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Grateful for the Lessons. Expecting Great Things

BY ROBERT ORSO

As we close the chapter on 2025, I find myself genuinely grateful—not just for the wins, but for the entire journey. This year brought successes worth celebrating, failures worth learning from, and challenges that tested our resolve. Each played an important role in shaping who we are today.

Success has a way of making us comfortable. It affirms that our hard work is paying off, brings a sense of satisfaction, and reminds us why we do what we do. But comfort alone doesn’t produce growth. It’s often the setbacks, the disappointments, and the seasons of uncertainty that force us to stretch, adapt, and become stronger. In hindsight, some of the most valuable lessons from 2025 came not from what went right, but from what didn’t go as planned.

Those lessons are not losses—they are investments. They sharpen our perspective, refine our decision-making, and prepare us for what’s next.

And what’s next is exciting.

As we step into 2026, I do so with great expectation. I truly believe this will be a banner year for us—

financially, professionally, and personally. Not because everything will suddenly be easy, but because we are better prepared. We are more aware. We are more disciplined. We now have the advantage of experience, and experience—when applied—is powerful.

This is the season to capitalize on what we learned in 2025.

Every January, we hear a lot about New Year’s resolutions. The truth is, resolutions without action are meaningless. Intentions alone don’t move the needle. Real progress comes from discipline—doing the right things consistently, especially when motivation fades.

That discipline shows up in personal growth: sharpening our skills, expanding our thinking, and staying curious. It shows up in how we take care of our health—physically, mentally, and emotionally—because sustained success requires energy, clarity, and endurance. And it shows up in how we conduct ourselves daily, through our words, our attitudes, and our actions.

A positive attitude isn’t just a mindset—it’s a strategy. Positive people look for solutions instead of excuses. They speak life instead of limitation. They move forward while others stay stuck. Over time, positivity paired with action creates momentum, and momentum creates opportunity.

I’ve seen it firsthand: the people who consistently win aren’t always the most talented or the most fortunate. They are the most disciplined, the most resilient, and the most positive.

As we head into 2026, my encouragement to you is simple: stay grateful, stay hungry, and stay committed to growth. Learn from the past, act boldly in the present, and expect great things for the future.

The best is still ahead.

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Amanda D'Angelo

COASTAL
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Breathing
Life Into
Leadership



BY REBECCA
WILSON
PHOTOS BY
ANNA K. STOKES,
AK STOKES
PHOTOGRAPHY

A Leader Is Born

Real estate became a life-affirming influence in Amanda D'Angelo's life long before she decided to pursue it as her profession. "While still in college, I was trying to decide what career path to take with a major in business and a minor in marketing", Amanda explained.

"At the time, my mother had a few rental houses that she renovated and managed. She had always loved real estate so she was trying to convince me to get my license. In an attempt to get her off my back, I got my license during my junior year of college, thinking it would only be temporary until I graduated and got a different job", she confessed.

After graduating from The University of MS in 2008, Amanda moved to Biloxi to continue her real estate career (still thinking it would only be temporary).

Amanda's reservations about pursuing real estate long-term lay mainly in the state of the field at that time. "It was the summer of 2008. The real estate market was crashing. The economy was in shambles. No one was hiring a college graduate with zero experience", she revealed. "I had no choice but to stick it out a few more years until things turned around."

What she didn't realize at the time was that things were about to change. After a few years of working as an agent, Amanda fell in love with real estate. "I can't imagine myself doing anything else", she shared proudly.

Leading Together

Amanda and a few others decided to open the brokerage, CRG (Coastal Realty Group), in 2015. Then, in 2022, Amanda became the sole owner of the company.

Since starting Coastal Realty Group, Amanda has learned the importance of building a team of other professionals to help carry the workload. "As a small business owner, I was wearing many hats to maintain a successful office. It didn't take me long to realize that I couldn't keep that pace up and I needed to hire support in many areas", she confessed.

"Luckily in 2022, I had the perfect broker associate who graciously agreed to be the managing broker, Mary Morgan", she added. "She and I pride ourselves in focusing on mentorship and training to provide a culture that encourages a growth environment. We know that while classes are great, agents need help daily, and having support when you need it is critical. So Mary and I are the resources for them", she shared proudly.



In addition to the managing broker, Amanda has expanded her team to include both a full-time receptionist and a full-time transaction coordinator. “So someone is always around to help the agents”, Amanda explained.

Building Other Leaders

Amanda is currently supervising 39 agents at her brokerage. The level of care she provides to

them is truly unmatched. She anticipates their needs and has put various growth opportunities in place to support them.

“Not every agent gets in real estate with a ton of sphere clients ready to buy or sell property. So being able to provide opportunities for agents to grow their business through various paid marketing platforms is a huge boost that we

provide”, she revealed. “We also have ‘Training Tuesdays’ every week and have accountability sessions with agents to track their goal progression.”

At Coastal Realty Group, Amanda offers competitive compensation options to fit different stages of an agent’s business. “I have learned that it’s not all about money, though. There has to be value to add in many other areas to create a total package”, she added. “A place where agents feel appreciated, supported, and loved. It’s more than just words, it’s a way of living that nurtures well-being, fosters growth, and creates spaces where individuals and teams thrive.”

Even her vendors notice the difference when they enter her brokerage. “Our vendors will tell us that our office is rare because it is full of life and energy - with staff and agents always being there”, she admitted.

This difference that the vendors sense is not only due to all the training and resources Amanda provides to her team, it is from maintaining a work/fun balance. “While real estate is a priority, we can have a little fun too. Our office has some pretty amazing people so when we come together, it’s like hanging out with your best friends all day! We are very fortunate in that we have a great group of people”, she described.

Amanda also attributes this to them standing by their Coastal Realty Group core values (Christianity, Loyalty, Integrity, Leadership, and Family) and their mission statement (Coastal Realty Group, leading the way by providing superior service with integrity and creating lifelong relationships to help our community navigate the real estate experience.).

Her efforts have clearly been paying off too. In 2023, Coastal Realty Group had a total of 496 transactions totaling over \$115 million and is on track to far surpass those numbers this year.

Defining Leadership

Amanda is redefining the word ‘leadership’.

When describing how she runs her brokerage, she shared the following, “I treat our agents like I want to be treated and I foster that mentality over into our business with other agents, vendors, and clients. I tell people all the time, I have to sleep at night so I am going to do what is right even when it hurts.”

Amanda provides her agents with a comfortable environment where they can always come to her with anything. To this, she stated, “It’s a safe place where they don’t have to be scared of an irrational reaction. If there is a problem, I will approach it with a team mindset to come up with a solution.”

Her brokerage is not the only place she is sharing her leadership skills, though. Amanda is a member of Mosiac Church in Ocean Springs. She also actively serves on several committees with the Gulf Coast Association of Realtors and MLS United. She is married to her husband, Matthew, and the mother of her two children, Myles and Mary Kathryn.

For all up-and-coming realtors, Amanda suggests, “You have to be consistent in putting in the work before you can see a steady pipeline of sphere business. I am talking about YEARS of hard work to grow your brand.”

She shared that she heard on a podcast once that you should always be willing to give a new



business 5 years before you decide it is not a good fit. She said, “That stuck with me through those first few years when things were really tough and it would have been easy to throw in the towel. I wanted to walk away knowing I truly tried my best. Luckily, I never walked away!”

When asked how she defines success, Amanda answered, “Watching my agents grow every year is how I define success.

“
Watching my
agents grow
every year is how
I define success.”

I feel like if you aren’t growing, you are dying. Maybe it’s not always professional growth. It could be personal or spiritual growth, but I am blessed to walk alongside 39 people as they navigate life. I count that as an honor and privilege.”

As it turns out, what Amanda heard on that podcast years ago has proven true in her life. Those 5 years of uncertainty have turned into a lifetime of assurance, and being awarded “Broker of the Year 2024” just further solidifies that truth.

Jodie & Kacie

BUSCH DENNY

CENTURY 21 BUSCH REALTY GROUP TWO PATHS, ONE SHARED PURPOSE

BY REBECCA
WILSON
PHOTOS BY
KRISTY RYAN

Standard of Service

In real estate, success is rarely built alone—and the most enduring impact often comes from leaders whose paths converge around a shared purpose. At Century 21 Busch Realty Group, that purpose is reflected through the leadership of Broker/Owner Jodi Busch and the contributions of one of her top-producing agents, Kacie Denny. Together, they exemplify how strong leadership and client-centered service can work hand-in-hand to elevate both the brokerage and the people it serves.

An Entrepreneurial Beginning

Born and raised in Southwest Florida, Jodi Busch gained an early understanding of what it takes to run a business. “I began my career supporting and managing my family’s copier business and eventually became a co-owner alongside my brother, gaining valuable experience in operations, leadership, and business development,” she shared.

That experience would prove essential when Jodi relocated to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, navigating a new chapter in her life. At the time, her children were just 5 and 3 years old, and Jodi found herself seeking a career that offered both purpose and flexibility.



“I was looking for something that would allow me to be a present mother while still pursuing something meaningful and rewarding,” she recalled. “My husband encouraged me to get into real estate because it offered the perfect balance—an opportunity to set my own hours, stay actively involved in my family’s life, and build a career where my efforts directly translated into results.”

Jodi officially began her real estate career in 2009, stepping into the industry at a pivotal season of both personal and professional growth. Starting from scratch in a new community with no sphere of influence, Jodi leaned into her natural gift of connecting with people and her passion for sales.

“Real estate combines my love for helping people, my passion for building relationships, and my drive to create something of my own,” Jodi elaborated. “It also pushes me beyond my comfort zone to create a business built on trust, service, and dedication.”

Driven to make a difference beyond individual production, Jodi earned her broker’s license and opened Busch Realty Group in 2012. In 2023, she strategically franchised the company with CENTURY 21—aligning her independently built brokerage with a globally recognized brand.

“As a broker, I have the privilege of managing agents while also helping people achieve their dreams of buying and selling homes,” she said proudly.

“The most rewarding part of managing agents is watching them grow, succeed, and thrive alongside our company,” added Jodi. “Seeing them gain confidence, achieve their goals, and expand their own businesses is incredibly fulfilling.” Today, Jodi supervises 81 agents across her Gulfport and Ocean Springs brokerage locations.





“I treat every transaction like it’s personal.

**I WORK HARD,
STAY RESPONSIVE,
AND ADVOCATE
FULLY FOR MY
CLIENTS.”**

-KACIE

Jodi works in the trenches alongside her agents, remaining readily available and fully invested in their success. “I run my brokerage like a family,” she said. “Every team member matters, every voice is heard, and together we succeed. When you join us, you’re not just an agent, you’re part of something bigger.”

“I tackle every aspect of the business, no matter how big or small,” Jodi explained. “We put our profits back into the company—growing leadership, opportunities, and experiences. From high-energy agent gatherings to exclusive top-producer trips, we celebrate wins and build a team that thrives together.”

In addition, Jodi owns a separate company that provides full-service property management, handling everything from short-term rentals to long-term leases.

A Purposeful Pivot

Having spent most of her life on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Kacie Denny’s early professional experiences included leadership, customer service, and adaptability.

She began her career in human resources for the United States Air Force, then transitioned to the hospitality industry, holding a fulfilling career at Beau Rivage Resort & Casino.

“After a life-changing diagnosis of a brain tumor, I decided to shift my focus back on my family,” shared Kacie, referring to her husband, AJ, and their two children, Donovan and Collins.

That turning point ultimately led Kacie into real estate in 2017, a career that aligned with both her professional strengths and her personal priorities.

“Real estate allows me the flexibility to have nights and holidays at home while still doing work I love.”

“My family is my ‘why,’” she added. “This career allows me to show up for them—both financially and personally.”

The flexibility of real estate gives Kacie the autonomy to shape her schedule with intention—allowing her to meet both professional demands and family priorities without compromise.

Over the years, she’s built a reputation for being hands-on, client-focused, and deeply invested in every transaction. In August 2024, she brought that experience to CENTURY 21 Busch Realty Group, joining a brokerage whose culture and leadership reflected the values she had built her business on.

“I treat every transaction like it’s personal,” Kacie said. “I work hard, stay responsive, and advocate fully for my clients.”

“Helping someone achieve homeownership is one of the most rewarding parts of my work,” Kacie shared. “There’s nothing quite like watching families grow and truly love the homes they built their lives in.”

Kacie is especially passionate about working with first-time home buyers and investors—roles that allow her to build lasting relationships from the very first conversation.

Many of her clients become friends, a reflection of the genuine care and trust she brings to every transaction. That same sense of connection extends to her coworkers, her CENTURY 21 Busch Realty Group family, and the broader real estate community she collaborates with daily.

Kacie approaches every transaction as a trusted guide and advocate, ensuring her clients feel supported and informed every step of the way. Her commitment extends well beyond closing, as she remains a trusted resource long after the transaction is complete.

A Collaborative Force

While Jodi Busch and Kacie Denny bring distinct backgrounds and roles to the table, it’s their shared values, mutual respect, and commitment to excellence that make their professional dynamic so impactful.



“Real estate combines my love for HELPING PEOPLE, MY PASSION FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, AND MY DRIVE TO CREATE SOMETHING OF MY OWN.”

-JODI

Together, they contribute to the continued success of the brokerage—Jodi, honored as the 2025 Gulf Coast Association of Realtors Broker of the Year, leading a thriving team since 2012, and Kacie, recognized as Realtor of the Year by the Biloxi Ocean Springs Association of Realtors in 2024. With over \$21 in combined sales, they continue to raise the bar—setting ambitious goals together and for the entire brokerage.

From Gulfport to Ocean Springs and Biloxi to Bay St. Louis, Busch Realty Group is known for its ability to serve clients at every stage of their real estate journey. The firm's agents leverage advanced technology, local market insight, and the CENTURY

21 network to make realty dreams a reality—whether buying a first home, selling a cherished property, or identifying investment value.

Together, Jodi and Kacie exemplify leadership that builds opportunity and service that creates lasting relationships. Jodi's vision has grown into a thriving brokerage that attracts top talent and delivers exceptional results, while Kacie's client-first focus ensures every transaction reflects care and excellence.

Looking ahead, Jodi is committed to continuing the growth and leadership of her brokerage, while Kacie plans to earn her broker's license—both driven by a shared dedication to mentorship and community impact.



“We put our profits back into the company—growing leadership, opportunities, and experiences.

FROM HIGH-ENERGY AGENT GATHERINGS TO EXCLUSIVE TOP-PRODUCER TRIPS, WE CELEBRATE WINS AND BUILD A TEAM THAT THRIVES TOGETHER.”

-JODI

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Laci Gates

COASTAL REALTY GROUP



BY DAVE DANIELSON
PHOTOS BY YVONNE & CARL FALLO,
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For Laci Gates, real estate was never just about selling homes. It was about building a career that could grow alongside her family, adapt to life’s unexpected challenges, and still allow her to give her all—both professionally and personally. Though she admits she doesn’t love talking about herself, Laci’s story is one of resilience, determination, and an unmistakable passion for helping others.

Finding the Right Path

Laci, a Realtor with Coastal Realty Group, officially earned her real estate license on August 1, 2021. But her professional journey began long before that. From high school onward, Laci worked multiple jobs while attending college, quickly learning the value of hard work and responsibility. She has always been someone who needed to stay busy, motivated, and contributing.

“I’ve never been the type of person who could just stay at home,” she explains. “I love being with my kids, but it’s important for their futures to show them what working hard can provide.”

Before real estate, Laci held various management roles, most recently working in banking. That experience gave her a solid foundation in finance and customer service—skills that would later prove invaluable in her real estate career.

A Turning Point Fueled by Family

The true catalyst for Laci’s move into real estate came during a deeply personal and challenging time. After she and her husband welcomed their third child, their baby was born with heart problems. Faced with mounting responsibilities and the need for flexibility, Laci and her husband had an honest conversation about the future.



“
I DON’T
LIKE DOING
ANYTHING
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I LIKE TO
GIVE IT MY
ALL.”

“I knew I needed to help make money, but I wanted a career—not just another job,” she says. “Real estate seemed like the perfect fit because of the flexibility.”

With her baby quite literally in her lap, Laci completed her real estate coursework online. Once licensed, she didn’t ease into the business—she dove in headfirst.

“I don’t like doing anything halfway,” she says. “I like to give it my all.”

Rising Through Dedication

That mindset quickly paid off. At Coastal Realty Group, Laci found an environment that felt less like an office and more like a family. The encouragement, support, and friendly competition motivated her to push herself further than she ever expected.

While she doesn’t obsess over numbers, seeing her name climb the office leaderboard was a powerful moment. “I never thought I’d be in the top 10 of my office,” she says. “It’s crazy to see the progression.”

Even when the business gets tough—and real estate often does—Laci has never regretted her decision. “Not one time,” she says. “Even on the hardest days.”

A Strong Support System at Home

Behind Laci’s success is a strong family foundation. She has been married to her husband, Kyler Gates, for 12 years. Kyle works for Mississippi Power and has been a constant source of support throughout her real estate journey.

“He’s my backbone,” Laci says. “Without him, I wouldn’t be where I am. He steps in whenever I can’t be there, and I honestly don’t think I could do this without him.”

Together, they are raising three children: Karter, 11; Paisleigh, 10; and four-year-old Kennedy. Their household is a whirlwind of activity, with baseball, tumbling, and dance filling nearly every afternoon of the week.

“I don’t know how I do it,” Laci laughs. “Although our schedules are

full with after school sports, I still manage to make time for clients.”

Advice for New Agents

When asked what advice she would give to those just entering the real estate industry, Laci doesn’t hesitate.

“Never say no,” she says. “Take every client you can get, stay focused, and be persistent.”

She emphasizes the importance of research and preparation, noting that she has spent hours learning the specifics of things like roofing systems just to ensure she gives clients accurate information.

“You can’t expect to know everything right away,” she says. “I’m still learning every day. It takes effort, time, and honestly a 24/7 mindset to really get comfortable.”

Known for Connection and Care

As clients get to know Laci, her hope is that they see her as someone genuine, caring, and approachable. Feedback from clients suggests that’s exactly how she comes across.

“I make every appointment personal,” she says. “I want to know about them and their family—not just what kind of house they want.”

Clients often describe her as bubbly, outgoing, and well-balanced. One even joked that she must have been a cheerleader in her younger years. For Laci, those comments mean everything.

“I always try to put my family first while still making time for my clients,” she says. “That balance matters.”

For Laci Gates, real estate is more than a profession—it’s a reflection of who she is: driven, compassionate, persistent, and deeply rooted in family. And while she may not love interviews, her story speaks for itself.

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JOSE ALONSO STRONG ROOFING



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With a legacy built on trust, quality, and community, Executive Vice President **Jose Alonso** is carrying on a tradition that's as sturdy as the roofs his team at Strong Roofing installs.

"This is all I've ever done," Jose says with a warm smile. "I grew up in the business. My dad has been working in roofing for decades—he's our crew supervisor and has been with Strong Roofing since 2002. Roofing isn't just my job. It's my family, my past, and my passion."

Founded and still owned by Mr. Burke, Strong Roofing is one of the oldest and highest-rated roofing companies working with major shingle manufacturers in the region. Jose, Mr. Burke, and Jose's father, Jose Sr., have built something special—more than just a company, it's a tightly knit team that homeowners have come to rely on time and again.

Consistency That Builds Confidence

"Our crew has been with us for years, and that's rare in this industry," Jose explains. "That consistency means every roof gets the same level of quality and attention to detail."

That kind of dependability is more than just a business philosophy—it's personal. Jose and Travis, the company's project manager, both served in the U.S. Army, where they learned the value of discipline, service, and follow-through. "Military service taught us to be accountable, to care about every detail, and to show up for people. We



carry that into everything we do at Strong Roofing."

Hands-On and Heartfelt Service

And show up they do. Whether it's helping homeowners navigate a storm-damaged roof or making sure every email is answered within three or four hours, Jose is committed to being responsive and

available. "I do a lot of the background logistics and visit with homeowners personally," he says. "I like being out there. I talk with clients, take photos before and during the process, and check on each site."

That hands-on approach has earned Jose a devoted following. "I've done multiple projects for many



customers. Sometimes I've worked with their entire family—siblings, parents, even grandparents. That's how trust grows."

Here Before Katrina—Still Here Today

It's no surprise, then, that Strong Roofing is more than a business to the communities it serves—it's a staple. "We were here before Katrina. We helped rebuild afterward. And we're still here. We aren't going anywhere," Jose says firmly.

In addition to leading the business side of operations, Jose also finds time to give back to the community. "There's a group of ladies I've worked with for a while now, and I just like helping them when I can. If it's a small fix, I won't charge anything. It's just my way of giving back."

A Process Rooted in Precision

That generosity is central to Jose's approach. It's not about squeezing every penny out of every job—it's about doing the right thing and helping people feel safe and cared for in their homes.

Behind every roof installation, there's a simple but effective process. When a call comes in, Jose or a member of his team sets up a window of time to assess the roof. "We always go in person," he says. "There's no substitute for getting up there and seeing the problem with your own eyes. That way, we can give homeowners an honest, accurate assessment."

Alongside Jose and Travis is Connor, the company's

dedicated salesperson, rounding out a small but mighty team that prioritizes quality, communication, and consistency. Together, they bring a level of professionalism and warmth that's rare in the industry.

Life Beyond the Ladder

Outside of work, Jose enjoys a quieter pace, spending a few days each month fishing—his way of recharging and reconnecting with nature. But even on those days off, the phone is never far. "You never know when someone might need you," he says. "That's the responsibility we carry. And I'm proud of it."

Strong Roofing is a state-licensed contractor, and Jose is, too—another layer of assurance for clients who want the job done right the first time.

Not Just Roofers—Trusted Partners for Life

In a region where roofing isn't just a home improvement but a necessity, Jose Alonso and Strong Roofing have proven time and again that their business is about more than shingles and gutters. It's about people, relationships, and trust earned over time.

"When someone needs help with their roof, we want them to think of us—not just because we do great work, but because they know we care," Jose says. "That's what it's all about."



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“
**YOU NEVER
KNOW WHEN
SOMEONE
MIGHT NEED
YOU.”**



Q: WHO RECEIVES THIS MAGAZINE?

A: The top 300 agents in the Gulf Coast Area. We pulled the MLS numbers (by volume) from Jan. 1, 2022, through Dec. 31, 2022, in the MS Gulf Coast market. We cut the list off at number 300, and the distribution was born. For this year's list, the minimum production level for our group is \$5 million in 2022. The list will reset at the end of 2023 for next year and will continue to update annually.

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

A: The process is simple. Every feature you see has first been nominated. You can nominate REALTORS®, agents, affiliates, brokers, owners, or even yourself. Office leaders can also nominate real estate agents. We will consider anyone you bring to our attention because we don't know everyone's story, and we need your help to learn more.

A nomination currently looks like this: Email us at robert.orso@realproducersmag.com with the subject line "Nomination: (Name of Nominee)" and explain why you are nominating the individual. Maybe the person has an amazing story that we need to tell, or perhaps someone overcame extreme obstacles, is an exceptional leader, has the best customer service, or gives back to the community in a big way. The next step is an interview with us to ensure a good fit, and then we put the wheels in motion for our writer to conduct an interview and for our photographer to schedule a photo shoot.

Q: WHAT IS THE COST TO FEATURE A REALTOR®, AGENT, OR TEAM?

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

Q: WHO ARE THE PREFERRED PARTNERS?

A: Anyone listed as a preferred partner in the front of the magazine is a part of this community and will have an ad in every issue of the magazine, attend our quarterly events, and be a part of our online community. We don't just find these businesses off the street, nor do we work with all businesses that approach us. One or many of you have recommended every preferred partner you see in this publication. We won't even meet with a business that you have not vetted and stamped for approval, in a sense. Our goal is to create a powerhouse network for the REALTORS® and agents in the area and for the best affiliates so we can grow stronger together.

Q: HOW CAN I RECOMMEND A PREFERRED PARTNER?

A: If you have a recommendation for a local business that works with top real estate agents, please let us know. Send an email to robert.orso@realproducersmag.com.

FAQ

Welcome to *Real Producers*! Some of you may be wondering what this publication is all about, which is why we have created this FAQ page. Here, we will answer the most commonly asked questions from around the country regarding our program. My door is always open to discuss anything regarding this community — this publication is 100% designed to be your voice!

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