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LIFE AS A HIGH-END REALTOR

Following the strategies of Realtors Rupert and Karen Irby as they try to make their mark in the upscale market in Naples.
BY JUSTIN PAPROCKI

"There's opportunity here—you just have to see it. Put a little money into it—well, the Naples version of 'a little money'—and this could sell quickly."



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RP

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HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY AND HAPPY FEBRUARY, EVERYONE!

publisher's note

February is a great month to celebrate loved ones and express gratitude for their presence in our lives. Here at *SWFL Real Producers*, it's no different; we are so appreciative and grateful for the incredible top-producing REALTORS® and valued industry partners that make up this special community. We love sharing your inspiring stories through the magazine and connecting everyone through this platform, both online and at our exclusive events, with the aim of continuing to elevate the industry in SWFL.



Our new 2021 TOP 500 list starts next month!

As you know, this publication is exclusive to the top 500 residential real estate agents in our service area by sales volume. At the end of each calendar year, we

pull MLS total production numbers and cut our list to the top 500 agents. These are the coming year's Top 500 Real Producers who will receive the magazine and be invited to our private Facebook group. Many or most of our current Top 500 will continue, but there will be some new people who have made the Top 500 based on their numbers for the year 2020. We will notify everyone who has made the 2021 list by email sometime this month.

We are excited to welcome new top performers to the community in March and look forward to an amazing, successful year with all of you in 2021!



Very respectfully yours,

Andrew Regenhart

Owner/Publisher
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MEET THE COMMUNITY

CHECK OUT SOME OF SWFL'S **TOP 500** REAL PRODUCERS!



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A JERRY MAGUIRE V=A=L=E=N=T=N=E

By Michael Dill

February is the month of love, so I thought I would share some powerful messages from a movie I love, *Jerry Maguire*, that apply to success in life and in business.

Show Me the Money!

The film centers around Jerry Maguire, a sports agent played by Tom Cruise. After experiencing a life-altering epiphany about his role as a sports agent, he writes a mission statement about dishonesty in the business and his desire to work with fewer clients to produce better personal relationships. In turn, his agency fires him. Jerry and the agency then both call all of Jerry’s clients, attempting to convince them not to hire each other. Arizona Cardinals wide receiver Rod Tidwell, played by

Cuba Gooding Jr., rants on about how he needs a new contract, demanding Jerry secure it for him while having Jerry scream, “Show me the money!” loudly over the phone.

In any business or organization, what has to be in place for your prospects and clients to “show you the money”? You can’t just expect them to step up to purchase your product and services; you have to earn the right to their business. You, your team, and your organization need to be running on all cylinders. Your customer service has to be top-notch. Your organization must be systematized. You must truly care for your customer. When you hold yourself to the highest standards of excellence, then, and only then, can you expect your clients to “show you the money.”

Ambassador of Quan

Rod Tidwell explains to Jerry that “quan” is more than “coin.” It’s about love, respect, *and* money. Throughout their relationship, Jerry continually tries to get Rod to take the necessary actions to get him what he truly wants, the “quan.” In the end, Rod has his aha moment and Jerry gets to show him the money. While being interviewed on ESPN, Rod breaks down and calls Jerry his “ambassador of quan.”

What is the “quan” for you? What do you want for yourself, as the business owner? What do you want for your team, your customers, and your family? Are you settling or are you after your “quan”? As the ambassador of quan for your clients, you will always have their back and, in the end, this always creates a win/win. In your business and life dealings, prove yourself to be “the ambassador of quan” for your family, team, clients, and associates, and they will always be your most loyal, raving fans.

Help Me Help You.

Rod Tidwell is in the locker room after a game, boasting to Jerry about how he “smokes” all the greats, but yet wasn’t being “shown the money.” Jerry asks him if he can get back to where he is playing from his heart, not from his wallet ... playing for the simple love of the game. Rod wasn’t buying it. Jerry began pleading with Rod, “Help me help you, help me help you.”

Why was Rod being resistant? He simply wasn’t ready to receive Jerry’s assistance and advice to get himself what he truly wanted. “When the student is ready the teacher will appear.” In business, when we’re communicating with team members and/or customers, they have to be open to receive the value from what we’re

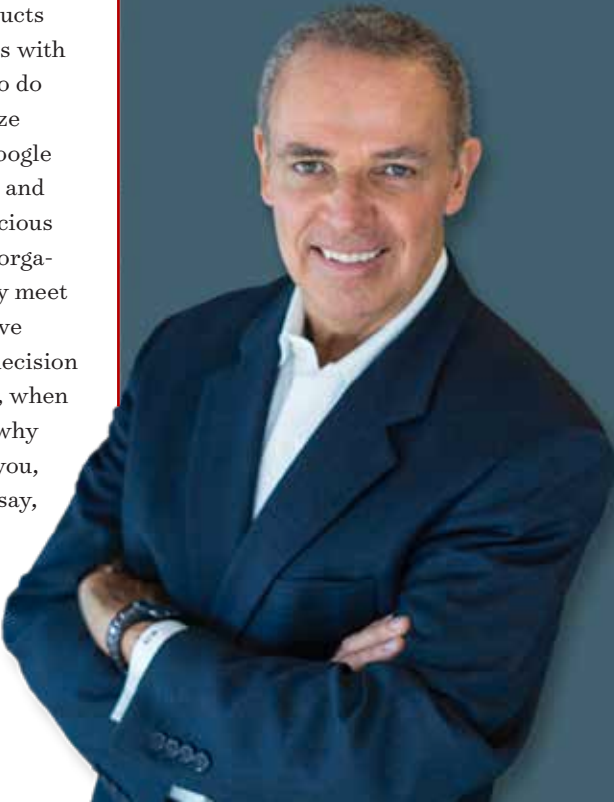
sharing with them to take the action that gets them what they truly want. The next time you are ready to exert your attention, energy, and effort assisting someone, make sure that they are first ready to receive it. Only then will they accept it and eventually “help you help them.”

You Had Me at Hello.

Rod Tidwell finally had his breakout moment — his breakout game — his breakthrough of clarity that he had finally made it, and this moment was also a major breakthrough for Jerry Maguire. So Jerry flew back home to see his estranged wife, Dorothy. He walked into the living room and went into a long speech about how they had such a big night and how he wanted to share it with her. As he continued to talk, she stopped him and said, “You had me at hello.”

When you are truly doing a fantastic job with your business or organization, when you treat your staff well, when you market well, when you consistently deliver your products and services to your customers with excellence, people will begin to do their homework on you and size you up. They will read your Google reviews and your testimonials and will have already made a conscious decision of who you and your organization are. When they finally meet you or your team, they will have essentially already made the decision to do business with you. Then, when you go to give your speech of why they should do business with you, they will simply stop you and say, “You had me at hello.”

Coach Michael Dill is an award-winning, certified business coach, speaker, and trainer. He brings more than 40 years of business and entrepreneurial experience in his leadership, team training, and mentoring practice. Michael’s passion is to both encourage and challenge business owners and entrepreneurs to become their best selves, both personally and professionally, to obtain all they want in business and life. BusinessCoachMichaelDill.com





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GIVE YOUR Referral Relationships A CHECKUP

Becoming a top-producing real estate agent does not happen by chance. It takes focus on effective use of your time, building and maintaining credibility with your clients, and having auxiliary industry partners that reinforce your credibility. As an independent insurance agency, Responsive Insurance represents an industry that is often an important step in the process. We know one of the best things we can do for *Real Producers* agents is provide timely, appropriate insurance options for your clients so you can trust their best interests are being served, but without you having to babysit the process. We try to make life easier for both our customers and the real estate agents who refer many of them.

As we step into 2021, I would suggest taking a few minutes to analyze the relationships you have with the auxiliary professionals you refer to and seek relationships that can not only check a box or be the low bidder but also reinforce your trust so that you can stay focused on the primary value you add to your clients' experience.

As a business owner myself, I know it can be difficult sometimes to delegate something and "let it go," but you simply cannot produce at your highest level without being able to trust that a referred client will be well looked after throughout the transaction. I would encourage you to take a few minutes

» pro tips | By Matt Nance

and understand at a deeper level who your referral partners are. Set up a Zoom meeting or grab coffee to simply talk about what their processes are, from start to finish, for a client you refer, and perhaps even share your 2021 goals with each other — a brief, formal planning session of sorts.

To be a producer at this level, odds are you have many very solid relationships in place. Taking those relationships a little deeper can only help you trust and understand your referral partners more and give you more time to focus on what you do best as a top producer. It also allows the party you refer to an opportunity to better understand how you prefer to work and how they could add even more value for you or your clients. Do not be afraid to specifically tell them how they can serve you/your clients better.

Here are five things we seek to provide in the process of helping referred clients with the insurance side of their transaction:

Choice. We are an independent agency. This means we work with multiple insurance companies and offer various coverage options. Our focus is to find the insurance coverage that best suits the buyer's unique needs. Our goal is to give options and assist them in taking ownership of their insurance plan.

Education. We get it, insurance can be confusing, frustrating, and sometimes seem like a necessary evil. Our goal is to help eliminate the confusion. We believe that price is important and seek value. We also believe that what our clients really want is the right coverage if they should face a claim.

Responsiveness. Clients want to feel valued enough to receive a call back, an answer to their question, a response. Our goal is to continue to communicate that we care about and appreciate our client's business by responding to their requests in a timely and thorough manner. Our clients will know us by name, and we want to know them.

Advocacy. We believe that a large part of the overall insurance experience is simply communication. Although we are not adjusters and we do not settle claims ourselves, our goal is to be in our client's corner to help maintain consistent communication and status updates, assist in getting questions answered, and walk alongside them should there be a claim.

Advice. Along with educating our clients about insurance, we leverage our experience and knowledge to make recommendations we feel are prudent, related to their protection.

Originally from Mount Vernon, Indiana, Matt moved to Naples in 2006 and began working at a local Allstate agency. He is now Owner and Principal Agent of Responsive Insurance, which he established in January of 2013. He and his wife, Casey, have been married 11 years and have two daughters.





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TONY LISTROM

►► leader of the month

By Dave Danielson
Photos by John Paul Buchanan

Life of Leadership. Resource for Results.

One sure sign of effective leadership is the success of those on the team. A prime example of that is Tony Listrom.

As Broker with RE/MAX Affinity Mercato, Tony builds on his lifetime of leadership as a true resource for results.

Far-Reaching Expertise

Tony's positive impact on others started years ago, early on in his career when he lived in New York. In fact, he had earned his New York Broker's license in 1988. Over time, Tony also earned his CPA and his law degree, providing those around him with a wealth of experience and expertise.

In 2000, Tony and his then girlfriend (now wife) Melanie, moved to Florida. Soon, Tony picked up where he left off in New York.

"When we moved here, I was able to transfer my CPA and worked at a regional firm here for four years," Tony recalls. "During that time, Melanie, who had worked as a REALTOR® in New York, started in the business here."

In time, Tony decided to go out on his own. In the process, he and Melanie organized Realty Pros of Naples in 2004, and soon had a team of 10 Realtors who joined the group. Tony also passed the

Florida bar and started practicing law as well. "I thought I could use the synergies of my background as a CPA, a lawyer, and a broker for commercial and business brokering, which I do," he explains. "In the meantime, our agents focus on the residential side of the business."

Moving Forward

Eight years ago, Tony and Melanie joined with RE/MAX Affinity.

The energy Tony has for the business is easy to see. "I really love what we're doing. And we're also working with other concepts right now to enhance the opportunities for the Realtors on our team," Tony explains. "With the market being short on inventory, one thing we've started doing is building houses, so that's a real benefit for our team. We also have a special Zillow lead program we use with the team here in Naples, where we pay for the service and the agents get the leads. Sometimes, those leads may be for land, but it's a great long-term strategy with our building company available to develop the property over time."

Along the way, the members of the brokerage have the benefit of Tony's knowledge—with an in-house attorney, CPA and Broker all in one. The power of having a resource like that within easy reach is immense.

...



“My mission is helping others...
I want to see everyone
**making money and
reaching their goals.**”



Tony Listrom and his wife Melanie founded Realty Pros of Naples in 2004.

• • • Defining Success as a Team

Today, RE/MAX Affinity has 23 agents. And that’s the way Tony likes it. “We don’t really go out and market ourselves and recruit agents,” he says. “I’m more into building the people we have and then growing naturally.”

That growth on behalf of the individuals on the team is at the heart of what defines success for Tony. “Right now, we have the perfect number of people on the team, where everyone is making commissions,” he says. “One of my favorite parts is seeing people who begin with us and are able to achieve a new level of success. I want to see everyone making money and reaching their goals. I count my successes by the growth our team has. They’re all doing business, which is phenomenal.”

Family Foundation

Tony and Melanie enjoy time spent with their family, including their children: Erin, who is a Realtor on the team, Renee, who is studying environmental engineering at the University of Florida, their son, Matthew, who is a CPA in Chicago, and their son, Joshua, who is a high school student and a nose tackle on the JV football team.

In his free time, Tony likes playing catch with Joshua and attending his son’s games. Speaking of games, Tony and his family like playing board games, with Scrabble being a favorite. Tony has even created his own games, as the developer of the Stargate SG1 board games, with another one in development.

Giving back is also a vital part of Tony’s approach to life. He’s involved with the Naples Area Board of REALTORS® and serves as a board member of his local homeowners association. He and his family also support the local children’s hospital through RE/MAX. In addition, Tony is part of the Knights of Columbus at St. Peter’s Church.

Tony continues to build on a career spent in service to those around him. “Whether it’s as a lawyer, CPA or broker, my mission is helping others,” he smiles.

That mission is being achieved each day. And if you ask people who know Tony, there’s no doubt they appreciate his life of leadership and the way he is always there as a resource for results.



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►► partner spotlight
By Lindsey Wells | Photos by LaCasaTour

MURAT DORKAN

DORKAN
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Helping Clients Draw a Line from Where They Are to Where They Want to Be

Dorkan Financial Group Inc. is a full-service financial firm committed to helping its clients identify their financial goals, drawing a line from where they are to where they want to be, then providing guidance on how to get there. President and founder Murat Dorkan started the group just under 30 years ago with an innate desire to protect others and provide clarity, honesty, and understanding in an industry that can be extremely confusing and intimidating at times.



Murat expanded his business into SWFL three years ago and is enjoying life with his fiancée.

It all started when Murat was just 8 years old. His father, a physician, suffered a massive stroke, leaving him 80 percent braindead. “He couldn’t walk, couldn’t talk,” Murat remembers. “He looked like my dad, acted like my dad, but he wasn’t in there.” The years passed; Murat grew older, and he became privy to wealth management and asset protection while working with his father’s financial advisors. This inspired him to go into the financial planning industry in 1992, determined to make a difference.

Murat’s number one mission, aside from providing his clients with top-notch customer service, is to inspire them to feel comfortable with their financial choices. “Understanding the pros and cons every step of the way will give them purpose in the decisions they make,” he says. “We advise clients in the areas where they might be getting taken advantage of, what they need to keep, and what they

might need to get rid of. There’s no pressure; we are simply offering our professional, unbiased advice. It’s up to them to decide what to do with it.”

Backed by Crump, the largest independent brokerage in the country, Dorkan Financial Group formulates a tailored plan for each client based on what’s important to them. Murat knows that no two clients’ situations are the same; there is no such thing as cookie-cutter in the financial industry. “We review our clients’ needs, share with them their options, charge a fee for the advice, and then it’s up to them to do with that advice what they want. No pressure for sales. That’s what differentiates us,” he adds.

For real estate agents, most of whom are self-employed independent contractors, Dorkan Financial Group offers personalized plans for managing cash flow, protecting their families and legacy, creating tax-free income

for retirement, and operating effectively as a self-employed business owner. “REALTORS® want to do the best things they can for tax efficiency and protecting their families because they go through cash flow highs and lows,” Murat says. “We are also talking about downside risk protection. There is a lot of market volatility expected post-COVID.” The group has a wide range of financial products for both individuals and business owners.

Crump and Dorkan Financial Group do not handle stocks or bonds, so they truly offer an unbiased opinion regardless of the state of the market.

“Our back room at Crump Advisory has lawyers, accountants, certified financial planners, and many certified financial analysts that pick apart every product, be it an insurance policy, an annuity, or whatever it is you’re looking at to determine where the cream of the crop is, where

“We advise clients in the areas where they might be getting taken advantage of, what they need to keep, and what they might need to get rid of.”



“ These days, with COVID, you’ve got to be grateful for the little things, so I try to spend as much time as I can with my kids. ”



Murat’s son Garrett attends the University of Maryland and loves to come down to SWFL for fishing with dad.



Murat’s daughter Brooke is a student at Penn State.

you’re being taken advantage of, and we share that information with our clients,” Murat adds. “This is feedback from an independent, unbiased team that works for no one but our clients, with access to all the top companies you would ever want to do business with. This is what can make a Realtor financially fit. We all strive to be mentally fit, physically fit, etc., but you truly need to be financially fit, and you can’t if you’re getting all your advice from a proprietary brokerage firm or captive insurance company. You need an independent set of eyes.”

In addition to his office in southwest Florida, Murat also has branches of Dorkan Financial Group in Maryland and Virginia. He expanded his business into Florida three years ago and has since enjoyed starting his life over here with his fiancée. Murat has two children, 21-year-old twins Brooke and Garrett, both of whom are in college out of state. “These days, with COVID, you’ve got to be grateful for the little things,” Murat says, “so I try to spend as much time as I can with my kids.” In his down time, Murat can usually be found doing some type of physical activity or anything outdoors.



For more information, call 443-569-6500 or visit www.DorkanFinancialGroup.com.



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OMEGA

Bonita Bay

Award-winning Bonita Bay is one of the most prestigious and naturally beautiful golf and country club communities in Southwest Florida. Surrounded by Estero Bay, the Imperial River and Spring Creek, Bonita Bay's amenities and lifestyle are truly unmatched.

For all these reasons and more, it's little wonder that the last development parcel in Bonita Bay could only be trusted to a nationally renowned, highly respected developer who had a plan to transform the parcel into the community's crème-de-la-crème of residential offerings.

That admirable task was presented to the highly respected and award-winning builder/developer, The Ronto Group. The result is the ultra-luxury, architecturally stunning high-rise of Omega, which literally translates to "the final piece."

The 27-story tower, featuring just 67 exquisitely designed residences is currently under construction and is due to be completed in late 2022. Residences in Omega range in size from 4,210 to 6,455 square feet and are priced from \$2.3 million to \$7 million.



Omega offers an approach to high-rise living never available before until now.

With only three residences per floor, the Omega floor plans are much wider than other high-rise condominiums in the area and are comparable in size to the estate homes many new residents will be leaving to begin their exciting lives in Omega at Bonita Bay.

As a result, the residences in Omega will have larger, more open living spaces that include walls of floor-to-ceiling windows offering incredible views of Estero Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. The living spaces, owners' suites and some of the guest bedrooms will open to expansive outdoor terraces. Gorgeous water views are both enhanced and extended thanks to the 42-inch-high, clear glass railings.

While the residences in Omega have captured the imaginations of potential purchasers, the high-rise's on-site amenities are also putting smiles on their faces as they contemplate how to spend their days.



community spotlight



For those who enjoy exercising, there's a 2,100-square-foot, fully equipped, state-of-the-art fitness center. Indoor amenities also include a grand salon, library, billiards room and 600-square-foot theater furnished with plush couches and chaise lounges to enhance the movie-viewing experience.

The outdoor amenities at Omega are just as spectacular as those found inside. The centerpiece is the pool with beach entry, two sun shelves with chaise lounges, and a linear fire element. Nearby are barbecue grills, a fire pit terrace with seating, a trellis-covered whirlpool spa, a putting green, and the pool pavilion with bar.

In addition to the luxurious homes, incredible views and amazing amenities, the residents of Omega have the opportunity to select from a number of memberships available through the Bonita Bay Club.

Club amenities include a world-class swimming and tennis complex with 18 Har-Tru courts, a state-of-the-art Life Center, impressive casual and formal dining options, and a variety of challenging and picturesque golf courses, both within Bonita Bay or a short drive away.

For additional information visit [OmegaBonitaBay.com](https://www.OmegaBonitaBay.com) or call 239-301-4940 for a sales appointment. The Omega Sales Center is located at 26951 Country Club Drive within Bonita Bay. It's open Monday – Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.





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DARLENE RODDY

▶▶ featured agent

By Lindsey Wells
Photos by LaCasaTour



Loving Real Estate ... and Making People Happy

There are many ways to view our lives and the world around us. For Darlene Roddy, real estate professional with Sotheby's International Realty, her preferred way of viewing the world is from the warmer climate of Southwest Florida after falling in love with the state and relocating to Marco Island in 1998.

younger years, so when an agent encouraged her to pursue her license, she jumped on it.

Darlene has been with Sotheby's International since 2005 and has always maintained the strong work ethic and Midwest values instilled in her

during childhood. As of now, she functions as an independent agent but says as her business continues to soar, she will consider adding other agents to her team. "I can see that coming down the pike very soon," she says.

Darlene and her significant other, Gary, just recently purchased a home together in Naples. "It's been a big change for me from Marco Island. I was there for 22 years," she says. Darlene and Gary



Before real estate, Darlene lived and worked in Wisconsin. Her job training new managers coming into the boutique where she worked allowed her to socialize and work with people, something she has always enjoyed doing. A vacation to Marco Island over 20 years ago changed everything.

are a blended family with five adult children, two of whom live in Naples, two in Bonita Springs, and one in Utah. Gary, now retired, was a general contractor for years in Chicago, where he operated one of the top companies in the area. Now, he's in Florida doing renovation projects.

"I called my parents and said, 'I'm staying here. I love it here,' so they ended up moving here, too, which is nice," Darlene says. Her interest in real estate was piqued when her parents were on the hunt for a condo to purchase. Darlene has always been fascinated by real estate, going back to her

When they can enjoy some down time, Darlene and Gary love to travel and are getting into the game of pickleball together. They also have their own hobbies. Darlene is a tennis player, while Gary is a golfer. Darlene says she is trying to learn how to golf but admits it comes as a bit of a challenge to

“ As for real estate,
I absolutely love it. ”



After many years in Marco Island, Darlene recently purchased a home in Naples with her partner, Gary Skott.

her. “For years, I’ve played high level and competition tennis, but to play golf ... I just can’t do it. It’s bizarre to me. And the ball isn’t even moving,” she says, laughing.

As for real estate, “I absolutely love it. I enjoy selling property to people. I love both sides of it—listing and selling—but there is just something about showing property and making people’s dreams come true,” Darlene says, adding that she works with a lot of second- and third-time homebuyers, who are often moving here from the northern part of the country or from other countries.

“I have an opportunity to meet a lot of different people. To me, it’s not a job. I make so many people happy and that’s what gets me up every morning.”

“ I make so many people happy and that’s what gets me up every morning. ”



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Everyone wants to increase their Gross Commission Income (GCI) each year. Ask yourself this question, why do so few real estate professionals make fabulous incomes, while the vast majority struggle year after year?

Is it a matter of working harder? Actually, the opposite. Really, it's just a matter of working smarter...not harder. And one sure-fire way to work smarter is to market better.

It's amazing how most people start their real estate business with no concrete marketing plan and no marketing budget. Would you enter any other business with no marketing plan or budget? Imagine opening an ice cream parlor and not letting people know who you are, what fabulous flavors you carry, and where they can find you. You wouldn't dream of it, but that's how most people enter real estate.

After working with thousands of real estate professionals, it is apparent the top income producers aggressively market and incorporate five elements into a cohesive and well-planned marketing program. Let's take a minute to discuss each of these five elements in detail.

LISTINGS - You need leads to fuel your business. There are two kinds of leads...buyer leads and listing leads. You've heard it over and over, listers last. Listings are inventory. Listings beget buyers. You can manage more sellers than buyers. You can develop a team once you have the ability to



secure listings, freeing you up to enjoy the fruits of your labors. Everything points to listings. So it makes sense that your marketing efforts should be focused on listings. However, most marketing expenditures, like the internet, are geared towards generating buyer leads.

TARGETED - Concentrate your marketing in a specific area (geographic) or to a specific group (demographic). In advertising it's called target marketing. In real estate it's called farming. It makes much more sense to focus on a specific group of homes rather than spread yourself, and your budget, too thin. It's always better to reach 1,000 people ten times than to reach 10,000 people one time.

BRAND - Brand yourself as the number one agent in your target market. Contact homeowners with better marketing materials. Hopefully, you can offer something exclusive the competition can't match. Whatever that is, however you create it, you want to be perceived as the most successful real estate professional in the area. Remember the NAR stat... 90% of people who list only call two agents. 75% only call one!

CONSISTENCY - When you commit to a marketing plan to dominate a farm, don't expect results overnight. Real estate experts like Tom Hopkins say it can take 12 to 18 months of consistency for homeowners to recognize you as the 'go-to' real estate professional. Real estate coach Bob Corcoran suggests mailing 22 postcards your first year. "Farming is a long-term program. You have to commit to an ongoing campaign," he advises.

LUXURY - Since you are in a commission based business, the commission on a \$600,000 home is generally double that of a \$300,000 home. Select upscale homes to farm. Make sure all your marketing materials are what upscale homeowners would expect from a successful agent. I'm not suggesting you buy a new car, but imagine the difference in perception pulling up in a new Bentley versus an old clunker with a stick shift. Remember the quote, "Image is everything."

Plan a long-term marketing strategy for your business applying these five factors and you can grow your income in as little as 12 months.

By Tony Spano, a real estate marketer who works with REALTORS® to grow their businesses.



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Ryan ► rising star By Dave Danielson | Photos by LaCasaTour

LEBEN

Going the Distance



Rising Star Ryan Leben finished out 2020 with over \$21 million in sales.

The people you work with appreciate your professionalism and the way you bring things to successful completion on their behalf.

Those who work with Ryan Leben see and benefit from these traits and his strong spirit. As REALTOR® and Team Leader of The Pinnacle Group of Naples, with MVP Realty, Ryan serves his clients' best interests by going the distance for them each day.

"One of the greatest compliments I receive is when people tell me that they appreciate my communication and follow-through," Ryan says. "I'm 100 percent dedicated to what I do. I put a lot of importance on being responsive and getting the job done, whether it's big or small."

Hometown Spirit

Ryan is a Naples native, with his family having moved here in the 1970s. As Ryan came of age, his career pursuits led him to become a Certified Financial Planner.

"I did that for 10 years, and it wasn't providing me with the flexibility with my schedule and it just was very corporate," Ryan recalls. "I didn't love all of the conference calls and meetings." In time, Ryan decided to make a change. Real estate came to mind and he pursued it.

"As I was thinking about real estate," he recalls, "I thought it would be a good direction for me. I have tons of connections and a big sphere of influence, plus I know every nook and cranny of this city since I've lived in practically every area."

Ryan's first stop in his real estate journey was Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices. "I was there for a year, and I learned a lot from the team I worked with. It was very valuable for me," he says. "And then I finally decided that I felt comfortable branching out on my own. Since then, I've never looked back."

Like most who enter the business, Ryan faced a transition time. "I started out not being that busy, because you don't have referrals when you start," Ryan points out. "It's just now coming full circle in the third year. This year is when I started my team. I have a partner on my team ... and also a partner in life. I do all the contract work and paperwork and he does the staging and merchandising of our properties. It works really well. He has another job so doesn't work full-time in real estate like I do. We're the team together. It's really nice because the staging is essential for big listings and they sell more quickly because of his expertise."

Reputation for Results

Ryan's reputation for results continues to grow. In fact, he recently completed a \$4 million sale — a record-breaker for the area involved. In turn, Ryan completed 2020 with over \$21 million in sales volume for the year.

...

Beyond the numbers, Ryan's love for his work is clear.

"I'm definitely a people person," he says. "I love meeting new people and sharing my passion for them and Southwest Florida. When I meet new people from out of town and show my enthusiasm for the city, that's what's so fun. I also love the flexibility to make my own schedule for family time with our daughter."

Life's Highlights

Away from work, Ryan and his partner, Louis Scandale, cherish time spent with their 2-year-old daughter, Diya. In their free time, they have a passion for travel, exploring new areas and spending time with family. Ryan is the oldest of eight siblings so one of their favorite things is spending time with them and their families.

When it comes to giving back, Ryan has a heart for supporting the Naples Therapeutic Riding Program and the work it does for those with special needs.

As Ryan considers his career, he offers advice for others entering the business: "I think one of the most important things is that you always have to remain positive, expect the unexpected, and stay patient. It's like any business you start. You aren't going to have a large business right away. It takes some time. It's perseverance all the time. It takes time and trust in the process."

"Now I'm thinking, 'How am I going to reach further next year than I did this year?' I just need to trust the process and keep doing what I'm doing," he says. "You have got to say 'Next.' You can't get caught up in one deal and stew over things ... now I say 'Next' and keep moving forward."



Ryan and his partner, Louis Scandale, with their daughter Diya Leben Scandale. (Photo by Sage & Sparrow Photography)



A native of Naples, Ryan Leben knows the city intimately and loves sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm for it with clients and new people he meets.



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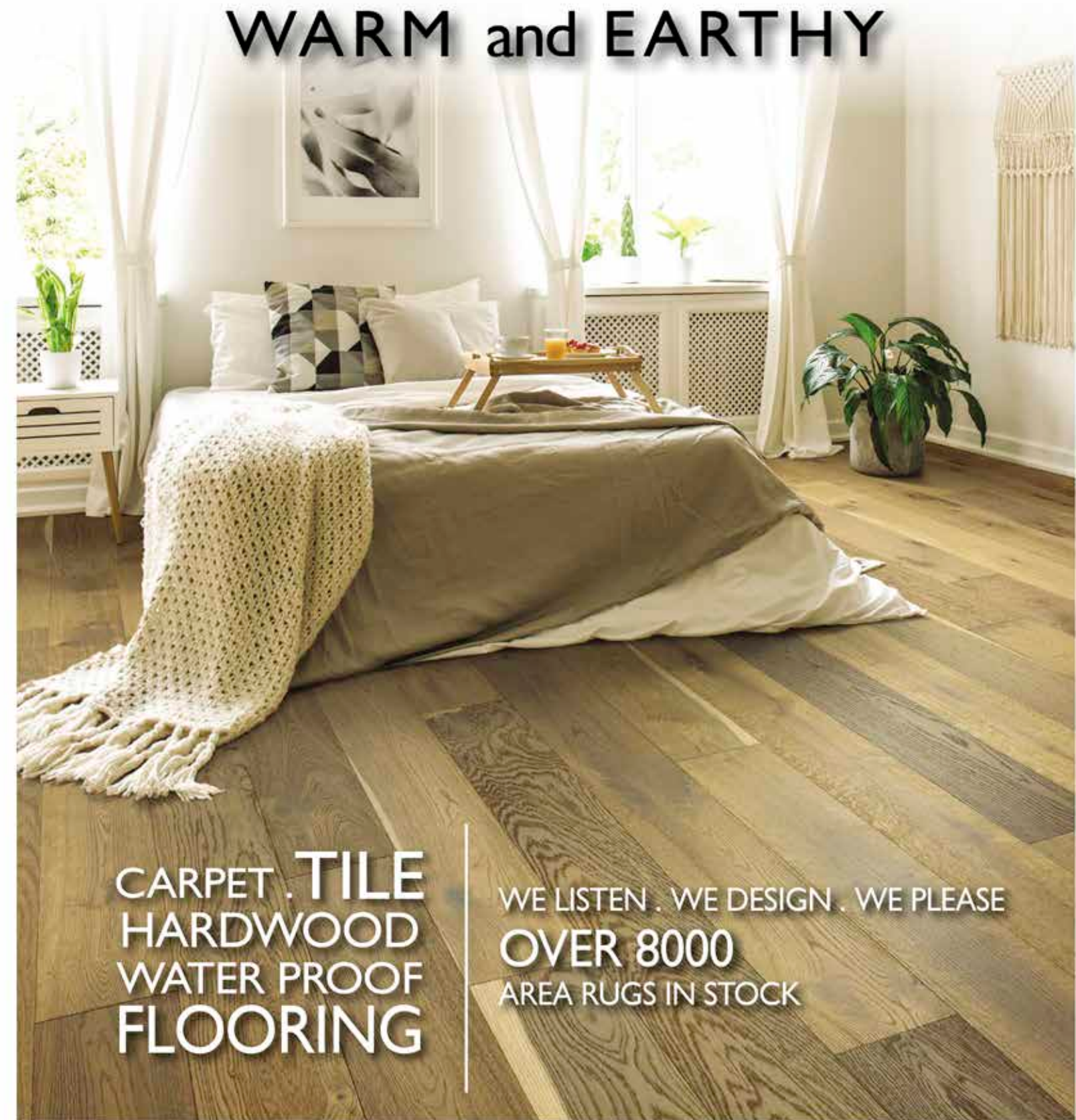
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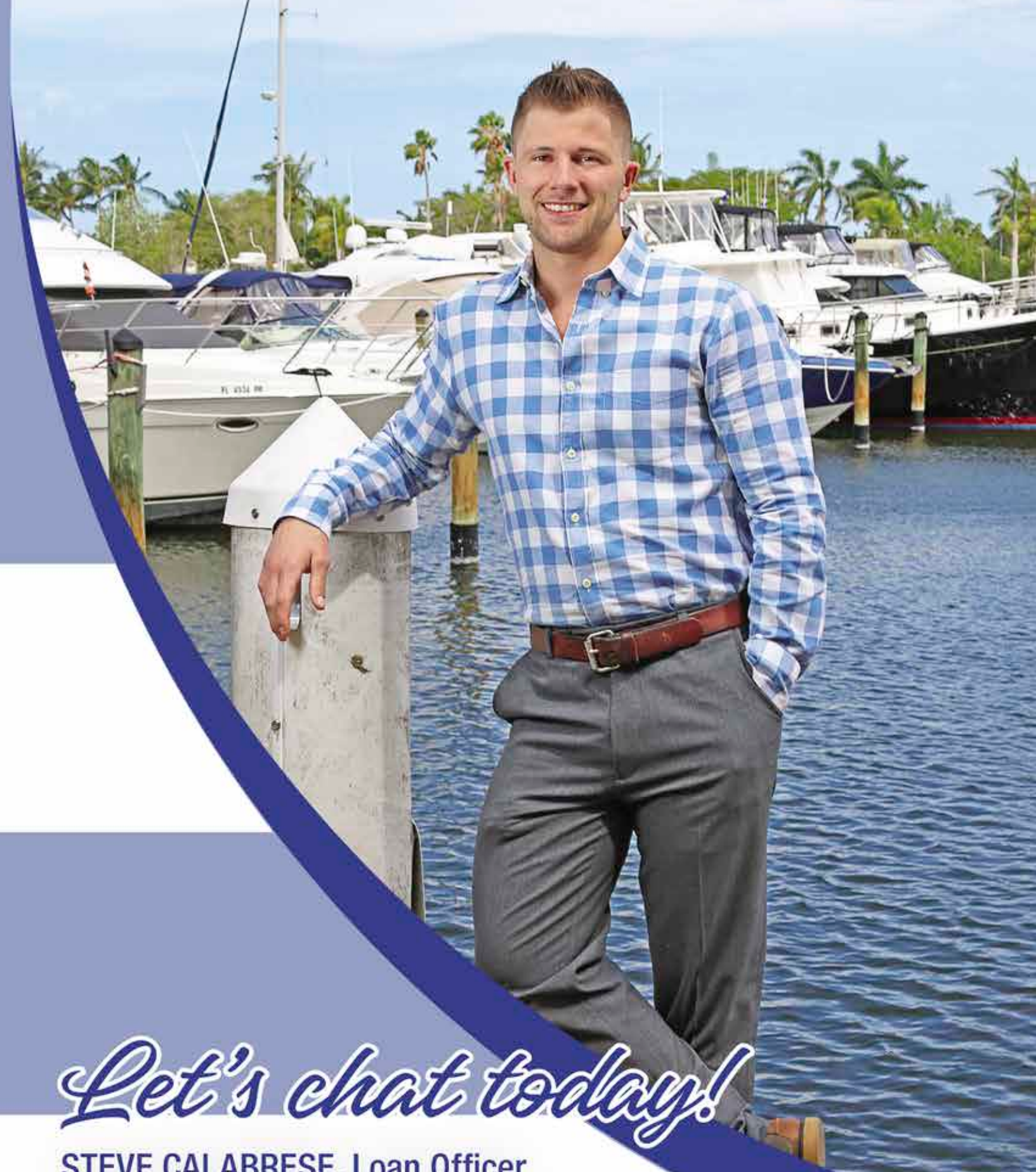


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TED STOUT

NAVIGATING THE LUXURY REAL
ESTATE MARKET BY BOAT

» cover story

By Lindsey Wells
Photos by John Paul Buchanan



A LOT OF OUR BUYERS ARE BUYING OFF THE INTERNET NOW, COMMUNICATING THROUGH PICTURES AND VIDEOS, AND I HAPPEN TO HAVE A BACKGROUND IN THAT.

Boating and real estate. You don't often see them go hand-in-hand. One local broker, however, has found a way to combine the two. Ted Stout has become known as somewhat of an oceanfront specialist on the southwest coast of Florida, preferring to introduce listings to his clients via watercraft. His brokerage, Realmark Realty Group II, is not your traditional brokerage. This small team specializes in luxury waterfront properties and giving its clients an experience they won't soon forget.

Ted's transition into real estate 23 years ago was a natural one, as his father was a developer and broker originally from Atlanta. "I've been through a lot of the ups and downs in real estate, two generations worth," Ted says. He moved to Florida from Atlanta to attend college at Florida State University and immediately fell in love with The Sunshine State.

Before real estate, Ted was a multimedia producer in Atlanta, mostly developing local commercials and DVDs. While that line of work certainly allowed him to exercise his creativity, Ted found that there weren't a lot of opportunities to work in the film business in Florida. "When I got to this region there just weren't a lot of Fortune 500 companies in need of my services, so that's when I got into real estate."

On any given off day, Ted will most likely be found on his boat, whether he's going to the beach, fishing, bar hopping, diving, or scuba diving. "That's the reason I'm here in Florida, my passion for the water," he says. If it's on the water, he's doing it. "I've hit every sandbar in the area, and I know the water very well." Ted's brokerage is even located on a marina, surrounded by boats every day, so it's no

surprise that this team especially caters to fellow boaters and luxury waterfront properties.

Ted's two daughters, MacKenzie, 5, and Venice, 2, have also shown interest in the water and enjoy going on the boat with their dad. "They're still pretty young, though, so we do a lot of crafts and activities together," Ted adds. At the time of this interview in early December, Ted and his daughters had just constructed gingerbread houses and decorated the Christmas tree the previous night.



Daughters MacKenzie and Venice enjoy time with Ted on the boat and at the beach. (Photo by Jenny Drew Photography)



Ted Stout (left) with Realmark Realty Group II Buyer Agent Paul Tee (right).

"We do a lot of tea parties. I know all the Disney princesses," he says, laughing.

While real estate isn't exactly known as a creative industry, Ted still finds ways to be creative in his business. He excels at finding creative solutions for his clients' problems and getting properties sold. He has especially had to be creative in this new world of COVID and social distancing. "A lot of our buyers are buying off the internet now, communicating through pictures and videos, and I happen to have a background in that," Ted says, "knowing the best way to present something to communicate effectively what you're trying to sell. I would say we do better at that than most people, and that's a huge part of our success."

Perhaps another part of Ted's success in the industry can be attributed to his own personal character and values. His business has been built on honor and integrity, and he hopes to be remembered as such. "A handshake agreement is as good as a contract to me," he says. "My word is my bond."

To an up-and-coming real estate agent, Ted offers this advice: "Get a mentor or a coach and learn from somebody that has learned the hard way. It's a brutal business," he says, "and there is so much you can learn. You don't have to learn the hard way. Let somebody tell you the right way to do it and save yourself a lot of time."



Ted Stout's brokerage, Realmark Realty Group II, specializes in luxury waterfront properties and often introduces clients to listings by boat.



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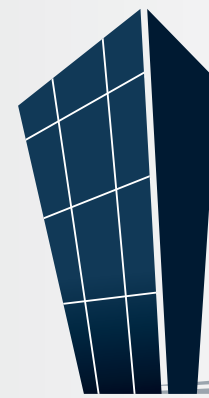
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