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APRIL 2026

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A portrait of Fran Papapietro, a woman with long, wavy dark hair and blue eyes, smiling. She is wearing a light blue blazer over a blue and white floral patterned top. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

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Papapietro



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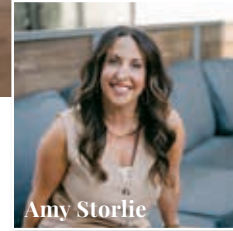
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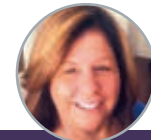


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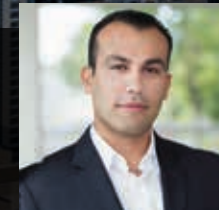
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BUILDING SOMETHING GREATER

There are moments that remind you why you do what you do.

Recently, I had one of those moments. I was standing in a room filled with familiar faces — and a few new ones — watching conversations unfold. Some people were reconnecting after months apart. Others were meeting for the very first time. Stories were being shared. Ideas were exchanged. Introductions were made. And in that moment, I thought, *this is it.*

This is why community matters.

That is the heart behind **Silicon Valley Real Producers**. Real estate is an extraordinary profession. It gives us freedom, opportunity, and impact. But if we're honest, it can also be isolating. We experience the highest highs and the lowest lows sometimes in the same week. Deals fall apart. Emotions run high. Challenges show up unannounced. And yet at the center of it all are families trusting us during some of the biggest transitions of their lives. That responsibility is not small.

When we gather at an event, over coffee, through a text, or even through the pages of this magazine we are reminded of something important we are not competitors first. We are humans first. We are professionals navigating the same pressures, learning from the same lessons, and striving to raise the standard of how real estate is done in Silicon Valley.

Community doesn't happen by accident. It happens when we choose to show up. When



we send the message. When we make the introduction. When we sit down for the conversation.

I truly believe that when agents know one another beyond production numbers and social media wins, empathy follows. And when empathy leads, transactions become more collaborative, more respectful, and ultimately more successful for everyone involved — including the clients we serve.

To our readers — thank you. I know how full your schedules are. The fact that you take the time to engage with this publication means more than you know. You are not just reading a magazine. You are helping elevate the culture of real estate in Silicon Valley.

And to our Preferred Partners and those considering partnership I encourage you to support the businesses you see in these pages. Every advertising partner is referral-based and vetted by top producing agents. They understand the pace, the pressure, and the precision this industry demands, and they are deeply invested in serving this community at the highest level.

Together, we are building something much greater than a magazine.

We are building a stronger network. A higher standard. A more connected and collaborative real estate community. And I am so grateful to build it alongside you.

Warmly,
Sandra



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BY HANNAH COLLINS
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PHOTOGRAPHY

Ben Frieden

BUILDING TRUST, RAISING STANDARDS, AND STAYING THE COURSE

Spend a few minutes with Ben Frieden and you realize quickly that real estate, for him, has never been about chasing numbers. It is about clarity under pressure, trust built the long way, and guiding people through decisions that often feel overwhelming.

“What inspired me was the opportunity to help turn goals into reality,” he shares. “Being trusted as a resource matters. That trust is earned.”

That belief has shaped his work, his growth, and the way clients often become long-term friends.

Foundations Built Early

Ben grew up in West San Jose where discipline, accountability, and consistent effort were part of everyday life. Before real estate, he helped open and manage a restaurant in Campbell. Leading teams, solving problems in real time, and consistent follow through helped set an early foundation for his future.

He competed as a college athlete and graduated from CSU Monterey Bay with a 4.0 GPA. Those experiences sharpened his ability to prepare, communicate clearly, and adapt to different personalities and situations.

Seeking broader perspective, Ben worked with a startup home-building company and later moved to Shanghai to join an interior design firm. Living abroad required patience, observation, and composure while navigating unfamiliar environments.

“Being placed in new environments taught me how to stay calm, see clearly, and approach challenges with intention,” he says.

Learning the Business the Right Way

When Ben entered real estate, he chose not to rush. He intentionally started at the front desk at Keller Williams. His goal was to understand contracts, systems, the language, and build relationships with other agents. From there, he moved into marketing, then leasing, where he helped place tenants in more than 250 homes.

He later joined the VKG team at the ground level, listening in on negotiations, objection handling, and client conversations in real time. That education mattered. When he moved into full production, he was prepared - and earned Rookie of the Year honors. Those early years shaped a simple but lasting approach: stay level-headed, execute over emotion, and prioritize relationships above everything else.

Early Lessons and Reality Checks

Like many ambitious agents, Ben began eager to prove himself. But clients weren't looking for someone chasing volume. They were looking for empathy, steadiness, and someone willing to listen.

Age was another hurdle. To earn credibility, he leaned into discipline - open houses, cold calls, door knocking. Much of it produced quiet momentum long before visible results showed.

He soon learned that real estate doesn't keep office hours. Conversations happen late at night, showings on Sundays, negotiations at inconvenient times. Learning how to stay available while building balance became one of his first major tests.

A Team Built on Unity and Accountability

Today, Ben operates within a high-performance team built on true partnership. They collaborate daily, challenge each other, and invest deeply in shared standards. Mentorship is constant. Strategy is collective. No one hides.

Client experience sits at the center: thoughtful systems, transparency, communication, and unwavering follow-through. Beyond sales, the team gives back through community involvement, events, sponsorships, and education, including the longest-running real estate podcast in the valley.

Together, they close more than \$200 million annually while continuing to raise expectations.

Mentorship, Influence, and the Push to Level Up

Ben credits his early foundation to the values he was raised with, shaping how he approaches responsibility and effort in both his personal and professional life. Professionally, his growth has been accelerated by the teammates he works alongside every day. Team leaders Mark and David have been

“

The expectations are clear. Consistency isn't optional.”



especially influential, pushing him to think bigger, stay disciplined, and make pressure-tested decisions rather than take shortcuts.

“The expectations are clear,” he says. “Consistency isn’t optional.”

When It Clicked

The moment Ben knew he was on the right track was when referrals began arriving. That was the signal trust had taken root.

He stopped reacting. He started leading. Negotiations felt more structured. Systems worked. Confidence deepened. That mindset helped him reach over \$50 million in sales and 30 transactions in 2025. Numbers mattered, but only as a reflection of doing things right.

Principles That Guide His Work

Authenticity, effort, discipline, and compassion anchor Ben’s approach.

Trust, he believes, is built through consistency and accountability. Show up. Own mistakes. Stay composed when the stakes rise.

When setbacks arise they serve as a reset. Ben returns to humility, mentorship, and perspective. He measures himself against top agents not for ego, but for growth. Comfort is the one thing he refuses to accept.

Life Beyond the Business

Outside of real estate, Ben is building roots. He purchased his first home in Cambrian before 30, where he lives with his fiancée and dog. That home has become a gathering place for friends and family.

He stays active with the gym and softball, enjoys travel, great food, and downtime building LEGO sets or watching movies. His parents remain close in West San Jose, and he maintains a strong bond with his sister in Arizona.

Community involvement is intentional. He sponsors

local programs, hosts multiple neighborhood and client events each year, and donates time to charitable causes.

“Creating connection is how I stay grounded,” he says.

Looking Ahead

Ben’s goals are clear. He wants to be someone people rely on for guidance, clarity, and execution. He sees leadership in his future, developing agents, and continuing to refine his craft.

More than anything, he wants his legacy defined by reliability, effort, and selflessness.

He is patient, intentional, and committed to raising standards for himself and those around him. And in a business where pressure is constant and trust is everything, that steady resolve may be his greatest advantage.

Follow along with Ben on Instagram @ben.frieden



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3 HEADSHOT PHOTOGRAPHY MYTHS YOU CAN DISCARD TODAY

BY OLHA MELOKHINA

Whether you're thinking about taking headshots for the first time or you want to refresh your current photos, you may have noticed there is a lot of different information floating around.

In this blog, we debunk some of the most common headshot myths so that you can book your next session with confidence and peace of mind.

There is No Need to Hire a Professional

Anyone can take a headshot on their smartphone, but there's a very slim chance it will look professional. If you want to look and feel like a true professional online, it's best to invest in a headshot session with a specialist photographer. Even if you or a family member has a professional camera, equipment doesn't mean much if you don't know how to use it or have an eye for headshots.

Headshots Don't Need Personality

Contrary to what you've heard or read, headshots do need to tell a story and showcase your personality. There are thousands of profiles and portfolios out there, so you need to find a way to stand out. In most instances, someone will notice your photo before they start reading about your skills and experience, so make it count.

You're Not Photogenic

Far too many professionals shy away from scheduling a professional photo session because they believe they aren't photogenic. This is never the case – you've just been using the wrong photographer. This paired with a little practice in the mirror can lead to eye-catching and professional headshots that will make you stand out in your industry.

My Existing Headshots are Fine

This might be the case if you took them within the last 2 years. If not, it's time to update them. Not only do headshot styles change, but you've changed too. And your headshots should always be a clear representation of who you are today.

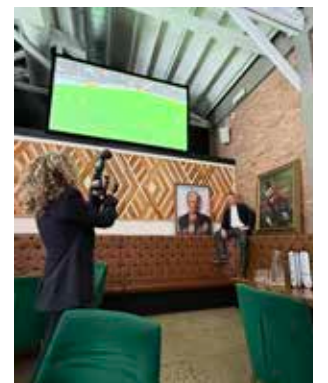
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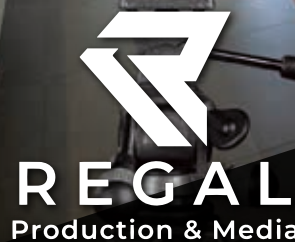
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Fran Papapietro

Queen Of Consistency

BY JESSICA WELLAR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY OLHA MELOKHINA PHOTOGRAPHY

“I loved spending time in my best friend’s mom’s real estate office in a brand-new housing development, flipping through all the brochures as a little girl,” Fran Papapietro remembers. “It seemed like such a fancy job! Instead of playing with dolls, my friend and I played ‘real estate.’ We stood in the sales office listening to people’s questions and realized most buyers asked the same 10 questions over and over. So, we memorized the answers!”

Whenever someone asks Fran when she got into real estate, she responds, “Around age 10,” with a straight face — and honestly, it’s not much of a stretch.

Today that curious, observant little girl has become one of Silicon Valley’s most trusted Realtors with Christie’s International Real Estate Sereno, and ranked among the top 500 agents in the nation by still listening carefully, preparing obsessively, and never leaving a question unanswered.

Two Sparks

Born in Philadelphia, Fran moved wherever the Navy sent her father — San Diego, Japan, Camp Pendleton, Irvine, and eventually the Bay Area when he was stationed in Alameda. Her parents ultimately settled in Sunnyvale, and that is where Fran planted her roots. But those moves weren’t just logistical; they were formative.

“Having personally navigated relocation as both a child and a teenager has deeply informed my professional empathy and expertise,” Fran affirms.

Though she earned a political science degree with plans for law school, she pivoted into tech, like so many around her. For five years, she worked in software sales, learning how to qualify clients, ask the right questions, build presentations, and communicate at a corporate level.

“The turning point came after several big deals I worked on fell apart for reasons completely out of my control — corporate politics, CEOs knowing each other, things like that,” Fran recalls.

Frustrated by success hinging on forces she couldn’t influence, Fran quietly began studying for her real estate exam. When her company warned her that layoffs might be coming, she was calm.

“They said, ‘You don’t seem upset,’ and I said, ‘Well, I’ve made another plan. I’m going into real estate,’” she grins. Fran began selling just as 2003 dawned, blending childhood fascination with adult resolve.

Early Sacrifices

Success, especially national recognition, can look easy enough from the outside. Fran is quick to correct that perception. “In my first five years, I worked every single weekend — both Saturday and Sunday — doing open houses,” she points out. That meant missed weddings, birthdays, and countless social gatherings. It also meant showing up late to events or leaving early, because open houses were nonnegotiable.

But her production grew steadily: nine homes her first year, a dozen the next, 15 the year after that.

“That growth didn’t come by luck, it came from relentless effort,” she adds.

She represented everyone, at every price point, in neighborhoods she sometimes had to research from scratch. If she didn’t know something, she learned it — fast.

She also absorbed hard lessons. Early coaching emphasized building a sphere of influence, but Fran discovered that expected support doesn’t always materialize. The disappointment sharpened her work ethic.

One mentor’s advice became a lifeline though: “You never lose a transaction. You just make room for a new one,” Fran recites.

That mindset carried her through dry spells, missed listings, and even a year in 2006 that nearly broke her. When she told her husband she might quit, he calmly outlined what life would look like on one income. After listening, she said, “You know what, forget it. I’ll keep working!” noting it was the best decision she ever made.

The Secret Sauce

Ask Fran what sets her apart, and she doesn’t hesitate: Consistency and tenacity.

Her business runs on process, checklists, and structured systems. Fran operates from a comprehensive task list that governs everything from complex client deliverables to small personal obligations, ensuring all commitments are honored.

“I answer every email, voicemail, and text the same day — no exceptions if I can help it,” she explains. In a market as competitive as Silicon Valley, she says her responsiveness is her currency.

But her fine-tuned systems also serve something deeper, long-term stewardship.

“I have a commitment to treating clients’ money like it’s my own,” Fran offers. She talks about resale value before aesthetics and points out potential issues before highlighting features. The positives are obvious; the risks are where she adds value and builds trust.

Her relocation specialty reflects the same intentionality. Holding both Certified Corporate Relocation Specialist and Global Mobility Specialist designations, Fran serves executives and families throughout the broader Silicon Valley metro, from Burlingame to Hollister and east to Pleasanton, Livermore and San Ramon.

“When I began building my relocation specialty, I intentionally designed it around anticipating needs before families articulate them,” she recounts. Part strategist, part advocate, part matchmaker, she ensures families are



placed in communities that align with how they actually live.

Clients frequently praise her proactivity and thoroughness. They admire how she thinks several steps ahead and manages complexities they didn’t even know existed. Many of her earliest first-time buyers have returned multiple times over decades.

“That generational loyalty is something I am deeply proud of,” she smiles.

Beyond Business

For Fran, real estate has always been personal. She once helped a single woman purchase her first home despite her parents’ doubts. They questioned whether she should own property at all. Fran walked her through a long-term strategy, including the possibility of renting it in the future. Watching that client step into financial independence was one of her proudest moments.

At the end of the day, her driver remains clear. “My ‘why’ has always been my family,” Fran emphasizes. With a son in his third year of university and a daughter graduating high school this year, she is approaching a new season as an empty nester.

Outside of work, Fran prioritizes fitness and getting outdoors — hiking, biking, skiing — especially when it means time on the slopes with her son in Utah. At home, two dogs and three rescue cats round out the family, and she proudly supports Paws in Need, a local nonprofit dedicated to animal welfare, including spay-and-neuter initiatives and assistance for underserved pet owners, along with Sereno’s 1% for Good program.

Eyeing the future, Fran remains laser-focused on refining systems, deepening corporate relocation relationships, and remaining a trusted long-term advisor.

“I fiercely advocate for my clients and treat them like family — never as transactions,” Fran concludes. “When someone finishes working with me and feels cared for, supported, and confident about their next chapter, that’s success.”



VERONICA MOCANU

Building New Beginnings Through Courage, Care, and Commitment

BY: DIANE ROWE • PHOTOGRAPHY BY OLHA MELOKHINA PHOTOGRAPHY

When Veronica Mocanu moved to the United States in 2017, she arrived with determination, a strong work ethic, and the quiet sense that her story was still unfolding. She began working as a receptionist at McLaren and Volvo Palo Alto, grateful for the opportunity but restless in the stillness of waiting for the phone to ring. “I wanted to do more,” Veronica says. “I knew I was capable of more.”

One simple question from a colleague changed everything. “Do you want to sell homes?” he asked. Veronica answered immediately, without hesitation. “Yes, I do.” His response was equally direct. “Then you need to get your real estate license.”

At the time, Veronica did not fully understand why a license was required. She believed passion and determination were enough. But that conversation planted a seed. From that day forward, she studied for her real estate license while working full time and caring for her daughter. The path was demanding, but it was purposeful. With the encouragement of a few people who believed in her, Veronica stayed focused and earned her license in March 2021.

By then, sales were familiar territory. She had already built a strong track record at McLaren and Volvo Palo Alto, where discipline, performance, and accountability were part of daily life. What surprised her most about real estate was not the sales aspect, but the weight of responsibility that came with it.

“When I received my license, I thought I could do it all,” she says.

For a full year, Veronica attempted to sell cars and homes simultaneously. What she learned was decisive and clarifying. Selling cars is a full time job. Selling homes is more than a

full time job. Real estate demands availability, deep market knowledge, emotional intelligence, and constant commitment. It is not the glamorous version often portrayed on television. It is real work, with real people and real consequences. That realization helped Veronica fully commit to the career that aligned with her long term vision.

That clarity was shaped long before contracts and listings, back in a small village called Vărzăreștii Noi in the Republic of Moldova. The community had fewer than 1,000 people and was rooted in simplicity, nature, and hard work. From a young age, Veronica learned self-reliance. She earned her own pocket money by picking fruit from her family garden and waking up at four in the morning to sell cherries, apples, and grapes at the train station to traders heading to Russia.

One childhood moment remains especially vivid. At just nine years old, Veronica found herself with a basket of white cherries on a day when buyers wanted only red ones. Determined not to return home empty handed, she boarded a train alone and traveled to the capital city of Chișinău for the first time. There were no cell phones, no way to inform her parents. It was frightening, but she sold the cherries for a good price and returned home proud. Not just of the money, but of the courage it took to navigate the unknown.

From her father, Veronica learned strength and resilience. From her mother, she learned kindness, curiosity, and gratitude. Those lessons remain central to how she works today. For Veronica, success in real estate is built on communication and relationships, not transactions alone.

When asked who has influenced her most, her gratitude is expansive. First and foremost, she credits her parents, whose love and belief have never wavered despite the distance between them. Professionally, she is deeply thankful for mentors who guided her early on, including Ramin Naimi, her General Manager at McLaren, along with Edison Tekmar, Lyman Huang, and Arnaud Fily. Each played a meaningful role during pivotal chapters of her career. After transitioning into real estate, she found support and guidance from many respected professionals who helped shape her growth. Veronica is quick to note that success is never achieved alone.

The moment she knew she was on the right path did not come from a commission check. It came from service.

One of her first listings in Palo Alto belonged to a single man who had inherited his parents’ home. The property was in poor condition, and selling it as it would not have supported him long term. Together, they made the



Credit: Self Submission



difficult decision to prepare the home for the market. Veronica managed renovations, supported her client emotionally, and helped find him temporary housing. When the home sold at an excellent value, the impact was life changing. At that moment, Veronica understood that her clients' happiness is her happiness.



Her approach to building trust is simple and disciplined. Be kind. Stay organized. Learn every day. Give your work full attention. It is a philosophy she learned from her mother and now shares with her daughter. In real estate, every client and every home deserves care and intention. When work is done with sincerity, clients feel it.

One lesson she wishes she had learned sooner is the importance of boundaries.

Veronica is naturally generous and giving, but she has learned that protecting her energy is essential. Balance, she has found, allows her to give wholeheartedly while building relationships rooted in mutual respect.

Real estate is not easy, and Veronica does not pretend otherwise. There have been days of exhaustion, doubt, prayer, and quiet reset. What carries

her forward is faith, resilience, and a deep love for working with people. She believes every challenge carries meaning and that growth often comes through discomfort.

When clients work with Veronica, she wants them to feel trust and peace of mind. She listens carefully, communicates clearly, and is never above rolling up her sleeves to do what needs to be done. Her goal is not simply to close transactions, but to help people step confidently into new chapters of their lives.

Looking ahead, her vision is straightforward and deeply personal. She wants to help as many people as possible find a place to create memories. If clients walk away feeling supported, grateful, and eager to refer others, she considers that success. For Veronica Mocanu, real estate is not just about homes. It is about courage, care, and the belief that new beginnings are always possible.

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