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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

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Cover photo courtesy of Michelle Reed Photography.

RP

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Happy FATHER'S DAY!

► publisher's note

Dear Real Producers,

In June, we celebrate Father's Day — an opportunity to honor and cherish our fathers, the men who gave so much and shaped who we are today ... and that goes for both men and women!

Almost exactly a year ago, at the time of this writing, I lost my father, Charlie Regenhard, so this Father's Day is a bittersweet one for me. My dad was my role model; I only hope to become half the man he was. He was a great father and wonderful husband, always working hard for and putting the family first — something we hear a lot of in the stories of some of the amazing fathers in real estate featured in this issue.

We're very blessed to have wonderful fathers in our lives. Congratulations to all the real estate dads in our *Real Producers* community. We know how challenging it can be juggling busy careers and active families — but you all make it look easy! So Happy Father's Day to all of you, and hats off to the wives and families who support you!

Very respectfully yours,

Andrew Regenhard
Owner/Publisher
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P.S. Be on the lookout for your exclusive invitation to our big summer event at the end of June or July. More information coming soon!



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EMILY KONOPASEK
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"What you drive should match your market. If you predominantly sell starter homes to first-time buyers, you probably shouldn't roll up in an ultra-expensive car. And vice versa: if it's a multimillion-dollar place, you'll need more than a beater!"



NIC SPANO
EQUITY REALTY

"Having a nice car is important, but having a luxury car isn't a necessity. I know agents that sell a ton of homes that drive 'normal' cars, but they are newer, clean, and well-maintained."



ADNAN DEDIC
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"Yes. You have to dress, look, and act the part. Real estate is a very judgmental business. People want to see success, so driving a nice car, looking nice, and presenting yourself like a professional are always key, especially being a younger person in the industry. People feel more comfortable when they work with someone who looks successful."



IRINA KISLYANKA
MVP REALTY ASSOCIATES

"Yes and yes. My luxury Audi is my business card! I got one client just asking about my car. We started a conversation and I got a seller!"



MICHAEL JORDAN
WILLIAM RAVEIS REAL ESTATE

"No. When I first started, I was driving an older



LAUREN BROOKER
COMPASS

"Luxury car? No, I am not a 'car' person BUT think the important thing is to show up in a car that is clean."



CANDACE WALTON FARMER
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"Drive what you can afford. The car doesn't make the relationship. You do. Whatever you drive needs to be clean. I always have a cooler with a variety of drinks and snacks. They would rather have that than a fancy car."



PATRICK DEARBORN
JOHN R. WOOD PROPERTIES

"Silverfox always rides deep!" (Editor's note: Patrick drives a Lexus.)



MELISSA MCMURRAY
COMPASS

"Drive what works for you. If luxury helps you sell, drive that. Or maybe you just like luxury cars. If your lifestyle or target market responds better to something else, drive that. Just make sure it's CLEAN."

sedan because it's all I could afford. I, however, ALWAYS made sure it was clean when I showed property. I think the car itself is less important than the cleanliness."



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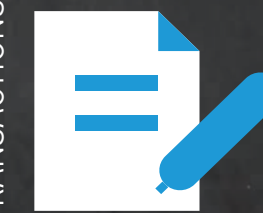
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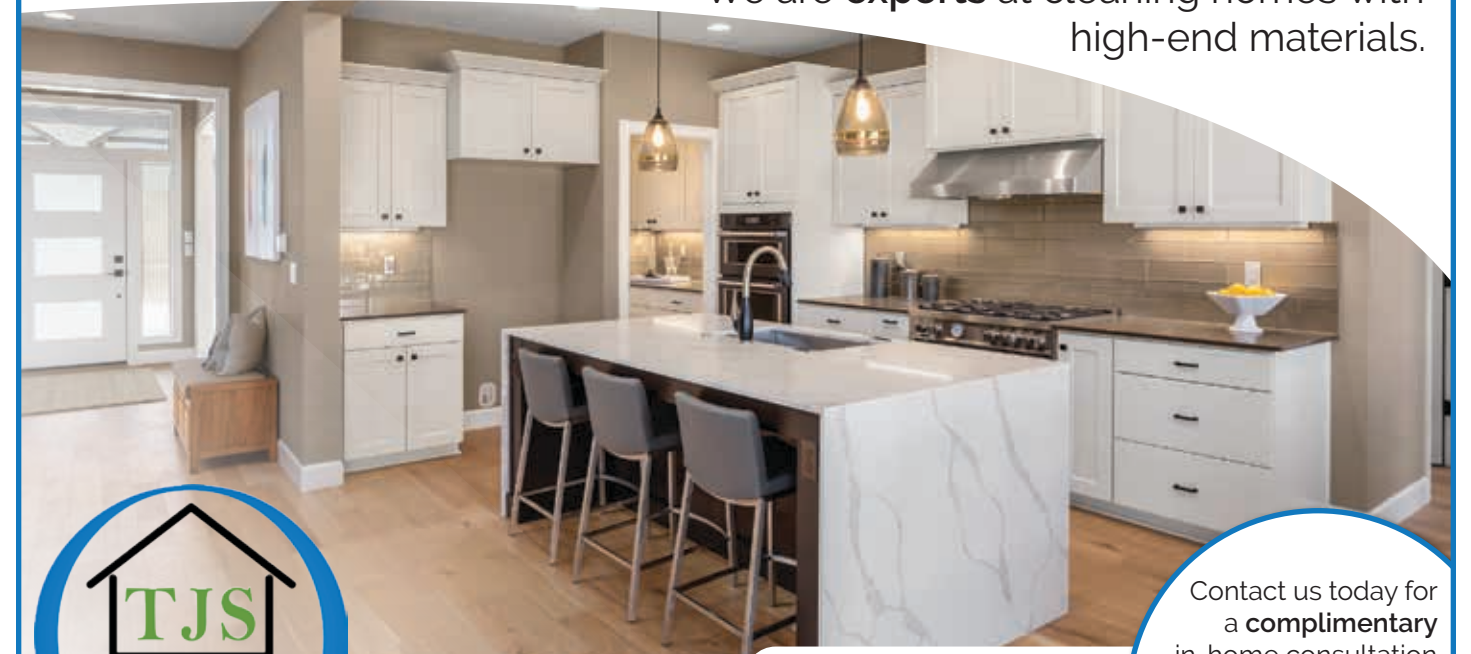
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Successful Business.

I share a conversation I had with a gentleman that leaned towards creating a referral strategy whereby we could refer quality clients back and forth to each other. One of my questions to him was, “Tell me something about your quality clients that you have great relationships with who you feel might be good referrals for me.”

He leaned back and thought about it, and he said, “I really don’t have any solid relationships with any of my clients.”

It shocked me. I asked, why? He shared, “Well, based on the service I provide, I sit down with somebody for the first time, I show them all the benefits, what they can get out of it, all the different ways of using my service. Once they agree, they sign. They get what they want. I get what I want. They become low-maintenance customers, and I really have no need to keep in touch with them unless they give me a call and ask a question.”

Wow. Not quite the strategy I would apply in my own business. He then

asked me, “Why? What would you suggest?” I replied, “Personally, I simply stick to what I like to call the $R \times R = R$ formula in my business. It’s a simple formula that I believe we all need to apply in business to create a win-win for both parties.”

“What does $R \times R = R$ mean?” he asked. I explained that the first R represents relationships. Build quality relationships with your clients and your customers. Harvey Mackey wrote a great book years ago called *Swim with the Sharks Without Getting Eaten Alive*. There was one section that he took a lot of pride in describing how he had 77 questions that he would ask his clients to really get all the information on them so he knew them inside and out. Birthdays, children, everything you could possibly think of. What it did was create great relationships because he knew a lot about his customers and his clients.

The second R represents results. We must deliver results for our clients. We must deliver the goods and services with excellence that we promised to them. Do what you say, when you say, the way you say you’re going to do it. Your clients expect results.

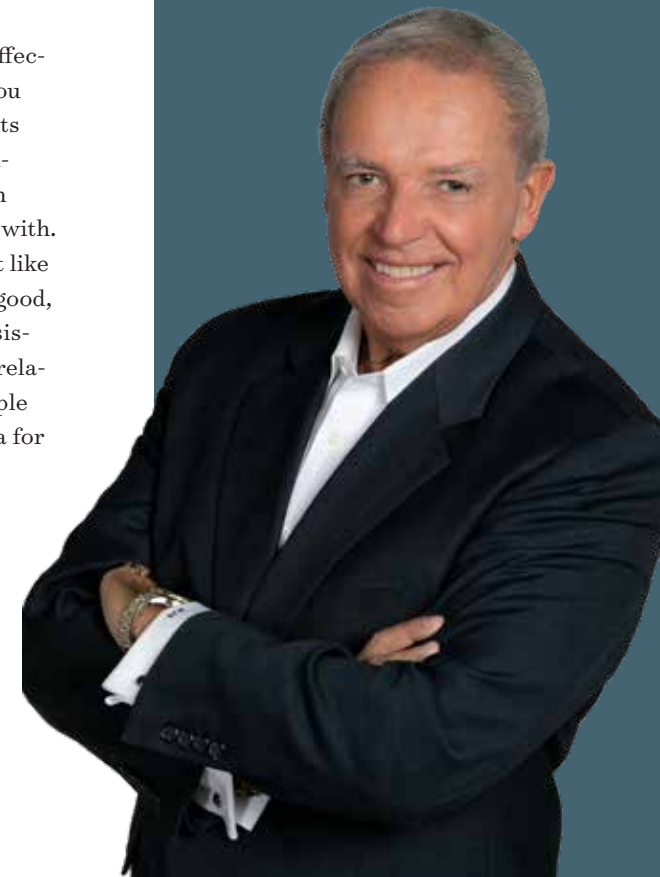
When you develop great relationships and consistently deliver results for your clients, the last R is retention. You keep them. Why would they leave? They have a great relationship with you. They’re getting what they want. They’re going to stay.

Let’s look at this for a moment. Let’s say you have a great relationship with your client, but for whatever reason, your company, your organization is not delivering the quality results of excellence that your client expects. Someone else might come along and promise to deliver the goods and execute on their promise, and your client just might leave you. Let’s say you deliver great results. You give them what they want, when they want it, the way they want it, but you’ve never taken the time to get to know them or build a relationship. Somebody might come along that’s been wooing them for quite some time, build a great relationship with them, and one day, your client might just disappear.

It’s not either-or, it’s both. We need to develop great relationships with our clients, deliver great results, and we will retain them as clients. Both parties will win as they develop a long-lasting relationship in addition to mutually helping each other’s businesses grow.

When this formula is executed effectively, you get one more thing. You get a fourth R, and that represents referrals. To build a healthy business, you want to be dealing with clients you enjoy doing business with. Clients hang out with people just like themselves, so when you retain good, quality clients by delivering consistent results while building solid relationships, they’ll refer more people just like them. That’s the formula for building a successful business.

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 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 their business and life. Businesscoachmichaeldill.com



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GOOD TIMES create BAD HABITS

6 Things To Do NOW!

By Christy Belt Grossman

As we began the journey of the pandemic, fear was rampant, jobs were cut, expenses trimmed, and we asked each other crazy questions like “*Is real estate deemed essential in your state?*” Now, jobs are reinstated, businesses growing, and every team we coach had the best year they’ve EVER had in 2020. Industry-wide, agents seemed to have had one of two things happen:

1. They didn’t act fast and double down, so they *lost* market share.
2. They wasted no time doubling down, and they *gained* market share.

The thing is, great results in 2020 came to many solely because the market was good. Great results came not *because* of what they were doing, they came *in spite* of what they were doing. 2021 arrived, along with historically low inventory. Now we’re seeing the result of “*bad habits created in good times*”:

- Agents leaving teams to go solo (because a great year made things look easy)
- Agents leaving teams to build their own team (same reason)
- Agents worn out from writing contracts and losing out to other offers
- Admins not building systems to generate income (being efficient and not effective)
- Admins not creating and executing systems to drive culture and retention

6 Things You Should Be Doing NOW:

1. Reviews & Referrals

Create systems for each. It’s not rocket science, but the SAME thing must happen on EVERY transaction. Your system MUST drive leads and commission to your business. (Plus referrals and reviews are the best way to measure whether you’re providing a customer *experience* as opposed to customer *service*.)

2. Training Schedule

Create a training schedule. In April, there were more agents in the U.S. than active listings. This means the most skilled agents WIN. Help your agents be prepared to win. Research and provide them with new scripts. Role play with them.

3. Lead Gen

Double down and be creative. Many agents slacked off on lead gen when the market picked up last year. They succeeded in spite of that. It’s time to put that habit back in place. Call your sphere!

4. Find Off-Market Homes To Sell

- Reach out to agents outside your team daily to see what they have coming on the market. Then share with your team.
- Write letters for buyers targeting a specific neighborhood.
- Call through your databank to see who they know that might be selling.
- Add a Buyer Wish List page to your website and share it on social media.

5. Value Proposition

Ensure your Value Prop is alive, and that it’s driving culture and retention. Are you clear on what it is? Are you delivering on it? In order to create a great culture and keep retention high, you must “*Tell them what you’re going to do, do it, then tell them what you did.*”

- Do you have a 24-Touch Plan for your team? (Most have a plan for their database, and forget about the team.)
- Are you purposeful in telling people what you did? (Ex: “*John, congrats on closing 101 Main St. Glad we could provide that lead from Facebook ads we ran. Nice work converting.*”)

6. Databank

Most have a database. Most do NOT have a SYSTEM to feed it. NOR are they tracking and setting goals around how to grow the database, what results it’s providing and how to increase results. Every team needs to:

- Know how many contacts are in the database. (It’s not a “contact” without contact info!)

- Know how many deals came from it last year (sphere, past clients, referrals from sphere/past clients)
- Calculate the percent. (Example: 1,000 in database, 10 deals sourced. $10/1000 = 1\%$.)
- Have a system to FEED it.
- Set a goal for how many to add AND what percent will do a deal/send a referral.
- Put systems in place around goals (touch plan, client events, tracking). NOW your database becomes a databank and you can create a predictable business!

Moral: Many agents had a great 2020 because the market rocked. If you like to control your destiny, create “*Good Habits to Avoid Bad Times*” NOW!



Christy Belt Grossman is the CEO and Owner of Ops Boss® Coaching, and a Director on the Board of NARESP (National Association of Real Estate Professionals). Prior to that, Christy was the COO of one of the nation’s first real estate teams to sell \$1 billion. Ops Boss® Coaching

provides classes, a video resource center, group coaching (coached by Elizabeth Gilbert), elite 1:1 coaching, and an annual conference focused on real estate operations professionals. More Info: www.OpsBossCoaching.com.

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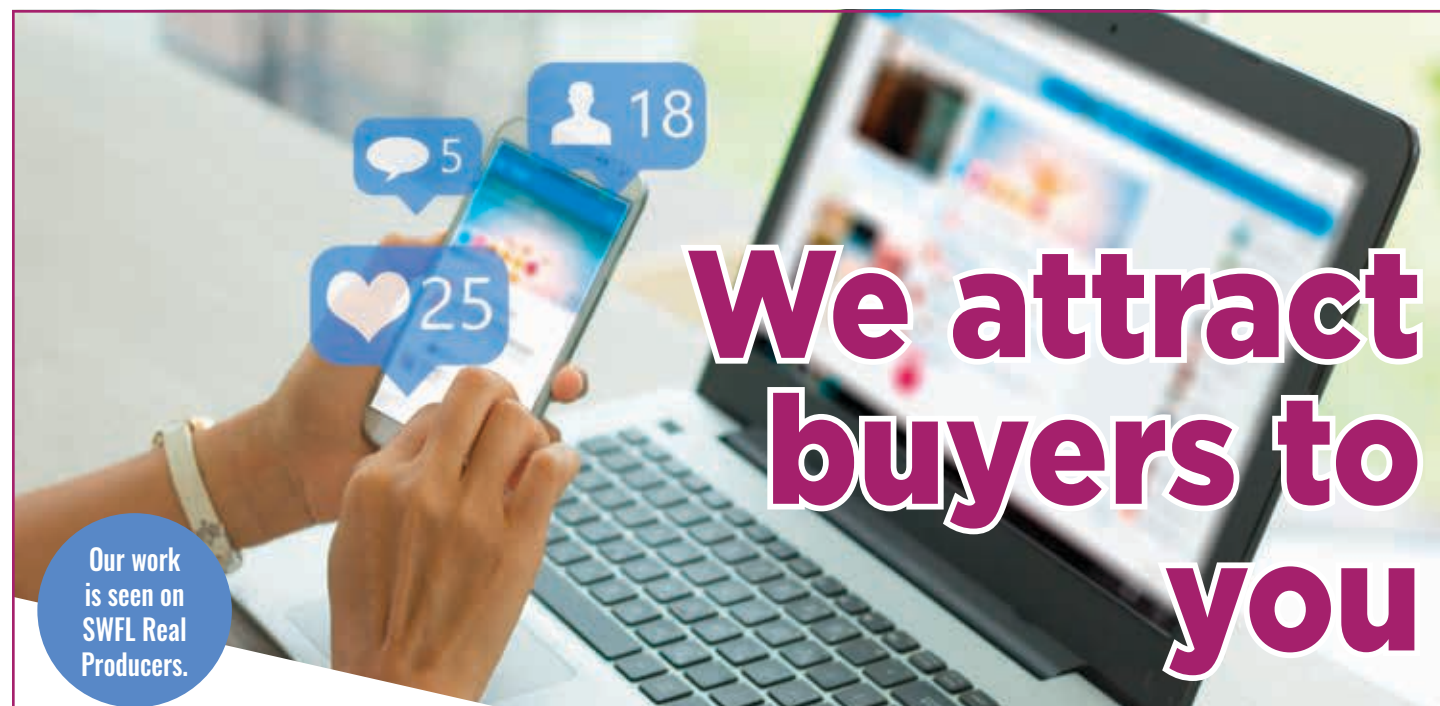
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►► Be Ready for the Summer Heat...

Keep Up with Your A/C Maintenance!

With summer already in full swing, it is important that you stay on top of air conditioning maintenance in order to ensure that your HVAC system is able to keep you and your family comfortable and healthy in the weeks of hot weather that are yet to come.

You should be on the lookout for signs indicating that your air conditioner needs a professional tune-up. This allows you to catch any problems early and can allow you to have them fixed before your air conditioning breaks down in the dead of summer.

To help you prevent such an occurrence, here are a few signs indicating that your air conditioning may be in need of a tune-up this summer.

Weak Airflow

There may be a problem with your

HVAC system if the airflow coming out of your vents is much weaker than it used to be. Without the proper airflow, your air conditioner will have a harder time cooling your home. This may make your system work harder, which can put an unnecessary strain on your HVAC. However, weak airflow can indicate a variety of problems, such as a clogged filter, leaking ductwork, or it can indicate a refrigerant leak in your system somewhere. Scheduling a tune-up to get your system running properly will prevent further damage and headaches.

Rising Electric Bills

You should also keep an eye on your electric bills this summer, as this can tell you a lot about the health of your

HVAC system. Have you noticed a sudden spike in the cost of your electric bill compared to recent months or compared to last summer? If so, your air conditioner may be to blame. A sudden increase in your electric bill can indicate that your air conditioning is not working properly or efficiently and is using more electricity to cool your home. A tune-up can help to diagnose the problem and save you money over time.

You Can't Keep Cool

Of course, it is particularly important that you schedule an air conditioning tune-up if you cannot seem to get cool enough no matter what temperature you set your thermostat to. If your air conditioner can no longer properly

cool your home, there is a serious problem with your system that will need to be fixed before your HVAC breaks down entirely. You want to avoid this as much as possible in the Southwest Florida summer heat!

Your Health Matters Too

Not only is staying cool comfortable, but not staying cool is detrimental to your health. Summer weather can be tough on your body and dehydration can occur easily. One major cause of dehydration is sweating profusely. The more you sweat, the more you increase your chances of dehydration. On the other hand, heatstroke can happen when your body begins to overheat due to high temperatures. A fully functional air conditioning unit will be beneficial in keeping you cool during the hot summer season!

Tim Dupre has been in the HVAC industry for 23 years and has worked in every aspect of the trade. Starting as an installer in 1997, he worked his way up through the organization to his current role of President and CEO of Conditioned Air.



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» leader of the month

By Lindsey Wells
Photos by Sandy Windham

ERIC GALLUS

Continuing His Father's Legacy

"Better than I deserve" is the only response you'll get when asking a Gallus how they're doing. Eric Gallus grew up in Minnesota in a family of real estate professionals who truly lived the Proverbs 22:6 verse that says, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Eric's father, David Gallus, "trained up" Eric to value faith, gratitude, and a relentless work ethic. Those qualities set Eric off on a winding road that would lead him to do remarkable things in his professional life. As CEO of Premiere Plus Realty, Eric is passionate about continuing to grow the brokerages while keeping faith and family at the center of his life.

Eric graduated from Brown Institute with a degree in marketing and advertising. He quickly excelled in the corporate dot-com world but wanted more.



Eric Gallus became operational manager of his father, David Gallus's, three brokerages and took them from 300 agents to over 1,700 agents today.

Over the next decade, Eric embraced entrepreneurship and owned and operated multiple companies that offered marketing, consulting, investment, and property management services. He also shared his father's passion for real estate investing after purchasing his first fixer-upper in Minnesota and began pursuing investment properties in Southwest Florida.

In 2005, Eric married his beautiful wife, Jacqueline. Shortly after, they made Southwest Florida their permanent home. He seized the opportunity to become the operational manager for his parents' three real estate companies, Premiere Plus Realty, Ruby Realty Co., and Independent Broker Realty (IBR now dissolved). Through Eric's leadership and innovation, Premiere Plus Realty and Ruby Realty grew from 300 agents and four staff members to over 1,700 agents and 30 staff members across six locations today.

...



The Gallus family loves being outdoors and shares their 3-acre property in Naples with 30 chickens.

...

Year after year, Premiere Plus Realty remains at the top of all Southwest Florida's outstanding brokerage lists. Eric was awarded the RISMedia Newsmaker Award in 2020, which is given to only a small number of individuals nationwide. "That was a huge honor," Eric says. In recent years, Premiere Plus Realty has been recognized by Gulfshore Business Magazine as Southwest Florida's Best Residential Real Estate Agency, Best Family-Owned Small Business, Best Commercial Real Estate Firm, and Best Small Business. RISMedia also recognized the brokerage in 2020 as a Top 200 Power Broker. The list goes on and on, proving time and again that a brokerage can be big and still deliver top-notch customer service.

While the growth of the companies was made possible through Eric's direction and keen eye for detail and quality support, he gives all the credit to his agents and the amazing staff members that support them. They conducted over 6,500 transactions with over \$2.5 billion in sales volume in 2020 alone. "It truly takes a dedicated team and the right people to make this happen," he



adds. Faith plays a tremendous part in the companies' culture and is one of Eric's biggest motivators. "I am extremely humbled each day by the talented team that supports me and honestly loves what they do. We pride ourselves on having the best support team and partnering with those that are hungry, humble, and smart. None of this is possible without them and a faithful foundation, knowing God has provided a purpose for us to influence others through servant leadership."

A few years ago, Premiere Plus initiated PPR Cares, which gives back 10 percent of transaction fees to local non-profits. Some of the organizations that have benefited from this initiative include St. Matthew's House, The Salvation Army, Ride Nature, Harry Chapin Food Bank, Pregnancy Resource Center, and Path 2 Freedom. "All of this is possible because of the buyers and sellers that close transactions with our agents," Eric says. "I think it's very important that they know when they're doing business with the Premiere Plus Realty agents, a portion of those fees to go to support the local needs of our community."

...

I am extremely humbled each day

by the talented team that supports me and honestly loves what they do.



Outside of business, Eric is a family man. He and Jacqueline have three children: two daughters, ages 21 and 5, and a son, 13. The Gallus family can usually be found spending time together on their three-acre property in Naples, which is an oasis of trees, land, and about 30 chickens! “We love being outside,” Eric says. “There is a balance between spending every morning and every evening outside and enjoying this beautiful creation.” The Gallus family also loves to travel and stay active with tons of adventures, especially those that involve hitting the mountains out west.

Today, with the companies’ continued growth and stable reputation, Eric is passionate about continuing his father’s legacy. “My father is an extremely giving man, has a huge heart, loves what he does, and loves people. He is still very active in the business and the lives of the agents. I’m honored to serve alongside him, who is a shining example of how to honor God by remaining humble as a top-producing business owner,” Eric says.

“

We pride ourselves on having the best support team and partnering

with those that are hungry, humble, and smart.



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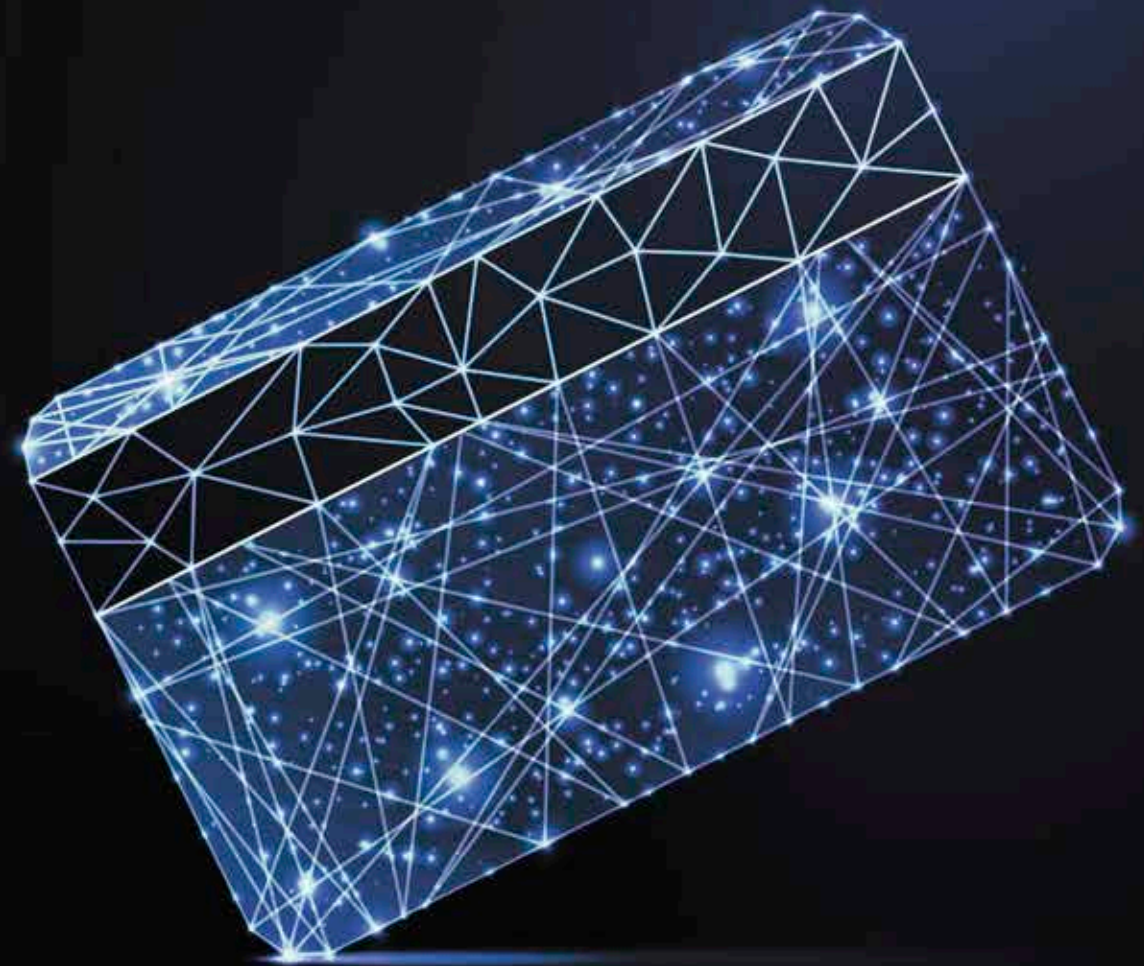
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▶▶ partner spotlight

By Lindsey Wells
Photos by Sun Services SW Photography

ERIC SOLOMON

Legacy Title

Photo by Sun Services SW Photography

Not All Title Companies Are Created Equal

REALTORS® are vital to moving a real estate transaction from point A to point B. There is, however, much more to buying and selling a home than the marketing of the property and the delicate negotiations between buyer, seller, and their respective agents. There are many other players in the game, such as mortgage lenders, appraisers, and home inspectors, to name a few. Perhaps one of the most prominent players is the title company, which, in some ways, ties the entire transaction together. Legacy Title has been providing remarkable title services and real estate closings to its residential and commercial customers since 2008. The company’s owner, Eric Solomon, is just as passionate today about his clients as he was when he started in the industry three decades ago.

Originally from New York, Eric first became interested in real estate while in law school. One of the first jobs he had after graduating in 1991 was working for a firm that represented many lenders. “In New York, the closing process is different and I handled many closings during each week—it could be eight, nine, 10 deals a day,” Eric reflects. “That’s how real estate just stuck with me over the years.”

Eric and his wife of 24 years, Jessica, had always dreamed about moving somewhere with a warmer climate. “New York is fine; you get all four seasons. Your summers are beautiful, falls are beautiful, springs are beautiful, and even the winter has its shining moments. But, if I have got to choose somewhere to live, I would rather be warm than cold,” Eric says. Finally, in 2001, with a toddler and another baby on the way, they decided it was time to make a move. A year later, in 2002, Eric and Jessica packed up their belongings and two young children and relocated to The Sunshine State.

Upon moving to Florida, Eric became licensed to practice in the state as an attorney. In 2008, to further his outreach in the real estate industry, Eric created Legacy Title. While all title insurance companies essentially exist for one primary purpose—to sell title insurance—Legacy Title is living proof that not all title agencies are created equal. “That’s just like saying all doctors do the same thing, or all lawyers do the same thing,” Eric says. “What sets us apart from other title companies is the level of service that we provide, and we stand behind what we do.”

With 30 years in the industry, to say that Eric knows what he is doing would be an understatement. Realtors placing their clients’ trust in Legacy Title appreciate the company’s ability to make the process a smooth one. Eric adds, “Yes—you can go to any title company and, in theory, get your title insurance done. The question is, who is actually reviewing the title? Who knows what is going on as far as the underlying documents? Who is actually going to be there to take care of an issue later on? There are companies that come, companies that go. I have been in this business for 30 years, and I am not going anywhere.



The Solomon family enjoys ski trips to Steamboat Springs, Colorado. (Shown here on their most recent trip, in December 2018, from left to right: son Harry, 21; wife Jessica; Eric; and son Sam, 19).

We have withstood strong markets, survived down markets; and we just keep trucking along. I take great pride in not only the product that we put out but our staff who make my vision a reality every day.”

At Legacy Title, the end goal with each transaction is to ensure a comfortable and easy process for everyone. After all, a home is the largest purchase most people will ever make in their lifetime. Eric and the Legacy Title staff know this is not something to be taken lightly. “Over the years, when these transactions start, there is, presumptively, a willing buyer and a willing seller who put a transaction together. While the road is not always smooth, we never lose sight of the fact that people start this process because they are, most likely, closing one chapter and opening a new one,” Eric said, adding that he finds it particularly rewarding to work with first-time homebuyers. “I like being able to walk them through everything and hopefully leave them with a better understanding of the process because it can be daunting for a lot of people.”

In 2018, Eric opened his own law firm, the Law Office of Eric L. Solomon, P.A. While it has proven



“What sets us apart from other title companies is the level of service that we provide, and we stand behind what we do.

Photo by Sun Services SW Photography

challenging to find time to relax—especially amid a pandemic—the Solomon family makes it a point to take a ski trip together each year and now that the boys are older

(Harry is 21 and Sam is 19), Eric and Jessica also take turns taking individual vacations with their boys. “When you already live in paradise, where do you go for vacation? We go

skiing,” Eric says. One of his favorite ski destinations, and the family’s primary home base for their ski trips, is Steamboat, Colorado. At home, they can often be found visiting with friends and going out to dinner. “Nothing too terribly exciting,” Eric adds. “With COVID, there’s really not much you can do, but when the boys are home, it’s nice to try to spend time together as a family.”



Two-and-a-half-year-old brother and sister Bernedoodles (50/50 mixes of Bernese mountain dog and poodle), Barney, left, and Mable, right, often come to the office with Eric. (Photo by Sun Services SW Photography)

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“I take great pride in not only the product that we put out but our staff who make my vision a reality every day.”

With over 30 years of experience in the title business, Eric Solomon opened Legacy Title in Estero in 2008. (Photo by Sun Services SW Photography)

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JEFF FELDMAN

► featured agent

By Dave Danielson
Photos by New Frame Photography

Adding Something Extra



Leaders aren't content with just getting it done. They go that extra mile. They exceed the need. One of those who does that each day is Jeff Feldman.

As a real estate professional with the Feldman Team with Premiere Plus Realty, Jeff takes pride in adding something extra for those he works with.

"The buyer and seller have an expectation of how the deal is going to happen, and, inevitably, with every transaction, there are some surprises that come up. I enjoy being the connector, mediator, and calmest person in the room, reassuring them we'll work to make sure the outcome will be a positive one," Jeff says.

"I like to provide world-class service and deliver beyond my customer's expectations. I enjoy the unexpected extras that my customers experience and the happiness they get at the end. It's a rewarding moment."

Finding His Path

Jeff earned his real estate license about 18 years ago. Today, he holds his Certified Residential Specialist, Luxury Real Estate, and Seniors Real

Estate Specialist certifications, but his story of success in this industry began in a different one.

"I started in sales when I was just 16 years old ... selling men's European clothing. I worked my way up to becoming the leading salesperson at the store in Boca Raton at the time," Jeff recalls.

"It was during that time when I learned not to ask closed-ended questions. I began to learn how to sell. This new talent seemed to come out of nowhere, considering my challenging upbringing, but once I got a taste of selling and started to have fun it grew on me."

As Jeff came of age, he moved on to college where he studied business for a while.

"Business school just didn't work out for me. Early on, I realized there were book smarts and street smarts, and I excelled in the latter. Instead of quitting school altogether, I remember my dad said I should check out gerontology — the study of aging and the elderly," Jeff recalls. "So I went back to summer school and studied gerontology.



Through that, I learned about my passion — the importance of being a good listener, being compassionate, and putting others' needs before mine."

Finding His Calling

After receiving a bachelor's degree in gerontology and realizing the career options were not what he expected, Jeff reminded himself about his passion for sales. In 1998, on the advice of his father, he looked into becoming



Jeff Feldman treasures time with wife Stephanie, daughters Bella and Gia, and family mini Goldendoodle, Boots.

a mortgage broker. After a time, he followed his love for working directly with people and earned his real estate license in 2003. For five years, Jeff would wear two hats (mortgage broker and real estate professional), until 2008 when the market crashed. He knew he had to choose one and get focused. In the years that followed, he has continued taking strides ahead — with joy.

Like most who enter the business, Jeff discovered there were hurdles to rise above in the beginning.

“It was a challenge at first. I was so good at being a mortgage broker, and I don’t like change. When I got my real estate license, I had to learn about the neighborhoods, furniture staging, photography, and so many aspects of making each home look and feel its best,” he says.

Jeff kept moving forward, putting his work ethic and love for people into practice day after day. In the

process, he has helped many area residents, over time.

Fulfilling Life

Away from work, Jeff looks forward to time with his family, including his wife, Stephanie, and their daughters: 12-year-old Bella and 10-year-old Gia.

Spare time for Jeff revolves around Stephanie, Bella, and Gia. “It all started with Stephanie and I meeting in an AOL chat room 22 years ago. Now, it’s the four of us. They are amazing. In my free time, I like spending time with the girls. I love living every moment and being connected with life and making memories,” he says with a smile.

Giving back is also part of the path Jeff and Stephanie walk through life. “We were foster parents. We had fertility issues, so we decided to become foster parents and maybe adopt through the system, to pursue our dream of a family,” Jeff says.



“ I LIKE TO PROVIDE
WORLD-CLASS SERVICE
AND DELIVER BEYOND
MY CUSTOMER’S
EXPECTATIONS. I ENJOY
THE UNEXPECTED
EXTRAS THAT
MY CUSTOMERS
EXPERIENCE AND THE
HAPPINESS THEY GET
AT THE END. IT’S A
REWARDING MOMENT. ”

“Through God’s will, Stephanie was able to conceive a child. Thirty days later, and after having received our license to become foster parents, we got a call that they had a placement for us — a 7-month-old girl. We had to dig deep in our mind and body to consider whether we were going to say no or yes. We had our baby on the way, so were in flux whether the ‘foster plan’ still needed our attention. But we said yes, we will take her in as her foster parents and do our part to help. We fostered her for two years and then were fortunate enough to adopt her. That was Bella. We fought hard for both girls, and are so thankful to have them.” Over the next five years, they opened their home to more than a dozen children needing a safe place. Some for a night, others for several weeks.

On a personal note, one of Jeff’s passions, over time, has been the martial arts, specifically the art of Krav Maga. “It’s not about the fighting for me. I really enjoy the sport, the technique, and the strategy of it. It’s interesting, and helps you stay in good shape,” Jeff points out.

Jeff also enjoys time playing tennis and spending time in nature. Travel and spending time with their mini Goldendoodle dog, Boots, are also favorites. He also has a love of comedy. One item on his bucket list is performing a stand-up routine.

Those who know Jeff appreciate his integrity, honesty, and deep sense of care. As he guides customers through the process, he puts his love of problem-solving to work, as well ... adding something extra to the lives he touches.



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Joe Epifanio

A Passion
for People



» featured agent

By Lindsey Wells
Photos by Michelle Reed



Joe and Ally Epifanio love spending time on their boat with their two rescue chocolate Doberman pinschers.

On any given day, it's not uncommon to find Joe Epifanio up and starting work long before the sun reveals itself in the wide-open Florida sky. Drive and determination are two words that come to mind when trying to compile the perfect description of Joe. He hit the ground running after his initial stride into real estate 30 years ago and has never slowed down. His efforts, however, have little to do with the commission checks or gaining recognition. For Joe Epifanio, it's all about the people he serves.

As a young guy looking to jumpstart his professional life, Joe started in the insurance industry, working a commission-only job. He discovered rather quickly that earning money by selling insurance would take more time than he could spare. "By the end of the month (I think I sold my dad an insurance policy), I only made \$30 in commission," Joe recalls. His broker suggested he get into real estate and sell a couple of houses while building up his insurance business. "I got my license and, in the first month, I sold three houses. I think my commissions were \$10,000 or \$12,000 ... inexpensive homes ... but it was still more than that \$30. That started my path in real estate, and I've never looked back."

Joe started in real estate in Illinois, and it wasn't long before he reached top-producer status, although there

were some rather amusing hiccups on the way there. Just four months into his career, Joe attended his company's yearly awards banquet. Unfortunately, no one prepared him ahead of time for how glamorous the event would be. "I was wearing a pair of slacks, a white shirt, cardigan sweater, and a tie. I figured it was going to be cold, so wear a sweater. I pull up in my car, get it parked, and see all the ladies in sequin dresses and the men in tuxedos. I was embarrassed by the way I looked because nobody told me, and I'd never done this before," he recalls, laughing.

Because he was underdressed, Joe opted not to go inside with the rest of the crowd and instead waited outside the door by the bar. "I was peeking through the door and watching all of these top producers on the

stage, one after another. The rounds of applause were roaring, and I loved it. I said to myself that day, 'I will be up on that stage next year.' As it turns out, I became the Rookie of the Year for RE/MAX in Northern Illinois that year."

Joe saw great success in real estate as an agent and eventually went on to run a few companies of his own, both in Illinois and Florida, as a broker. Joe and his wife, Ally, moved to Florida 25 years ago to escape the brutal winters of Illinois. Although he was successful as a broker, Joe's passion for selling was always a little bit stronger, and he ultimately decided to return to being a selling agent full-time.

After three decades in real estate, Joe has never "worked" a day in his



life — because he sincerely loves what he does. As an agent and leader of the Epifanio Team with Royal Shell Real Estate, Joe is passionate about helping his clients achieve their goals. Similar to how many adults have one designated family doctor or family dentist that they use for themselves and their children, Joe wants to be the family REALTOR®. “I’ve sold houses to a mom and dad, then to the kids, and I’ve even sold grandma and grandpa a house,” Joe says. “To me, it’s not about money; money is a byproduct of what I do. Customer service is what it’s all about, and making and maintaining relationships.”

One of Joe’s more memorable transactions involved a disagreement between a buyer and seller about the depth of a home’s swimming pool. The seller insisted it was six feet deep, while the buyer maintained that the pool couldn’t possibly be any deeper than five feet. “They were bantering a little back and forth, and then the buyer says, ‘Well, if it’s six feet deep, I’ll buy this house right now,’” Joe says. Being the salesman that he is, Joe emptied the contents of his suit pockets and proceeded to jump straight into the pool to settle the argument once and for all. “I’m 5’8,” and the water was over my head,” Joe adds, laughing. “I wrote the contract in a soaking wet suit.”

Joe and Ally have been together for 15 years and have four adult children, ages 36, 32, 24, and 23. When they aren’t working, Joe and Ally are passionate about rescuing animals. For fun, they love boating and fishing, and anything outdoors.



Joe Epifanio once closed a sale by jumping into a pool to settle a dispute between the buyer and seller about how deep it was.

“To me, it’s not about money; money is a byproduct of what I do. Customer service is what it’s all about, and making and maintaining relationships.”

“After three decades in real estate, Joe says he’s never ‘worked’ a day in his life.”



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MARK & AMANDA FENNIG

Providing a Lifeline



You know the story. You see it every day. Your clients have everything they've worked for on the line. All of their hopes, dreams, and savings are put into a basket and placed into your capable hands.

That's an everyday occurrence for Mark and Amanda Fennig. Through their roles with the Caine Luxury Team as part of Keller Williams, Mark and Amanda provide a lifeline for their clients as they guide them toward the finish line.

"We really enjoy helping the people we come in contact with," Mark says. "We want to help them make an educated decision for their lives, whether we're working with a buyer or seller. Supporting people as they achieve a goal is very satisfying. Most of the people we work with go beyond the home ... we become part of their family."

Getting their Start

Before starting her journey in real estate four and a half years ago, Amanda worked in health care. "In time, the company I was working for was bought out," Amanda recalls. "But it ended up working out, since our children are homeschooled. I dove right into it."

During her first year, Amanda had some stops and starts. "During those 12 months, I completed three deals," she remembers. "It was rough. I went to a couple different brokerages and ended up on another team. We did a lot of cold calling, which taught me discipline. I didn't want to give up on it. So I did what I could to expand my networking and get in with the right group of people. I'm thankful that I joined the Caine Luxury Team. I've learned so much here."

Through persistence and talent, Amanda got traction — and results. A couple years later, Mark made his own career shift to walk the path through real estate with his wife.

"Amanda was getting so busy with her business," he says. "So I got my license and joined her. It was a little easier for me because I had started preparing about a year ahead of time for my transition. With Amanda's earlier start in real estate, I kind of felt like I got grandfathered in. I had a great trainer in Amanda, who was always there to help me out. I had it a lot easier getting started because she already knew all the tips and tricks."

Signs of Success

Their results have been remarkable. In fact, in 2020, they completed 40 deals, representing \$11.5 million. As of mid-April, they had already recorded 37 deals for \$8.8 million. As time has gone on, Mark and Amanda have hired their first transaction coordinator and administrative assistant as well.

Along the way, the partnership they enjoy together in both life and business is very rewarding. "It's great. We've been married for 15 years, so we know how each other thinks. I know what her thoughts are. It makes it a little bit easier than if we had a regular business partner," Mark says.

...

...

“His strengths are my weaknesses and vice versa. I’m bringing more of the marketing aspect, and then Mark takes them through the contract. That way, we can keep things moving,” Amanda explains. “Also, we offer two different personality types to fit with those we work with.”

Family Foundations

Family is at the heart of life for Mark and Amanda. They look forward to time spent with their children: 13-year-old daughter Lilly Anne and 12-year-old daughter Lexis.

In their free time, Mark and Amanda have a love for traveling and exploring new cities. They also love the outdoors, hiking, and exploring. Boating, time at church, and networking with other parents are other favorites for them.

Giving back is an essential part of life as well. One of the favorite ways to help for Mark and Amanda is to support organizations that help the homeless. Their spirit of giving back is something that naturally applies to their work with clients.



“We always just want to go above and beyond for our clients ... even beyond the deal. We’ve had people call me about their air conditioning. With my background in construction, I like giving them ideas on ways of saving money on minor things,” says Mark.

“It makes me feel good knowing that our clients understand they can call us no matter what they need,” says Amanda. “We’re not here to just sell them a house. No matter the price point, it’s a big investment for each

person. We are here to help them every step of the way. We are very thankful. We wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for our clients.”

Day by day, Mark and Amanda Fennig are here as a lifeline for people who trust them to help them take steps forward in their own lives.

His strengths are my weaknesses and vice versa. I’m bringing more of the marketing aspect, and then Mark takes them through the contract.



Mark and Amanda Fennig love traveling and exploring new places with their girls, Lilly Anne and Lexis.

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Eric Ramirez

LARAM
CONSTRUCTION



Photo by New Frame Photography



Eric Ramirez runs Laram Construction with his wife, Christl, and his father, Juan. (Photo by New Frame Photography).

Putting It All Together

Reaching goals is rewarding in and of itself. But the journey of getting there can be just as important. That's the feeling you get with Laram Construction, a company that takes pride in putting it all together for their partners and clients.

Eric Ramirez is the owner of Laram Construction. Eric shares that "For us, one of the things we love the most about what we do is watching the satisfaction clients have during the process, seeing the final product, and having them be excited as they move into their home."

Family Foundation

Laram Construction is a company that Eric operates with his wife, Christl, and his father, Juan. As those who work with the 11-member team

at Laram Construction will attest, communication and understanding are essential parts of building success each step of the way.

"All of our employees are very close. In fact, we're like family," Eric explains. "We bring that same spirit to the way we work with our partners and clients. With that in mind, we feel that it's very important that the client gets a full understanding of exactly how the construction process is going to work from the very beginning."

Individual Impact

With each phase of the project, individual service makes a true difference for clients. "We're a small, local, family-owned company," he says. "We do all of our own work in-house. What we do isn't subcontracted out.

We take pride in that. Along the way, people know they'll be dealing directly with me all the way through. So whether we're going over initial plans and pricing or having project check-ins, they have me as the go-to person through the whole process."

Emphasis on Education

The foundation of the building process is education. Those who work with Eric get the benefit of his 15 years of experience in the industry. In fact, he's been in the industry since graduating from high school.

"When we work with people, the first step is for them to come in and understand the construction process and how it works," Eric points out. "A lot of agents and clients don't know how construction works. There are a lot of

...



Eric Ramirez's father and best friend, Juan, brought him into real estate and taught him the business. (Photo by New Frame Photography)

aspects to it that we walk through step by step. One thing we like doing is even helping agents find the land and guiding them through the development process. That's the most important thing ... finding a good base with land. From there, the construction is pretty easygoing."

Fulfilling Life

Family is at the heart of life for Eric and Christl. They look forward to time spent with their children: 9-year-old Lyla and 5-year-old Eric, Jr. In their free time, Eric and his family have a passion for boating on the weekends.

"We also really enjoy supporting the kids in their activities," Eric says. "We're very involved in their events. Lyla is really into golf and cheerleading, while Eric plays a lot of soccer."

The Naples community is part of Eric's DNA, having been born and raised here. Community involvement, therefore, comes naturally for Eric.

“
**We do all
of our own
work in-house.**

What we do isn't
subcontracted out. We
take pride in that.





Eric and Christl Ramirez love spending time with daughter, Lyla, and son, Eric Jr. (Photo by K. Michelle Photography)

Enjoying the Journey

The sense of pride and caring that Laram Construction provides throughout the journey to a new home is remarkable. As Eric says with a spark, “It’s a very important thing for us. It means so much to us to be able to give that sense of satisfaction to clients ... to be able to give them a product that we’re proud of ... and one that they’ll be able to enjoy with their family for years to come.”

Straightforward Success

Those who work with Laram Construction appreciate the level of quality they get with the final product — from a commitment to providing the best that is literally built in throughout the process. Along the way, they know they can rely on a straightforward experience.

“We are all about customer satisfaction and the quality of our work,” Eric says. “As part of that, I’m very straightforward. When I tell someone

something, they know that I’m giving it to them in black and white. We’re a small business but we are here to provide a big experience by giving clients the highest level of satisfaction that we can.”

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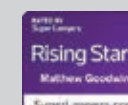
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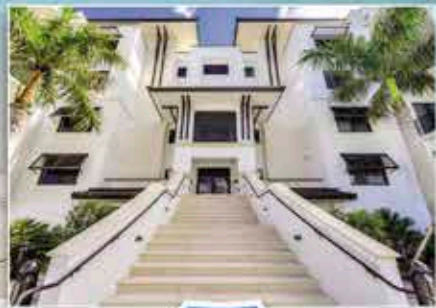
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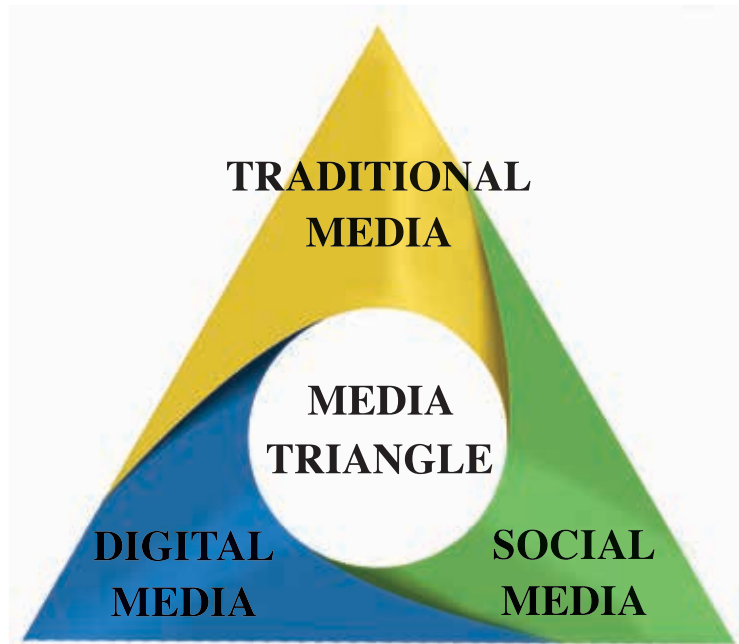
Or are you going to look at this as an opportunity to shift your focus to the listing side of the business, and develop a marketing strategy that will grow your business year after year?

Here are couple of things to consider before you put together a long-term strategy:

How long do you plan to be in the business? If you're planning to retire next year, a long-term marketing strategy doesn't make sense. You've gotten where you are, doing what you're doing, so why change now?

If you currently close \$10 million in transactions each year, and you're happy with that, you don't need a new strategy. You know how to close \$10 million. The only reason to consider an additional marketing strategy would be to get your closings to \$20 million. That will take a plan and an investment.

One of the easiest and most straightforward market-



Today's media triangle involves multiple approaches to reaching your target audience. Focusing only on one side leaves two-thirds of the media mix untapped.

ing strategies is to farm a select group of homes and become the agent homeowners think of first when it's time to buy, sell, or refer a friend or relative. That's reasonably easy to accomplish, if you focus on that farm area; regularly engage homeowners with something they enjoy receiving and actually read, and do something the competition just can't match. If you do, you will become the their 'top-of-mind' agent.

Here are couple of observations you may find useful, if you do want to take your business to the next level:

1. Top producers have a marketing strategy and stick to it, regardless of market conditions. They always 'out-market' the competition. That's being proactive rather than reactive. Ironically, it's easier and less expensive in a market like the one we are in now,

simply because the competition folds their cards, letting the pot go to those that stay in the game.

2. Top producers are winning today, because they put a long-term strategy in place yesterday. That strategy lets them continue to win when the going gets tough. They know the market goes up and down, but they keep marketing and keep closing. Isn't it coincidental that top producers are top producers regardless of the market? Look at the top 20, and they are pretty much the same, all the time.

3. Top producers use all proven channels to reach sellers, buyers, and referrals. Today's media triangle includes traditional media, like high-quality marketing materials mailed to upscale home owners; digital media, which would be your IDX website, blogs, and electronic newsletters and market reports; and social media, which would be things like joining Facebook groups and producing YouTube videos. Unfortunately, many lower income-producing agents follow the advice of internet pundits and focus entirely on social media. After all, it's free! Well, actually, it's only free if your time isn't worth anything. Top producers' time is very valuable, so they 'leverage', or delegate, their social media marketing and focus on what's really important – generating commissions.

Hopefully, you've already made the decision to take your income to the next level and join the hundreds, even thousands, of agents who have figured out how to increase their Gross Commission Income (GCI) year after year, regardless of whether the market is red-hot or ice-cold. It's all about your long-term marketing strategy.

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

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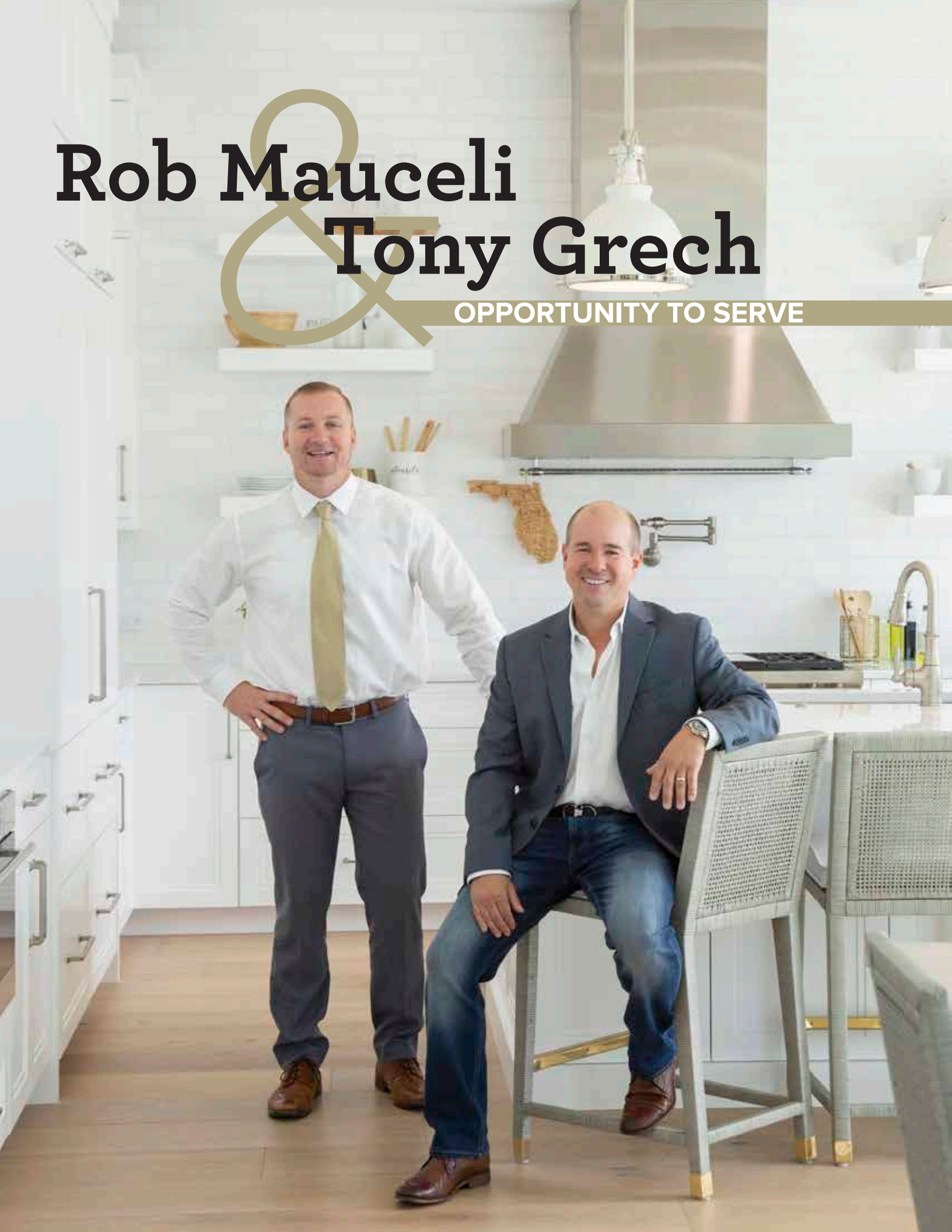
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Rob Mauceli & Tony Grech

OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE



cover story

By Dave Danielson
Photos by Michelle Reed
Home by Griffin Builders



The Mauceli Grech Realtors team at McQuaid & Company is comprised of Rob Mauceli (left), Tony Grech (middle), and Arelys Alexander (right).

One of the most powerful forces in the world is being given the chance to make a difference.

Two who understand and appreciate that honor as well as anyone are Rob Mauceli and Tony Grech.

REALTORS® with Mauceli Grech Realtors at McQuaid & Company, Rob and Tony are humbled by their opportunity to be a part of their clients' real estate process.

"We really enjoy impacting others' lives. When someone is purchasing a home, they are starting another chapter in their book and we get to be part of that, in addition to growing a real relationship with them and earning their trust," Tony emphasizes. "It's not always easy getting every sale across that finish line, but we do everything we can to do so."

"The relationships matter to us more than the actual transactions," Rob explains. "Buying or selling a home is one of the most important financial

decisions in someone's life and we operate with the goal of making each transaction a win-win for everyone. If you focus on your passion of helping other people, good things happen."

First Steps Forward

Tony began his real estate career in 2007. He remembers how it all came about for him.

"I remember I was working in another line of business. I had a conversation with someone I knew who was a Realtor. He was telling me that if I took the time to earn my license and referred him to someone, that he would pay me a finder's fee," Tony recalls. "I saw how much money he was making simply by helping people, to the point where he could not only pay a referral fee, but do so just to help me understand the business. I earned my license shortly after that and have kept the same idea of helping others through real estate transactions and helping other agents as well."

...

Rob earned his license in 2012. He had already formed a successful startup company in Durango, Colorado, and his entrepreneurial spirit was looking for more.

“I had started a clothing company called Bomber Gear,” Rob says. “It started in my garage and was an entrepreneurial adventure. At one point, we had 90 employees. I ran the company for 18 years before it ultimately sold to a larger conglomerate.”

After transitioning into corporate America for a time, Rob knew he wanted a different path. So he moved his family to Florida, where his dad was snow-birding. In 2009, Rob got his contractor’s license and started buying foreclosures and distressed properties — renovating and flipping them.

“In the process of selling them, I realized this was a side I really enjoyed, so I went into real estate full-time. My background of flipping and building homes helped me understand the market. It made it so that when

someone was looking at a home, I could guide them through the process. It also helped me build a connection with investors and others trying to get a feel for the market. My business experience and entrepreneurial sense allowed me to facilitate finding properties that could turn into stellar investment opportunities.”

Joining Forces

In 2017, Rob and Tony teamed up. “Being a team really works for us,” Rob says. “We have a fit together. We keep the mindset that we don’t want to just sell people one house. We want to have multiple transactions with them. We always put the customer first. We enjoy the opportunity to provide a service.”

Tony agrees, calling Rob the ultimate real estate agent. “Rob knows everything, and we work well together. My weaknesses are his strengths. He is passionate to a T,” Tony says. “What really helps us both is that we both care about each other’s success as well. If I’m having a rough day, he’s

having a rough day. We aren’t just business partners. We are friends. We do things with families outside of work, too. I think that’s what helps us elevate each other a bit.”

Rewarding Results

Through the process of guiding their clients to the closing table, Rob and Tony have achieved their success ... with over \$80 million in combined sales volume in 2020 and more than \$50 million through mid-April this year, at the time of this writing.

In the process, Rob and Tony are proud to share their results and gratitude with their administrative assistant, Arelys Alexander, who also serves as closing coordinator and has just gotten her real estate license as well.

What Matters Most

Life for both men begins with their families. Rob and his wife, Sage, have two children: 13-year-old daughter Avi, and 10-year-old son Harry. In his free time, Rob has a passion for fishing, diving, spearfishing, spending time on the water, and taking vacations.



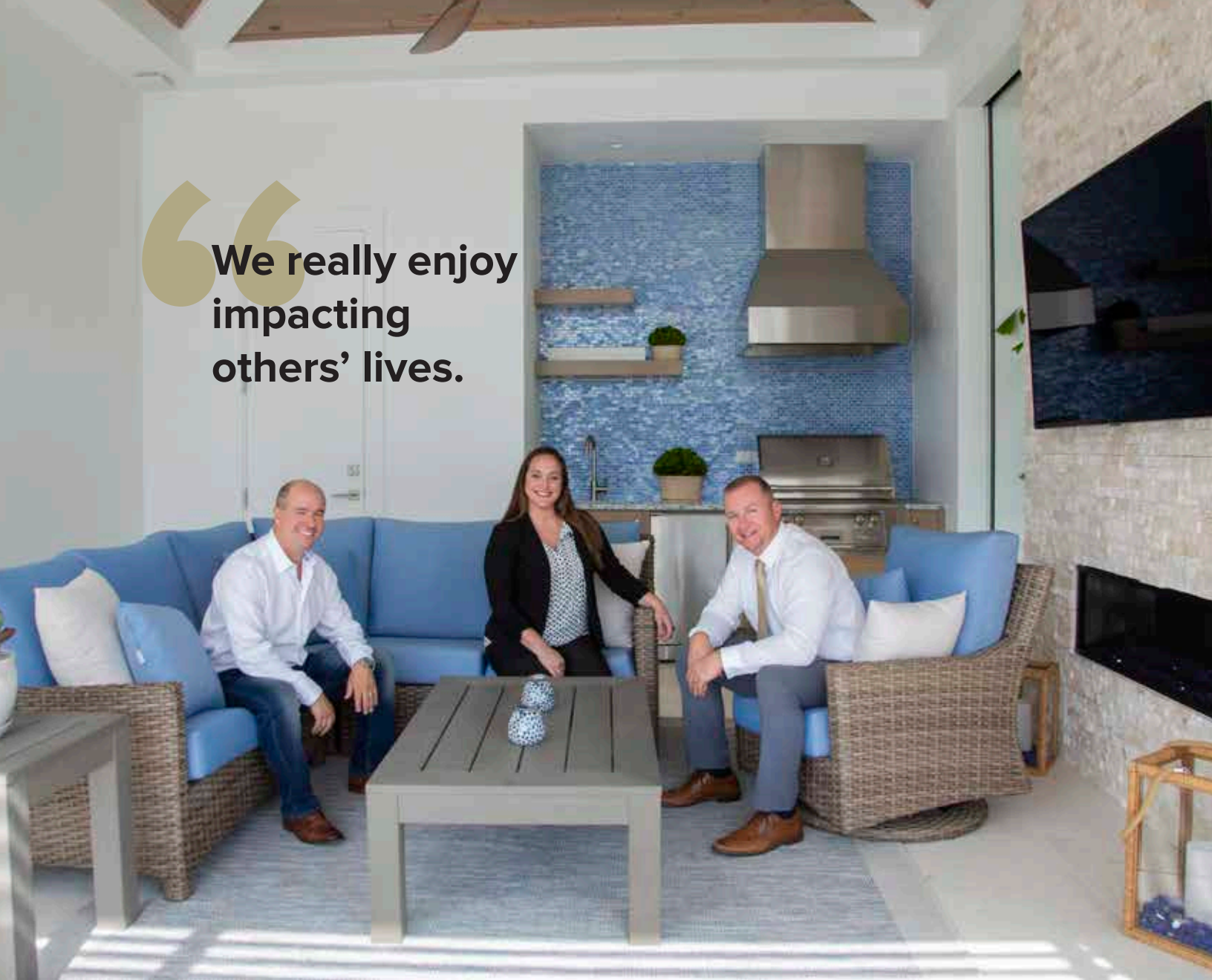
Rob Mauceli got a contractor’s license in 2009 and bought, renovated, and flipped foreclosures before entering residential real estate full-time.



Tony Grech started in real estate in 2007, after referring a client to a REALTOR® friend who inspired him to enter the business himself.



“We really enjoy impacting others’ lives.”



The Maucelli Grech Team is driven by the opportunity to serve and provides world-class service and attention to clients.

...

Tony and his wife Michelle, have three children: 11-year-old daughter Gianna, 9-year-old daughter Sophia, and 7-year-old son Michael. A favorite pursuit for Tony is early-morning workouts at the gym. He also enjoys activities with his children, including four-wheeling and basketball.

As they consider their careers in this business and the impact they have the chance to make on others, Rob and Tony feel a deep sense of responsibility.

“Those first impressions are so important when we work with clients,” Rob says. “When you go into it as your natural self, that’s what helps people get to know you and remember you. It’s the knowledge of the business and having the experience to know they can trust your guidance ... helping people make that right decision.”

“We take what we do very seriously. We know the numbers and we study

the market thoroughly daily. It’s the first thing, besides our family, that we think of every day and the last thing each night,” Tony explains. “In the process, we appreciate every opportunity we get.”

There’s no doubt their clients are very appreciative of Rob and Tony too — two men who cherish the opportunity to serve ... and the chance to make dreams come true.

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▶ MASTER THE MEDIA



What to Pitch the Media This Summer

By Christina Daves

Take a look at the calendar and see what you can tie to real estate during the summer months. May and June mark college graduations. Can a new graduate buy a home? What does it take in the current market? Do you have creative, unique ways to help a new graduate buy a home?

June is National Safety Month. Pitch safety features every home should have and/or do certain safety features add value to a home? The second week in June is “National Gardening Week.” What’s the best bang-for-your-buck upgrade to a home, in terms of curb appeal and landscaping?

July is vacation rental month. If that’s your expertise, talk about purchasing a second home to use as a rental. July 15th is “Get to Know Your Customers Day.” Whether you use this to pitch the media or just make a note for yourself, this is a quarterly holiday and a great excuse for you to stay connected with your sphere of influence.

August has “National Safe at Home Week.” Similarly to June, you could pitch new safety features for homes and what you are seeing trending in that area with homes for sale. August 21st is

“Senior Citizen Day.” What is the trend for retirees? Are they staying in their large homes? Are they downsizing? Are they moving to retirement communities? What are you seeing in the market? Pitch that for this day in August.

It’s also summer, so you can pitch stories related to selling a home during the summer months. Is it a hot time with back-to-school coming? Is it a good or bad time to buy or sell? Why or why not? Position yourself as the real estate expert on any of these topics and pitch away!



Christina Daves
PR for Anyone®

Christina Daves is the founder of PR For Anyone®. She has trained thousands of real estate agents in gaining visibility by using traditional and social media together for maximum effectiveness. Agents she has worked with have appeared in national magazines, newspapers, radio, television, and blogs. Book your free business strategy session with Christina at www.ChatWithChristina.com, and learn more about her at www.ChristinaDaves.com.

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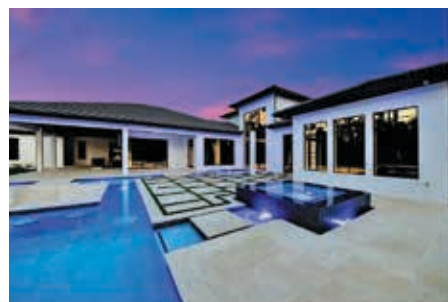
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By Shauna Osborne

HERE'S A TIP: GRATUITY IN 2021

How much do I tip the Uber Eats delivery person? Should I tip the barista? Fifteen percent? Twenty percent? Ask 20 people what they think about tipping, and you'll get 20 different responses. On one hand, tipping detractors argue tipping can be arbitrary and doesn't allow high-performing service professionals to be suitably compensated. Those in favor of tipping consider the practice an essential and longstanding part of the American culture of hospitality favored by tipped employees, customers, and employers alike. It's a topic that's brought out heated opinions on both sides for nearly a century.

Sadly, the practice of tipping in the U.S. actually has its roots in dubious and discriminatory employment practices after the Civil War, brought back from Europe by wealthy travelers in the name of gentility. The first minimum-wage law in the U.S. was passed by Congress in 1938 and allowed states to set a lower wage for tipped workers; then, in the 1960s, Congress passed a law designating a federal tipped minimum wage that increased when the regular minimum wage increased. This law was, in turn, disman-

tled in the 1990s, and the tipped minimum wage then became \$2.13/hour ... where it remains today, for better or for worse.

Recognizing that tipping endures here in the U.S., what is proper etiquette nowadays? Who gets tips and who doesn't (and how much)? Etiquette experts agree that, for example, food, furniture, and flower delivery folks, drivers and parking attendants, most travel-related services (e.g., bellhop, housekeeping), salon and spa services, bartenders, and tattoo artists should always be tipped, with amounts varying depending on the service. For workers who play regular roles in our lives, such as tutors, assistants, building staff, and mail / package delivery people, it might be more appropriate to tip on special occasions or yearly during the holidays. There's generally no expectation to tip mechanics, contractors, accountants, grocery-store baggers, or fast-food workers. However, considering that many in the service industry, especially, have lost weeks, maybe months, of income during the pandemic, we should never worry we've over-tipped. In short, if in doubt, tip 15-20%.

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