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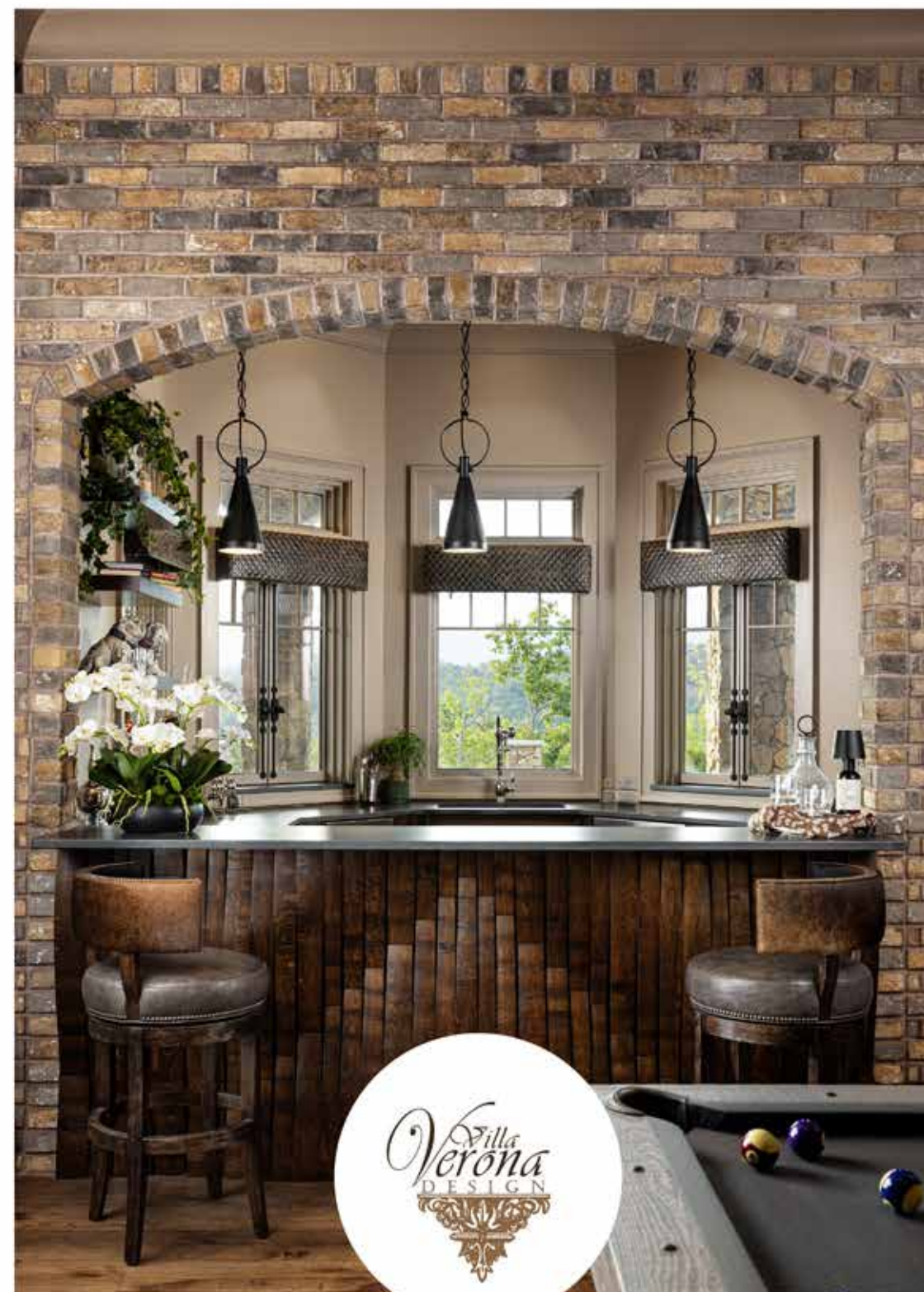
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As February unfolds, we are reminded of the power of love, connection, and collaboration—the very values that make our real estate community thrive. Whether it's the love for helping clients find their dream homes, the dedication to professional growth, or the partnerships that strengthen our success, this month is a celebration of what truly matters.

This issue highlights extraordinary individuals and teams who exemplify these values:

- **Our Cover Feature Realtor**, whose passion and perseverance inspire us all.
- **Our Top Producer**, someone making a remarkable impact with leadership that uplifts the industry.
- **Our Rising Star**, whose energy and innovation represent the bright future of real estate.
- **Our Tips of the Trade**, we can never stop learning from others.
- And, of course, **our Amazing Preferred Partner**, who continues to set the gold standard for service and collaboration.

As we celebrate the season of love, let's also take a moment to appreciate the bonds we've built within this incredible network. Thank you for being part of our *Columbia Real Producers* family.

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Robert Smith
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I like the idea of being the only point of contact so nothing falls through the cracks.”



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Tillman



A Passionate Professional with a Tenacious Spirit

PHOTOS BY: CAROLINA HOUSE SHOTS · WRITTEN BY: AMY PORTER

Katie Tillman, the dynamic real estate agent from BuyHartwellLake, LLC, exemplifies determination, compassion, and a dedication to her clients. Licensed since 2016, Katie transitioned into real estate after more than 20 years in the restaurant and catering business. Her entrepreneurial spirit and love for connecting with people made real estate a natural fit. Leveraging a vast contact network and her own extensive

real estate experience, Katie has built a career centered on exceptional service and meaningful client relationships.

Katie specializes in lake properties but works across various locations, tailoring her approach to meet the unique needs of each client. As a team of one, she values the personal touch and direct communication, ensuring every detail is meticulously managed. “I like the idea of



“

Keep your eye on the prize. Real estate is only a deal if it closes. Set egos aside and focus on what’s best for all parties.”

being the only point of contact so nothing falls through the cracks,” Katie explains. Her impressive career volume speaks to her success, with \$49,852,097 in properties listed, \$48,003,878 sold, and 151 transactions completed since 2016—averaging 21.5 transactions per year at an average price of \$330,000. Her commitment to understanding her clients’ dreams and needs has made her a trusted partner in their journeys, from finding the perfect family home to retiring in a peaceful lakeside retreat.

One of Katie’s most memorable success stories reflects her patience and dedication: after showing a couple more than 30 homes over several years, they ultimately purchased the house right next door to Katie and Val. “They hit the good neighbor lottery,” Katie quips. This persistence and humor are hallmarks of her approach, making the home-buying process both thorough and enjoyable.

Katie credits her mentor, Judy Stevanovich, for inspiring her focus on integrity and attention to detail. She admires Judy’s honesty and courage in addressing tough decisions—qualities that Katie embodies in her own business practices. “It’s only a good deal if it’s good for both parties,” she advises, emphasizing the importance of fairness and keeping the ultimate goal in sight: a successful closing.

Beyond her professional achievements, Katie is an artist, a chef, and community advocate. Katie and Val have a catering company Food With A Flair LLC. They handle all the food prep and cooking for their catering company. She supports the Anderson Free Clinic, Meals on Wheels, and the several local Arts Center, reflecting her belief that no one should go without medical care or food and her passion for the arts. An iron sculptor and potter, she finds joy in firing a wood kiln and exploring creative expression.

Katie’s personal life is equally vibrant. She and her partner of 33 years, Val, share a love for pottery, cycling, and good food, but most of all, they cherish time with friends. This balance between work and life is a cornerstone of Katie’s definition of success: “Success is being able to slow down enough to enjoy every moment of every day,” she shares.

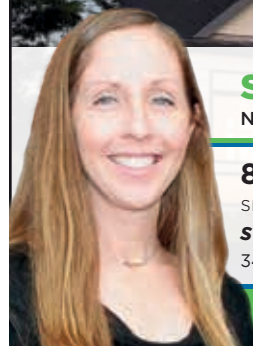
For aspiring top producers, Katie offers sage advice: “Keep your eye on the prize. Real estate is only a deal if it closes. Set egos aside and focus on what’s best for all parties.” With her unwavering dedication and authentic approach, Katie Tillman exemplifies what it means to be a real producer—one who truly works hard for her clients while maintaining the highest standards of integrity.

Katie’s story serves as a reminder that in the complex world of real estate, finding a professional who respects your dreams, values your budget, and works tirelessly to “make it happen” can transform the process into a journey worth celebrating.



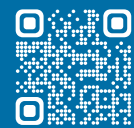
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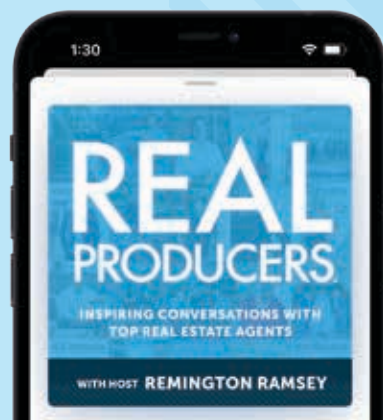
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From

Recession Survivor to Top Producing Real Estate Leader

Dan Bracken's Journey

WRITTEN BY: AMY PORTER · PHOTOS BY: TRES DABNEY (TRUE NORTH PRODUCTIONS)

In the ever-evolving world of real estate, few professionals have weathered the storms and emerged stronger quite like Dan Bracken. With a humble heart, two decades of experience, and \$300,000,000 in career total sales, Dan has become a beacon of resilience and adaptability in the industry. His journey, marked by economic downturns and personal challenges, offers invaluable insights into what it takes to thrive in the competitive realm of real estate.

Bracken's path to real estate began during his college years when he first identified a desire to become a Realtor. This ambition was fueled by a genuine passion for helping and guiding people through one of life's most significant decisions - purchasing a home. After a brief stint in the mortgage industry, Dan fully committed to his real estate career in 2000.

Throughout his career, Bracken has amassed impressive accomplishments, including a robust sales year of \$25 million in 2024. However, his true measure of success lies not in numbers, but in the lives he's touched and the problems he's solved. As a broker in charge, Dan leads an office of three agents, a licensed assistant, and a marketing assistant, embodying his belief that success in real estate is about serving well rather than chasing numbers.

Bracken's approach to business is deeply rooted in his core values of serving, work ethic, and intentionality. He believes in giving more than he takes and approaches each client interaction with a genuine desire to solve problems and guide them through challenging times. This philosophy has not only helped him build a successful career but has also enabled him to forge lasting relationships with his clients.

Like many in the industry, Bracken faced significant challenges during the Great Recession of 2008. With a young family to support and a market that screeched to a halt, he experienced many sleepless nights wondering how to make ends meet. However, this period proved to be a pivotal turning point in his career. From that year on, Dan learned to focus on what he could control - his work ethic and approach to serving clients. This mindset shift not only helped him survive the recession but also shaped his business philosophy for years to come.

Looking to the future, Dan is concerned about the growing disconnect between average American earnings and home prices. He sees this as a critical issue that could potentially rob the next generation of a primary wealth-building tool. Despite these challenges,

Bracken remains optimistic, believing in the industry's ability to adapt and find opportunities even in times of chaos. In his words, "We seem to have an existential crisis every four to five years. When it occurs, panic spreads. What I've learned is we always adapt. Instead of herding with the panic, I focus on adapting, learning, and finding the opportunity in the chaos."

For those aspiring to follow in his footsteps, Dan offers three key pieces of advice. First, identify your purpose and stay grounded in it. Second, be consistent about working

“

WE SEEM TO HAVE AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS EVERY FOUR TO FIVE YEARS. WHEN IT OCCURS, PANIC SPREADS. WHAT I'VE LEARNED IS WE ALWAYS ADAPT.”





“

INSTEAD OF HERDING WITH THE PANIC, I FOCUS ON ADAPTING, LEARNING, AND FINDING THE OPPORTUNITY IN THE CHAOS.”

your circle and have a clear action plan. Finally, be conscientious about your methods. He emphasizes that a successful career in real estate is built on more than just numbers - it's about serving well and making a positive impact on people's lives.

Outside of his professional life, Dan is a family man with children ranging from 9 to 21 years old. He enjoys traveling with his diverse family and maintains an active lifestyle through cycling and running. His passion for serving extends beyond his real estate career - he's been on the board of his local YMCA for over a decade, driven by a belief in the organization's mission to serve the community.

In conclusion, Bracken's journey in real estate is a testament to the power of resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to service. From surviving the Great Recession to building a successful team, Dan has consistently demonstrated that success in real estate is about more than just closing deals. It's about solving problems, serving well, guiding clients through difficult times, and always striving to give more than you take. As the real estate landscape continues to evolve, professionals like Dan Bracken serve as inspiring examples of how to not just survive, but thrive in this dynamic industry.



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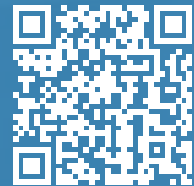
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“
I want to be remembered for my enthusiasm, my caring nature, and my ability to make others smile.”

Melissa Powell

PHOTOS BY: TRES DABNEY
(TRUE NORTH PRODUCTIONS)
WRITTEN BY: AMY PORTER

Melissa Powell, a rising star in the Upstate real estate market, has quickly made a name for herself since obtaining her real estate license in 2021. Melissa works with Allen Tate – Pine to Palm Realty Group, a company she has been with since the start of her career. Her journey into real estate was inspired by her passion for helping people, which she initially nurtured as a full-time nurse. When the COVID-19 pandemic prompted her to reevaluate her career, Melissa took a leap of faith, attending real estate school after long nursing shifts. That bold decision has proven to be a life-changing blessing.

Melissa’s real estate career is rooted in a commitment to understanding her clients’ needs and navigating them through one of the most significant decisions of their lives—buying or selling a home. Specializing in the Upstate, particularly the Lake Hartwell, Anderson, Pendleton, and Clemson areas, she holds licenses in both South Carolina and Georgia. Her personal approach to client relationships sets her apart. By taking the time to connect on a deeper level, she ensures that every transaction reflects her clients’ unique goals and aspirations.



**FORGING A PATH
TO REAL ESTATE
SUCCESS**

“

Real estate is more than a job—it's my calling. I feel so blessed that God has placed me on this path.”



One of Melissa's most rewarding experiences as a Realtor involved helping a first-time homebuyer achieve their dream of homeownership. Through persistence and problem-solving, Melissa guided her client from renting to owning a new construction home—a journey the client initially thought impossible. These moments of transformation and joy are what drive Melissa's passion for her work.

In 2023, Melissa achieved over \$6.2 million in sales, and she is on track to close nearly \$9 million in 2024. Her success stems from a blend of hard work, determination, and the guidance of mentors who have helped her grow professionally. She looks up to a close friend and her broker at Allen Tate – Pine to Palm Realty Group, both of whom have provided invaluable encouragement and support.



Melissa's approach to real estate emphasizes transparency and adaptability. She embraces challenges as learning opportunities and maintains that no transaction is perfect. Her faith, coupled with her dedication to serving others, fuels her enthusiasm for her career.

Outside of work, Melissa enjoys spending time with her boyfriend, Chevis, and their two Goldendoodles, Jumper and Whiskey. Whether traveling, relaxing on the lake, or cheering on Clemson football, she values the moments spent with loved ones. Additionally, Melissa supports charitable organizations like Meals on Wheels and AIM, reflecting her ongoing commitment to giving back to her community.

Melissa's definition of success goes beyond financial achievement. For her, it's about building strong, trusting



relationships with clients and peers, creating a network of support that fosters growth and mutual respect. Her advice to aspiring Realtors is simple: work hard, stay adaptable, and strive for personal and professional growth every day.

“I want to be remembered for my enthusiasm, my caring nature, and my ability to make others smile,” Melissa shares. “Real estate is more than a job—it's my calling. I feel so blessed that God has placed me on this path.”

Melissa's favorite quote, “Success doesn't come from what you do occasionally; it comes from what you do consistently,” perfectly encapsulates her approach to life and work. With her unwavering dedication and genuine passion, Melissa Powell continues to inspire and excel as a Realtor, making her a well-deserving Rising Star.



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BIGGEST INVESTMENT.”



MEET Kendyl URGO

Home Warranty Inc.

WRITTEN BY: AMY PORTER

Spotlight on Kendyl Urgo of Home Warranty Inc.

Meet Kendyl Urgo, a Greer, SC, native with a passion for providing homeowners with peace of mind through exceptional home warranty services. With 20 plus years of experience in the home warranty industry, Kendyl joined Home Warranty Inc. in March 2024, bringing her expertise and dedication to a company that has proudly served customers for 25 years. Headquartered in Iowa, Home Warranty Inc. operates in 45 states, continually expanding to offer its unparalleled services nationwide.

Kendyl’s enthusiasm for her work shines through her commitment to helping Realtors and their clients navigate the challenges of homeownership. “Buying a house is most people’s biggest investment,” Kendyl says. “I love saving homeowners money on unexpected repairs or replacements caused by normal wear and tear.” Home Warranty Inc. stands out in the industry by offering services that complement

homeowner’s insurance, covering items that insurance policies typically don’t. Unique benefits include 14 months of coverage for the first year, free seller listing coverage, a home concierge service, and the flexibility for homeowners to choose their own qualified contractor.

Outside of work, Kendyl enjoys spending time with her family and friends, playing cards, and nurturing her love for gardening as a Master Gardener. She and her husband of 26 years share a close-knit family that includes their daughter, two stepchildren, six grandchildren, two playful dogs (a Standard Poodle and an Aussie Doodle), and an outdoor orange tabby cat.

Kendyl attributes her success to her belief in the value of her product and her love for what she does. One memorable story from her career highlights the importance of her work: An agent once placed seller coverage on a home for an extended period. When an inspection revealed a crack in both heat exchangers,



Home Warranty Inc. stepped in to cover the replacement costs, saving the deal and the seller significant expense.

For Kendyl, success is about finding joy in your work. Her favorite quote, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't – you're right," by Henry Ford, perfectly encapsulates her positive and determined mindset.

Kendyl's ideal customers include Realtors, builders, and independent insurance companies who value top-notch service and a reliable partner in home warranties. To potential customers, Kendyl emphasizes the exceptional customer service and comprehensive coverage Home Warranty Inc. offers, along with her two decades of expertise.



CONTACT US!

To learn more about how Kendyl Urgo and Home Warranty Inc. can help protect your investment, visit HomeWarrantyInc.com or connect with Kendyl on Facebook. You can also reach her directly via email at kendylu@homewarrantyinc.com or by phone at (864) 640-5841.



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WRITTEN BY: AMY PORTER • PHOTOS BY: PP'S PHOTOGRAPHY (AMY PORTER)

Ugly Sweater Showdown a Night to Remember

On Wednesday, December 11, 2024, the *Upstate Real Producers* community gathered at The Upper Room in downtown Greenville for an evening of holiday cheer and lighthearted competition. The Ugly Sweater Showdown, hosted by publishers Robert and Sierra, brought together the top REALTORS® in the Upstate for a night of laughter, networking, and festive fun.

From the moment guests arrived at the stylish venue on College Street, the energy was electric. The Upper Room's cozy ambiance, adorned with twinkling holiday lights, perfectly complemented the outrageous holiday sweaters that filled the room. REALTORS® and preferred partners embraced the theme with gusto, showcasing a dazzling array of hilariously hideous attire—from blinking reindeer sweaters to over-the-top tinsel creations.

The event wasn't just about questionable fashion; it was also an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the Upstate's real estate stars. Guests mingled over delectable holiday bites and festive drinks while sharing stories from the past year. The highlight of the evening came during the

Ugly Sweater Contest, where creativity and humor reigned supreme. Winners walked away with coveted prizes—and, of course, bragging rights.

A heartfelt thank you goes to Joel Ridings with Atlantic Bay Mortgage, whose generous sponsorship made the evening possible. Joel's support exemplifies the spirit of collaboration and excellence that defines the *Upstate Real Producers* community.

As the evening wound down, it was clear that the *Upstate Real Producers* Holiday Party was more than just an event; it was a celebration of camaraderie, gratitude, and holiday joy. With memories of laughter and new connections made, attendees left the party feeling inspired to tackle the new year ahead.

Here's to an incredible 2024, and may the tradition of festive fun and friendly competition continue to thrive!



THANKS TO ATLANTIC BAY MORTGAGE FOR SPONSORING THIS EVENT AND ALWAYS SUPPORTING THE TOP REALTORS IN THE UPSTATE!





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Building Momentum

in Your Real Estate Business Post-Holidays

WRITTEN BY: QUANTELLA SIMMONS-KINARD ASSOCIATE BROKER AND TEAM OWNER AT REAL BROKER



As the holiday season winds down and we usher in the new year, it's essential for real estate professionals to

maintain their momentum and focus on their business goals. The start of a new year often brings with it a renewed sense of purpose and excitement, but by Valentine's day you are already distracted and bogged down with life's responsibilities. How do you keep your "New Year Spunk"? Here are a few tips of the trade to help you build and sustain momentum in your real estate business post-holidays:

1 / Review and Refine Your Goals:

Don't just buy a 2025 planner and say new year, new me! Take some time to review the goals you set for your real estate business and analyze- are my actions aligned with my vision and goals? If necessary, refine or adjust your goals or create an action plan to better execute. Break down your objectives into smaller tasks and prioritize them to ensure you stay focused and on track.

2 / Stay Organized:

Organization is key to maintaining momentum in your real estate business. Keep track of your appointments,

deadlines, and tasks using a digital calendar or planner. Set aside time each week to review your progress and make any necessary adjustments.. Two words: EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY. Technology is your friend and can help streamline what may seem to be a cumbersome task. Explore CRM systems, email marketing platforms, and social media management tools to help you stay organized and connected with your clients.

3 / Timeblock:

Don't get caught working so hard in your business that you forget to work ON your business. Delegate tasks to others and the ones you keep for yourself make sure they are money making activities. Consistent lead generation is essential for the growth of your real estate business. Allocate time each day to prospecting, networking, and following up with leads. Consider implementing new marketing strategies or collaborating with other professionals to expand your reach.

4 / Invest in Professional Development:

Enhance your skills and knowledge by attending real estate seminars, workshops, or obtaining relevant certifications. Continuous learning will not only keep you updated on industry trends but also help you offer better services to your clients.

Surround yourself with supportive colleagues or mentors, and celebrate your achievements along the way to stay inspired and focused.

5 / Stay Active & Engaged:

How many old acquaintances and long lost family members did you see over the last few weeks at different festivities? How many holiday cards did you receive? All of the people you connected with at the end of the year deserve a follow up- a thank you for thinking of you and your family. Have natural conversations and listen for clues. Did someone graduate, get married, or lose a family member? They may need your services. Stay connected and do not become a secret agent.

Remember that building momentum in your real estate business is a journey that requires consistency, dedication, and resilience. By staying committed to your goals and taking proactive steps to grow your business, you can set yourself up for success in the new year and beyond. Let's channel our energy and enthusiasm into propelling our real estate businesses forward. Stay focused, stay motivated, and keep striving for excellence in everything you do.

Do you have a tip you would like to share with your fellow Realtors? Reach out to us at robert.smith@realproducersmag.com



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