vega achieved a No. 7 ranking at ONE Sotheby’s in 2025, fueled by \$23.5 million in sales generated directly from YouTube. By merging traditional luxury expertise with viral marketing and neighborhood-themed music, he continues to inspire a new generation of real estate professionals.

GRETCHEN ROSENBERG

**Executive Liaison for Industry Affairs,
HomeServices of America**

Gretchen Rosenberg expanded her storied 30-year career in 2025 by formally stepping into the role of executive liaison for Industry Affairs for HomeServices of America. While maintaining her position as president and CEO of Kentwood Real Estate, Rosenberg now serves as a high-level representative for HomeServices, fostering relationships across local, state and national associations to navigate the industry's shifting regulatory and operational landscapes. Her leadership at Kentwood continues to set benchmarks for excellence; in 2025, the firm expanded into Colorado Springs and Keystone, while maintaining a staggering average agent production of \$8.38 million—nearly triple the Denver metro average.

Rosenberg's influence is equally defined by her commitment to social responsibility. Since 2021, her Kentwood Cares Foundation has raised over \$150,000 for disaster victims and community members in crisis. Additionally, her leadership of the INSPIRE Council promotes housing equity and inclusive real estate.

"I loved being an agent, helping clients realize their goals and ultimately reaping the rewards of repeat business and referrals from people I'd worked with," Rosenberg reflects.



REBECCA THOMSON
**National Vice President,
Anywhere - Coldwell Banker
Realty**

As national vice president, Thomson spent 2025 leading a national transformation of Coldwell Banker Realty's Learning & Development strategy for 50,000 agents. A prominent industry speaker and REACH mentor, she continues to influence the future of real estate by bridging the gap between cutting-edge proptech innovation and tangible agent success.



BRIAN SCHNEIDER
General Counsel, Bright MLS

A premier legal strategist, Schneider provided the steady guidance necessary to navigate the 2025 regulatory landscape. By authoring innovative policies at Bright MLS and advising national trade associations on anti-trust and governance, he continues to safeguard the interests of real estate professionals during an era of historic transformation.

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CHRIS KELLY

President & CEO, HomeServices of America

Chris Kelly ascended to the role of president and CEO of HomeServices of America in April 2025, marking the start of a transformative new era for the brokerage. Since taking the helm, Kelly has strategically positioned HomeServices's foundational businesses for future growth, achieving an immediate and tangible impact by surpassing quarterly revenue performance goals and maintaining its status as a leading brokerage enterprise.

A veteran with over two decades of experience, including an 18-year history at HomeServices, Kelly brings a deep legal and business acumen to his leadership. His strategic direction is centered on enhancing value for agents and consumers alike, focusing on the core principle of a unified, full-service model.

"The ability to drive the full-service business model to protect the agent's relationship with their clients, and helping the consumer navigate the real estate transaction in a more enjoyable and simple fashion," are goals Kelly remains committed to.



HOWARD 'HOBY' HANNA

CEO, Howard Hanna Real Estate Services

In 2025, Hanna led the company to "Most Innovative Brokerage" honors, overseeing \$40 billion in sales volume while driving expansion into Manhattan and launching the AI-powered HomeFinder search tool—revolutionizing how clients discover properties.



MERRI JO COWEN

**Strategic Advisor, Stellar MLS;
CEO, Universal Consulting Opportunities**

As one of the most respected leaders in the MLS industry, Cowen expanded Stellar MLS' national collaboration and deployed powerful tools like IO Reports and Rayse in 2025, providing agents with enhanced data, transparency and resources to prove their value to consumers.



VINCE LEISEY

President, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices

Appointed president of the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices network in 2025, Leisey accelerated the brand's strategic growth by launching an AI and Innovation Working Group and strengthening agent value through new, collaborative coaching and professional development programs.

TAMI BONNELL

Co-Chair, EXIT Realty

In 2025, Tami Bonnell led EXIT Realty Corp. International through a year defined by both heart and hustle, advancing the company's growth while reinforcing its mission-driven culture. Under her leadership, EXIT Realty raised \$8 million through the Spirit of EXIT charitable program and continued expanding its franchise footprint across North America, entering new markets while deepening its community impact.

"It wasn't just business expansion, it was purpose-powered growth, anchored in community, compassion and a bold belief that building legacy is about more than earnings—it's about the elevation of us all," says Bonnell.

Bonnell also spent the year working directly with brokers across the country, hosting live events and teaching mergers and acquisitions strategies designed to strengthen leadership, succession planning and long-term brokerage sustainability. With more than three decades in real estate, she has been instrumental in building and scaling three major real estate brands.



SHERRY CHRIS

**Special Advisor, Brokerages,
National Association of
Realtors®**

Chris returned to the frontlines in 2025 to serve as NAR's special advisor for brokerages, strengthening industry relationships and bridging the gap between national leadership and brokerage operators at a historic turning point for the profession.



STUART SIEGEL

CEO, Engel & Völkers

Siegel drove meaningful growth in 2025 by expanding Engel & Völkers into new, strategic international markets, achieving robust gains in the high-luxury sector and empowering advisors through upgraded digital tools and specialization platforms.



MICHAEL NOURMAND

**President, Nourmand &
Associates**

Guiding Nourmand & Associates to over \$650 million in sales in 2025, Nourmand was recognized as an influential leader by the Los Angeles Business Journal and served as a trusted voice on market trends and mortgage rates for top-tier national media.



LEO PAREJA CEO, eXp Realty

In 2025, Leo Pareja solidified his status as a pivotal industry voice, advocating for consumer transparency and the preservation of the Clear Cooperation model. Pareja also spearheaded the launch of the innovative co-sponsor program and the AI Agent Accelerator, doubling down on technology to empower the firm's 82,000 agents worldwide.

Pareja's influence reached new heights this past year when he was named to the 2025 MarketWatch 25 list, the only real estate brokerage CEO to receive the honor. A former national president of NAHREP (the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals®), he remains deeply committed to diversity and fair housing.

"Today, the ultimate reward is watching our agents grow—seeing someone build a team, create generational wealth and completely change the trajectory of their family's future," shares Pareja, whose visionary leadership continues to ensure that eXp Realty remains a dominant, agent-centric force on a global scale.



BRENDA MAHER President, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices New England, New York & Hudson Valley Properties

Promoted to president in 2025, Maher launched the "Year of Community" to strengthen culture, drove significant growth in essential-services capture rates and advanced a historic SmartMLS policy change expanding access to non-Realtor® members.



IVAN SHER Founder, IS Luxury

As founder of the No. 1 luxury brokerage in Las Vegas, Sher drove strategic growth in 2025 by expanding IS Luxury into Southern California and personally securing some of Nevada's most notable sales, continuing his firm's \$2 billion sales momentum.



MIKE GOLDEN Co-CEO/Co-Founder, @properties and Christie's International Real Estate

Golden helped co-engineer the sale of @properties and Christie's International Real Estate in 2025, while expanding the global network with 10 new affiliates and championing the refinement of the firm's signature "private-to-prominent" off-market listing strategy.

BESS FREEDMAN

CEO, Brown Harris Stevens

As CEO of Brown Harris Stevens, Bess Freedman spearheaded the impactful #LetsBeClear campaign, a bold initiative advocating for the National Association of Realtors®' Clear Cooperation Policy. Her "no-nonsense" critique of private listing networks—articulated through high-profile opinion pieces and national broadcasts on CNBC and Bloomberg—challenged the rise of pocket listings, arguing that such practices undermine market transparency and seller equity. This unwavering commitment to a fair and open marketplace led to her selection as the opening keynote speaker for RISMedia's 37th Annual CEO & Leadership Exchange in Washington, D.C.

Beyond her advocacy, Freedman's influence reached the highest levels of financial media as the only residential real estate executive appointed to CNBC's Inside Wealth Advisory Board.

"I truly love helping people succeed, whether it's guiding a new agent to the next level or giving experienced agents better tools," she says. "Real estate is all about relationships, and that is why I love what I do."



SHAYAN HAMIDI

CEO, Rechat

As CEO of Rechat, Hamidi advanced his vision for integrated real estate technology in 2025, deploying an AI-powered "Super App" that achieved CRM adoption rates over 75%, setting a new standard for mobile-first, agent-centric operational platforms.



WILLIAM E. SOTEROFF

President, Keller Williams Worldwide, Keller Williams Realty LLC

Soteroff drove significant international achievement for Keller Williams Worldwide in 2025, expanding its global footprint by awarding master franchises in five new regions, and growing the division to over 17,300 affiliated agents as of Sept. 30.



PHILLIP CANTRELL

CEO, Benchmark Realty; EVP of Strategy, United Real Estate

Cantrell spent 2025 as a vital voice of reason and strategy during a period of significant industry transition, releasing his book, "Failing My Way to Success," which became a No. 1 Amazon bestseller in five categories within 24 hours of its launch.



BRIAN DONNELLAN

President & CEO, Bright MLS

Brian Donnellan redefined MLS leadership in 2025 by steering Bright MLS through a transformative year marked by significant industry shifts, ultimately moving the organization beyond compliance to set new standards in flexibility and innovation.

Donnellan spearheaded major reinvestment into Bright's technology platform, reinforcing its proprietary architecture to safeguard brokerage data and futureproof MLS capabilities. His vision culminated in the design and launch of Bright's next-generation Listing Management system, introducing AI-powered features and UX enhancements that set a new benchmark for MLS technology. Additionally, he expanded Bright's influence by securing key clients for its SaaS product line and launching a joint venture with solutions provider Ocusell.

"At Bright, we're constantly challenging the status quo, reimagining how the MLS can evolve to better serve brokers, agents and ultimately millions of homebuyers and owners every year," says Donnellan, positioning Bright MLS as a catalyst for industry transformation, guiding the evolution of organized real estate.



KATIE COOPER

Chief Operating Officer,
HomeSmart

Cooper drove growth for HomeSmart by recruiting over 2,285 agents and advancing the company's tech ecosystem in 2025, overseeing the launch of an AI-powered Marketing Design Center, a proprietary RPR integration and SmartSigns to provide cutting-edge agent-centric tools.



PAT SHEA

President & CEO,
Windermere Signature
Properties & Windermere SoCal

A visionary brokerage CEO and chairman of the Broker Public Portal, Shea drove over \$1.5 billion in 2025 volume while serving as a leading architect in reimagining the digital property search experience in an effort to restore consumer trust and data transparency.

"At Bright, we're constantly challenging the status quo, reimagining how the MLS can evolve to better serve brokers, agents and ultimately millions of homebuyers and owners every year."

-BRIAN DONNELLAN,
President & CEO, Bright MLS

BRIAN BUFFINI

Chairman & Founder, Buffini & Company

Throughout 2025, Brian Buffini focused on “cutting through the noise” to provide agents with a clear, data-driven roadmap for success. His mid-year “Bold Predictions” broadcast in August set the tone for the industry, where he analyzed the stabilizing market and provided agents with the tactical skills necessary to thrive amid fluctuating interest rates and regulatory changes.

Buffini’s commitment to agent empowerment reached a new peak in late 2025 with the announcement of a massive \$1,200 membership upgrade for his clients at no additional cost, introducing a state-of-the-art suite of tools designed for the 2026 landscape. His year culminated in his highly anticipated 2026 Housing Forecast, where he collaborated with top experts like Dr. Lawrence Yun and Kevin O’Leary to separate “fact from fiction” for thousands of real estate professionals. By prioritizing mindset, skillset and financial discipline, Buffini has shaped the professional standards of the industry for nearly three decades.



JAMES DWIGGINS

Co-CEO, NextHome

In 2025, Dwiggins advanced a people-first growth model at NextHome while expanding his role as a trusted industry voice through speaking, media and podcasting—helping guide real estate professionals with practical insight, leadership perspective and a clear vision for the future.



JIM FISCHETTI

President of Brokerage Operations, NextHome

In 2025, Fischetti led NextHome’s training and coaching initiatives, delivering in-person education, agent development programs and business planning clinics that empowered brokers and agents to build sustainable businesses and raise professional standards across the franchise.



LAUREN FOX

Vice President of Marketing, HomeSmart

In 2025, Fox transformed HomeSmart’s marketing strategy with AI-powered platforms, data-driven recruiting systems and high-impact brand campaigns—driving dramatic gains in engagement, lead performance and agent adoption while modernizing the brokerage’s national marketing engine.



LARRY FLICK V

CEO, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach, Realtors® and The Trident Group

Larry Flick V, a visionary leader with over 30 years of experience, continued to drive exceptional profitability and scale for his organization in 2025. Under his stewardship, Fox & Roach was named the No. 1 company across the entire Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices network for the 10th consecutive year, while increasing profitability by 10% across its four operating companies.

Flick's strategic focus on agent support was evident in the rollout of a new localized leadership structure, ensuring the brokerage remains nimble in diverse markets. This investment in talent resulted in a 155% increase in agent referrals through the Recruitment Rewards program, securing high-performing teams like the regional powerhouse, Philly + The Burbs. He also spearheaded three new agent-experience services, including a cutting-edge CRM and productivity platform.

According to Flick, being honored as a Newsmaker is "humbling," as the "individuals featured are driving the industry forward and making meaningful differences in their communities."



RICK HAASE

**President, United Real Estate;
COO, United Real Estate Group**

In 2025, Haase accelerated United Real Estate's national expansion, orchestrating the historic affiliation of MORE Realty while providing steady, expert guidance to agents navigating a shifting industry landscape—hosting quarterly market insight sessions where he served as a critical voice of clarity.



CINDY BLACK

**Owner, Executive Producer,
Five Star Productions**

With almost 30 years of experience planning real estate conferences, Black hosted events such as a celebrity-studded private weekend at Wynn Las Vegas in 2025. She is recognized for blending artistic vision with operational excellence while building long-term partnerships grounded in trust, consistency and exceptional execution.



MATT TEBBE

President & CEO, Cartus

Tebbe transformed global mobility in 2025 by launching a Data Insights Hub and an automated tax engine solution while securing major client renewals. His leadership combined high-tech innovation with a human-centered mission through a new partnership with Move for Hunger.

WHITNEY LACOSTA

President, Howard Hanna | Coach Realtors®

In 2025, Whitney LaCosta continued to exemplify visionary leadership. The year marked the conclusion of her term as chairman of the board for Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®, where she helped guide the organization through shifting market dynamics. While her chairmanship ended, LaCosta remains an influential voice on the board, contributing to the network's continued strength and direction.

Closer to home, LaCosta oversaw a major growth milestone with the opening of Howard Hanna | Coach Realtors®' 20th office, expanding into Astoria, Queens. This strategic move reinforced the company's presence in one of the nation's most competitive real estate markets while creating new opportunities for agents and clients alike.

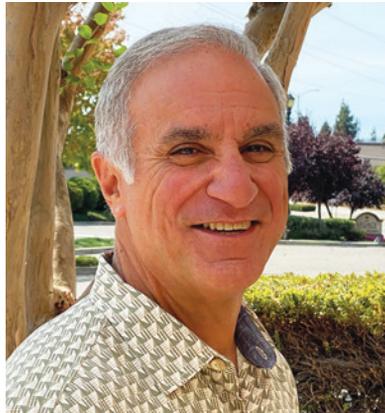
Equally committed to education and mentorship, LaCosta teaches real estate at Stony Brook University and remains a trusted advisor to agents at every stage of their careers. Balancing her roles as executive, educator and industry leader, she leads with clarity, courage and conviction.



BRANDEN AND RAYNI WILLIAMS

**Co-Founders,
The Beverly Hills Estates**

The Williamses propelled their boutique firm to a record \$2.53 billion in 2025 sales volume, a 35% year-over-year increase. By listing trophy estates like the \$177 million Villa Siena, they have redefined ultra-luxury real estate through a unique blend of architectural preservation and high-end storytelling.



BILL ABOUMRAD

**President & Broker/Owner,
Legacy Real Estate & Associates**

In 2025, Aboumrad strengthened agent success through targeted education initiatives, including legal updates and ongoing training programs that helped more than 100 professionals navigate contract changes, best practices and market shifts—reinforcing his role as a trusted leader and mentor in the Bay Area real estate community.



JAMES O'BRYON

**CEO, REMAX Gold and
Gold Nation**

In 2025, O'Bryon strengthened Gold Nation's six-state footprint, expanded agent equity and revenue-share initiatives, launched advanced CRM and professional development programs, and surpassed \$2.25 million raised for Children's Miracle Network—reinforcing his legacy as an industry icon committed to agents, consumers and long-term innovation.

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JOE SKOUSEN President & CEO, Inside Real Estate

In 2025, Joe Skousen led Inside Real Estate through a transformative era with the BoldTrail platform reaching more than 400,000 users. This seamless end-to-end platform, launched in 2024, unites legacy brands like kvCORE, BoomTown and Brokermint into a single, scalable destination. Under his leadership in 2025, the firm executed the strategic acquisition of ListAssist and launched HomeSearch AI—a natural language search tool designed to deliver a better search experience and help agents reengage their entire database.

Skousen's people-first philosophy has solidified partnerships with the industry's top franchises, including REMAX, NextHome, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, eXp Realty and Weichert. Skousen also remained deeply committed to community impact through the company's 5th annual Give Back Awards.

"My role as a leader is based on an unwavering commitment to people—the people who make Inside Real Estate the powerhouse that it is, and the people whose businesses are bettered by their efforts," Skousen shares.



ALEXIS BOLIN Broker Associate, Keller Williams Realty Gulf Coast

A true industry icon, Bolin spent 2025 sharing her expertise nationwide as a sought-after speaker, educator and leader, and with nearly five decades in real estate, she remains deeply committed to mentoring others, advancing professional standards and making a lasting impact through service, teaching and lifelong learning.



DAN KRUSE CEO & Owner, CENTURY 21 Affiliated

In 2025, Kruse guided CENTURY 21 Affiliated to its continued standing as the No. 1 CENTURY 21 franchise globally, while driving strategic expansion, advancing technology platforms and investing in leadership development. He also deepened investments in leadership development, mentorship and recognition programs.



MIKE MIEDLER President & CEO, Century 21 Real Estate LLC

In 2025, Miedler—known for his people-first leadership and industry influence—strengthened CENTURY 21's position as one of the most recognized and respected brands in real estate, advancing thought leadership, consumer trust and inclusive growth as he continued to elevate agents, communities and the future of homeownership.

NYKIA WRIGHT CEO, National Association of Realtors®

In 2025, Nykia Wright forged forward on her plan to execute a radical transformation of the National Association of Realtors® (NAR).

Among her efforts last year, she spearheaded an organizational revamp, eliminating 61 positions and restructuring departments to create a leaner, more agile association. This culture of accountability was designed to ensure that every resource within the organization was directly tied to member value and advocacy.

The pinnacle of Wright's 2025 leadership was the unveiling of the 2026 - 2028 Strategic Plan. Under Wright's guidance, NAR shifted its focus toward three critical pillars: defending private property rights; advancing professional excellence; and driving radical transparency. She was instrumental in navigating the association through the implementation of practice changes following the landmark Sitzer-Burnett settlement, personally engaging with thousands of members through town halls and industry summits.

"Our goal is to build an NAR that is more relevant, more resilient and more focused than ever before," Wright shared.



CANDACE ADAMS Executive Vice President, HomeServices of America

Appointed executive vice president of HomeServices of America in 2025, Adams leverages 29 years of leadership excellence to oversee strategic alignment across 32 companies. While spearheading national best-practices innovation, she continues to serve as chair of her Northeast brokerage, fostering a culture of mentorship and high-level performance.



ROBERT BAILEY Broker/Owner | Realtor®, Bailey Properties, Inc.

An industry icon with a 51-year legacy, Bailey continued his extensive leadership in 2025 through key roles with NAR, C.A.R. and MLSListings. As a policy expert and mentor, he remains a passionate advocate for Realtor® professionalism, private property rights and the independent brokerage model.



KELLY AND LINDA BOEHMER Real Estate Team Leaders, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Select Properties

Recipients of the 15 Years Legend Award, the Boehmers led the No. 1 mid-size team in the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices national network in 2025. Their mastery of new construction and 13-year legacy of supporting the Sunshine Kids charity make them true pillars of the St. Louis community.

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MICHAEL VALDES CEO, LPT International

Michael Valdes spearheaded a year of explosive achievement in 2025, dramatically scaling the organization and launching a new, exclusive luxury brand. Under his leadership, LPT expanded its market reach from 22 states to a full 50 states, and grew internationally into five Canadian provinces. Valdes also led the launch of Aperture, a global luxury brand that debuted in 18 states and four international destinations, attracting over \$1.5 billion in production in its first 90 days.

This phenomenal growth helped propel LPT to jump from the No. 10 to the No. 6 largest brokerage in transaction count. The company also announced its ticker symbol, LPTA, for its planned public market debut in 2026.

Valdes is driven by the ability to help lead a brokerage that enables agents to achieve success on their own terms.

"If I can help someone else achieve their goals, it's why I do this," he says.



JEREMY CRAWFORD President & CEO, FMLS

A visionary leader and technologist, Crawford transformed FMLS through massive national data-sharing expansions and the integration of industry-first AI property intelligence. His relentless dedication to data standardization and philanthropic service continues to shape a more efficient, transparent and compassionate future for the real estate industry.



STEVE BELLOUMINI CEO, Corcoran Icon Properties

A veteran leader with a three-decade legacy, Belloumini guided Corcoran Icon Properties through a year of remarkable growth and cultural unity in 2025. By championing a people-first approach and operational excellence, he has solidified the firm's standing as one of Northern California's most respected and collaborative real estate organizations.



GINGER WILCOX President, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate

A visionary in lifestyle-driven real estate, Wilcox led a massive brand refresh in 2025 and launched the industry-first TrendmakerSM Accreditation program. By blending deep consumer insights with digital innovation, she's transformed a global network of 12,000 agents into specialized experts who truly understand the future of the home.

ANTHONY LAMACCHIA

**CEO & Owner,
Crush It In Real Estate and Lamacchia Realty**

While many brokerage leaders scaled back during the market slowdown, Anthony Lamacchia doubled down on expansion, successfully acquiring 11 companies in just over two years. This rapid growth spurt, including expanding into Rhode Island with the acquisition of Tirrell Realty last July, significantly expanded his company and propelled Lamacchia Realty to over \$3.3 billion in sales volume and more than 6,000 transactions in 2025. The firm was also named a No. 1 Top Place to Work nationally and, for the 14th year in a row, listed as one of America's Fastest-Growing Private Companies by the Inc. 5000.

Lamacchia also expanded his role as an educator and advocate for real estate professionals navigating the post-settlement landscape, including serving as the National Association of Realtors®' 2025 Broker Relations Liaison. Through his "Crush It In Real Estate" platform and frequent industry appearances, he provided actionable strategies for articulating value in a transitioning market.



CRAIG WITT

CEO, EXIT Realty

A veteran executive with a sharp eye for innovation, Witt spearheaded EXIT Realty's expansion into 50 new markets in 2025. Through his vocal advocacy for licensing reform and his impactful mentorship series, he continues to push the industry toward a higher standard of professionalism and agent-centric success.



MARK WOODROOF

**CEO, Better Homes and Gardens
Real Estate Gary Greene**

A premier industry statesman and 2025 Chair of the Texas Real Estate Commission, Woodroof led Houston's top brokerage to significant gains in listings and market share last year. His 40-year legacy, reinforced by \$4 million in philanthropic impact and a new generation of family leadership, continues to define excellence.



ERIC SHULL

**Designated Broker & Business
Leader, John L. Scott Real Estate**

Shull led John L. Scott's Kent North office to elite production levels in 2025, hosting high-impact training events, including the 2025 Legal Symposium and Ninja Launch Sessions, and championing technological innovation and ethical leadership for over 160 brokers across the Pacific Northwest.

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DAN DUFFY CEO, United Real Estate

In 2025, Dan Duffy continued to position United Real Estate Group as a growth-driven, agent-centric organization, guiding the company through another year of disciplined expansion amid market challenges. Growth through affiliation remained a priority, with United welcoming MORE Realty and expanding its footprint into Nevada and New Mexico.

Under Duffy's leadership, United launched an AI-enabled proprietary technology stack and organically grew its agent count by 12%, outpacing industry attrition trends while strengthening productivity and retention across the network. Duffy translated strategy into meaningful agent outcomes by expanding United's Marketplace on Bullseye, leveraging scale to deliver exclusive tools, services and benefits designed to enhance agent businesses and lifestyles.

He also championed the launch of United's Proprietary Residential Investment Curriculum (URES), a key addition to the company's Financial Wellness initiative. Introduced in August 2025, URES equips agents with education, community and resources to build long-term wealth through real estate investment.



NELSON ZIDE Realtor®, ERA Key Realty Services

A 48-year industry veteran and acclaimed educator, Zide used his 2025 platform—including a featured television appearance—to champion mentorship and professional standards. Through his teaching and community service, he continues to empower the next generation of Realtors® while maintaining a legacy of excellence in the Massachusetts market.



TOM E. CHANCE Director of Career Development, Legacy Real Estate & Associates

A 42-year industry veteran and creator of the Legacy Leap! career development program, Chance continues to elevate professional standards in the East Bay. By combining executive mentorship with his status as a top-producing agent, he provides the strategic guidance necessary for the next generation of real estate leaders to thrive.



MIKE BRODIE Owner, Keller Williams Legacy

A 50-year veteran and recipient of NAR's Distinguished Service Award, Brodie continued his longstanding commitment to the next generation of leaders in 2025 by mentoring agents within his Plano market center and serving his eighth year as chairman of the Executive Board at the University of Texas at Dallas.

LIZ GEHRINGER

President & CEO, Anywhere Franchise Brands

As president and CEO of Anywhere Franchise Brands, Liz Gehringer oversees the strategic direction of an iconic portfolio including Coldwell Banker, Century 21, Sotheby's International Realty, Corcoran, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate and ERA. In 2025, Gehringer's leadership helped guide the global network through a period of immense industry change. Her hands-on approach drove unprecedented franchisee engagement, evidenced by a near-perfect 99% renewal rate. She spearheaded the delivery of critical resources, including financial M&A guidance, localized marketing assets and in-depth legal counsel to help affiliates navigate the post-NAR settlement landscape and the ongoing Clear Cooperation discourse.

A champion of ethical leadership and inclusive growth, Gehringer continues to lead the "Stop Hate in Real Estate" pledge and the Inclusive Ownership program, which has welcomed dozens of franchised companies since its inception.

"We all work best when we can share ideas that move the entire industry forward, together," believes Gehringer.



MAYI & DANIEL DE LA VEGA

Founder & CEO | President, ONE Sotheby's International Realty

Leading Florida's East Coast with a \$9 billion sales volume and a \$12 billion development portfolio, the de la Vegas achieved top-tier national rankings in 2025, continuing to fortify ONE Sotheby's International Realty as a global leader in luxury real estate.



GAVIN SWARTZMAN

President, Christie's International Real Estate

Appointed president of Christie's International Real Estate in 2025, Swartzman is spearheading a bold new era of global expansion for the luxury icon, unifying a worldwide network of over 100 firms under a vision of unparalleled service.

"We all work best when we can share ideas that move the entire industry forward, together."

-LIZ GEHRINGER,
President & CEO, Anywhere
Franchise Brands



ROBERT REFFKIN CEO, Compass

In September 2025, Robert Reffkin shocked the industry by announcing Compass' agreement to acquire Anywhere Real Estate in an unprecedented \$1.6 billion deal. Navigating the complexities of this massive consolidation, Reffkin spent the year harmonizing Compass' high-growth, tech-first culture with Anywhere's expansive global footprint and iconic brands. His ability to secure stockholder and regulatory confidence during a period of intense industry scrutiny solidified his reputation as a master strategist.

While the merger dominated headlines, Reffkin's 2025 focus remained anchored in agent empowerment. He continued to iterate on the Compass end-to-end platform, ensuring that the integration of Anywhere's vast data and resources would provide immediate value to the combined force of agents. By steering the firm through the successful negotiation and approval phases of this landmark acquisition, Reffkin has not only scaled his company to new heights but has fundamentally redrawn the map of the brokerage business for the next generation.



JASON WAUGH President, Coldwell Banker Real Estate

As president of Coldwell Banker Affiliates, Jason Waugh oversaw an expansive franchise network of approximately 95,000 agents, orches-

trating a monumental global push that added 67 new office locations across 14 countries by year-end. His leadership was punctuated by the brand's debut in five new nations—Albania, Belgium, Poland, Puerto Rico and Switzerland.

Domestically, Waugh's focus on people-first leadership resulted in the renewal of 68 affiliate partnerships year-to-date, representing an excess of \$10 billion in sales volume. His commitment to professional development was equally evident in the return of the Generation Blue Experience in Las Vegas, which saw a sold-out crowd of over 2,500 professionals.

"We aren't just adding offices—we're building long-term partnerships with leaders who believe in where this industry is heading," Waugh shares.

By blending a deep data-driven strategy with an authentic dedication to agent-centric success, Waugh continues to set a new standard.



MIKE CLEAR CFO & COO, Realty ONE Group

A veteran executive and strategic architect of Realty ONE Group's 20th anniversary expansion, Clear led the brand's 2025 push into nearly 30 countries. By prioritizing operational efficiency and an aggressive growth mindset, he continues to empower over 20,000 professionals with a globally scalable, agent-centric business model.

KUBA JEWGIENIEW

Founder & CEO, Realty ONE Group

In 2025, Kuba Jewgieniew continued to scale Realty ONE Group as a global lifestyle brand, expanding the organization to more than 20,000 real estate professionals across 25 countries and over 450 locations worldwide. During the company's 20th anniversary year, the brand achieved continued international growth while earning recognition for its culture, innovation and commitment to supporting women in business.

Jewgieniew's leadership has been rooted in empowering entrepreneurs. In 2025, that vision translated into sustainable expansion, strong franchise engagement and a collaborative global community built around the belief that everyone matters and everyone has a voice.

"Watching the lives of real estate professionals transform when they're given the freedom, support and opportunity to succeed," makes Jewgieniew's career all the more satisfying for him. He remains committed to opening doors, fostering connections and building a brand where success is measured not only by growth, but by the people empowered along the way.



TAMIR POLEG

Chairman & CEO, Real

A leader in real estate fintech and AI, Poleg led Real to one of the nation's top five brokerages in 2025. By surpassing 31,000 agents and launching the Real Wallet Capital embedded lending solution and HeyLeo AI concierge, he continues to demonstrate how technology-first models can dominate challenging markets.



ALEX VIDAL

President, ERA Real Estate

A dynamic leader who surpassed 2025 renewal quotas early, this past year, Vidal visited nearly 25 brokerages nationwide and provided direct coaching to over 5,000 agents. By prioritizing "feet-on-the-street" engagement and agent production, he has cemented ERA's position as a high-growth powerhouse while inspiring thousands across the global network.

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MATT WIDDOWS Founder & CEO, HomeSmart

Matt Widdows celebrated the 25th anniversary of HomeSmart in 2025 by accelerating technological evolution. Throughout the year, he spearheaded a series of industry-first launches, including an eSign contract management tool integrated directly into HomeSmart's proprietary platform at no cost to agents.

He further bridged the gap between physical and digital marketing with the debut of Next-Gen Yard Signs, which utilize both QR codes and Near Field Communication (NFC) technology to deliver property data instantly to a consumer's mobile device.

Since founding HomeSmart in 2000, Widdows has consistently defied the status quo, scaling a two-person startup into the seventh-largest real estate company in the industry by agent count.

"My vision for HomeSmart was to combine technology, efficiency and fairness to give agents the freedom and resources to thrive," Widdows shares. "Seeing thousands of agents across the country build their businesses and serve clients more effectively because of the platform we created, that's the ultimate reward."



CHRIS MCGOLDRICK Head of AI Innovation, Inside Real Estate

After successfully selling his AI company—ListAssist—to Inside Real Estate in 2025, McGoldrick spearheaded the launch of HomeSearch AI, a revolutionary search platform that uses AI and computer vision to deliver intuitive, natural language searching on thousands of agent websites.



RENÉE GONZALES CEO, Long Realty

In 2025, while continuing to lead Long Companies as CEO, Gonzales was appointed vice president – Core Services Integrations for HomeServices of America, a newly created national role focused on accelerating growth and strengthening integration across brokerage, mortgage, title and insurance services.



BRIAN TEPFER CEO, PropStream

In 2025, Tepfer led PropStream through a pivotal year of expansion and innovation by acquiring Batch Leads and Batch Dialer, which expanded the company's feature set, added new customers and enhanced lead generation, and introduced new annual plans and pricing that include free skip tracing for homeowner contact information.

JOHN FINN

**CEO/Senior Managing Broker,
United Real Estate Richmond**

A fifth-generation real estate professional with nearly 50 years of experience, John Finn spearheaded the strategic acquisition of River City Blues Realty, further expanding United Real Estate's Richmond, Virginia, footprint as the largest Black-owned real estate firm in the Commonwealth.

His leadership was recognized by the Richmond Association of Realtors®, which named him the 2025 Civic Leader of the Year. He also deepened his commitment to housing equity through his appointment to the Board of Trustees for the Maggie L. Walker Community Land Trust.

Finn also authored and released "The C.H.I.E.F.S. Formula," a white paper providing real estate professionals with a structured framework for goal setting. A vocal advocate for diversity, Finn has been featured in industry publications for his work in DEI, stating, "If excellence is your goal, then diversity will be the byproduct."

His 2025 milestones—ranging from successful mergers to landmark civic appointments—solidify his legacy as an industry statesman.



CYNTHIA TAYLOR
**SVP of Agent Software and
Advertising, Zillow Group**

In 2025, Taylor led agent-focused innovation, unveiling a suite of new tools designed to elevate service, such as SkyTour, a cutting-edge aerial experience that provides buyers with a 360-degree exterior view of a property and its surroundings—reshaping how technology supports real estate agents in a rapidly evolving market.



DAN BIRDWELL
**Manager/Realtor®,
Legacy Real Estate &
Associates**

In 2025, Birdwell expanded REVIVE, a weekly in-person accountability and coaching program that now engages more than 50 agents each month, fostering mentorship, collaboration and renewed energy while helping professionals stay focused, motivated and ahead in a competitive Bay Area market.



KATHLEEN MINSER
**Director of Operations,
Legacy Real Estate & Associates**

In 2025, Minser launched the Legacy Agent Hub, a comprehensive business management platform supporting more than 300 agents and staff, while also strengthening company culture through regional events and engagement initiatives. Her operational leadership continues to simplify workflows and empower agents across the Bay Area.

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KAYLA CLICK Realtor®, Ebby Halliday

In addition to her role as a Realtor® for Ebby Halliday, Kayla Click is an industry advocate, serving as executive-at-large for the MetroTex Association of Realtors® in 2025, and the vice chair of orientation for the Texas Association of Realtors® Political Action Committee (TREPAC), where she spearheaded fundraising efforts for the year.

Her advocacy extended to public speaking and a personal commitment to industry-important issues, such as housing affordability and property rights. As an NAR Commitment to Excellence (C2EX) ambassador, Click has accepted the responsibility of presenting the industry with the highest bars of professionalism.

"I am truly humbled and honored to know my works are being seen and making a difference," said Click. "As a Realtor®, I feel my commitment to our industry allows me to provide my clients superior service that is backed by my commitment to advocacy, protecting their largest investment and protecting Texas."



RITU DESAI Associate Broker, Samson Properties

A champion of ethics and advocacy, Desai achieved double-digit growth in 2025 while serving as an RPAC Loudoun trustee and on NVAR's Professional Standards Committee. Through her mentorship at Samson Properties and her extensive community service for local nonprofits, she continues to blaze a trail for service-oriented leadership.



ELISA CHO Broker/Owner, Echo Realty

A dual-board director and health advocate, Cho transformed industry wellness in 2025. By leading the Greater Bergen Realtors® Health, Wellness & Safety Council to record-breaking screening numbers and scaling her independent brokerage, she is successfully pioneering a movement that prioritizes the physical and mental well-being of the real estate community.



JENNIFER LIND Regional President, West Coldwell Banker Realty

Lind led Coldwell Banker Realty's West Region to significant growth in 2025 by pioneering new luxury structures and transaction concierge services. Managing 10,000 agents and \$45 billion in volume, her strategic focus on "leadership as a service" has redefined agent support across five states.

MATT KUCHAR

Founder, Showami

In 2025, Matt Kuchar continued redefining how real estate showings are handled nationwide, placing agent safety, flexibility and collaboration at the center of Showami's rapid growth. Under his leadership, Showami crossed the 500,000-showing milestone, expanded to more than 190,000 agents on the platform, and facilitated showings in every U.S. state except North and South Dakota.

Agent safety remained a top priority, as Showami successfully launched free access to the Tether RE safety and showing platform for its agents. This initiative reinforced Kuchar's belief that innovation in real estate should protect and support the people doing the work, not just streamline transactions.

"I love knowing that Showami has helped launch hundreds of careers in real estate," Kuchar says. A licensed broker since 2000, Kuchar brings deep, first-hand knowledge of brokerage operations to his work. Through Showami, he continues building a nationwide community where agents help one another succeed.



CORY VASQUEZ

President, Realty ONE Group

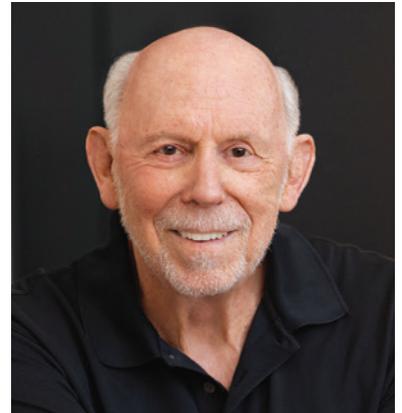
In her first year as president, Vasquez propelled Realty ONE Group to a global network of 20,000 agents across 25-plus countries. By blending modern lifestyle branding with a people-first leadership style, she has successfully fortified the company's status as a dominant and innovative force in the international real estate market.



TODD TUCKER

Executive Vice President & Qualifying Broker, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties

A 2025 innovation leader, Tucker transformed associate engagement through the expansion of his "Todcast" and the launch of the high-tech Training Lab. Opening a flagship luxury suite in Buckhead and leading massive Hurricane Helene relief efforts, he has redefined the intersection of executive excellence and community impact.



BEN CABALLERO

Founder & CEO, HomesUSA.com

Caballero, a three-time Guinness World Records title holder, revolutionized builder operations in 2025 with the full deployment of SpecDeck, providing over 70 builders with an AI-driven platform that slashes manual entry and significantly accelerates home sales across Texas.



ABBY LEE

Executive Vice President of Marketing, Communications, Production and Events, RE/MAX Holdings, Inc.

A driving force behind strategic marketing and brand leadership at REMAX, in 2025, Abby Lee led a historic brand refresh, unveiling a modern digital-first logo and logotype that places agents at the center of the REMAX story while honoring the brand's globally respected legacy.

Under Lee's leadership, agents gained access to customizable branding and flexible design elements that turn everyday interactions into brand-building opportunities. The refresh expanded to include physical marketing products, many of which sold out at launch events.

"I am proud of building the No. 1 name in real estate throughout the last 25-plus years," says Lee. "For decades, REMAX has believed in my vision to elevate our agents and connect with consumers in meaningful ways."

Lee also advanced storytelling and technology-driven marketing initiatives in 2025, including a social series connecting NFL rookie Matthew Golden with a REMAX agent to fulfill a promise of buying a house for his grandmother.



AMANDA CLINE

Vice President of Marketing & Communications, United Real Estate

A 2025 transformation leader, Cline modernized United Real Estate's recruitment and marketing ecosystems through the launch of the AI-enhanced Bullseye™ Hub and the URESI investment curriculum. Her strategic initiatives saved the network over \$125,000 in costs while delivering 31,000 leads and helping agents eliminate nearly \$2 million in debt.



CHAD CARROLL

President, The Carroll Group, Compass

The No. 1 agent at Compass Florida, Carroll crossed the \$8 billion career sales threshold in 2025. By combining world-class negotiation with a digital reach of over 1 million followers, he continues to dominate the South Florida luxury landscape, closing record-breaking deals from Miami Beach to Fort Lauderdale.



KYLE HUNTER

Industry Principal, Lone Wolf Technologies

Hunter transformed industry dialogue in 2025, launching the PropTech Pulse podcast and Lone Wolf's first Customer Advisory Board. By translating operational pain points into actionable tech solutions, he has established a new gold standard for collaborative innovation between software providers and the real estate community.

NATASHA PATLA

Chief Marketing Officer, @properties and Christie's International Real Estate

In 2025, Natasha Patla helped shape the conversation around luxury real estate and brokerage branding through a series of high-impact initiatives across Christie's International Real Estate and @properties. As chief marketing officer for both brands, she led the launch of the Christie's International Real Estate Luxury Forecast and Mid-Year Update, delivering timely insights that informed agents, consumers and the broader industry. She also directed branding and event strategy for marquee gatherings, including the Christie's International Real Estate Summit in New York and EXPO, @properties' largest annual event.

Patla oversaw @properties' 25th anniversary campaign, and also served as CMO of @gives back, the company's charitable foundation, where she led the 2025 launch of the "\$25 for 25 Years" initiative.

"There's nothing more satisfying than turning a great idea into a brand-defining moment. Marketing is about storytelling—and when those stories move people, drive results and elevate agents' businesses, it's a win all around," Patla says.



MELISSA COHN
Regional Vice President,
William Raveis Mortgage

A 43-year industry veteran and top-ranked originator, Cohn reached the No. 1 spot for mortgage brokers in Connecticut in 2025. By closing 148 loans totaling over \$116 million and appearing on television as a national media expert 11 times throughout the year, she continues to set the standard for leadership and mentorship.



RICH DENICOLA
EVP of Integrated Operations,
Anywhere Integrated Services

Stepping into the role of EVP of Integrated Operations in early 2025, DeNicola is spearheading the integration of brokerage and title operations at Anywhere. By leveraging AI to automate complex workflows across 700 offices in 2025, he has significantly accelerated transaction timelines and enhanced the service experience for agents and franchisees.



KIM KORACA
CMO, MoxiWorks

Appointed CMO in 2025, Koraca led MoxiWorks through a successful brand refresh and the pivotal launch of the RISE AI marketing platform. By modernizing the company's digital presence and product positioning, she has effectively aligned the legacy brand's identity with its new era of predictive, AI-driven innovation.



AUSTIN BLONDE President & CEO, Oakley Signs

In 2025, Austin Blonde spearheaded a reinvention of Oakley Signs, transforming the 53-year-old company into a strategic brand and fulfillment partner for the nation's leading brokerages. Under his leadership, Oakley launched an in-house creative studio that reframed signage as a high-impact recruitment and branding asset rather than a simple operational expense. Blonde's strategic vision led to exclusive partnerships with top national brands.

Innovation was a hallmark of Blonde's 2025 agenda, notably with the introduction of MagSmart™, a magnetic signage system allowing agents to swap branding instantly, and QR-enhanced solutions that bridge offline yard signs with digital lead capture. Blonde also utilized his platform as one of the few openly LGBTQ+ executives in the vendor space to advocate for inclusive leadership and mentorship.

"I get the most fulfillment from watching others succeed," Blonde shares. "That's what drives me every day: building something bigger than myself, and doing it alongside people I believe in."



KAYLIN POUND Senior Vice President & Regional Manager, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties

A 45-year industry leader, Pound earned the 2025 President's Award from the Cherokee Board of Realtors®. By launching The Moving Forward Group and spearheading Hurricane Helene relief efforts, she continued to blend executive excellence with a compassionate mission to uplift those in her community.



KIM PRIOR Executive Vice President, FBS, Inc.

A 2025 industry innovator, Prior launched the M^AS platform to provide MLSs with professional marketing and branding services. By doubling Flexmls' subscriber base and maintaining a 99% renewal rate, she has successfully transformed how technology providers empower the MLS community through strategic communication and scalable creative solutions.



AYOUB RABAH Regional President, Midwest and Texas, Coldwell Banker Realty

In 2025, Rabah expanded Coldwell Banker's Texas footprint in the luxury market with two new offices in strategic locations and a record-breaking \$59.9 million Houston listing. He also led the rollout of enhanced Transaction Concierge and Client Experience Specialist services across his regions.

LUIS POGGI

Co-Founder & CEO, HouseWhisper AI

In February 2025, Luis Poggi launched HouseWhisper, an AI-powered personal assistant designed specifically for real estate agents. Unlike generic AI tools, HouseWhisper requires no new dashboard or app; agents simply interact with the assistant via text or voice to update their CRM, set reminders and manage transaction details on the go. By December 2025, the platform had scaled to over 6,000 paying users and partnered with some of the nation's most elite teams, including eXp's Andy Griesinger and REMAX's Gary Ashton. Poggi successfully closed nearly \$10 million in venture capital from firms like Mayfield and Pioneer Square Labs to fuel this growth.

"It's been incredibly meaningful to work with some of the best teams across the nation and watch how we can help them be more productive and do more deals," Poggi shares.

By bridging the gap between generative AI and human-like usability, Poggi has set a new standard for proptech adoption.



KHET RICHARDS

Head of Product, Cartus

A 2025 mobility innovator, Richards led the launch of Cartus' next-generation product suite, including the GATE tax solution and real-time Data Insights Dashboard. By leveraging AI and digital workflows, she has modernized corporate relocation logistics, delivering more seamless, data-driven outcomes for relocating employees and global enterprises alike.



KARRIE-ANN SHEPPARD

Vice President of Learning, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate

An education visionary, this past year, Sheppard launched the TrendmakerSM Accreditation and a landmark financial management course for brokers. By increasing learning engagement by 85% and pioneering well-being initiatives at The Better Retreat 2025, she successfully empowered agents to leverage lifestyle data and financial clarity as competitive advantages.



TANYA REU-NARVAEZ

Chief People Officer, Anywhere Real Estate Inc.

In 2025, Reu-Narvaez pioneered the transformation of HR into "People Enablement" at Anywhere, driving record-high retention through a remote-first culture and innovative benefits. By championing AI literacy and human-centric leadership, she works to set a new global standard for real estate.

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LAUREN HENSS

**VP of Marketing & Strategic Initiatives,
FirstTeam® Real Estate**

Lauren Henss has spearheaded a transformative new era for FirstTeam® Real Estate. In 2025, her leadership was instrumental in the firm's national expansion across Idaho, Washington, Arizona, Nevada and Oregon. She orchestrated a complete digital overhaul, launching an award-winning corporate website and over 1,800 agent subdomains in record time. Her work earned FirstTeam® the 2025 Website of the Year award from Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate.

A key member of the industry's first all-female senior leadership team, Henss launched the Powerful Women: Redefining Real Estate movement in 2025. This integrated campaign provides mentorship and resources to help female professionals break into executive leadership.

"Whether guiding a Fortune 500 company, preparing a late-stage startup for IPO or advancing a legacy brand like FirstTeam®, I see every challenge as an opportunity to drive meaningful growth," shares Henss, whose strategic marketing activations have driven agent Net Promoter Scores (NPS) to 86%.



MEREDITH SMITH

**Global Real Estate Advisor,
Gibson Sotheby's International Realty**

A 2025 technology pioneer, Smith integrated custom GPTs and AI-driven content strategies to achieve over 4.7 million social media views and launch an automated relocation funnel. By marrying high-level negotiation coaching with data-curated client roadmaps, she has successfully modernized the luxury real estate experience for the Greater Boston market.



DAWN PFAFF

Owner, State Listings Inc.

A visionary tech entrepreneur, Pfaff propelled My State MLS to over 85,000 members in 2025. By launching a proprietary real estate LLM and integrated transaction tools, she continues to dismantle geographical barriers, providing agents with the advanced technology and independence needed to compete nationwide.



STACEY SOLEIL

Head of Community, Cloze

Soleil led the landmark transition of eXp Realty agents to BoldTrail in 2025, launching a Product Advisory Council and peer-driven forums that bridge the gap between users and developers. Her community-first strategy has turned tech adoption into a collaborative movement, empowering tens of thousands of professionals.

BLANCA HEBE LOPEZ PIERLUISI

Broker/Owner, Corcoran Puerto Rico

In 2025, Blanca Hebe Lopez Pierluisi marked a major milestone in the growth of Corcoran Puerto Rico with the official launch of the brokerage's commercial division, signaling a strategic expansion and long-term vision for diversification. The new division debuted with the exclusive listing of a \$20 million condo-hotel project.

Since founding Corcoran Puerto Rico just three years ago, Lopez Pierluisi has propelled the firm to the No. 1 position on the island by sales volume and built Puerto Rico's largest new development division, representing more than \$700 million in pre-construction inventory. With more than 15 years of experience, her background spans some of the most prestigious residential developments.

"Whether it's a first-time homebuyer, a seasoned investor or a business owner expanding into Puerto Rico, being trusted as their advisor is deeply meaningful," she says. "I take pride in contributing to the island's development and future through responsible and strategic real estate work."



EMIL SEDGH

CTO, Rechat

As the architect of Rechat's AI-powered platform, Sedgh revolutionized agent productivity in 2025 through the launch of Lucy, an AI assistant supporting 19,000 agents. His pioneering Figma integration and Agent Network tools have set a new pace for collaborative, tech-driven real estate marketing and deal-making.



ANDREW MANNING

Realtor® - Luxury Property Specialist, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties

Ranked No. 3 in Los Angeles transactions for the first half of 2025, Manning continues to blaze a trail of excellence by securing new elite designations in sports, entertainment and senior real estate, proving that three decades of expertise is the perfect foundation for constant innovation.



PRITESH DAMANI

CTO, Real

A premier architect of real estate technology, Damani led the 2025 launch of the HeyLeo AI concierge and the Real Wallet Capital lending platform. By automating nearly half of all support interactions through Leo CoPilot, he has enabled Real to scale to 31,000 agents while drastically increasing operational efficiency.



QUAN REMMER

**Vice President of Strategic Partnerships,
Suncoast Tampa Association of Realtors®**

As vice president of Strategic Partnerships for the nation's sixth-largest Realtor® association, Quan Remmer has modernized how professional organizations deliver value. In 2025, following the landmark merger that created the Suncoast Tampa Association of Realtors® (STAR), Remmer spearheaded a 159% increase in sponsorship revenue, growing non-dues income from \$54,000 to over \$140,000 in a single year. He expanded STAR's member benefits from five to 19 programs, intentionally blending business-critical tools with lifestyle perks to support members' well-being and professional success.

Remmer also launched the STAR Member Hub mobile app and the Suncoast Tampa Living Podcast Network, creating high-visibility platforms that connect over 24,000 members across three counties.

"In 2025, I grew our offerings from five to 19, introducing resources that support daily business needs while also adding lifestyle perks that improve personal lives," Remmer shares. "Knowing that these efforts help Realtors® thrive in their careers and their lives is what fuels my passion."



TEI BAISHIKI

**Chief Operating Officer,
NextHome**

A visionary co-founder, Baishiki led NextHome to the No. 1 ranking in owner satisfaction in 2025. By engineering an integrated, automated technology ecosystem and fostering elite supplier partnerships, he has redefined the franchise experience, allowing agents to prioritize "humans over houses."



DINA GOLDENTAYER

**Ultra Luxury Realtor®,
Douglas Elliman**

Douglas Elliman's No. 1 agent for five years running, Goldentayer continued to blaze a trail in the ultra-luxury sector, combining record-breaking closings with her viral #StepInside-WithMe marketing campaigns to redefine the South Florida real estate experience.



DEAN DETONNANCOURT

**Broker/Owner, HomeSmart
Professionals Real Estate**

In 2025, deTonnancourt expanded HomeSmart Professionals' footprint by acquiring four brokerages and launching a new commercial division. By also purchasing and reinventing a local real estate school, he has pioneered a holistic model for professional growth and regional market leadership.

MELISSA CUNNINGHAM

Vice President of Marketing & Brand, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach, Realtors®

As vice president of Marketing and Brand for Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach, Realtors®, in 2025, Melissa Cunningham led the high-impact implementation of two critical response campaigns, Beyond the Headlines and Let's Talk Facts, designed to provide clarity following the landmark NAR settlement. These multifaceted programs utilized digital brochures, micro-sites and CRM-driven outreach, with the Beyond the Headlines guide reaching nearly 4,000 viewers within 60 days of launch.

Cunningham also launched the "Open Market Advantage" campaign in the spring of 2025 to educate clients on the value of MLS exposure and help agents secure listings more effectively. She also developed the comprehensive Marketing Concierge program, providing agents with bespoke marketing solutions and premium creative support.

"This dynamic field presents endless opportunities to learn and grow, whether it's embracing new technologies, driving change, navigating shifting market trends or finding fresh and authentic ways to help agents connect with clients," Cunningham shares.



DAN COOPER

Founder & CEO, Gitcha

In 2025, Cooper launched the first "buy-sided" MLS integration, creating a transparent marketplace for buyer demand that boosts agency value and collaboration. By integrating buyer "want-listings" directly into the MLS workflow, he is spearheading a transformative shift toward a more balanced and efficient real estate ecosystem.



LINDA JAMES

Founder & CEO, FyrstUp

In 2025, James propelled FyrstUp to profitability by digitizing the office whiteboard for brokerages nationwide. Her "agent-first" technology has become an essential tool for navigating industry changes, proving that resilient leadership and innovative communication are the new standards for brokerage success.



MICHELLE LUNDY

Regional Director, Franchise Development, ERA Real Estate

A top-performing franchise director at Anywhere, Lundy spearheaded landmark growth in 2025 by facilitating a major Texas affiliation and acquisition that added over \$220 million in sales volume. Her "growth-through-partnership" philosophy continues to redefine market dynamics across the South Central United States.



ERIC ELFMAN CEO, MoxiWorks

Since taking the helm of MoxiWorks in June 2024, Eric Elfman has ignited a bold transformation centered on AI-driven innovation and agent empowerment. In 2025, he executed a significant strategic overhaul, beginning with the January acquisition of additional growth capital from Vector Capital and brokerage partners. This was followed by the May divestiture of MoxiBalance, a back-office solution managing \$2 billion in volume, allowing the company to focus exclusively on sales and marketing tools that help agents find and close more deals.

The centerpiece of Elfman's 2025 leadership was the November launch of RISE, an AI-native marketing platform. Unlike traditional tools, RISE proactively guides agents by predicting client intent and surfacing daily action items.

To drive this evolution, Elfman rebuilt the executive team with key hires in product, finance and marketing.

"Watching our team bring RISE to life, and seeing how quickly customers have embraced it, has been deeply fulfilling," shares Elfman.



KACIE RICKER Senior Vice President of Product, Anywhere Real Estate Inc.

As SVP of Product for Anywhere Real Estate Inc., Kacie Ricker oversees the strategy and execution of solutions

for one of the world's largest brokerage networks. In 2025, she was the primary architect behind the launch of the Anywhere Intelligence Platform (AiP)—a proprietary AI ecosystem that automates critical workflows for agents, including lead scoring, marketing content generation and transaction coordination. Under her guidance, AiP has delivered measurable impact, including \$9.5 million in additional revenue driven by AI-powered lead routing and a 28% year-over-year increase in lead conversion rates.

This past year, Ricker also expanded the award-winning Listing Concierge platform to the company's franchise operations. She also secured an enterprise-wide partnership with Canva, providing AI-enabled design tools to over 300,000 agents.

"It's incredibly fulfilling to take something complex—whether that's AI, data or product strategy—and translate it into tools that make someone's day easier, their business stronger or their client's experience better," shares Ricker.



TODD TETA Chief Product and Technology Officer, ATTOM

In 2025, Teta revolutionized data accessibility by launching ATTOM Nexus and cloud-native solutions like Snowflake and Parquet. By prioritizing AI-ready infrastructure and launching the Transparent Owner dataset, he has set a new benchmark for data integrity and transparency in the modern real estate ecosystem.

JIMMY KELLY

CEO, Lone Wolf Technologies

In 2025, under Jimmy Kelly's leadership, Lone Wolf Technologies underwent a complete brand evolution while simultaneously modernizing its core infrastructure for over 1.5 million professionals. Kelly's strategic vision culminated in the launch of the Foundation platform and four major products. He further expanded the company's reach by launching Inkless, an API-first e-signature platform that leverages Lone Wolf's enterprise-grade engine to serve the broader B2B market.

Kelly's commitment to industry stability was highlighted by a landmark five-year partnership with First Multiple Listing Service and the appointment of industry veteran York Baur as chief industry relations officer.

"Leading Lone Wolf through 2025's transformation taught me that meaningful change happens when you stay deeply connected to the people you serve," Kelly says. "When I see agents who once juggled 20 different tools now accessing everything through Foundation, or when a brokerage successfully implements our solutions to serve their clients better, I'm reminded why this work matters."



ANDY WHITE

Founder & CEO, Closinglock

White revolutionized transaction security in 2025, leading Closinglock to triple revenue and \$2 billion in processed payments through SecurePay. By securing over 1 million closings and launching automated compliance tools, he has set a new global standard for fraud prevention and digital payment efficiency.



DANNY HERNANDEZ

Vice President, International, Realty ONE Group

In 2025, Hernandez accelerated Realty ONE Group's global reach, successfully spearheading market expansions into Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica while strengthening international franchise partnerships.

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TRAVIS SAXTON

EVP of Strategy, RE/MAX Holdings, Inc.

Travis Saxton joined RE/MAX Holdings in 2025 as executive vice president of strategy, and quickly helped usher in a new era of innovation.

In his first year, Saxton led the launch of MAXRefer, an AI-driven global referral system, now facilitating nearly 4,000 referrals each month across the REMAX network. Saxton also introduced Max, an AI digital assistant that converts traffic on remax.com and remax.ca into actionable opportunities delivered directly to agents and teams, enhancing both the consumer experience and lead response speed.

Additional launches included MAXEngage, a loyalty and rewards platform that gamifies productive agent behaviors and social marketing, and a global Marketing as a Service platform that blends digital, video, social, print and generative AI into a single omni-channel solution.

"I love using my expertise and strategic passion to chart a course for REMAX we truly believe is unique, competitive and leading the industry," says Saxton.



BOB PORTALE

**President & CEO,
RELO Direct, Inc.**

In 2025, Portale helped redefine relocation for the 21st century—blending high-tech innovation, human-centered service and bold thinking to move people, organizations—and even humanoid robots—with precision, speed and vision that anticipates the future of the industry.



PIERRE CALZADILLA, MUK VENKATAKRISHNAN & ISH AHMED

**CEO, COO & CPO,
Upfront & Vero**

Calzadilla, Venkatakrishnan and Ahmed are the driving force behind Upfront and Vero, merging back-office operations with embedded financial and healthcare solutions. In 2025, their platform empowered 20,000-plus agents and 250 brokerages nationwide, turning traditional cost centers into profit-generating, agent-first ecosystems.



JOHN WALKUP

Co-Founder, UrbanDigs

In 2025, Walkup's UrbanDigs launched the Manhattan Market Price Index, expanded the \$600M Advisor program and grew Macro Monday audiences 300%, providing agents with hyperlocal pricing insights and macroeconomic context that empower smarter decisions in Manhattan and Brooklyn's complex real estate market.

BRAD BJELKE

CEO, [UtahRealEstate.com](https://www.UtahRealEstate.com)

In 2025, Brad Bjelke, CEO of [UtahRealEstate.com](https://www.UtahRealEstate.com), launched reDataExport, LLC, a groundbreaking software company that helps MLSs efficiently deliver real estate statistics to economists, government agencies, media outlets and universities. The platform quickly secured its first clients—NorthStarMLS in Minnesota and [UtahRealEstate.com](https://www.UtahRealEstate.com)—and is poised to expand nationwide.

Bjelke also oversaw the creation of a new public website for the New Mexico MLS, and led [UtahRealEstate.com](https://www.UtahRealEstate.com) to more than 20 million monthly pageviews. He also introduced advanced AI-driven capabilities, including automated photo intelligence, voice-to-search technology and an AI-powered chatbot that now resolves the majority of member inquiries.

“For the past 20 years, I have dedicated my career to advancing the MLS and residential real estate industries,” he says. “I have watched the industry evolve multiple times, and I am pleased to be the CEO of an organization that has been able to continually get better in the wake of challenges.”



RICHARD SULLIVAN

General Counsel, Gibson Sotheby's International Realty

Sullivan guided Gibson Sotheby's through sweeping Massachusetts rental and home-inspection law changes in 2025, providing updated contracts, company-wide training and strategic counsel that empowered agents, protected clients and positioned the brokerage as a compliance leader in a rapidly evolving legal landscape.



PETYA MANNING

Vice President of Marketing, NextHome

Manning modernized NextHome's brand in 2025 through innovative storytelling, authentic marketing and thought leadership, positioning the company for long-term growth while preserving its core culture and values—equipping franchisees nationwide to communicate their unique stories.



JUN CHOO

Chief Operating Officer, Zillow Group

Choo drives innovation that empowers agents to thrive in a fast-moving market, leading initiatives like the launch of Zillow Showcase in 2025 and the Connections platform to deliver AI-driven insights, real-time consumer connections and training that transform technology into tangible growth for real estate professionals.



INES HEGEDUS-GARCIA

Managing Partner, Avanti Way Realty

In 2025, Ines Hegedus-Garcia grew Avanti Way Realty – East Miami to nearly 200 agents while helping the brokerage network reach almost 2,000 agents statewide, collectively closing over \$1 billion in sales. Hegedus-Garcia spearheaded agent development initiatives, including Open House With Intention, Buyer Representation Protocols and the AI + Crypto Strategies for Real Estate Pros series, equipping agents with the skills to navigate a rapidly evolving market.

Beyond brokerage growth, Hegedus-Garcia chaired Florida Realtors[®] Strategic Planning Committee, developing a statewide plan to address major shifts in the real estate industry. She also launched upgraded buyer assets, presentations and training to prepare agents for new buyer representation requirements. Additionally, Hegedus-Garcia expanded consumer education through Miamiism.com and the agent spotlight series.

“What drives me is knowing that the work I do at the brokerage, state and national levels does not just prepare agents for today. It positions them to succeed in the future,” says Hegedus-Garcia.



NATHAN BRANNEN

Chief Product Officer,
Restb.ai

Brannen led the real estate industry's AI revolution in 2025, delivering automated appraisal insights, compliance solutions and data-driven research that empower over a million agents nationwide to work smarter, streamline operations and make hyper-accurate, client-focused decisions.



CHRIS COX

Chief Technology and
Digital Officer, Keller Williams
Realty, LLC

Cox powers the next generation of agent-focused innovation, delivering smart CRM tools, streamlined workflows and cutting-edge marketing solutions through partnerships like Canva, helping agents scale their business with intelligence, efficiency and creativity.



DAVID RICKEL

Region President, Berkshire
Hathaway HomeServices
Fox & Roach, Realtors[®] &
The Trident Group

Rickel launched the innovative Recruitment Rewards and Inventory Creator programs in 2025, driving agent referrals up 155% and boosting listing inventory, while mentoring agents and earning NEXUS' Icon of the Year award for his industry leadership.

TOMMY DUNBAR

President & CEO, Old Colony, Realtors®

As president and CEO, Tommy Dunbar oversaw an acquisition that expanded Old Colony Realtors® into new markets, opened three new offices and strengthened the firm's regional footprint. He also led the firm's 80th anniversary celebration and directed a comprehensive company rebrand, modernizing Old Colony's presence while preserving the values that have defined the West Virginia-based brokerage since 1944.

Dunbar began his career at Old Colony straight out of high school, working in IT, and over the next 27 years held roles spanning technology, marketing, relocation and finance, all preparing him to step into the role of majority shareholder and president and CEO in 2024.

"I started here right out of high school, and this company has truly been my life's work," Dunbar says. "To now lead it as president and CEO, and see the difference we make for our sales associates, our clients and our communities—that's been the greatest privilege."



KELLY SILVER

Senior Vice President of Marketing, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties

In 2025, Silver drove transformative marketing initiatives at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties, from helping launch the "Always a Good Move" company tagline to overseeing marquee agent events and record-breaking SEO and recruiting growth.



FRANK DERONJA JR.

Principal Broker & Owner, Corcoran DeRonja Real Estate

In 2025, DeRonja led the brokerage to one of its strongest years ever while advancing a future-focused vision through association leadership, MLS innovation and advocacy—championing agent growth, client trust and long-term resilience in a changing market.



MEG MCFARLANE

CEO, New Mexico MLS

In 2025, McFarlane positioned New Mexico MLS as a national innovator by introducing the first mandatory floor plan requirement, launching a Property Description Contest and creating a Virtual MLS Summit that connected more than 35,000 industry professionals nationwide.

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JILLIAN YOUNG **President, Premiere Plus Realty**

Jillian Young guided her brokerage through one of the most transformative years in Florida real estate in 2025. In the wake of national commission settlements and additional copycat lawsuits, she led the implementation of new buyer representation procedures, disclosures and contracts while rolling out brokerage-wide Errors & Omissions coverage and risk-management processes.

Operationally, Young restructured office models, centralized administrative support and integrated AI-driven systems for compliance, agent onboarding and CRM workflows—improving efficiency, reducing overhead and maintaining one of the lowest agent fees in the market while preserving a 100%-commission structure. She also expanded agent support through enhanced education, workshops and a rebranded Referral Rewards program. Additionally, she positioned the firm as a thought leader by speaking at national conferences on compliance, growth strategy and technology adoption.

“Witnessing an agent improve the financial trajectory of their careers, and sometimes their lives, because of their hard work and our support is incredibly fulfilling,” says Young.



TROY SINGLETON **Senior Vice President, Title and Escrow, Anywhere Integrated Services**

SVP of title and escrow services for Anywhere Integrated Services, Troy Singleton took on broader national oversight across title and escrow operations in 2025. His expanded scope reflects a clear mandate: simplify complexity while elevating service across one of the industry’s most extensive settlement networks.

Singleton led a company-wide operational streamlining initiative that standardized processes, improved efficiency and opened new career pathways across Anywhere Integrated Services. At the same time, he strengthened the brokerage’s integrated services advantage by deepening alignment among mortgage, property and casualty insurance and the brokerage network, ensuring seamless collaboration amid evolving buyer agency requirements.

A strong advocate for modernization, Singleton championed automation and AI adoption to reduce manual touch-points and raise standards for speed, accuracy and compliance. His leadership philosophy is rooted in impact.

ANNE MARIE DECATSYE

CEO, Canopy Realtor® Association

Anne Marie DeCatsye, CEO of Canopy Realtor® Association and Canopy MLS, led transformative advancements in 2025. Under her leadership, Canopy MLS became the first in North Carolina to transition to an open MLS, while maintaining strong Realtor® membership and providing agents with flexible platform choices, including ICE Paragon and Matrix.

DeCatsye also co-founded the Southeast MLS Alliance, a regional data-sharing initiative spanning four major MLSs and serving 100,000-plus agents. She championed innovative tools like Ardi, a 24/7 AI-powered assistant, and Rayse, which provides real-time transaction visibility.

"I continue to feel a great sense of purpose in being able to inspire, share new perspectives, provide expertise and guidance, which results in achieving a shared goal, addressing challenges or identifying opportunities," she says.

DeCatsye's leadership in 2025 earned national recognition, including the Shuttleworth MLS Executive of the Year Award and the National Association of Realtors® William R. Magel Award of Excellence.



DON KOTTICK

President, REMAX Canada

In April 2025, Don Kottick joined REMAX Canada as president, taking on leadership of all operations during a pivotal period for the Canadian real estate industry. He spent his first 100 days on a nationwide listening tour, meeting with affiliates across the country to hear their ideas, challenges and priorities, using that insight to help shape the brand's future direction.

In October, Kottick hosted Activate, REMAX Canada's annual national convention, which attracted a record number of affiliates and reinforced confidence in the company's strategic vision and long-term growth.

"At REMAX, I now have the opportunity to lead a brand that Canadians trust deeply, bringing together innovation, service and a shared commitment to excellence," says Kottick.

A fellow and past president of the Real Estate Institute of Canada, Kottick has also served as a director at large for the Canadian Real Estate Association and as a director of the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board.





MATTHEW LEONE

Chief Marketing Officer, Brown Harris Stevens

In 2025, Matthew Leone's leadership as chief marketing officer led to the expansion of the company's podcast network, MORE (Mastery of Real Estate), now the largest real estate podcast network in the U.S. featuring 17 shows. By producing these series entirely in-house at Studio 1873 and securing high-value sponsorships from mortgage, legal and tech brands, Leone transformed a branding initiative into a significant revenue stream. This innovative approach to media allows Brown Harris Stevens to reach an average of 11,000 viewers per episode, bypassing traditional media shrinkage to speak directly to consumers.

Beyond his media successes, Leone spearheaded the 2025 launch of the new BrownHarrisStevens.com, and serves as a vital voice on several elite advisory councils.

"My goal is to represent my team and this company in the best way possible by letting the industry and consumer base know what is truly unique and exceptional about this brokerage brand," says Leone.



JAKE HAMILTON

SVP of Strategy,
Lone Wolf Technologies

In 2025, Hamilton led strategic evolution toward a unified, customer-centric platform, coordinating complex integrations, partnerships and support initiatives to deliver seamless digital experiences for more than 1.5 million real estate professionals across North America.



ERIC FITE

COO, CENTURY 21 Judge Fite
Company

In 2025, Fite helped modernize his family-owned brokerage, from launching a new holding company, integrating AI-driven technologies, expanding affiliated services into new markets and guiding an 88-year-old brokerage into its third generation of leadership.



ROB BARBER

CEO, ATTOM

Barber led a pivotal 2025 transformation, launching cloud-native, AI-ready data platforms—including Nexus, Snowflake and Parquet delivery—while introducing new solutions that redefine how the industry accesses, integrates and applies property intelligence at scale.

AMY RIGGSBEE

President, Settlement Services, HomeServices of America

Amy Riggsbee, president of National Settlement Services at HomeServices of America, spent 2025 reenergizing the Settlement Services division, fostering alignment, collaboration and a technology-forward approach.

With the upcoming FinCEN Real Estate Reporting Rule affecting operations across 29 states, Riggsbee spearheaded strategic planning for software enhancements and workflow integrations, ensuring HomeServices Settlement Services is fully prepared to meet regulatory demands efficiently and accurately. Her leadership balances compliance, technology adoption and operational efficiency on a national scale, transforming complex challenges into opportunities for growth.

"My goal is to help position HomeServices Settlement Services companies as leaders in compliance, technology adoption and operational excellence," she says.

Riggsbee emphasizes national collaboration and innovation, empowering teams to implement modernized processes that enhance client experiences while maintaining rigorous standards.



TED MUCELLIN

Chief Strategy and Operations Officer, Bright MLS

Mucellin helped redefine MLS value in 2025 by leading the launch of Bright Solutions, a customizable platform designed to streamline workflows, improve collaboration and deliver more actionable analytics, and spearheading a joint venture between Bright MLS and Ocusell, creating a unified "one-to-many" listing platform.



BRIAN MURRAY

Vice President of Sales and Luxury, Houlihan Lawrence

Murray drove agent-focused growth in 2025 by advancing the firm's luxury strategy and launching a data-driven market-share model that gives agents earlier insights, stronger coaching and more predictable paths to long-term success.



ROB NORMAN

Regional President, East, Coldwell Banker Realty

In 2025, Norman led a major realignment of Coldwell Banker Realty's East Region, restructuring offices into district sales centers and expanding agent support across New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. His forward-thinking leadership emphasizes productivity, mobility and innovation while preserving the high-touch service of a legacy brand.



DAPHNA FIELDS

**Chief Brokerage Officer,
Gibson Sotheby's International Realty**

Daphna Fields played a pivotal role in guiding Gibson Sotheby's International Realty through 2025. She collaborated closely with leadership to anticipate and respond to sweeping industry changes, including revised standards of practice, updated listing display policies and significant state-level regulatory updates in Massachusetts.

Fields led brokerage-wide training sessions, targeted workshops and individualized coaching to translate complex rule changes into clear, practical strategies. She also launched an internal Leadership Development Program designed to prepare high-potential advisors for future management roles. Through structured mentorship, skill-building and real-world application, the program is cultivating the next generation.

"I find great fulfillment in helping advisors achieve their goals and guiding them to those 'aha moments' where new ideas click and confidence grows," says Fields. "I thrive on creating spaces where individuals can lean into their own expertise while also learning from the diverse perspectives of those around them."



ANDREW LAFRENIERE

**Chief Operating Officer,
Houlihan Lawrence**

Lafreniere advanced operational innovation in 2025 by launching a Private Exclusive portal for off-market opportunities, reinforcing agent value while continuing a 25-year legacy of technology leadership and strategic execution.



ERIC CHESIN

**Executive Vice President
and Chief Strategy Officer,
Anywhere Real Estate Inc.**

Chesin advanced enterprise-wide innovation in 2025 by expanding AI-powered recruiting tools, streamlining cross-functional operations and leading transformational initiatives that strengthened alignment, agility and long-term competitiveness across the organization.



JERRY LEGRAND

**Chief Technology Officer,
APEX MLS**

A visionary technologist, Legrand led the rebranding of APEX MLS while launching a compliance system that slashed data errors by 40%, ensuring over 6,000 real estate professionals have access to the highest quality MLS data. His commitment to innovation and industry policy continues to set a gold standard for MLS excellence and member retention.

NICHOLAS SEKELA

**Founder/Licensed Real Estate Salesperson,
Oasis Realty Group**

In just three years, Nicholas Sekela has grown Oasis Realty Group into the No. 1 brokerage in Bellport Village, New York, by volume sold, while personally crossing \$65 million in closed sales. He combines market expertise with relationship-driven care, serving first-time buyers, seasoned investors and diverse communities with equal commitment.

As dedicated to community as he is to business, Sekela hosted the third annual Oasis Patchogue Pride Party in 2025, drawing over 500 attendees and reinforcing his commitment to LGBTQIA+ rights and visibility year-round. Alongside his husband, Joseph, who runs the in-house production company Oasis Studios, Sekela has cultivated a team of motivated agents and developed cutting-edge marketing content, delivering A-list property presentations across all price points.

An innovator, leader and community advocate, Sekela has been recognized as one of Top 20 Under 40 by the Long Island Board of Realtors® and received the Real Estate Excellence Award from Herald Publications.



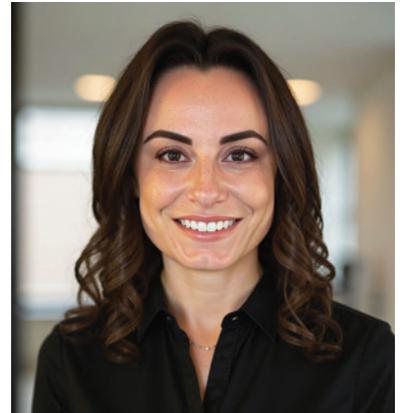
VICTOR LUND
**CEO, WAV Group &
RE Technology**

A tireless advocate for “digital sovereignty,” Lund launched the Fluente AI division and WAV Group’s technology investment arm, Lumnia, in 2025 while supporting the rollout of transformative engagement platform Homeowner.ai. His strategic vision ensures that brokerages and MLSs maintain control over their data and technology in an increasingly automated landscape.



IDA MARIE PETKUS
**Sales Agent, Berkshire
Hathaway HomeServices
Florida Realty**

A dedicated advocate for consumer safety, Petkus led a national push for mandatory mold disclosures and professional testing standards in 2025. Her efforts to categorize mold as a critical public health issue are designed to protect homeowners and tenants from the devastating health and financial impacts of exposure.



ELYSE CRUCIANI
**Vice President of The Studio,
Anywhere Real Estate Inc.**

In 2025, Cruciani revolutionized real estate marketing by embedding generative AI into The Studio’s workflows. From launching pioneering AI-headshot technology to scaling multi-channel listing packages, her visionary leadership has set a new industry standard for how technology and creativity empower the modern agent.



CHIP MURPHY Executive Vice President, Michael Saunders & Company

In 2025, Chip Murphy was promoted to executive vice president of Michael Saunders & Company, marking a pivotal step in his leadership journey. That same year, he also spearheaded the brokerage's expansion into two competitive luxury markets—St. Petersburg and Sanibel/Captiva—including the acquisition of the No. 1 office on Sanibel Island. These moves strengthened the company's Gulf Coast footprint, attracted top talent and positioned the firm for sustained growth in high-demand coastal markets.

In 2025, Murphy also rolled out new tools and programs designed to elevate agent productivity, leadership development and client service, reinforcing the firm's commitment to excellence.

"Real estate is a competitive, ever-changing industry, so creating a culture of professionalism, collaboration and growth is what continues to inspire me," Murphy says. "It's incredibly meaningful to know that my work extends beyond individual careers by having a small part in strengthening our company and the communities we serve."



BRYAN DEVORE Realtor® | Senior Real Estate Specialist, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties

In 2025, Devore bridged the gap between real estate and advocacy by launching the "Senior Spaces" reality show and hosting monthly educational workshops. His forward-thinking approach provides a comprehensive roadmap for older adults, cementing his role as the industry's premier specialist for senior transitions.



CHRIS DIETZ President, Global Operations, Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®

Dietz drove unprecedented international connectivity in 2025, orchestrating the Global Symposium in Prague, the Latin America and Caribbean Forum in Miami, and the Asia Pacific Forum in Singapore while securing LeadingRE's prominence at high-level venues like the Global Property Expo in Singapore and the Luxury Property Show in Shanghai.



ALAN FENN Founder & CEO, MLS Offers

Fenn reinforced his reputation as a premier industry futurist in 2025 by enabling unrepresented buyers to use the MLS Offers platform. By anticipating post-settlement market needs and securing essential patents, he has modernized the offer process to ensure transparency and efficiency for all parties.

STEPHEN MEADOWS

Chief Operating Officer, Coldwell Banker Premier

As COO, Stephen Meadows spent 2025 advancing Coldwell Banker Premier's growth strategy. A key initiative he spearheaded was the creation and training of a new AI incubation tool focused on converting rental leads into potential buyers—significantly improving conversion rates and helping agents unlock new paths to homeownership for their clients.

Meadows also designed and launched a new Business Development division centered on life-event marketing and enterprise-level partnerships, created through a strategic acquisition in Florida. In addition, he built a system enabling referral agents to generate greater passive income by activating their spheres of influence for structured referral farming.

In 2025, Meadows also completed his tenth merger or acquisition for the company in the last five years. "I love thinking of new ways to drive revenue and provide new tools to the agents," he says. "We are a growth-oriented company, and I am always looking down the road for the best opportunities."



GEORGE GATT

Licensed Real Estate Agent, Stephen Joseph Properties

Gatt excelled in 2025 by facilitating a landmark 15-year national commercial lease and a \$5 million community sports development project. By blending AI-driven marketing with a concierge-style residential approach, he has established himself as one of Long Island's most influential and versatile rising stars.



DIANE GLASS

CEO, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Chicago

Glass revolutionized the agent experience in 2025 by trading traditional office footprints for modern, collaborative hubs and launching the vibrant "Move Confidently 3.0" campaign. Her visionary leadership continues to secure Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Chicago's status as a top workplace and industry innovator.



YUVAL GOLAN

Founder & CEO, Waltz

Golan transformed international real estate investment in 2025, raising \$50 million to scale the Waltz platform and enable up to \$1 billion in U.S. loan volume. His digital-first approach provides foreign nationals with a seamless, "white-glove" solution for financing and managing American property from anywhere in the world.



KATEY MCGRATH

Vice President and Operating Partner,
Elfant Wissahickon Realtors®

As vice president of Elfant Wissahickon Realtors®, Katey McGrath's involvement with Leading Real Estate Companies of the World® in 2025—including moderating a panel at its National Conference, participating in broker forum interviews for the organization's Institute and speaking at the Global Symposium in Prague—were experiences that underscored her commitment to listening, learning and sharing ideas that elevate the profession.

In 2025, McGrath continued serving on the Philadelphia Commission for Women, where she co-chairs the Housing Subcommittee, advocating for access to safe and affordable housing. Her work on the Bright MLS Data Policy Committee further positioned her as a voice for trust, transparency and responsible data use.

"The most valuable part of leadership is the opportunity to create connections, open doors for others and learn from people I meet," McGrath says. "I don't take those opportunities lightly, and I'm committed to continuing this work with humility, curiosity and respect."



DIANA ZAYA

Founder, Maverick Systems

In 2025, Zaya revolutionized recruitment and retention by launching AI-powered predictive models like Movement Alerts. Expanding Maverick Systems to over 25 MLS markets, her data-driven vision has empowered brokerages representing \$1B-plus in sales to grow with unprecedented clarity and confidence.



LAURIE EVANS

President,
The Real Estate Studio

In 2025, Evans launched The Real Estate Studio, a hospitality-driven brokerage redefining luxury as a level of service, while introducing innovative builder and client experience programs that elevate standards, re-humanize real estate and set a new benchmark for service-first leadership.



JUAN DEL SOL

CEO, Multiple Clients List

Del Sol spearheaded a major technological leap in 2025 by integrating AI-driven contract verification into the Multiple Clients List platform. His focus on automating compliance and protecting buyer-agent relationships has provided real estate professionals with essential tools to maintain transparency, elevate standards and secure their value.

BENNETT RICHARDSON

**Chief Marketing & Communications Officer,
National Association of Realtors®**

In May 2025, Bennett Richardson joined the National Association of Realtors® (NAR) during one of the most transformative periods in the organization's 117-year history. As chief marketing and communications officer, Richardson has spearheaded a new chapter for the brand, focused on absolute transparency and a modernized advocacy voice. Drawing from his extensive background as a media executive at Semafor, Google and Politico, he has worked to overhaul NAR's content ecosystem to better serve its approximately 1.5 million members and the general public.

Under his leadership, NAR successfully deployed a robust consumer-education infrastructure, including the Consumer Guide series and a high-impact legal video campaign that garnered over 800,000 views.

Richardson also pioneered the Pro-Property Platform in late 2025, a digital initiative connecting the real estate community with federal candidates who champion private property rights. He has worked to reposition NAR as a forward-thinking organization ready to lead the industry into its next era.



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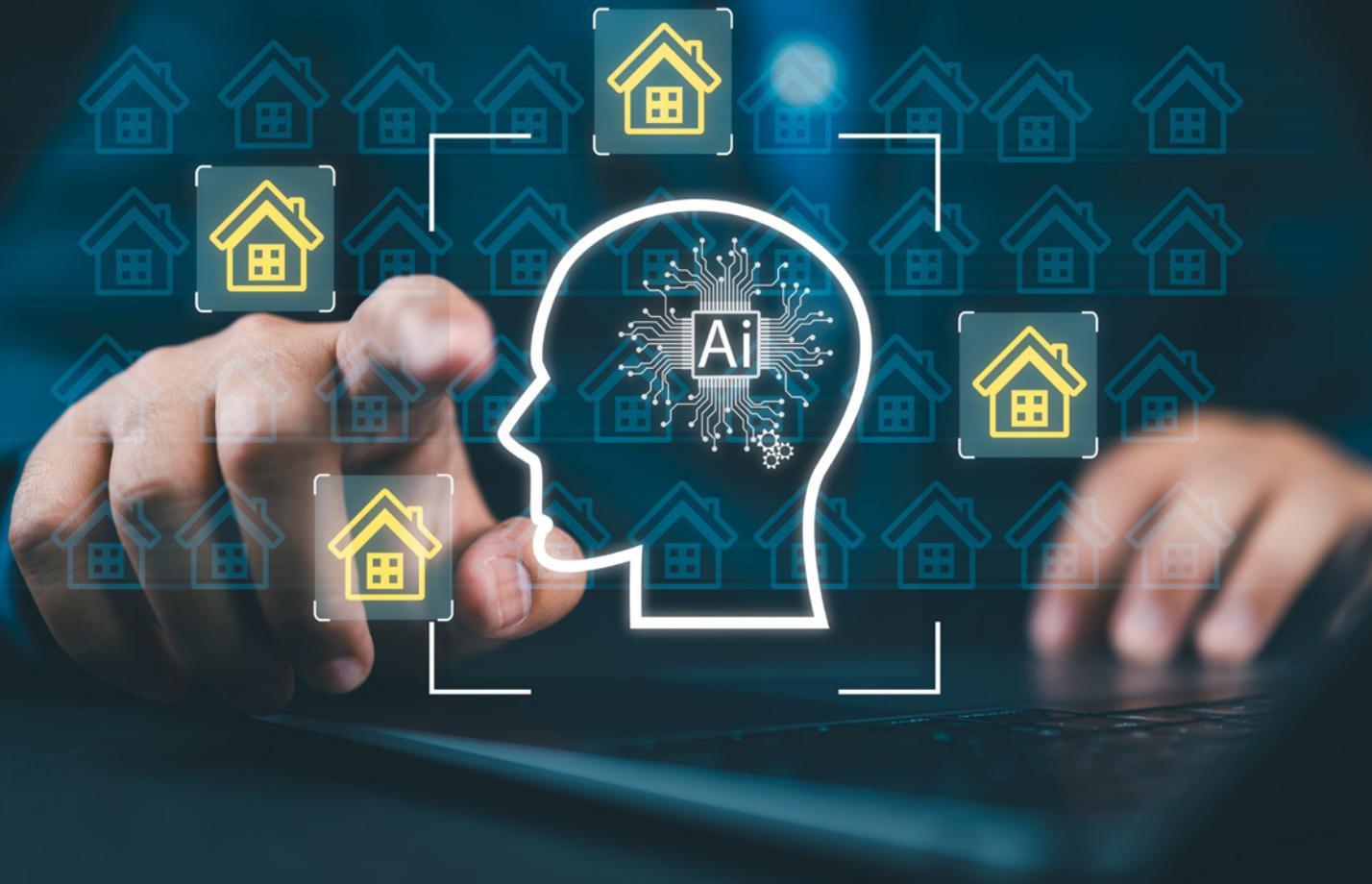
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12 Ways AI Can Fall Short for Real Estate Professionals

By Michael Catarevas

Sailors awaiting rain aim straight, said Captain Craig. Does that sentence make any sense to you? Me neither. It resulted when AI was provided with text and tasked to create something readable, but was misinterpreted by the app to mean that each word had to include "ai." Whoops.

The lead sentence is, of course, laughable, but it's certainly no joke if/when AI screw-ups cost real estate pros hard-earned commissions, clients and reputations. AI has certainly established the ability to save agents gobs of time by automating repetitive, time-consuming tasks. AI is great at supporting agents but terrible at trying to be one. Here are 12 things it cannot do, according to top real estate professionals around the country.

AI Can't Read a Room

"AI is an incredibly powerful tool, but where it consistently falls short in real estate is the judgment, nuance and accountability," says Josh Jarboe, with REMAX Empire Buyers in Kentucky. "It can analyze data, draft content and speed up workflows, but it cannot replace human interaction or experience in the trenches. AI doesn't read a room during negotiations, sense hesitation from a seller or

recognize when a deal is about to fall apart because of emotion, ego or fear rather than the reality of the situation. Humans have instincts, and anytime our food, water or shelter feel threatened, primal emotions can often be triggered, which AI will never be able to understand."

AI Can't See Inside a House

"AI has not been in the houses we list to explain layouts and features, like examining the depth of a closet (will a standard hanger fit?), smells and ceiling height," says Pam Rosser Thistle, with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach, Realtors® in Philadelphia. "Also, an agent is aware of what's to come. In Philadelphia, some

properties have a tax abatement. An agent will know the terms to be able to advise the buyer about steep increases when the abatement expires. We are humans with both real estate and real-life experience, and a mastery of our markets.”

AI Can't Be Hyperlocal

“When it comes to clients, they have to realize, especially in smaller metro areas, that the information isn't as local as they like to think it is,” says Jeffrey Decatur, with REMAX Capital in upstate New York. “AI frequently pulls national headlines and makes sweeping generalizations in its answers. It doesn't take into account that real estate is hyperlocal. Real estate laws and standards of practice differ from state to state, and sometimes from region to region. There are very limited situations where one answer covers the entire country. For example, in Albany, New York, I hired an AI company to create content for me, but it pulled info from New York City. AI has never viewed properties. It doesn't know the nuances and differences of an area. AI can only take what information it is supplied with. It won't live it or experience real estate the way an agent or client does.”

AI Can't Know Crucial Details

“There are some things that AI consistently gets wrong in real estate,” says Monisha Rana, with Coldwell Banker Warburg, in New York City. “It has yet to accurately determine whether buildings are pre-war or post-war, for instance. In NYC, a building's pre- or post-war status is often a key architectural and style distinction, and many people feel strongly about their preferences. On several occasions, when trying to find comps for a particular unit, I have input data into ChatGPT and asked it to give me similar buildings in the neighborhood, making sure to include whether the building was pre-war vs. post-war, had a doorman, and any other ame-

“While AI can pull generalized data, it cannot truly understand micro-markets, street-by-street value differences or neighborhood culture, which come from being present and engaged locally.”

**-MADISON BLAU,
IS LUXURY**



nities that would help me get as similar a comp as possible without being in the same building. On all of the occasions AI was very good at finding buildings in the neighborhood. However, it has not been accurate about whether the building was in fact pre-war or post-war, and moreover, AI has not been accurate or helpful in distinguishing which side streets or crossings are considered more desirable, such as less busy traffic-wise, have a school next door, etc.”

AI Can't Build Trust

“AI can analyze data, but it cannot replace human judgment,” says Madison Blau, with IS LUXURY in Las Vegas and California. “It cannot read emotional cues, body language or

the subtle signals that matter most in negotiations, where timing, tone and intuition often outweigh data-driven responses. AI cannot build trust in a high-stakes, emotional transaction where clients need reassurance, empathy and accountability. Trust is built through consistency, transparency and lived experience, not algorithms. While AI can pull generalized data, it cannot truly understand micro-markets, street-by-street value differences or neighborhood culture, which come from being present and engaged locally.”

AI Can't Communicate Directly

“AI cannot replace the fundamental human connection we share with our clients,” says Robert Little, with

“I like to tell my clients that AI is like a blender, not a chef. It can mix info from various sources, but it takes a professional to analyze and compile the final product.”

-LISA HARRIS,
REMAX Center



REMAX Advantage in Henderson, Nevada. “While it can draft a message, it should be used sparingly in direct communication. Clients often sense when a response is automated, which can erode trust. Ultimately, AI cannot pick up the phone to offer reassurance during an emotional purchase or provide the sage, experience-based advice required during a difficult sale where empathy is essential.”

AI Can’t Create Logical Comps

“AI falls short in comparative analysis because it isn’t able to differentiate between renovations that sellers have made to a home or make adjustments for them,” says William Yau, with

Coldwell Banker Warburg in New York City. “AI cannot understand development rezoning, natural light, air rights, etc., to provide the most accurate market value analysis. For example, there were two single-family homes near a construction area. One of them faced the construction site, which will soon impact its natural light (previously unobstructed; will now face a brick wall). The other home was a few blocks away and had more wear and tear. The comp analysis conveyed that the home facing the construction was valued higher. However, the home that sold for the higher price was the one farther from the construction zone despite its less desirable condition.”

AI Can’t Lead the Path to Closings

“Once a buyer is writing an offer, the real work begins,” says Eric Lavey, with The Beverly Hills Estates in California. “The transaction must be held together throughout escrow, knowing there is a 30%-plus chance it will never reach closing. Most failures are not about price or terms. They come from misunderstandings, an inability to recognize what a buyer or seller is feeling and the failure to bridge that gap toward clarity, comfort and trust. And this is only the beginning of the deal. Marketing a home or placing it on the MLS is not what a seller is truly paying for when they hire a broker. They are paying for judgment, perception and execution. Not every agent can do this, let alone AI.”

AI Can’t Perceive Emotions

“AI is a great tool that processes and mirrors the information it is given,” says Shannon Murree, with REMAX Hallmark Chay Realty Brokerage in Barrie, Ontario. “It outputs only what it is instructed, with no judgment, intuition, empathy or awareness of what is missing. It cannot hear hesitation in someone’s voice, or sit with a client who is navigating grief, divorce or a major life shift and simply listen with intention. It cannot walk a property and notice what experience tells you matters: the smell, the sound, the feel, the things that never show up in data.”

AI Can’t Predict Ahead

“Our team has integrated AI into nearly every aspect of our business, but it’s not replacing our primary roles,” says Ivan Chorney, with Compass’s Ivan & Mike Team in South Florida. “There’s a local intelligence that never shows up in data or AI. Knowing that a developer quietly controls multiple homes on a street, that infrastructure is planned nearby or that a neighboring site may be headed toward demolition and years of construction. Those details can



dramatically change how you value a property and whether you buy it at all. The best outcomes will come from professionals who use AI to enhance their judgment, not from AI trying to replace it.”

Like Agents, AI Can’t Give Legal/Financial Advice

“Whether putting together a contract or reviewing a building document, a small oversight can create a big problem,” says Blake Zises, with Coldwell Banker Warburg in New York City. “AI (like agents) should not give financial advice. When a seller reviews offers, they should not rely on AI to confirm a buyer’s qualifications. As for buyers, AI should not be trust-

ed to make financing recommendations or determine someone’s overall budget. In terms of pricing, while AI can provide comps in the neighborhood, real estate professionals will always provide a deeper level of comp analysis. For instance, the caliber of renovation or the uniqueness of a particular property can only be sussed out by the human eye.”

AI Can’t Verify Information

“AI can help write the words in our listing descriptions, but it can’t verify facts,” says Lisa Harris, with REMAX Center in Braselton, Georgia. “The top six areas I’ve seen most errors include Fair Housing comments, square footage, pricing, comps, schools and

inaccurate marketing claims. I like to tell my clients that AI is like a blender, not a chef. It can mix info from various sources, but it takes a professional to analyze and compile the final product.” **RE**



Michael Catarevas is an RISMedia senior editor.

RISMedia™ 2026

REAL ESTATE'S ROCKING IN THE NEW YEAR



Women in Real Estate: Insights and Strategies for Succeeding in Today's Market

By Maria Patterson

During RISMedia's 5th Annual Rocking in the New Year event on Jan. 8, a cohort of female leaders from across the industry shared sage advice and practical knowledge for succeeding in the months ahead. In honor of International Women's month, here are some of the top takeaways from just a few of real estate's most influential female voices.

BESS FREEDMAN
CEO, Brown Harris Stevens, on agent success

"It's hard for people not to get caught up in the outcome because people only get paid for results in what we do. So agents, many times, if they're focused on the commission that's coming in versus serving their client, everything gets jumbled, and that's not good. We have to focus on the

journey, what you're doing and how you're doing it, and all the other good stuff will come."

LISA STURTEVANT
Chief Economist, Bright MLS, on the economy

"2026 is going to be a transition year, not a turnaround year. Sales are going to be lower than they would in a more normal year, price growth is

going to slow and, overall, we will be seeing the market head back towards a more normal condition. But there's going to be a lot of uncertainty, and homebuyers and sellers are going to be looking to their real estate professional to help give them the advice and guidance they need to make the right decision."

MICHELE HARRINGTON
CEO, FirstTeam® Real Estate, on the value of discipline

"The best thing about real estate and the worst thing about real estate is the amount of freedom that you have. It's an amazing business for being an entrepreneur, but the problem is, we don't have the structure that we

need to be successful. So my biggest piece of advice is creating amazing habits, using discipline, making sure that you're doing the hard things first every day."

CARRIE LITTLE

Designated Managing Broker/Owner, CARMAC Realty Group, LLC, on lead gen

"What I like to tell real estate agents, before they go invest in lead generation, look at what their brokerage offers and look at what's available to them through their local association or even multiple listing service. They probably don't even know that they have access to potential buyer leads and potential seller leads at their fingertips."

MARISELA HARPER

Broker/Owner, ClearView Realty, on buyer agency changes

"Getting a buyer representation agreement signed before going out and showing a home was something I did for years, and then COVID happened and it was a race to show the home, a race to write the offer and there was less time to explain my process and how I worked. These changes have caused us to slow down, talk about our process, talk about how we get paid. I think it's been positive; transparency creates a better environment, and those agents that take the time to slow down and do it the right way are the ones that are going to thrive long term."

CHRISTINA PAPPAS

President, The Keyes Company and Illustrated Properties, on relationships

"We are a relationship business. We're nose to nose, toes to toes, belly to belly. Our company's about to turn 100 years old. Like my grandfather said, everything is different, but nothing has changed. It's about the people. But I would also add, it's about trust. How are you differentiating yourself and ensuring that you are

in front of people when they need to buy or sell? How are you providing value to your customer so they call you for that referral?"

WENDY FORSYTHE

CMO, eXp Realty, on the advantage of AI

"I look at how AI can handle all the things that are sort of low-impact so that I am freeing up my time for high-impact activities, the human interaction activities, because that's where I get the highest amount of return. I don't worry about robots replacing me. People don't want to buy houses from robots. If that's what they wanted, they would've found ways to do that years ago."

BRENDA MAHER

President, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices New England, New York and Hudson Valley Properties, on private listings

"It's very, very important that the seller be completely consulted with to really understand their motivation. Oftentimes, exclusives sound like the way to go. In many instances, I think [sellers] just haven't been educated fully, and they don't have any idea that they're going to be leaving money on the table. Will the open market always bring in the highest and best price? Maybe not, but the majority of the time, it is in the best interest of the seller, for sure."

ATHENA PETERSEN

Senior Vice President & Regional Manager, Long & Foster, on affordability challenges

"We do have some financing in place that helps first-time homebuyers get into homes, and some buy-down programs. We're also able to get buyers into homes with an assumable mortgage rate. We work really closely with our lender team as well. Our preferred lenders help educate our buyers and help them come up with creative solutions."

JACKIE LOUH

Chief Operating Officer, Lamacchia Realty, on modern marketing

"The way that consumers look for homes and look for agents, and really make decisions in general, has changed completely. We are now marketing to a digital-centric consumer and one who expects instant information and a seamless, personalized experience. From AI tools that help us understand buyer behavior to social media platforms that shape our brand presence, modern marketing is no longer optional—it's essential."

ANAM HARGEY

Team Lead, The Hargey Group, Real Brokerage, on productivity

"I schedule everything. I do time blocks for responding to emails, responding to text messages, reaching out, scheduling lunches, coffees, and then I also leave a block in my schedule open in case a last-minute showing request comes up or somebody needs something that's a little more emergent. I have time in my day built in so that I can handle it and it's not going to throw off the rest of my day."

DEANNE GOLDEN

President & CEO, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties, on mindset

"We always perform to the level of our mindset, so make certain the people around you are lifting up your mindset because that's going to help you get more clarity, and clarity is going to gain back more confidence. Your mindset is going to control the amount of clarity you bring forth to your day, to the people you're surrounding yourself with, to the clients you serve." **RE**



Maria Patterson is RISMedia's EVP and executive editor.



From Double Taps to DMs: Turning Social Engagement Into Leads

By Claudia Larsen

Social media often feels like it's all about the followers. The platforms make you feel like the more followers you have, the more successful you'll be. But, for real estate agents, social media success isn't about how many people saw your post. It's about how many people you actually spoke to.

In order for your social media marketing to add real value to your business, you need to be turning your engagement into prospects. You have to take the time to reach out to those engaging with you, DM (direct message) them and create leads for your business.

Here's how to evaluate meaningful social media engagement and turn it into leads.

Evaluating Interactions

Beyond building trust with potential clients and showcasing your brand, you should always be aiming for engagement on your socials: votes on your polls, likes and comments on your posts and stories.

Some people will casually engage with profiles they see or follow, so

you'll need to evaluate which of these are meaningful interactions.

The profiles that follow you and you see commenting, liking, voting, etc., most frequently are the ones you're going to want to reach out to. These are the ones who are most interested in your business, and have interacted meaningfully to the point of following you because they want to be tuned into what you're posting.

Those profiles that may not follow you, but frequently interact, are strong leads. As algorithms work differently nowadays, some people don't commit to following people they like as long as that person is appearing on their feed regularly. These are still valuable people to connect with, as they're frequently interacting with your content.

For the casual followers—those who follow you but don't interact regularly—wait for more frequent engagement to reach out. If they aren't interacting with your content, they aren't really looking at it, which means they aren't really interested in real estate at the moment. When their interactions ramp up, that's when you have an opportunity to connect.

Sending Direct Messages

While as an agent you're a salesperson in your own right, you don't necessarily want to approach your reach-outs to followers as one. If you go in hard off the bat with "Are you looking to buy or sell?" it can feel a little disingenuous to the authentic, trustworthy personality you've been crafting on your socials.

Once you've identified those people meaningfully engaging, center your DM conversation with an approach based on their interactions.

For example, if they've been voting in polls, reach out based on their answers. If you conducted a poll on preferred kitchen styles in a home, you can reach out to a poll voter with a DM saying, "Hey! I saw you voted for the modern farmhouse kitchen over the industrial one. Are you a fan of that style, or just browsing?"

The key is to be conversational and casual, and center the DM on what your potential client has been interacting with and what that means to them. You want to probe to find out their goals, whether they're just looking and have no current plans, their plans are further out or they're looking to do a transaction in the immediate future. All are valued leads, with different levels of immediacy to the business they'll provide.

Once you've opened a successful conversation, and receive interest from your DM, you now have a lead you can transfer over to your follow-up lists. **RE**

Claudia Larsen is an associate editor for RISMedia.



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Steven Fase II

President

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Michigan Real Estate
Grand Rapids, Michigan

<https://www.bhsmichiganrealestate.com>

Region served: **Michigan and Northern Indiana**

Years in real estate: **24 (12 in management)**

Number of offices: **40**

Number of agents: **900**

Favorite part of your job: **Working together to solve issues and help people achieve their goals**

Given how much the industry has evolved in recent years, what do you see as the biggest challenge facing your brokerage?

We're seeing a lot of new agents, which I think is good, but the influx is creating challenges among some of the industry's long-term agents. It's also impacting brokerages as they determine how to get agents up and running to begin making a living in a market with fewer units for sale. Millions of agents didn't sell a house this past year, so how do we help those just getting started make this a career? How do we help them achieve their goals so that they can be successful?

How does your company make its agents' jobs easier?

My role, which is the same as everyone else on my team,

is to listen to what the frontline agent is dealing with and determine what they need to succeed. From there, it's all about focusing our energy on getting those tools—from the support to the training—into the agents' hands.

I'm a huge goal-setter and development guy, as I believe you always need to be learning and growing, so I'm constantly thinking about how I can help our agents do just that. Not only are we big on training and development, but we're also passionate about teaching. And we invest heavily in our training and coaching for agents in all phases of their career. We designed our brokerage to be a service to the agent, and I'm proud to say that we're a true servant leadership company.

What is the best advice you'd give agents who want to succeed and grow into leadership roles like yours?

I always say that you must be present to win. If your company has an office and hosts masterminds, conducts sales meetings or provides training, you have to be part of that. If you want to win in this game, you must be engaged. Whether it's joining your board or setting aside time to spend with clients, do whatever you can to be present.

Another piece of advice that I'd offer is to write down what you want then try to plan your life around those goals so that you can achieve them. I keep a master goal list in my planner and aim to write down 100 goals for the year.

I'm old-school in that I believe in hard work, but you have to try to balance that with the wheel of life. In the end, it all comes down to being present and putting in the work while being honest and speaking your mind clearly.

What attracted you to the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices network?

While we originally switched over when Prudential was acquired by HomeServices of America, Inc., after being part of the network, I've come to recognize that it's all about the leaders and broker/owners I associate with—some of whom have become friends over the years. If I need help with something, I can pick up the phone and call 50 or so owners or CEOs, and there's never any hesitation from the person on the other end of the line. There's an abundance of positive attitude that comes along with the firm. They're truly great people. **RE**

For more information, please visit
<https://www.BerkshireHathawayhs.com>.

-Claudia Larsen



Rastellini

Guiding Agents Through Change and Opportunity

Angela Rastellini

Broker of Record - Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island; Vice President of Transactions Management
Lamacchia Realty
Waltham, Massachusetts
<https://www.lamacchiarealty.com>

Region served: **New England and South Florida**

Years in real estate: **17**

Number of offices: **24**

Number of agents: **750**

Favorite part of your job: **Helping people solve problems**

Your bio notes a particular focus on compliance. How have the past few years changed the way you go about teaching and enforcing compliance?

Having recently attended a training focused on ways to avoid lawsuits, with an emphasis on disclosure, representation and related compliance issues—I would say that when the commission-related lawsuits emerged, we spent a lot of time on just that: creating forms, documents and disclosures.

Most recently, there have been several new laws introduced in Massachusetts—one where sellers have to allow buyers the right to have a home inspection in addition to a rental fee change where you can only be paid by the person that hired you. Each of these updates required

new documentation and extensive education for Massachusetts agents. They've thrown a lot of curveballs, so you have to be able to adapt on the fly.

You also have a strong focus on office expansion. Would you say now is the time to pursue growth—in terms of offices and/or number of agents? Why or why not?

We're always looking to expand, but it has to make sense for the business. We've acquired quite a few companies over the past few years, each with its own challenges and way of doing things, which we keep intact for a period of time before making changes. That said, we're always looking for additional opportunities in the market.

Historically, we've spent a significant amount of time training new agents, but as we've become more successful, we've shifted our focus toward investing in and developing our existing agents—but we're beginning to bring on new agents again.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to advance their real estate careers—whether that means becoming a successful agent or growing into a leadership role?

I've experienced both paths firsthand. When I started at Lamacchia Realty, while we operated under a team model, I handled thousands of real estate transactions—a unique setup that has proven to be invaluable in my current role.

While hard work is essential, having been in those situations allows me to coach agents through the challenges they're faced with. In many cases, I've been in their shoes, so it helped to have that experience before taking on a higher role.

Tell us what it means to be part of Lamacchia Realty.

I joined the company when it was still very small, and it's been amazing to see just how much it has grown over the 17 years that I've been here. Being part of senior leadership and helping people grow while navigating challenging situations has been an incredibly rewarding experience.

I'm also proud of our culture. People doubted that we'd be able to maintain it as we grew, but we've proven that we can. Our agents genuinely support one another, so there's no "just-in-it-for-myself" environment and mentality here. Plus, with Broker/Owner and CEO Anthony Lamacchia at the helm—leading by example by putting in the hours—it sets the tone for the entire organization. The harder our agents work, the harder Anthony works for us. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.lamacchiarealty.com>.

-Claudia Larsen



Staying Ahead in a Shifting Market

Todd Engels

Founder

SWAT Realty Group powered by Fathom Realty
North Dallas, Texas

<https://soldinnorthtexas.com>

Region served: **Dallas-Fort Worth**

Years in real estate: **10**

Number of offices: **We don't operate out of traditional offices—instead, we're structured by divisions to better serve the North Texas market.**

Number of agents: **21**

What is the biggest shift you're anticipating in your market this year?

The biggest shift we anticipate is a more balanced, intentional market. Buyers are becoming more strategic, taking the time to evaluate value, location and long-term affordability. At the same time, sellers are having to adjust expectations and understand that pricing, presentation and strong marketing truly matter again. Overall, it's a healthier market where education, communication and professional guidance play a bigger role than in recent years.

How do you maintain expertise across the many sub-markets in North Texas?

We have agents actively working throughout several counties across the Dallas-Fort Worth area, which allows us to stay connected to each sub-market we serve. Through consistent market tracking, regular reporting and strong communication, our agents and division leaders share real-time insights into pricing trends, inventory shifts and buyer behav-

ior. This allows us to remain hyperlocal in our expertise while maintaining a big-picture understanding of the region.

How are you using technology to give your listings a competitive edge?

From professional photography and video to data-driven pricing and targeted digital marketing, every listing is positioned with a specific strategy in mind. Within our professional media, we use embedded, trackable links that allow us to monitor clicks, views and overall engagement in real-time. This helps us gauge buyer interest, track market feedback and make adjustments quickly.

Which demographic segments are driving activity in your business right now?

We're seeing the most activity from move-up buyers, relocation clients and buyers who are leasing strategically while preparing to purchase. North Texas continues to attract people at different life stages, which keeps the market active as conditions shift. The first-time homebuyer profile has evolved as well. Today's buyers tend to be more informed, more financially prepared and far more intentional. They're less focused on rushing into a purchase and more focused on long-term affordability, stability and making a smart entry into the market.

What is your best tip for coaching a picky buyer through the emotional hurdles of today's market?

The most important pieces are education and clear expectation-setting. When buyers truly understand the market, their options and the trade-offs involved, emotions tend to settle. Early in the process, we help them define their must-haves versus their preferences, so decisions feel grounded rather than overwhelming. Throughout the transaction, we consistently bring the focus back to their long-term goals and the realities of today's market, reminding them that the right home isn't about perfection—it's about fit. That clarity, paired with ongoing education, helps buyers stay confident, keep emotions in check and ultimately reach the closing table.

How does Fathom help your brokerage stay ahead of the competition?

By giving our team a modern, scalable platform that supports every stage of the business. From advanced marketing tools and lead management to ongoing training and systems for growth, Fathom provides the structure and resources agents need to compete in today's market. The brokerage's focus on technology and innovation allows us to serve clients faster and more effectively, while maintaining the personalized service that sets us apart. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://fathomcareers.com>.

-Paige Brown



Warren

Building Sustainable Results Through Consistent Execution

JB Warren

Team Founder

Warren Team powered by Jason Mitchell Group
Orlando, Florida

<https://thejasonmitchellgroup.com>

Region served: [Florida](#), [Colorado](#), [Idaho](#), [Tennessee](#)

Years in real estate: 10

Number of team members: 120

Favorite part of your job: [Helping agents build confidence and consistency while creating businesses that support their goals and lives](#)

What is one challenge your market is facing, and what are you doing to overcome it?

The biggest challenge is the number of buyers and sellers sitting on the sidelines. People want to move, but uncertainty has created a lock-in effect. Because of that, agents must double down on business fundamentals and prospecting. Success comes from treating your pipeline as a long-term initiative, hitting weekly call expectations, consistently sending out value-add content and staying in touch with past clients on a quarterly basis. Agents who stop chasing commission and focus on providing value and education are the ones who build sustainable results.

You're widely recognized for driving performance and growth. What leadership practices have been most critical in building and scaling high-performing teams?

Leaders have to be steady and involved, which begins with being present and consistent. Teams don't need hype, they need clarity, direction and someone they can trust—especially when things get tough. A big part of my approach involves staying close to the business and making myself available, which means stepping in to help with the small details. Even if they don't feel significant to me, they may be critical to the agent at that moment.

How do you approach training and mentorship to ensure agents build sustainable careers?

I look at training as habit-building first, skills second. Early on, the focus is on helping agents build the right routines, and while talent helps, early success almost always comes from repetition and discipline more than anything else. However, access and mentorship matter just as much. If agents don't have support, confidence fades quickly. When someone can get guidance in real-time, they correct faster, build confidence sooner and start stacking wins.

In what ways are you leveraging the power of technology to help agents close more?

Technology has to support agents, not slow them down. This business keeps demanding more adaptability, and if the tools aren't helping agents execute, they become a distraction. AI has been a real advantage for our team when used the right way. We leverage it for conversation scripting, market research, content ideas and helping agents stay consistent with follow-up and workflows. It's not about replacing the agent, but reducing friction and helping them show up prepared.

What led to your decision to join the Jason Mitchell Group (JMG)?

I'd been paying attention to JMG for years, and through multiple market cycles, they consistently grew while others stalled—which told me they had built something fundamentally different. What stood out most was the focus on bottom-of-the-funnel lead and referral opportunities. Instead of agents constantly chasing cold, low-converting business, the model centers around clients who are closer to making decisions. Just as important has been the support system behind the scenes. From onboarding, to processing and compliance, to our regional and national leaders and state brokers, the level of support has been incredible. Founder and CEO Jason Mitchell's firsthand experience as a producing agent was also a major factor. He understands what agents need to succeed—and that agent-first mindset shows up in the model and the decisions being made every day. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://thejasonmitchellgroup.com>.

-Paige Tepping



A Brand That Supports, Agents That Shine

Jim Sparkman
Principal Broker/Owner

Mark Farrow
Broker/Owner
HomeSmart Realty Group
Salem, Oregon

<https://homesmart.com/real-estate-office/oregon/salem/56-homesmart-realty-group>

Region served: **The Pacific Northwest**
Years in real estate: **Jim: 21; Mark: 30**
Number of offices: **6 in Oregon, Washington and Idaho**
Number of agents: **298**

What does HomeSmart's new brand mean for your brokerage, and how does it help agents stand out in your market?

Mark Farrow: In a market like ours, with all the fluctuations—and the absorption and sale of companies at the national level—it couldn't have come at a better time. The branding is crisp, new and bold, which serves to reinvent us visually as we ride the wave into what's next. It signals that we're making changes to keep up with the market and the industry, providing a springboard to the next level.

Jim Sparkman: While there's value in how long Matt Widows held onto the brand that started it all after founding the company, the timing couldn't have been better. We're leaders in our marketplace as franchise partners, and the comfort of a consistent brand makes a lot of sense. But when you see a market leader make a change to a brand that matches today's environment, it's accepted pretty quickly.

And while our agents already stand out in the marketplace, the rebrand further reinforces the professionalism that's associated with our agent base. While the rebrand alone may not directly generate additional business in and of itself, it strengthens the base we've already established.

How are your agents supported and driven by the brand's tools, programs and leadership?

JS: The tools provided by HomeSmart—all of which are incorporated into the RealSmart Agent platform—are far superior to those of our peers, which has been proven time and again among agents from other brokerages who can't believe how much they have access to and how streamlined the process is. We've always believed that the 100%-model combined with traditional management and support is what sets HomeSmart apart.

MF: A lot of agents have been given the wrong impression about what HomeSmart offers, so when they join, it can honestly be mind-blowing. They're surprised by how much support and how many tools are available. Our principal broker/owner is extremely responsive and hands-on, and agents feel that leadership connection and involvement every day. People sometimes assume a flat-fee model means fewer services, but we actually provide far more than they expect.

What do you want agents to know about the experience associated with being part of HomeSmart Realty Group?

MF: We're a family, so we look out for one another, and we all work together. It's the community we've created, as well as the atmosphere. Whether it's getting our agents and their families involved at our annual barbecue, our awards banquet, or any of the other parties we throw throughout the year, it's an inclusive mentality.

JS: If you spend any time in our organization, you're going to hear me or Mark tell our agents that we love each and every one of them, and we're thankful that they're part of the family and they call HomeSmart Realty Group home—and that's what drives how we operate the business.

What attracts real estate professionals to the firm?

JS: We joined HomeSmart because we supported Matt and his vision, but more than that, we wanted to see agents make more money. When we franchised, there wasn't a 100%-brokerage in our marketplace, and for many years, our recruiting methodology centered around agents keeping more of their commission. This afforded agents the opportunity to invest back into their clients and family. But over the years, that has shifted, and today, culture and support are key when it comes to recruiting top agents. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://homesmart.com>.

-Paige Tepping



Leveraging Opportunity for Long-Term Success

Tyler Thornhill
President

Janet McAfee Real Estate, a member of Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®
Saint Louis, Missouri
<https://janetmcafee.com>

Region served: **St. Louis, Missouri**

Years in real estate: **21**

Number of offices: **1**

Number of agents: **120**

Favorite part of your job: **Seeing agents succeed.**

Best advice for new agents: **Spend time in the office. I know that might sound disjointed in a world where not many people go to the office anymore, but some of the greatest mentor/mentee relationships have formed organically at the phone duty desk.**

Tell us what you like most about the region in which you work.

Our town experiences a familiar “boomerang” pattern common in many Midwestern towns—where people leave for an extended period of time and later return. We see it come back around when people you went to school with, or those you knew as a young adult, come back and lean on the brokerage’s expertise to purchase their first home and become part of the St. Louis community.

What is the most significant trend positively affecting your business right now?

We had the opportunity to grow our agent count significantly this past year due to changes brought about by consolidation in the marketplace, which resulted in a good year for us. That said, we don’t have annual target numbers for agent adds, as we don’t think that way. But when we get the opportunity to add good agents to our roster, it’s really exciting. Our longevity in the industry—we’ve been around for 50 years—really matters to people right now.

“It’s exciting to see people moving forward authentically because they have a true need for housing.”

-TYLER THORNHILL,
President, Janet McAfee Real Estate

When it comes to closing transactions, what strategy do you rely on most?

We focus on being there for the entire transaction, managing it closely and offering an all-hands-on-deck level of support for the agent so that the client has a great perception of the experience from beginning to end. Ultimately, that’s where success happens. The magic is digging in, being present for every aspect of the transaction and offering help along the way.

What is one of the challenges your market faces, and what are you doing to overcome it?

I don’t think our market is fundamentally different from other markets in the country, specifically other Midwestern markets, where inventory is limited. Good homes sell quickly at market prices, which is a beautiful thing. However, for buyers searching for that needle-in-a-haystack property—or sellers looking for a needle-in-a-haystack buyer—it becomes a long game. The challenge is finding the inventory, and to manage that, you have to think in years, not just individual transactions.

As we continue through 2026, what are you most looking forward to?

2026 is a year where the lock-in effect stemming from the low interest rates we saw in 2020 and 2021 will finally begin to ease. People’s needs are requiring them to move again, and as a result, I think we’re going to see more transactions in the marketplace this year. It’s exciting to see people moving forward authentically because they have a true need for housing. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.leadingre.com>.

-Devin Meenan



Growing the United Brand at Home in Kansas City

Marta Grace
Broker/Owner
United | Kansas City
Kansas City, Missouri
www.UnitedRealEstateKansasCity.com

Region served: **Greater Kansas City**

Years in real estate: **25**

Number of offices: **3**

Number of agents: **350**

Key to continued growth and success: It comes down to retention. Recruiting is its own art, but so is keeping the agents you have. Otherwise, you're in this constant cycle of bringing people on to replace those who leave.

Favorite part of working in real estate: Positively impacting the lives and financial trajectory of our agents

How did you get started in real estate, and what inspired you to take the leap into owning and leading a brokerage?

Working as a nurse, I felt the excitement of being a part of somebody's life for an important moment, which isn't something I expected when I made the transition to real estate. But at my very first closing, an older Spanish-speaking couple was crying at the closing table, saying they never thought homeownership would be a reality for them, and I was crying right along with them, knowing that I'm absolutely still making a difference.

My husband and I were investing in real estate before we got our licenses and quickly realized we needed ac-

cess to the MLS. We needed to have our licenses if we were going to invest and build a portfolio, so we decided to start our own brokerage so that we weren't giving up half of the commission. As time went by, we began growing in agent count—and the five agents we had when we started in 2003 are still with us today.

How does the real estate profession empower women, and what role do you play in mentoring others?

I always say real estate allowed me to be the mother I wanted to be. As a nurse, you can't just say, "I'm not coming in today. My kid has the sniffles." You don't have the flexibility in most careers that you do with real estate, which allowed me to still be a mother who was available for all the important things. Most of the time, I would have a laptop on my lap at their games or whatever, but I was there, and that's what I really wanted. I talk to other women all the time and say, "There's nothing like real estate in terms of the freedom you have to parent the way you want."

What does success look like to you, not just in terms of numbers, but the impact on agents, employees and buyer and seller clients?

Success for me is freedom, and that's what United offers. In fact, one of our slogans is "Find Your Freedom." Freedom for my schedule, freedom for my agents, freedom to travel. Again, even as a broker, I'm available via Google Meet, text or phone call anytime. Now that our kids are grown and we're empty nesters, we've been traveling a ton, and it hasn't impacted my business because everything's mobile nowadays.

What were the most important factors in choosing United Real Estate as your brokerage partner?

We chose United mostly because they were the first brokerage we talked to that was 100%-commission but still offered everything. It felt like everybody else was saying, "Hey, we're 100%-commission, but don't expect much in return" or "You're going to get all this great training, but you're going to pay us a 30% to 50% split." Also, it's an international company, so they're much bigger than mom-and-pop shops, and we have boots on the ground. There's a real office in every city we're in, so we're not virtual like a lot of the other 100%-commission brokerages.

As the broker, I don't work with buyers and sellers anymore, and that's huge. At first, I thought, gosh, am I giving up business? But as we started growing, I could see why that was so important, and it's made a difference in our brokerage.

How has United's technology, marketing tools and resources helped you differentiate your brokerage in a competitive market?

Technology is one of the main things that sets us apart. Our CEO, Dan Duffy, sold his last company to Microsoft, so technology is his passion. Nowadays, there's AI, and people are more familiar and comfortable with CRMs and all automation. Back then, he also started creating what we call Bullseye, which is an entire agent and broker productivity platform that all our agents have access to, and we automate the follow-up, which is key. No matter what broker you go to, we preach that there is fortune in the follow-up. We all teach our agents how to stay top of mind, but no company is really saying, "Let's take that off your shoulders and just automate it for you." That's what this technology does.

United is among the top 10 brokerages in America. How does being part of its national network benefit you and your agents?

Here in Kansas City, where United actually started off as United Country in 1925, we already had a nice presence, so it benefits us when it comes to credibility. Once we became national and earned all those accolades as one of the fastest-growing companies in the U.S., it became easier as far as recruiting. But bottom line, it's about what we are doing locally and what we are doing for the community. We're very involved here because United promotes getting involved with the community and making a real difference.

As an entrepreneur, what does it take to build a thriving brokerage in today's market?

Truly listening. That's one of the reasons I feel like female brokers are strong. Every agent has a different need, a different schedule, a different niche and a different goal. It's all about how well I'm listening to what your needs are to ensure we're setting you up for success in terms of what success looks like for you.

What is the biggest challenge you face as a leader?

Keeping everyone positive, because in the news, there's doom and gloom. We stay on top of the news and communicate with our agents, creating videos and posting them on a closed Facebook group. It's really about keeping the positive messaging going, keeping real numbers in front of them and saying, "Don't listen to the news hype. Here's what's actually happening in our city and in our state."

What are your best practices for attracting top talent?

That's definitely the toughest part because people are feeling spammed due to the amount of emails and text messages. That said, phone calls have made the biggest difference. Actually picking up the phone and calling somebody and saying, "Hi, I know I've sent an email, but I wanted to follow up and make sure you've looked at it." The actual phone call makes a huge difference with me being able to say, "Hi, I'm

the broker," not just, "Hey, we're a company reaching out to you." It makes them feel special, makes them feel wanted.

What trends do you see shaping the future of real estate, and how are you preparing your brokerage to thrive?

Like other businesses, we're being impacted by AI, so we're teaching our agents how to use it properly. We've created an AI for agents that we've pre-prompted with real estate coaches like Tom Ferry and Brian Buffini, so agents can go in and create marketing campaigns. With all the technology that's being used now, we're making sure our agents know how to use it and are actually implementing it. Where it once took an hour to create a flyer or listing presentation, thanks to the hundreds of templates available within Bullseye's Marketing Hub, it now takes less than two minutes to create what you need.

"Marta's brokerage is run with a tremendous desire to help improve the lives and opportunities of each of her agents and employees. She truly understands that she is making a difference, and as a result, the business continues to grow and prosper."

-RICK HAASE,
President, United Real Estate



In what ways has real estate investing proven to be a great move for you in addition to your career?

One of my passions, my husband and I have been investing here in Kansas City for about 25 years, and it has completely changed our financial trajectory (we own about \$60 million worth of real estate between residential, commercial and multifamily). It's something we preach to agents as well. My goal is to make sure we can empower them, train them, teach them and guide them on how to invest themselves. There's no pension when you retire from real estate, so a few investment properties can change what their retirement could look like.

What excites you most about the next chapter for your brokerage?

That it only gets easier. The more time passes and the more we grow, the growth becomes easier, and I'm really excited to hit that 500-agent milestone. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.GrowWithUnited.com>.

-Michael Catarevas



A Value-Driven Approach to Building Business

Ryan Jonke

Managing Broker/Owner
JPAR® – Modern Real Estate
Arvada, Colorado
<https://www.jparmodernre.com>

Region served: **Denver Front Range**

Years in real estate: **25**

Number of offices: **1**

Number of agents: **170**

What do you like most about the region in which you work?

Colorado, especially the Denver metro area, is insulated from the big dips and swings we see across the United States—which is one of the things I love about this area. In fact, we can look at our growth charts for the last 100 years and find trends that help us understand what our property is going to do, which helps us sell the dream for those looking to buy. We're able to show prospective buyers that while we're going to experience dips and valleys—they're not going to be huge—and you're going to gain a lot of that equity back a lot faster.

With a successful career as the owner of your own brokerage under your belt, what attracted you to JPAR?

As a decent-sized brokerage, I had been talking to folks for a couple of years, as I had already begun to see the writing on the wall. While I wasn't big enough to really leverage

our numbers to get better, I've always been a flat-fee brokerage (even before JPAR)—and so I was collecting big percentages, which made it harder to reinvest and give agents what they want. If I was ever going to franchise, there were certain things I wanted the company to align themselves with me on, and JPAR checked a lot of the boxes.

How does your company make its agents' jobs easier?

Through our concierge support. We have people available throughout the week to help agents who may be struggling up until the point where you could be a very hands-on (managing everything themselves) or hands-off (letting the company handle almost everything) broker. Or they can choose a higher flat-fee option where the company helps with transaction management, marketing and other services. We offer both approaches that you're going to get from a flat-fee brokerage all the way up to a full-service traditional brokerage.

The other part of it involves helping our agents become the best real estate professional they can be. We can provide more value through education and experience, ensuring our agents are aware of what's going on in the market and how they should be looking at it versus how they've always looked at it.

How is your brokerage using technology to better serve clients?

While technology was one of the main things that attracted me to JPAR, it's important to note that a lot of our technology is business based, as our sales professionals are more than simply agents. They're business owners. They have to work their business, which isn't the fun part, but that's the part that's going to grow consistency.

We're also working to integrate meaningful artificial intelligence into the mix to assist our agents within their day-to-day routine—building out a CMA tool for our office that's AI-based. While it's not designed to replace what an agent does, it will help cut out about 40 minutes of the preliminary work associated with gathering data.

What sets JPAR® – Modern Real Estate apart from the competition?

I think it's a couple different things, beginning with the fact that our agents aren't afraid of support—meaning they aren't afraid to ask questions. The other thing that sets us apart from the competition centers around us being a tech-heavy brokerage. The value that we're able to bring to our clients is going to exceed most other brokerages' value based on the basic things we offer. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.jp-ar.com>.

-Paige Tepping



Supporting Agents in a Relationship-Driven Market

Will Langley

Principal Broker
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Keys
Real Estate | Knight & Gardner Realty
Key West, Florida
<https://www.keysrealestate.com>

Region served: **The Florida Keys**

Years in real estate: **16**

Number of offices: **4**

Number of agents: **160**

Favorite part of your job: **The people—the agents I get to work with daily, the buyers and sellers, the mortgage brokers, insurers and inspectors. We're all quarterbacking the teams that come together to help people achieve their goals. I love watching agents build stronger, more lasting, more stable careers.**

Favorite relationship-building strategy: **Integrity above everything and just being real. More often than not we have to come together to solve problems in order to help guide buyers and sellers through a transaction. We lead with integrity, and we're always real.**

In what ways does your company make its agents' jobs easier?

Real estate is a relationship business, and we have an incredible reputation in the Florida Keys and around the world through our affiliation with Berkshire Hathaway

HomeServices. We want to give agents the tools to not only help them stay in touch with their clients, but to provide the best service along the way. I call it a culture of abundance, as we're not competing against one another. In our office, there's enough to go around—and we openly share our favorite roofer, handyman or go-to spot.

Which demographic segments are driving your business these days?

We're a second-home market, a vacation land, and so we're seeing folks anywhere from 40 to 70 years old coming down to the Keys. The common denominator for all of them is that they love our lifestyle. They love the fun, they love the restaurants, and they love the atmosphere—and so that's our target buyer right there.

What strategies do you have in place to successfully reach out to buyers?

We're embracing all the new AI coming out because we want to be ahead of everyone else. When someone asks their chatbot who the best Realtor® in Key West or the Florida Keys is, we want our agents to be the answer. When we have happy buyers and sellers, that's the true marker of our success, because that's what turns into referrals.

What is your best tip for dealing with a picky buyer?

I would say that every one of our clients is a picky buyer, so we have to know the inventory, and I think that's one area at which we excel. Not only are our agents going above and beyond to familiarize themselves with what's available on the market, but we're also doing agent caravans in each of our offices regularly—joining association caravans as well. Buyers aren't picky if you can give them what they want, so having firsthand knowledge of what's out there is key.

What do you like most about the region in which you work?

Getting out on the water boating or visiting our sandbars and coral reefs. I truly believe that if I could take each and every client out for a nice boat ride, everyone's blood pressure would drop. They'd remember why they're there and what it's all about: enjoying the natural resources we're blessed with down in the Florida Keys. **RE**

For more information, please visit
<https://www.BerkshireHathawayhs.com>.

-Devin Meenan



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Anthony Bordin
Associate Sales Manager,
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties



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dhall@rworld.com

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Bright MLS was founded in 2016 as a collaboration between 43 visionary associations and two of the nation's most prominent MLSs to transform what an MLS is and what it does, so real estate pros and the people they serve can thrive today and into our data-driven future through an open, clear and competitive housing market for all. Bright is proud to be the source of truth for comprehensive real estate data in the Mid-Atlantic, with market intelligence currently covering six states (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylv-

ania, Virginia, West Virginia) and the District of Columbia. Bright MLS' innovative tool library—both created and curated—provides services and award-winning support to well over 100K real estate professionals. Learn more at <https://BrightMLS.com>.

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Canopy Realtor® Association, headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, is a professional trade association with 15,000-plus Realtor® members. Canopy is ranked the 16th largest local Realtor® association in the country. The Association manages Canopy Housing Foundation, Canopy Real Estate Institute, and owns and operates Canopy MLS. Canopy MLS provides technology tools, training and support to better equip Realtors® to serve clients. Canopy is the MLS of choice now serving 14 Realtor® associations in a 23-county service area. The service area includes North Carolina's Charlotte region, Asheville region and the Catawba Value region, and three counties in South Carolina.

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Waltham, Massachusetts • info@crushiinre.com
Crush It In Real Estate was started back in November 2017 for the sole purpose of providing quick, easy and actionable tips for agents to grow their business and to give a sneak peek into what their renowned training courses look like. These short, digestible videos highlight the tricks and strategies of these courses in an entertaining way that only Anthony Lamacchia can provide.

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JPAR® - REAL ESTATE

(800) 683-5651 • www.jpar.com • Careers@jpar.com
5045 Lorimar Dr., Suite #180, Plano, TX 75093
• Rick Davidson, CEO
• Laura O'Connor, COO
JPARG® - Real Estate offers a full-service real estate brand with a competitive fee-based model and agent-centric culture. The platform provides seven-day support, tech tools, marketing, lead generation and mentoring. JPARG® empowers real estate professionals to deliver exceptional service with cutting-edge technology and comprehensive support.



PREFERRED PROVIDERS

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(855) 510-SOLD (855-510-7653) • www.lamacchiarealty.com
Waltham, Massachusetts

• Anthony Lamacchia, anthony@lamacchiarealty.com,
855-510-7653

Lamacchia Realty is a Massachusetts-based real estate company, that now in addition to Massachusetts serves Connecticut, New Hampshire, Florida, Rhode Island and Maine. They focus on technology, innovation and top-notch customer service. The company is also known for community involvement and philanthropy. They have hundreds of highly trained and experienced agents who are dedicated to helping clients find the perfect home by providing exceptional service and marketing, utilizing the latest market technology.

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• Richard Haggerty, Chief Executive Officer

OneKey® MLS is the largest regional Multiple Listing Service in New York and one of the nation's leading Multiple Listing Services, serving over 50,000 Realtor® subscribers and 4,500 participating offices throughout Manhattan, Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Orange, Nassau, Suffolk, Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx. Formed in 2020 through the merger of MLS of Long Island and Hudson Gateway MLS, their vision is to be the ONE Source Real Estate Marketplace for subscribers and consumers alike. OneKey MLS is dedicated to providing more comprehensive coverage, up-to-date statistics and the most innovative tools in the business to help Realtors® succeed.

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Laguna Niguel, California

• Eddie Sturgeon, EVP, Global Growth

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Oppy Wins RISMedia's 1st Annual Tech Showdown

By Beth McGuire

After an extremely tight race among finalists, Oppy, an AI-driven platform that launches and manages personalized AI assistants called "Oppies," was named the winner of RISMedia's inaugural Tech Showdown competition. A three-way tie among judges was tipped in Oppy's favor from votes cast by RISMedia viewers who tuned into a live pitch-battle webinar on Jan. 14.

"At Oppy, we've been focused on building a platform where residential service businesses like brokerages can deploy AI agents at scale, complete with the control and oversight these entrepreneurs need," said Alex Gustafson, founder and CEO of Oppy, after being selected the winner. "Winning the RISMedia Tech Showdown is a major milestone for Oppy as it recognizes that this isn't a future concept anymore—it's an operating advantage for winning executives right now."

The three Tech Showdown finalists—Oppy, Fiji App and Courted.io—presented their solutions to webinar host, RISMedia Founder & CEO John Featherston, along with industry leaders Kate Reisinger, COO, Leading Real Estate Companies of the World®; Joe Rand, chief creative officer, Howard Hanna | Rand Realty; and Cory Vasquez, president and CMO, Realty ONE Group, who served as competition judges. Several hundred RISMe-

dia viewers who tuned in were sent a poll after the event asking them to cast a vote for their favorite contestant.

During a short pitch, Gustafson shared the high-level features and benefits of his company's AI assistant, which include:

- **Deploying intelligent AI assistants at scale** with enterprise-grade management and control
- **AI assistants working 24/7 to handle routine tasks** like lead qualification, scheduling, customer support and follow-ups
- **AI assistants managing multiple communication channels**, including web chat, text messaging, voice calls and email, while maintaining natural, engaging conversations, and ensuring a 3.5-second response time.

"The main problem we're trying to help people with here is nobody wants to answer the same questions over and over regardless of your vertical," Gustafson said during the pitch battle. "Especially in real estate, there's a lot of questions that are very low-hanging fruit that brokers have to answer for their agents, that agents have to answer for their leads, and a lot of that can be automated so that each person on your team can focus on what's adding value."

According to Gustafson, what makes Oppy special is its "Human-in-the-Loop" approach, where AI assistants handle routine inquiries, but intelligently escalate important matters to human agents when needed. Across the industry, he said some agents are using multiple Oppies together to assist with business tasks both that the program was designed for and also in new ways the creators hadn't thought about.

"You could have one or a thousand," he said. "As your team grows over time, Oppy provides that 'Human-in-the-Loop' dashboard experience so that your team can join your AI employees. Oppy agents work with them in a variety of different ways. We build everything from the standpoint of what a person sitting at a desk could do if you were to hire them."

The three finalists and winner were chosen by the expert judges along with RISMedia editors and technology executives using a point evaluation system based on the product's uniqueness; its value proposition to brokers and/or agents; its potential to scale industry-wide; the clarity of recorded and/or live presentations; and several other factors.

As the winner, Oppy will receive an extensive RISMedia advertising campaign valued at more than \$80,000. **RE**

For more information, please visit <https://www.oppy.pro/>.

Beth McGuire is RISMedia's senior vice president of online editorial.

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