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FEBRUARY 2026

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From Front Desk
to Front Runner

MARISSA PAPA



Partner Spotlight
MANNY GOMES
Total Mortgage

Agent to Watch
GINA WILLIAMS

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GAME DAY

Buffalo Chicken Dip

- 2 cups, shredded cooked chicken
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- 1/2 ranch dressing
- 1/2 cup blue cheese crumbles

1. Preheat oven to 350°F
2. Mix all ingredients in a large bowl and spoon into a 1-quart baking dish.
3. Bake for 20 minutes or until the dip is heated through. Serve with tortilla chips.



Manny Gomes
SVP, Branch Manager
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GOLD COAST
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2025

BY THE
NUMBERS

Here's what the top 500 Gold Coast agents sold

12,157,379,438 Billion



TOTAL SALES VOLUME

9,500

**TOTAL
TRANSACTIONS
JAN-DEC 2025**



\$24.1 M

**AVERAGE
SALES VOLUME
PER AGENT**



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Marissa Papa **26**
TOP AGENT



PROFILES



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If you are interested in nominating people for certain stories, please email us at: Sam.Kantrow@realproducersmag.com

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It's Time to GET MOVING



February sits in the quiet middle of momentum.

The excitement of January goal setting fades. The urgency of spring has not arrived. This is the month where habits show their strength.

Most people wait for motivation. Top performers rely on structure.

They block time even when schedules feel full. They follow systems even when results feel slow. They keep promises to themselves before anyone else notices.

Success rarely comes from one big move. It comes from repeated actions done without negotiation. Calls made on busy days. Follow-ups sent when energy dips. Relationships nurtured without immediate payoff.

This business rewards consistency more than intensity. One strong conversation builds trust. One thoughtful introduction creates opportunity. One reliable partner becomes a long-term asset. These moments stack quietly and then show up all at once.

This community thrives because you choose connection over competition. You share resources. You make introductions. You show up in rooms with no expectation other than adding value. That mindset compounds.

The magazine tells stories of success. The real work happens between the pages. It happens in meetings, texts, coffees, and

referrals. It happens when you follow through. It happens when you stay visible even during slower weeks.

February is a chance to refine your process.

Look closely at your daily actions. Cut what wastes time. Strengthen what builds relationships. Commit to simple habits you repeat without exception.

Progress often feels quiet before it feels meaningful. Discipline looks boring before it looks impressive. Consistency feels small before it creates momentum.

I am grateful for every agent and every partner who continues to invest in this community. Your effort raises the standard for everyone around you. This network works because you work.

Also don't forget to check your inbox for our launch party/ magazine celebration party in Westport! Please text me at 203-435-6891 if you have not received the invite!



Sam Kantrow
Publisher
Gold Coast Real Producers



GOLD COAST Launch Party

March 4, 2026

Please join us for the very first Real Producers Gold Coast Launch Party as we kick off something truly special and celebrate the amazing agents and partners who have already graced our pages.

On **March 4th from 6-8 PM at Gabriele's of Westport**, we'll gather for

an unforgettable evening of connection, community, and celebration. This is more than a party, it's the start of a family. A night filled with handshakes that turn into friendships, conversations that spark opportunity, and a room full of the people shaping the Gold Coast real estate community.

Enjoy signature cocktails, heavy hors d'oeuvres, and a vibrant atmosphere as we officially welcome Real Producers Gold Coast. We are beyond excited to be here with all of you amazing agents and partners, and we know this is just the beginning. Cheers to what's ahead!



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Gina WILLIAMS

The Second Act

BY GEORGE GROTHEER
PHOTOS BY TJ MULDOON

BREAKING NEWS – Gina Williams is sensational at real estate!

Before getting into the buying and selling of houses with Preston Gray Real Estate in Shelton, Gina spent twenty years working for a Marketing company, building her career to become a senior director of operations.

“All I ever wanted was to work my way to the top,” she says. “And then on the way there, I realized... I was not happy.”

With two kids in Shelton, Gina found commuting down county and to New York City to be a challenge. She was dedicating too much of her time to her work and to traveling

for her job – and without a work-from-home option in the late 2010s, she became frustrated by her situation. “I just wasn’t fulfilled. I felt like something was missing”.

An unexpected midday work meeting changed everything.

“We found out our company was being sold,” she says. “I came home and said, ‘I just don’t want to do this anymore.’ I got the support from my husband and quit my job – one of the hardest things I have ever had to do.”

Williams says her corporate career was such a huge part of her identity that after two decades, she did not know where to turn next.



After struggling with the decision for weeks, she decided on the second chapter of her life... real estate.

"I was always online checking out houses for sale even though I wasn't in the market to buy," she says. "I started taking classes in October of 2019 and got my license the very beginning of 2020."

After researching local real estate firms and brokerages, Williams sent her resume to Marissa Papa of Preston Gray.

"I said, 'I have to meet her!' And she literally called me right away."

Williams says she and Papa clicked immediately, and she became one of the first agents to join the team at Preston Gray – without any experience.

"I had to do this fast; I didn't have the luxury of letting it all fall into place," she says. "I really had to hustle without that safety net of having a decade to build up a career."

Williams says becoming established in the industry does not happen right away – especially with a global pandemic starting within a month of her introduction into real estate.

"We kept working," she says. "I was lucky enough to be able to shadow Marissa. Anytime she went to a listing appointment, an inspection, an appraisal, you name it – she let me tag along with her for the ride. I was just a sponge learning everything I could from her."

Papa let Gina team up with her on her first sale and things began to snowball for



With her husband and two children—Gina's greatest supporters and the reason she chose a career that allows her to be present for the moments that matter.



Gina Williams and Marissa Papa— whose partnership reflects mentorship, trust, and the power of building something together.



“I try really hard to connect with all of my clients. I love building relationships that last.”

— Gina Williams

Williams after that. She started to build up a client base, and as the pandemic subsided she found a groove.

"I sold over 200 houses within the last 5 years," she says with pride. "It was really hard to accomplish that."

Williams says she loves building relationships with people and getting to know her clients –



saying that when people buy houses, it is an exciting and scary time in their lives. She says she really enjoys helping people during this important life event and finds it gratifying to make connections that last beyond the often-short-lived nature of a real estate transaction.

“I try really hard to connect with all of my clients,” she says. “I stay in touch with them around the holidays, reaching out on birthdays or when they have kids. I love writing handwritten cards.”

She builds connections with anyone she can – whether it is clients, vendors, inspectors, attorneys, contractors... she says the more people you have good relationships with, the more you can help.

Outside of real estate, Williams loves traveling with her husband and teenage kids. She says they hop on a plane every Winter, usually to somewhere warm, and never miss going to Cape Cod in the Summer, her favorite place to spend time as a family and get away from the

rat race. She spends most of her spare time cheering her daughters on at their gymnastics meets and hanging out with family and friends – finding meaningful connections outside of the office as well as within.

In real estate and in life, she proves that the bravest move is betting on yourself—and she’s just getting started. Gina Williams is certainly an agent to watch.



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MANNY GOMES

BUILT WITH INTENTION
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TJ MULDOON

OF TOTAL MORTGAGE

Some careers are stumbled into. Others are built with intention.

For Manny Gomes, the mortgage industry was never a backup plan or a pivot. It was the goal from the very beginning.

A finance graduate from Southern Connecticut State University, Manny entered the mortgage world immediately after college, applying his degree exactly as intended. While many professionals in the industry arrived after exploring other paths, Manny was deliberate. He had

already spent time interning at financial planning firms, gaining firsthand exposure to how financial advice was often delivered in practice.

What he observed gave him pause.

“I realized a lot of advisors were trained to sell products rather than truly serve the long-term interests of the families they were working with,” Manny explains. “It wasn’t necessarily wrong, but it didn’t align with how I wanted to help people.”

That realization, paired with his own family’s experience navigating a mortgage as first-generation immigrants, shaped his direction. Watching his parents go through a purchase process they didn’t fully understand left a lasting impression. Manny saw an opportunity to combine financial expertise with education, clarity, and advocacy — and the mortgage business became the perfect intersection.

He joined the industry in December 2007, just as the housing market was





“

It’s not about what you qualify for on paper—it’s about what actually makes sense for your life.”

— Manny Gomes



on the brink of historic disruption. By 2008, Manny was fully immersed in a profession facing unprecedented challenges. Instead of deterring him, the timing reinforced the importance of doing things the right way.

Nearly two decades later, Manny has built a reputation as a steady, strategic, and deeply prepared loan officer at Total Mortgage — one who prioritizes foresight over urgency and education over salesmanship.

Preparation as a Philosophy
Manny is a firm believer that stress in a transaction is almost always the result of under-preparation.

“There’s no such thing as being overprepared,” he says. “If you’re truly prepared, there’s nothing left to panic about.”

That mindset defines his entire process. From the earliest conversations, Manny conducts what he calls a “data dump” — a comprehensive, honest review of a borrower’s financial picture, motivations, lifestyle goals, and future plans. Rather than focusing solely on what someone qualifies for on paper, he focuses on what actually makes sense for where they are in life.

This approach has become especially important as the profile of today’s first-

time homebuyer has shifted. Many are now purchasing later, often in their mid-to-late 30s, with higher incomes and evolving family goals.

“People don’t always think about how quickly their needs might change,” Manny explains. “They buy a home that works for today, not for three or five years down the line — and that can be an expensive mistake.”

During periods like the low-rate surge of the COVID era, Manny often found himself educating buyers on opportunity cost. Some were hesitant to increase their purchase price by a few hundred dollars per month, unaware



Manny Gomes of Total Mortgage brings clarity, preparation, and purpose to every client experience.

that selling and rebuying just a few years later could cost far more when factoring in transaction fees, taxes, and closing costs.

His role isn’t to push buyers higher — it’s to help them see the full financial picture.

Transparency That Builds Trust

One of Manny’s defining qualities is his commitment to transparency, especially when it comes to closing costs. He routinely builds in financial cushions, accounting for variables that other loan officers may gloss over — from prepaid

taxes to timing differences that can impact cash due at closing.

“In Connecticut, especially in higher-tax towns, reimbursements can be significant,” he notes. “Showing up to closing with four or five thousand dollars more than expected is stressful. That should never be a surprise.”

By setting expectations early, Manny eliminates last-minute confusion and builds confidence throughout the transaction. Clients don’t feel sold — they feel informed.

That same clarity allows Manny to approach problem-solving creatively. He often helps borrowers rethink fixed assumptions, such as the idea that 20% down is always the best path. In some cases, reallocating funds to eliminate high monthly liabilities — like auto loans — creates far more breathing room than avoiding mortgage insurance altogether.

“It’s about perspective,” he says. “Once people see the numbers differently, the right decision becomes obvious.”





There's no such thing as being overprepared. If you're truly prepared, there's nothing left to panic about."

— Manny Gomes



A True Partner to Real Estate Agents

Manny's approach extends beyond borrowers to the agents he works alongside. He values realtors who understand that success comes from collaboration, preparation, and shared accountability.

"A great realtor is worth every dollar of their commission," he says. "They set expectations, think ahead, and guide clients through every stage of the process."

He's equally candid about the challenges that arise when buyers select agents based solely on availability or personality, rather than experience and transactional skill. For Manny, professionalism matters — and so does efficiency.

That's why he often acts as a gatekeeper for agents, offering quick qualification conversations that help determine whether a buyer is realistically ready to enter the market. In as little as five minutes, Manny can provide a reliable ballpark of purchasing power, saving agents countless hours and helping clients avoid disappointment.

"It's not about saying no," he explains. "It's about making sure everyone's time is respected, and expectations are aligned."

Built on Perspective and Purpose
What ultimately sets Manny Gomes apart is not just his financial acumen but his ability to see the bigger picture. He understands that buying a home is rarely just a transaction — it's a life decision layered with emotion, pressure, and long-term impact.

By combining education, preparation, and strategic thinking, Manny has built a business rooted in trust and longevity. He doesn't chase volume. He builds relationships. He doesn't sell scenarios. He presents realities.

And for the clients and agents who work with him, that difference is felt at every stage — from the first conversation to the closing table.

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FROM FRONT DESK TO FRONT RUNNER

BY GEORGE GROTHEER • PHOTOS BY IO ESCU, AG MODE

An early start in the industry leads to long-term success.

That idea rings true for many in their respective fields, but few (if any) have demonstrated the dedication and skill shown by top agent and Broker Marissa Papa of Preston Gray Real Estate. Marissa started out at 16 years old answering the phone at a real estate office and attended Salve Regina University, where she earned her Marketing degree. She worked in the real estate office after completing college, and at 23 years old obtained her real estate license. She went on to work at an independent real estate company in Shelton. After about a year, Marissa wanted to do more with her degree and joined RBS Bank in Bridgeport as a Marketing Services Manager.

Still... she kept her real estate license... and kept on selling to friends and family.

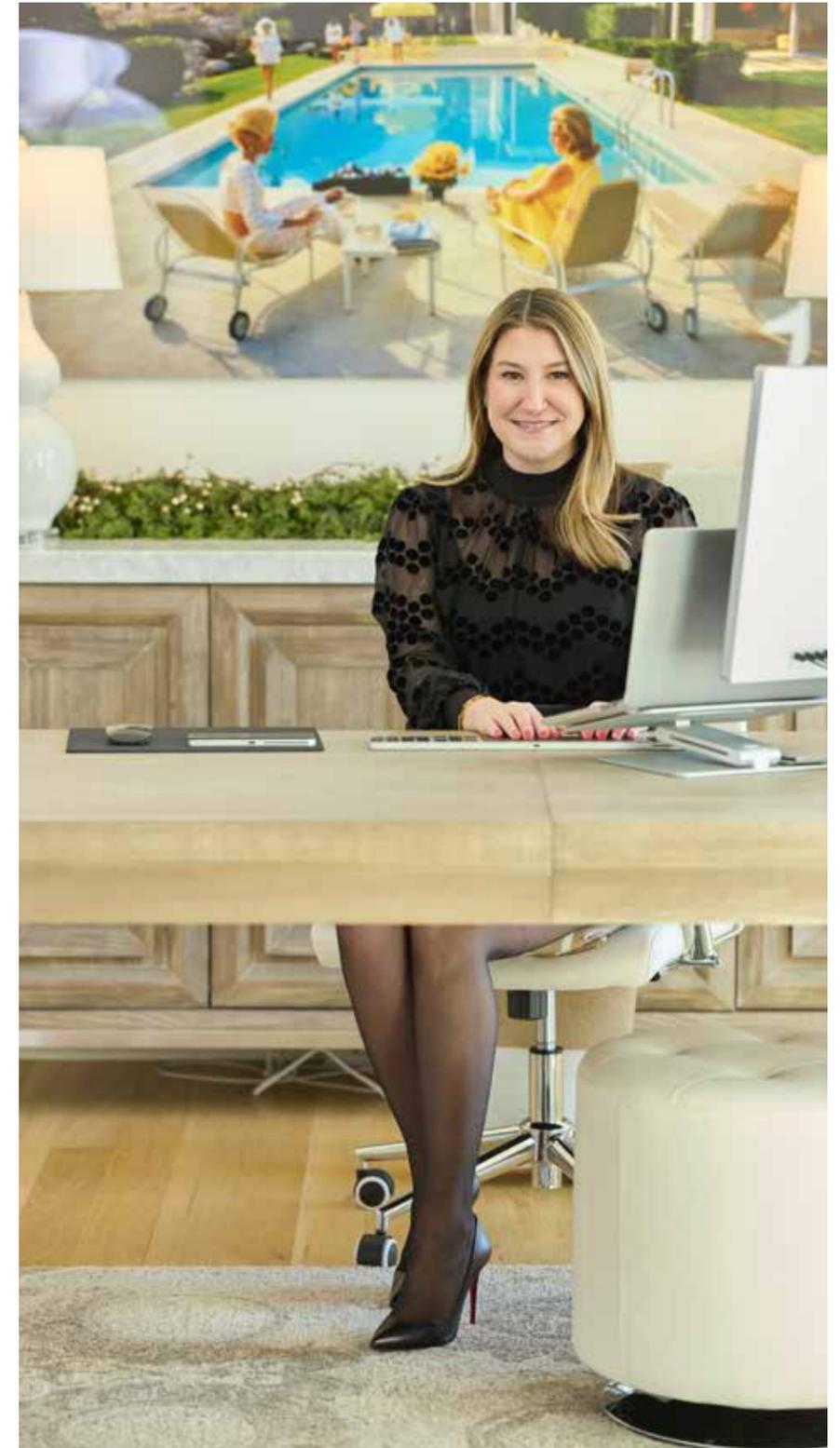
As her family grew and her kids aged into school, she dived back into real estate full-time in 2014 and has not looked back. Fast forward 12 years, Marissa Papa is now the top producing agent in her hometown of Shelton, and her firm is the top-selling office in Shelton for Single Family Sales 3 years in a row.

Marissa closed out 2025 with over \$50 Million in total sales, while Preston Gray's office surpassed \$117 million in sales across the state.

Her kids, it turns out, have had a major impact on how she has built her business in Fairfield County.

The name Preston Gray Real Estate was inspired by my children, combining my son Owen Preston's name with my daughter Lilly Grayson's.

Marissa says she finds it very important for her kids to see what she has built



Marissa
PAPA

“

I believe relentless work ethic and strategic marketing are what set the best agents apart.”

Marissa Pappa



and to see what it takes to run a business. Her daughter has a job, her son is doing work-study as a freshman at Sacred Heart University, and she believes in leading by example, teaching her children the value of hard work and entrepreneurship.

“I believe a relentless work ethic and strategic marketing are what set the best agents apart. I work seven days a week, and I am completely committed to my clients, approaching every transaction with the same care and attention I would give my own.”

Marissa feels that she is “trusted, well-connected, and community driven with unmatched knowledge of local markets and neighborhoods. I prioritize my clients’ goals by taking the time to



Preston Gray Real Estate was named after Marissa’s children, Owen Preston and Lilly Grayson.



carefully navigate each transaction and secure the strongest outcome.

Her ability to network with clients, new individuals, and families has helped her career skyrocket – as well as her online presence.

“My marketing has been really cutting edge,” Marissa says. “I’ve been able to strategically build a brand that stands out in a competitive market.”

The success of Marissa’s brokerage, Preston Gray, is a big part of her legacy in Fairfield County real estate.



“I wanted my own look and feel, and I was kind of at a crossroads in 2019,” she remembers. “I always worked for local independent firms. I asked myself, ‘Do I go off to a big firm, or do I build my own brand?’

“I felt like I had the ability to build something really special.” Build something special, she has.

In less than ten years, it has grown to include dozens of team members – all

working together, learning from each other, and creating sustained success.

“We are a boutique firm, but we really keep up with the really big names in the area,” she says.

Part of that, she says, is that “the branding is powered by creative advertising, innovative social media strategies, and unmatched customer service.”

Maintaining the connections Marissa and her team build are essential.

“I tell all of my agents how important it is to cultivate their sphere of influence. Staying top of mind and continuously building relationships is everything,” she says. “That means sending a birthday message, thoughtful closing gifts, and staying connected through life’s milestones- whether someone is getting married, having a baby, or celebrating a new chapter.”

While many clients and agents are very transactional, she finds ways to connect with everyone. “I don’t feel like this is a job for me,” she says. “I love it. This is my passion; this is what I truly feel I was meant to do.



The family behind Preston Gray—Marissa’s greatest inspiration and the heart of everything she’s built.

“
I don’t feel like this is a
job for me. I love it—this
is my passion and what I
was meant to do.”

Marissa Papa



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What Is Real Producers?

BY SAM KANTROW

Welcome to
*Gold Coast
Real Producers!*

It is a privilege to introduce **Gold Coast Real Producers to Fairfield County** and to celebrate the exceptional contributions you bring to this market. I grew up here and spent 14 years in television and media. Showcasing your achievements, building stronger connections, and honoring your commitment to clients energizes me. Real Producers began in 2015 in Indianapolis and now spans 130 plus markets across the U.S. The community thrives where top agents and trusted partners connect with purpose. As we launch on the Gold Coast, my promise is simple. Build community. Spotlight excellence. Elevate relationships.

We **sell nothing to agents**. Features are **free**. Agents appear by nomination from a peer, leader, or influencer. Send nominations for those making a meaningful impact in our market.

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Want to contribute, nominate REALTORS® for features, recommend elite affiliate partners, or learn more? Reach out to me anytime. I look forward to meeting every one of you.

Thank you to our Preferred Partners for their belief and early support. Your commitment brings *Gold Coast Real Producers* to life and sets the stage for sustained growth.

As we head into November, I wish you a strong finish to the year and a season filled with progress and community.

I appreciate you, and I look forward to seeing you at our launch party soon.

We provide a platform to connect, elevate and inspire the top real estate professionals across the Connecticut Shoreline.




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ALL ABOUT GOLD COAST REAL PRODUCERS

The first Real Producers magazine started in Indianapolis in 2015. Real Producers is now in over 130 markets across the nation and is continuing to grow nationwide.

Q: WHO RECEIVES Real Producers MAGAZINES?

A: The top 500 real estate agents across Fairfield County and our preferred partners.

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 accomplished individuals in the Connecticut real estate sector.

By curating an exclusive community comprised of the top 300 real estate agents and RP-vetted businesses in each market, we foster a shared space for sharing stories, celebrating successes, discussing market trends, and highlighting upcoming events. Our monthly publication is dedicated to connecting, informing, and inspiring, encompassing anything that contributes to the enrichment of our community.

Q: DOES Real Producers HAVE EVENTS?

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

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

A: The process for getting featured in our magazine is straightforward. To be eligible, you need to be on the top 500 list, and we value nominations highly. Whether you're a real estate agent, business, broker, owner, or someone who admires the work of others, you can nominate individuals, including yourself. Even office leaders have the opportunity to nominate outstanding real estate agents. We take every nomination seriously and consider anyone from the top 500 list who is brought to our attention. While we cannot guarantee a feature, we strongly encourage you to connect with one of our team members, show support for Real Producers, and participate in our private events. These steps can enhance your chances of being featured in our publication.

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: The RP-vetted businesses featured in our publication represent some of the best in the business in their respective categories within the Connecticut Shoreline. You can easily locate them in our index. We do not randomly select businesses, nor do we collaborate with every business that approaches us. We prioritize businesses that have received your stamp of approval through recommendations, and each business showcased has been personally recommended by many of the top agents featured in our publication. Before featuring any business, our team conducts additional vetting to ensure they align with our community's values and bring substantial value. Our aim is to build a robust network that not only includes the best real estate agents but also features top-tier businesses, fostering collective growth and strength within our community.

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 -

Email: sam.kantrow@realproducersmag.com



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