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SEAN HETTICH



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

RISING STAR
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MEET THE ACADIANA REAL PRODUCERS TEAM


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Drake Abshire
Publisher



Blaine Goudeau
Videographer



Erin Goudeau
Photographer



Ace Sylvester
Photographer



Holly Hebert
Advertising Manager



Jordan Iverstine
Staff Journalist

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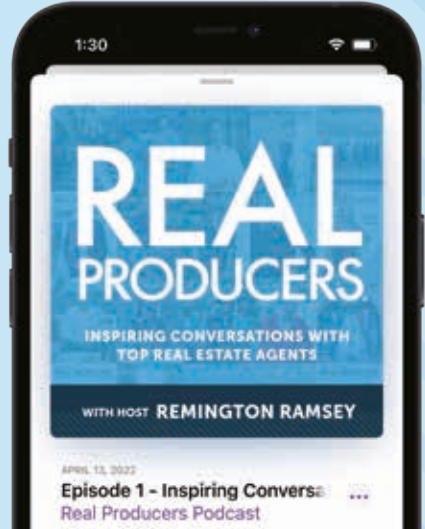
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» cover story

SEAN HETTICH

Sean Hettich learned the power of an entrepreneurial spirit at a very young age.

From the time he was little, he understood that if he wanted something, he was going to have to work hard to get it. In his early days of Middle School, all Hettich wanted in the entire world was a go-kart. However, as an 11-year-old boy, attaining the money for this purchase would require effort beyond receiving the occasional dollar from his parents. Determined, Hettich found a way to make money by tapping into a technique that many adults still don't understand: supply and demand. Before he even had his wisdom teeth, Hettich was wise enough to know what was hot in the market. Sean would buy a popular candy called Cry Babies from the corner store at 5 cents each and would sell them to his classmates for 15 cents, pocketing the 10-cent profit. To close his margins even further, Hettich struck up a deal with the store owner to get a discount when he bought the entire box, participating in bulk purchasing for the first time in his life. "I was all about the margins," He says fondly, thinking back. His daytime school hustle coupled with mowing lawns and shoveling snow, got him his go-kart.

By Jordan Iversine • Photos by Ace Sylvester

It was only a matter of time before these skills became the backbone of how he lived his life. Hettich deduced at the end of high school that if he wanted to take his entrepreneurship to the next level, he would have to invest in himself. "I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth," he relates, "I realized that if I was going to get ahead in life, I needed to invest in my mind [in college]." After a few semesters of fumbling around in pre-law and pre-med, Hettich landed in the major where it all started: business. "The business stuff just came naturally, as it always has... I didn't feel like work to me," he says, and after three years of undergrad, and a spur decision to finish his business and marketing degrees in Australia, Hettich found himself living in the land down under and pursuing his career as a marketing manager. "Being the hustler that I was... I discovered a gap in the market for certain car accessories and electronics. Out of a one-bed, one-bathroom apartment, I started importing them and selling them in the local markets," Hettich explains. Amazingly, the income from this side business eventually surpassed his 9 to 5, so he decided to become a full-time business owner. Hettich goes on to relate that he built this business for the next 7 years, but after becoming homesick, he sold this now thriving business, making his first million at the age of 31, and returned to the States.

It wasn't long before the entrepreneurial itch urged Hettich to begin looking for what would be the next big market. Only a few months after being reunited with his family, Hettich found himself on the doorstep of Lafayette, Louisiana, ready to begin the next phase of his life. "When I moved to Lafayette, it was difficult for me to find

**FROM MARKETING TO
MARKET KING**





In 2017, after many years of learning the market and working for other businesses, Hettich's desire to be a self-made man led him to open his firm, District South, with his partner Carrie Theard. Six years later, he decided to migrate the firm to an "agent-ownership model", by partnering with REAL Broker, to give his agents more freedom and wealth-creation opportunities. "Looking at numbers and national trends, I realized this is where people were migrating," he emphasizes, "The point of being in business is to stay in business." Once again, Hettich's mind for success steered him in the right direction and has made his brokerage one of the most successful in the entire city.

Sean Hettich relates that when he first came down to the

a decent quality rental. That was my first clue... I realized that there were more people than there were places, because the area was growing so fast, which was my indicator that this was what I was supposed to pursue next," he remarks. Hettich got his real estate license in 2013 and within a year, was one of the top twenty realtors in the region.

“ I REALIZED THAT IF I WAS GOING TO GET AHEAD IN LIFE, I NEEDED TO INVEST IN MY MIND [IN COLLEGE].



“
**THE
COMMUNITY
WELCOMED
ME AND
ALLOWED
ME TO
PROVE MY
WORTH TO
THEM AS A
REALTOR.**
I DIDN'T
WANT TO
LET THEM
DOWN.

”

South, he was a little hesitant about how the community would embrace him. “I was a little bit nervous because I’m just like this “Michigander”, this Yankee / Australian, going into the deep south, cajun country. I really didn’t know how it was going to go,” Hettich admits. Now a resident of the community for almost a decade, Hettich is emphatic about his love for southern culture. “What I have found is that the people in the south are just so kind and so welcoming... That whole idea of ‘Southern hospitality’ is so real,” he shares, “I find that people down here are so genuine and are some of the least judgmental and friendliest people I’ve ever met. The community welcomed me and allowed me to prove my worth to them as a realtor. I didn’t want to let them down.”

Hettich has mixed both his love for business and his newfound love of the South into a recipe for success. As one of the most highly rated and best-loved brokerages in the city, Hettich plans to continue serving the people who made him feel so at home, by helping them find their homes, for years to come.



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REAL PRODUCERS MAGAZINE STARTED IN INDIANAPOLIS IN 2015 AND IS NOW IN OVER 130 MARKETS ACROSS THE NATION AND CONTINUES TO SPREAD RAPIDLY.

Real Producers magazine started in Indianapolis in 2015 and is now in over 130 markets across the nation and continues to spread rapidly.

Q: WHO RECEIVES Real Producers MAGAZINES?

A: The top 300+ real estate agents across Acadiana.

Q: WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THIS MAGAZINE?

A: We believe that we are better together. When we surround ourselves with other successful, like-minded people, we grow to new heights. Real Producers is a platform that brings together the most elite individuals in Acadiana's real estate industry.

We take the top 300 real estate agents and RP-vetted businesses in every market, and we build an exclusive community around that group. We share their stories, successes, market trends, and upcoming events — really, anything that will connect, inform and inspire, we put in our monthly publication.

Q: DOES Real Producers HAVE EVENTS?

A: Yes! We will have specific networking events throughout the year.

Q: WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR BEING FEATURED IN THIS MAGAZINE?

A: It's really simple. You have to be on the top 300 list, and we take nominations seriously. You can nominate other real estate agents, businesses,

brokers, owners or even yourself! Office leaders can also nominate real estate agents. We will consider anyone brought to our attention who is in the top 300 because we don't know everyone's story, so we need your help to learn about them. We cannot guarantee a feature, but we encourage you to meet with one of our team members, support Real Producers and attend our private events to increase your chances.

To submit a nomination, please send us an email!

Q: WHAT DOES IT COST A REAL ESTATE AGENT/TEAM TO BE FEATURED?

A: Zero, zilch, zippo, nada, nil. It costs nothing to agents, so nominate away! We are not a pay-to-play model. We share **Real** stories of **Real Producers**.

Q: WHO ARE THE RP-VETTED BUSINESSES?

A: They are one of the best businesses in Acadiana in their category, and you can find them listed in our index! We don't just find these businesses off the street, nor do we work with all businesses that approach us. Many of the top agents have recommended every single business you see in this publication. We will not even meet with a business that has not been vetted by one of you and "stamped for approval," in a sense. Our team will further vet every business to make sure they are a good fit and bring value to our community. Our goal is to create a powerhouse network, not only for the best real estate agents in the area but the best businesses so we can grow stronger together.

Q: HOW CAN I RECOMMEND A BUSINESS?

A: If you want to recommend a business that works with top real estate agents, please email or message us!

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SAM HAYNES



1. How many years have you been a realtor?

Almost a year and a half

2. What is your career volume as a realtor?

\$ 2,733,0253

3. What was your total volume last year?

\$ 2,548,025

4. What awards have you achieved as a realtor?

I've yet to receive any awards; however, I've been selected to be a member of the 2024 RAA Leadership Academy, which I'm very proud of.

1. When did you start your career in real estate?

I began my real estate career in October 2022.

2. What did you do before you became a realtor?

Before my real estate career, I was the manager of my family's bar for 7 years, where I worked throughout college.

3. What are you passionate about right now in your business?

I'm currently focused on building a strong and clear brand for my business. I aim to create a brand that tells potential clients exactly who I am and what my business offers, making it easy for them to understand the unique benefits of choosing my services.

4. What has been the most rewarding part of your business?

The most gratifying aspect of being a realtor is witnessing the joy and satisfaction on my client's faces at the closing table.

5. What was your biggest challenge as a realtor?

As a new realtor, I'm navigating through plenty of unfamiliar ground. Each day brings its own set of challenges, but I view them as opportunities to learn and grow. It's crucial for me to learn from my mistakes rather than dwell on them. Surrounding myself with some of the top professionals in the industry has been incredibly beneficial. Their expertise and guidance have provided me with valuable tools and strategies to proactively address and overcome any obstacles I encounter.



6. How does real estate fit into your dreams and goals?

It might sound cliché, but being a real estate agent has been my dream for as long as I can remember. As a child, I was captivated by a local Cox TV station that continuously showed real estate listings. I would sit and watch for hours, and that's when I realized my future was in real estate. Throughout college, I remained focused on this goal, knowing that a career in real estate was my ultimate destination.

7. What's your favorite part of being a realtor?

Choosing just one favorite is hard, so I'll name a few. I love being able to work with many different types of people and being able to be part of their stories. I also enjoy the flexibility this career gives me, enabling me to give back to my community by being involved in multiple organizations.

8. Define success.

To me, success is all about achieving my personal goals. These goals must be within reach yet still challenging enough to require effort and determination. The moment I accomplish these goals, I feel an immense sense of pride and achievement.

9. Tell us about your family.

I'm lucky to have a large, close-knit family. My family is, without a doubt, my biggest support system, and I know I can rely on them when I need them. My experience working in our family bar has equipped me with unique skills I couldn't have learned elsewhere. When the time came for me to leave the bar, my family, while sad about my departure, were grateful for my contributions during my tenure. I owe a lot to my family, and I aspire to continue making them proud of my journey and future endeavors.

10. Favorite books?

I'll be honest—I'm not an avid reader, and I haven't really picked up a book since my college days. My attention span tends to be quite short. However, I do have a couple of business and real estate books on my list that I hope to read this year.

11. Are there any charities or organizations you support?

I am actively involved in my community as a board member for several organizations. These include

the St. Martinville Chamber of Commerce, the St. Martinville Historic District Commission, and the SLCC Advisory Board for the Evangeline Campus. I really enjoy contributing to these committees and aim to offer valuable insights and fresh perspectives, especially as I am the youngest member on each of these committees.

12. What are your hobbies and interests outside of the business?

Apart from my real estate career, I love spending time with friends and family and being involved in community events and organizations. Music has always been a deep passion of mine as well. If not for my career in real estate, I might have pursued a path in music. I've always enjoyed singing, and in my personal time, I continue to work on enhancing my vocal skills and refining my technique.

13. Given your status and expertise, what is some advice you would give the up-and-coming top producer?

Keep steady and don't lose heart! It's common to doubt yourself, but remember, the real estate market is always fluctuating. We might not have control over market trends, but we can certainly manage our attitudes. It's important to acknowledge that there will be both great and challenging months. Equip yourself both mentally and financially for the tougher times, so you have the resilience and mindset to persist.

14. In closing, is there anything else you would like to communicate using this Acadiana Real Producer platform?

As someone deeply passionate about my hometown, St. Martinville, I encourage everyone to explore our charming historic town. With new leadership in place, exciting developments are on the horizon for our community. I foresee St. Martinville becoming one of the top destinations in Acadiana within the next 5 years. The city presents fantastic investment opportunities, and I invite you to join us in enhancing and adding to the beauty of this beautiful community.

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This magazine may be completely new to you, but I've been working on this launch for several months and I firmly believe in the mission of this publication. Real Producers is in over 130 markets across the U.S., where each city has its own version of Real Producers. I'm very excited to bring this magazine to our Acadiana real estate market!

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This magazine will be a vehicle to highlight all the top-producing agents across Acadiana to share what makes them so special.

What does this magazine mean to the REALTOR®?

It is a badge of honor to be receiving this magazine out of the thousands of agents in our area. We want to validate your business and achievements! There are so many incredible real estate agents who don't get the opportunity to be in the spotlight as they should. We will celebrate our local legends, industry icons and rising stars each month and all the success they've created.

What does this magazine mean to our Preferred Partners?

Our partners hold a special piece to this puzzle since their partnership helps support our monthly publication. Without them, we wouldn't be able to feature our top agents or host our social events. Each business in our magazine has been vetted and personally referred to *Acadiana Real Producers*, so you can trust they're doing good work! If you are looking for a great business to try or to use, I strongly suggest our preferred partners.

What content will be featured each month?

- Cover Story
- Rising Star
- Industry Icons
- Partner Spotlight featuring a Preferred Partner
- Social event recaps
- Other content will be added as we continue to grow our publication

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Austin Shumaker

professional journey in lending. This same desire to win and not take “no” for an answer is the reason why this student suggested that Shumaker get his mortgage originator’s license in the first place.

“Originally I was like, “Thanks, but no thanks”, and I was kind of guilt-tripped into it”, Shumaker laughs, thinking back. Despite his initial objections, he received his license in July 2016 and began his journey as a loan officer. “It was definitely a learning curve”, he says, remembering the struggles that the first year posed to him.

However, these challenges helped him to grow, and once he opened his own business, Neighborly Home Lending in 2017, Shumaker finally felt at home. “It was when I opened my own company that I finally believed I could do amazing things for people and do well. That’s when I took off and ran with it”, he emphasizes. While running this company, Shumaker had the honor of landing in the top 20% of the Inc. 5000 list for fastest-growing, privately owned businesses. Then, after years of being a one-man-show, he has now expanded his business with Cross Country Mortgage, which has allowed him to have more products and create more opportunities for the people he serves.

Best in the Business

Few people end up where they set out to be, yet many discover where they belong along the way. This idea rings especially true for Austin Shumaker, who describes the start of his career in mortgage as “falling into the business”. Austin began his career in the oil and gas industry, but after dealing with a downturn in work, he returned to school, not sure what the future held for him. After a few semesters, Shumaker eventually had a conversation with a student he was coaching that would change the trajectory of his career. “I’ve always been a super competitive person” Shumaker states, something that has helped him in his

With an expanded range of products and a dedicated staff readily accessible, Cross Country’s Neighborly Team functions as the financing piece for the real estate industry in Lafayette, LA. In the day-to-day, Shumaker, along with his second in command, Sarah Cooley, helps the people of Acadiana, from getting pre-approved to the final closing day.

Shumaker prides himself in the fact that his company is one of the best lenders in the region, boasting many options that help the vast assortment of clients they serve. “What really sets us apart is the range



Sarah Cooley

Shumaker believes the secret behind his company's success is instilling a particular mindset into his employees, one that he's followed for years. "You have to create necessity," he insists, "You have something pushing you to show up and get the job done, whether that's an external necessity, like a drive to be successful to support yourself and your family, or an internal necessity, like the burning desire for the industry. You have to have one of those two or you won't be satisfied."

You Do for Family

Running one of the fastest-growing companies in the area could not be done without inspiration and support. Shumaker attributes his "necessity", the driving factor in his professional career, to his wonderful wife. "She's a general surgeon, so when we met, 7 or 8 years ago, that was really a defining moment and an inflection point for me", he says, "an indicator to get my life together. She's a super hard worker and it just really motivated me to work hard." Shumaker and his wife also just had their first baby, who is now 6 months old, which he says is another huge driving force to provide for his family.

From this source of inspiration, Shumaker has built his company into what it is today. Looking back on where he started, from a fledgling loan officer who was lucky to get 10 deals in his first year, to the originating branch manager of his own company and a decade of experience under his belt, Shumaker is proud of all that he's accomplished. "I'm at a very sustaining period in my career, where I'm very happy with the results of the work that we've put in. Thankfully, now that we've grown into having a steady amount of clients, we can focus more now on refining the way we do things... and pouring back into the people we hire," he shares. Shumaker looks forward to continuing to serve his clients with the hard-working attitude he's known for, while also taking some time for his family, the people who make it all worth it.

of products we offer for our clients. We have your run-of-the-mill loans, FHA loans, VA loans, and FDA loans. Still, we also have products outside of that suite that make us a really attractive and compelling offer", he remarks. Closing between 150 to 200 deals a year, Cross Country Neighborly Team has become a well-seasoned lender that understands the ins and outs of the mortgage process. Shumaker states that "the sheer exposure to different types of clients throughout the year, their financial situations, how they fit in certain boxes or don't fit in certain boxes" is what allows him to pick up on vital details intuitively and, as a result, distinguishing his team in terms of serving people well.





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Mitzi Mayeux
Attorney at Law

Peter Marshall
Attorney at Law

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318-727-SOCO

145 W. Main St Suite C
New Iberia, LA 70560
337-333-SOCO

Info@SoCoTitle.com | www.SoCoTitle.com