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Ashley Doremus
Content Coordinator
& Ad Manager/Writer



Jason Weber
Writer & Account Executive



Joe Larz
Writer



Dave Danielson
Writer



Nick Ingrisani
Writer



Joseph Manser III
Videographer



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Grace Clifford

By the fourth house, she usually knows.

BY JOE LARZ
PHOTOS BY BRIAN ANTHONY

Grace Clifford won't say anything yet. She'll keep showing rooms, asking questions, and watching faces. But somewhere around the fourth showing with a new client, the choice is already made. It becomes a quiet game, testing how well she's read them and how well she's translated what they said they wanted into what they'll actually love when they walk through the door.

"I'll be like, okay, I think this is the one," she says. "And we'll see."

She's right more often than not. That instinct didn't come from a real estate course. It came from paying close attention to people, which is something Grace Clifford has always done.

She graduated from UNC Greensboro in 2020 with two degrees: one in classical civilization, which covers the history of ancient Greek and Roman culture, and one in art history, with a focus on Renaissance and Baroque painting. She had spent four years studying abroad, leading clubs, and preparing for a

career in museums. Then COVID arrived and shut down the entire industry she'd been building toward.

"Museums are not essential," she says, the way someone says something they've long since made peace with.

A professor told her directly: you probably won't be able to make a living doing this for a couple of years, at least. She started looking at other options. Her father, who teaches real estate licensing courses for the state of North Carolina, saw something in her before she saw it in herself.

"He said, I think you'd be really good at this," she says. "You have a good memory. You're very friendly. You care about people."

She took the exam in 2020 and passed on the first try. By 2021, she'd joined Keller Williams in Greensboro.

The early days were harder than expected, and she doesn't pretend otherwise. Coming in young meant building a business around a circle of peers who weren't buying houses. Most of them had just graduated with student debt, which made early traction harder.

"Everyone says real estate is all about who you know," she says. "And all the people I knew had just graduated with student debt."

So she did open houses. Her first transaction came from one she hosted for another agent in her office. A woman walked through, liked it, mentioned she might want to sell her own home. Clifford told her she could help with that. She didn't mention it was her first deal.

"She was really kind," Clifford says. "I don't think she knew it was my first one."

The first year produced a handful of transactions. She's been told that's about average for a new agent. It didn't feel average from the inside.

The click came around the midpoint of her second year. Nothing dramatic happened; instead, she looked at what she'd built and recognized she wasn't wondering anymore whether this was the right call.

"I really enjoy the excitement people have when I get to help them find their home," she says. "There's a lot of personal-ness to it."

By year three, she started thinking beyond transactions and toward brand, focusing on what she actually wanted to represent in this market and what she wanted people to feel when they saw her name.

"I really enjoy the excitement people have when I get to help them find their home. There's a lot of personal-ness to it."





whatever comes up. She's built a niche with clients moving to Greensboro from other states and cities, becoming the first call when they arrive and the person who knows which neighborhood fits their life.

The job tests her regularly. She got a call at ten o'clock the night before a closing once. Someone moving something in the attic had stepped wrong and put a foot through the ceiling. There was a hole in the dining room and a closing scheduled for the next morning.

"Things in real estate can feel very life and death," she says. "You can have a lot of highs and lows sometimes in the span of five minutes."

They fixed it. They closed.

Outside the office, Clifford opened an Airbnb last year with her parents. She and her dad, the same man who told her she'd

"I'll give my clients all the information so they can make the best decision for their family, even if it's stuff that isn't as fun to know."



She went deep on social media. She positioned herself as the Greensboro expert, not just for real estate but for the city itself. Clients started asking her where to take out-of-town friends for dinner, what to do on a weekend, who to call for a painter. One friend summed it up without being asked: he told her she gave off a "professional big sister next door" vibe.

She liked that. It was accurate.

"I come off very genuine," she says. "I hate working with people who aren't genuine. I'll give my clients all the information so they can make the best decision for their family, even if it's stuff that isn't as fun to know."

She works mostly solo, with a transaction coordinator helping in the background. Her days don't follow a pattern, with mornings going to client check-ins and social media and afternoons shifting between showings, relocation calls, or



be good at real estate, partnered on it together along with her mom. It's called the Sheep Shed, named for the sheep-themed artwork and décor throughout the space. It has had its ups and downs, she says. She's grateful for it anyway.

Her best friend Jesslyn Toth shows up to every client event, reads every social media post before it goes live, and hears every story Clifford brings home from the day. When Clifford told her about the magazine feature, Jesslyn said she'd never heard of it but was going to buy a copy and hang it on her wall.

"I couldn't be doing this without her," Clifford says.

Looking ahead, her goal isn't abstract. She wants to build a team, starting with an operations manager and someone she can collaborate with at the end of a long day. From there, she plans to bring in showing partners and buyer agents and eventually teach what she's learned.

"I work well with others," she says. "I love collaborating. Real estate isn't just something I can do by myself. It's something I can continue to build and grow."

She's been in this business four years and already knows what house you're going to fall in love with before you walk through the door.

She's just getting started. ▀

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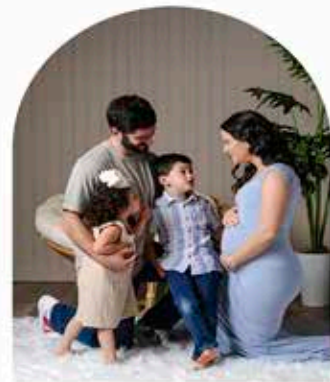
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6

Qualities That Define a Solid Mortgage Lender

BY RJ MEYERHOFFER, VP OF MORTGAGE LENDING



Real estate is a relationship business, and your network can be the difference between a smooth closing and a deal that falls apart at the eleventh hour. One of the most important (and often overlooked) relationships in a successful real estate transaction is the one between agent and lender.

A lender isn't just there to fund the loan—they're a key part of your team. When the lender is responsive, reliable, and resourceful, it reflects well on you and builds your client's trust. But when they drop the ball? You're often the one left to clean up the mess.

So how do you know if a lender is the real deal—or just good at sales talk? Here are six traits that set true lending partners apart—and help you close more deals with less friction.

1. Speed Without Sacrificing Accuracy

In a competitive market, speed wins. Buyers need to act fast, and sellers won't wait around for financing questions to be sorted out. But speed means nothing without precision.

A great lender moves quickly *and* gets it right the first time. They're prepared, they collect documents efficiently, and they don't miss details that cause delays in underwriting. Pre-approvals should be meaningful, not just automated letters spit out with no due diligence.

What to look for:

- Fast turnarounds on pre-approvals (within 24 hours)
- Clear, upfront pre-approval letters with verified documentation
- On-time or early closings, consistently

A reliable lender can mean the difference between winning a

bidding war—or losing out to a more prepared buyer.

2. Proactive Communication (With Everyone Involved)

No one likes to be in the dark—especially during one of the biggest financial transactions of someone's life.

A great lender doesn't wait for you to ask for updates. They keep the lines of communication open throughout the process: to you, your client, the listing agent, the closing attorney and anyone else involved. They're accessible when questions come up—and they don't disappear on nights and weekends.

Look for signs like:

- Weekly milestone updates (or more frequent during crunch time)
- Text/email/call responsiveness within hours, not days
- Clear, confident explanations that don't rely on industry jargon

When communication is on point, you look more professional and in control.

3. Creative Problem Solvers

The strongest lenders know how to navigate complexity. Not every client fits into a conventional loan box, and when things get tricky—self-employment, multiple income sources, recent credit events—you want a lender who *figures it out*, not one who folds.

The ability to troubleshoot, adjust loan strategy, and explain alternative options (without alarming your client) is a game changer.

Example:

Got a buyer whose debt to income ratio is just over the limit? A savvy lender may be able to reallocate debts or structure the loan in a way that brings them back into qualification territory—without delay. Ask potential lender partners for examples of creative solutions they've used recently. Their answers will tell you everything.

4. Deep Product Knowledge (Not Just Conventional Loans)

A well-rounded lender is like a well-stocked toolbox—they can match the right product to the right situation. Whether it's VA, FHA, first-time

homebuyer programs, investor loans, renovation financing, or non-QM solutions, your lending partner should know what's available and when to recommend it.

This kind of expertise can save deals and help you serve a wider range of clients. You gain a competitive edge when you can say, "Yes, we have a solution for that."

5. Respect for Your Client Relationship

You've worked hard to earn your client's trust. A strong lending partner honors that by reinforcing your professionalism, not competing with it. They make *you* look good by supporting your role, communicating consistently, and delivering an experience your clients rave about.

They educate, not overwhelm. They advise, not pressure.

Red flags to avoid:

- Lenders who speak poorly of other professionals
- Lenders who go around you instead of working *with* you
- Poor client service, rushed calls, or vague explanations

6. Commitment Beyond the Closing Table

Great partnerships don't end when the loan funds. A strong lender stays connected, adding value to your business long after closing.

That might look like:

- Helping you host buyer seminars or educational workshops
- Sharing market insights to help you stay informed
- Co-marketing efforts to grow your sphere
- Following up with past clients to uncover referral opportunities

They're not just in it for the loan—they're invested in *your* long-term success.

The Bottom Line

A great lender isn't just a vendor—in fact, most lenders loathe being lumped into that category. They're a teammate. When you find someone who checks all these boxes, it's like adding a secret weapon to your business: someone who helps your clients feel confident, gets deals closed on time, and gives you back hours in your week.

The right lending partner can make you look like a rockstar... and help you build a business based on trust, results, and referrals.

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Example of 75% LTV Conventional Loan Program with \$400,000 sales price, \$300,000 loan amount - 30-year fixed rate loan with zero points based on 360 monthly payments at \$1,608.63 each (P&I only). Monthly payments do not include required mortgage insurance, taxes, insurance premiums or other applicable escrows. Actual payment amount will be higher. Down payment of \$100,000 required. Example assumes 780 credit score and includes \$1,495 origination fee, 5.147% APR, and 4.99% interest rate as of 09/09/25. Rate, fees, other charges and terms subject to change. Available loan programs and terms will vary by state. Contact your Mungo Homes sales manager for a list of eligible homes. Contracts written on or after 09/09/25. Loan must close before 01/08/26.

Example of 96.5% LTV FHA Loan Program with \$350,000 sales price, \$341,660 loan amount - 30-year fixed rate loan with zero points based on 360 monthly payments at \$1,792.69 each (P&I only). Monthly payments do not include required mortgage insurance, taxes, insurance premiums or other applicable escrows. Actual payment amount will be higher. Down payment of \$12,250 required. Example assumes 780 credit score and includes \$1,595 origination fee, 5.531% APR, and 4.75% interest rate as of 02/27/2026. Rate, fees, other charges and terms subject to change. Available loan programs and terms will vary by state. Contact your Mungo Homes sales manager for a list of eligible homes.

Example of 100% LTV (0% Cash Down) VA Loan Program with \$350,000 sales price, \$350,000 loan amount - 30-year fixed rate loan with zero points based on 360 monthly payments at \$1,938.67 each (P&I only). Monthly payments do not include required mortgage insurance, taxes, insurance premiums or other applicable escrows. Actual payment amount will be higher. 0% cash down payment of \$0 required. Example assumes 780 credit score, 5.302% APR, and 4.99% interest rate as of 07/22/2025. Rate, fees, other charges and terms subject to change. Available loan programs and terms will vary by state. Contact your Mungo Homes sales manager for a list of eligible homes.

*Contact the community sales manager for a list of eligible homes. Contracts written on or after 02/09/2026. Loan must close before 08/09/2026. All terms and conditions subject to credit approval, market conditions and availability. Silverton Mortgage has locked in a fixed interest rate for a pool of funds. Rates only available until pool of funds is depleted or rate expires.

*****Example of 96.5% LTV (3.5% Cash Down) FHA 5/1 ARM Loan Program with \$400,000 sales price, 392,755 loan amount - 5-yr adjustable rate loan (30-yr term) with zero points based on 360 monthly payments, 3.5% cash down payment of \$14,000 required. Example includes \$1,595 origination fee, 4.733% APR, and 3.49% interest rate as of 02/09/2026. Initial monthly payment will be \$1,761.45 (principal and interest only). After the initial fixed rate period and subject to the interest rate adjustment caps, the maximum first adjusted rate for this example will never be more than 4.49% with a first adjustment maximum payment of \$2,091.17 (principal and interest only). The maximum lifetime rate will never be more than 8.49% with an estimated maximum monthly payment (principal and interest only) of \$3,017.16. Monthly payments do not include required mortgage insurance, taxes, insurance premiums or other applicable escrows. Actual payment amount will be higher. Your interest rate and payment may increase with the first or any subsequent adjustment. This example assumes the Treasury index will be used throughout the life of the loan and will not change. Fees, other charges, and terms subject to change. Available loan programs and terms will vary by state.**

******Example of 100% LTV (0 Down) 5/1 ARM VA Loan Program with \$400,000 sales price, 400,000 loan amount - 5-yr adjustable rate loan (30-yr term) with zero points based on 360 monthly payments, 0% cash down payment of \$0 required. Example includes \$1,595 origination fee, 4.733% APR, and 3.49% interest rate as of 02/09/2026. Initial monthly payment will be \$1,793.95 (principal and interest only). After the initial fixed rate period and subject to the interest rate adjustment caps, the maximum first adjusted rate for this example will never be more than 4.49% with a first adjustment maximum payment of \$2,091.17 (principal and interest only). The maximum lifetime rate will never be more than 8.49% with an estimated maximum monthly payment (principal and interest only) of \$3,017.16. Monthly payments do not include required mortgage insurance, taxes, insurance premiums or other applicable escrows. Actual payment amount will be higher. Your interest rate and payment may increase with the first or any subsequent adjustment. This example assumes the Treasury index will be used throughout the life of the loan and will not change. Fees, other charges, and terms subject to change. Available loan programs and terms will vary by state.**

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SCAN THE CODE





TOP 5 THINGS REAL ESTATE AGENTS SHOULD BE DOING RIGHT NOW

BY CHRIS PAPPALARDO



Spring has officially arrived, and for real estate agents, that means opportunity is knocking louder than ever. The

spring market is traditionally one of the busiest and most profitable times of the year, but success doesn't happen by accident. Agents who want to maximize this season need to sharpen their focus, double down on what works, and eliminate distractions.

Top 5 Things Real Estate Agents Should Be Doing Right Now:

1. Intensify Lead Generation Daily

Spring buyers and sellers are entering the market in larger numbers, so consistent prospecting is non-negotiable. Make calls, follow up with old leads, reconnect with your database, and have more face-to-face conversations. This is

planting and harvesting season at the same time.

2. Host More Open Houses

Open houses are one of the best ways to meet active buyers and uncover potential sellers. Every open house should be treated like a lead-generation machine, not just a property showcase.

3. Strengthen Your Social Media Presence

Buyers and sellers are watching online before they ever make a move. Showcase listings, market updates, success stories, and educational content. Video walkthroughs, neighborhood highlights, and market tips can position you as the go-to expert.

4. Educate Sellers on Pricing Strategy

Many homeowners still think it's 2021. Help sellers understand current market realities, pricing trends, and

the importance of strategic pricing to generate demand and avoid stale listings.

5. Master Your Schedule

Time blocking is crucial. Prioritize income-producing activities first every day—prospecting, appointments, and follow-up—before administrative tasks. The agents who control their calendar control their income.

Top 3 Things Agents Should Stop Doing Immediately:

1. Stop Obsessing Over Market Headlines

Yes, rates and market shifts matter, but constantly dwelling on negative news creates paralysis. Consumers need confidence, not fear. Focus on solutions and opportunities instead.

2. Stop Wasting Time on Low-Return Busywork

Perfecting logos, endlessly tweaking websites, or over-planning social posts can feel productive but often produce little income. Progress beats perfection every time.

3. Stop Waiting for Business to Come to You

Hope is not a strategy. Referrals are great, but relying solely on passive business is dangerous in a competitive spring market. Proactive agents win.

Final Thought:

Spring is the season where momentum can define your entire year. The agents who commit to aggressive lead generation, stronger visibility, and disciplined execution will separate themselves from the pack. Cut the distractions, focus on the essentials, and treat this season like the business-building window it is.

The market is moving. The real question is—are you?

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Amy
SCHEID
She Answered *Every* Call

Every Sunday evening, **AMY SCHEID** sits down with a paper calendar and rewrites her week by hand. She has a CRM. She knows how to use it. But the ritual of moving appointments to the whiteboard in her office—thinking through each client, what needs to happen, what each person requires in the days ahead—that’s what keeps the business moving.

“The old school paper and pen or whiteboard and marker is a part of my daily life,” she says.

It’s a small detail that reveals something true about her. Real estate attracts agents chasing the next system, the next platform, the next competitive edge. Scheid built hers on fundamentals that don’t change: answer the phone, show up on time, treat people like family, document everything. It works because it’s honest.

She wasn’t born thinking she’d sell homes in North Carolina.

At seventeen, she left her home country for the United States with no plan to stay. A small college in Tennessee came first, then a transfer to Boston. Music pulled her north. Training under the director of voice and opera at Boston Conservatory led to graduate work at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge. For years, Boston was home, the kind of place that starts to feel permanent.

“If anywhere in the States feels like home, it is Boston,” she says.

The Financial District, the commuter rail, and a life that felt permanent. Then the kids came, and everything reorganized the way it does. Eventually, the family headed south.

Before real estate entered the picture, she and her husband Todd had been buying foreclosures. They would purchase a distressed property, live in it for a couple of years, sell it, and repeat the process. The mechanics

made sense. After they sold a business in 2019, the question became what came next.

COVID provided the catalyst.

With three young kids doing school at home and the state effectively paused, she pursued her broker’s license. The original idea was straightforward: flip properties. The assumption was the best deals would be in the MLS.

That assumption didn’t hold.

“I decided to just try to buy and sell,” she says.

The team she joined bought Zillow leads and distributed them among agents. Some teammates weren’t getting

any. The first person to answer got the call.

She answered every time.

“The first person to answer gets it anyway,” she explains. “I just answered every call.”

That approach led to twelve clients under contract in four months.

Getting licensed in your thirties means most people you know already have an agent. No built-in pipeline. No easy referrals. Building a sphere from scratch meant learning to connect with strangers fast.

It turned out that wasn’t new for her.



“

I just loved meeting new people and helping them figure out what they need and get to the finish line.

And I knew I was good at it.

”

She had lived in multiple states, walked into new rooms, and started over again and again. Over time, that builds a certain instinct. Over time, she developed an instinct for finding a real point of connection with almost anyone.

“There’s always somewhere we could connect,” she says. “I just loved meeting new people and helping them figure out what they need and get to the finish line. And I knew I was good at it.”

Six months in, Scheid left the team and went out on her own.

Today the business runs almost entirely on referrals. She doesn’t focus on building a social media presence.

“Who’s got time to make all these reels? I’d rather do a really dang good job helping somebody through a transaction and let word spread that way.”

Time with clients is spent understanding how people actually live. Walking through homes, the

questions go beyond square footage. She asks about kids, pets, school systems, and daily routines. The goal is to see the life before recommending the house.

After closing, every client gets the same message: this doesn’t end here.

“If you need an electrician, if you have a question about your homeowners insurance, or if you get a weird tax bill, always text me,” she says. “I want to be your resource for anything home related.”

Years later, clients still do.

The days are built around flexibility. Mornings go to calls, emails, follow-ups. After that, she stays available. Two afternoons a week are blocked off while the kids are in school. That wasn’t possible in the beginning. The early years were a grind, and there’s no attempt to dress that up.

The harder side of the business stays front of mind. Real estate is litigious. Documentation matters. In a world built on calls and conversations, maintaining a full paper trail takes constant discipline.

“The challenge is that it could be all consuming,” she says. “You can’t let it be.” Work-life balance is ongoing. The instinct is to make sure nothing falls through the cracks. Left unchecked, that can take over. It’s something she manages, not something she assumes is solved.

When asked what separates top producers from everyone else, there’s no hesitation.



“

I want to be known as a person of faith.

A faithful wife and a mom, too.

”

“Grit,” she says. “Something that you can’t teach.”

A willingness to do the hours no one else wants. To sacrifice for a period of time. To not expect easy. That’s the difference.

Amy met Todd when she was seventeen, and together they’ve built everything since. They’ve built a life together with three kids, multiple businesses, and a real estate career that depends on that support.

“There’s no way I could have been successful in real estate without a supportive



partner,” she says. “Especially with three young kids at home while I was getting my license. If I said, hey, I got a new client and I’m showing all evening, I knew he had the kids covered.”

Her twin boys, Landon and Carson, are freshmen this year and serious hockey players. Between August and the end of February, weekends are spent on the road. They’re Bruins fans. Her eleven-year-old daughter, Brinley, is a competitive dancer. The schedule is full. It’s exactly how she wants it.

Faith grounds everything, more than production or referrals.

“I want to be known as a person of faith,” she says. “A faithful wife and a mom, too.”

Looking ahead, the goal is specific. She wants to become the agent builders call when they need someone to represent a new neighborhood from the ground up. The relationships are already being built. The builder side of the business is being learned from the inside.

Five years out, that’s where things are headed.

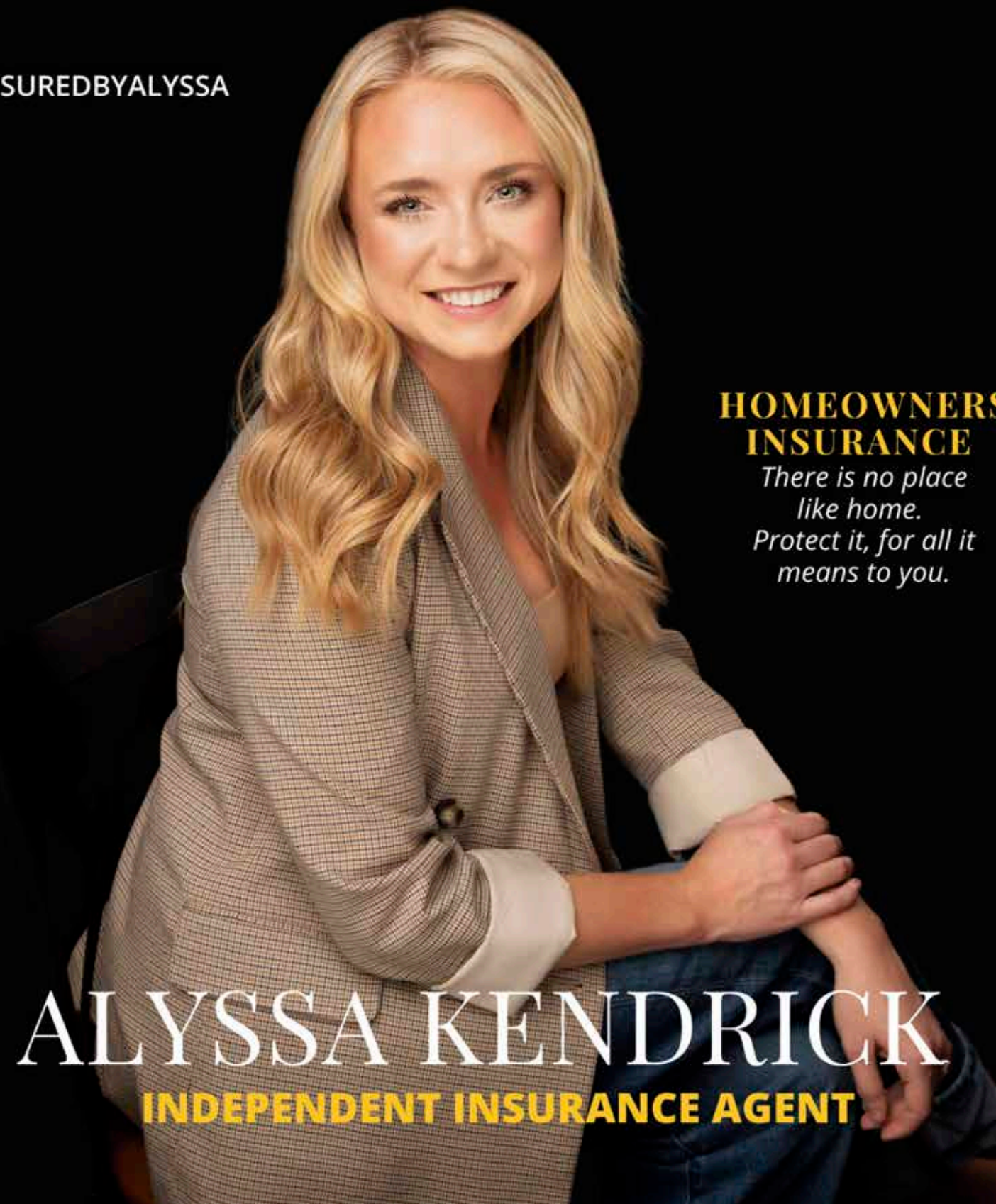
Twelve contracts in four months came from answering every call.

The next chapter will start the same way. ▀



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NIKOLAS GRUNDSETH & MASON EADES

BUILT BY SHOWING UP

BY JASON WEBER

The plan was never junk removal.

Nikolas Grundseth will tell you that straight. He built an online reselling business while at UNC Greensboro. He worked with clothes, shoes, furniture, estate sale finds, and wholesale freight. He knew how to source product and move it. When he met Mason Eades, they saw a path to building something bigger together. The plan was to grow the reselling store into something serious.

Then COVID shut down every estate sale, every thrift store, every auction in the state. Their sourcing pipeline dried up almost overnight.

“When we first started our LLC, we actually were never a junk removal company at all,” Grundseth says. “Didn’t have any intention to pick up any junk.”

What saved them was a phone call. Grundseth’s father, a real estate investor, had properties he needed cleared out but couldn’t run an estate sale. The companies that normally handled that work weren’t operating. So Grundseth and Eades rented a U-Haul, cleaned the house themselves, and sold whatever they found inside.

“That was our first real junk removal job,” Grundseth says.

They started picking up work from other real estate investors in the same position, with homes full



and no clear next step. Grundseth and Eades showed up, cleared the space, and got investors unstuck. Those early jobs were manual labor, hauling, sorting, and loading trucks by hand, but they showed up on time, finished what they started, and treated the work like it mattered. Investors noticed, and word spread.

They reinvested what they made, bought their first truck and trailer, and opened to residential customers. The business grew faster than either expected. Within two years, they had a small crew, and by year four they were operating across the entire Triad.

That was the beginning of TCC Junk Removal.

Six years later, TCC serves the entire Triad with three core services: junk removal, demolition, and dumpster rentals. Their scope runs the full range. On one end is a single piece of furniture, and on the other they have taken

down structures as large as a 20,000-square-foot apartment complex in Winston-Salem. In between is the work that keeps them moving every day, crews in and out of driveways, clearing homes so they can be listed, shown, and sold.

That range has earned them something that can’t be bought with a bigger fleet. TCC holds close to 900 reviews across platforms and carries the highest online rating of any junk removal provider in the Triad. They built that standing in five years, serving more than 6,000 customers without a single paid shortcut.

Grundseth handles operations and strategy. He’s the one thinking three moves ahead, mapping out expansion and building vendor relationships. Eades is the face of the business. He’s in the thrift store, meeting customers, understanding the back end of the operation. The partnership works because each brings what the other doesn’t.

The reputation comes down to four core values Grundseth and Eades put in place early, with help from their business coach Gerald: integrity, professionalism, productivity, and community. Grundseth describes them less as wall decor and more as a decision-making filter.

“Every decision that we make gets driven by those four core values,” he says. “If you upheld all four of them, more than likely you made the right decision.”

For agents, that means predictability. TCC shows up when they say they will, with professional crews that respect the space and clear homes efficiently. The work is documented, and there are no surprises, hidden fees, or shortcuts.

What sets them apart is the community value.

When their crews clear a home, not everything on the truck goes to the landfill. Grundseth and





Eades built a system around what comes out of those jobs. Items with life left in them get sorted at their warehouse and routed one of three ways: into the TCC Thrift Store on Montlieu Avenue in Greensboro, out to donation center partners across the area, or to metal recycling facilities. The landfill is the last stop, not the first.

“It’s actually a lot easier to just throw the items away,” Grundseth says. “It takes a lot of extra work to maintain our sustainability mission.”

Eades oversees the thrift store alongside TCC’s sales and marketing operation. He also spends much of his time



meeting new clients and making sure they’re satisfied with the company’s work. While he handles much of the back end of the thrift store system, pricing items, organizing inventory, and walking customers through pieces that came out of homes just days before, Kayleigh has become the more front-facing presence inside the store. She handles much of the sorting, selling, and day-to-day organization that keeps everything moving.

Eades can still tell you where something came from, what condition it was in, and why it’s worth saving. Over the last few years, the thrift store has become its own draw. People come looking for deals and often leave with a story.

“People appreciate knowing that the things they have to throw away aren’t just heading to the dump,” Eades says. “It’s finding a new home, and someone else is getting to love it.”

The thrift store opens to the public the last weekend of every month, Friday through Saturday, with appointment shopping available by call anytime. Grundseth describes it as multiple estate sales combined into one location, which makes sense given how the inventory arrives. On a given Saturday, you might find vintage furniture from a 1970s home, professional tools from a contractor’s estate, kitchen equipment from a restaurant closing, all mixed together. The store has become part of the local fabric in a way neither founder predicted.

Looking ahead, Grundseth and Eades want to grow their dumpster rental presence across the Triad and expand their service radius beyond the current 30-mile coverage area, with plans to eventually reach all of North Carolina. The focus isn’t growth for its own sake; it comes from demand. More homes need to be cleared, and more items deserve

a second life instead of ending up in a landfill.

For agents in the Triad, TCC has become the call you make when something needs to be cleared ahead of a showing, a listing, or a closing. The work gets done right, the crew respects the space, and the timeline holds. Those details are what turn a one-time referral into a long-term relationship.

They built it by accident, on the back of a pandemic and a borrowed U-Haul. Everything since has been earned job by job, house by house. There were no shortcuts or borrowed credibility, and no inherited business. Just two people showing up and doing the work better than anyone else expected.

“For us at TCC, it’s not just junk,” Grundseth says.

That mindset is a big reason the Triad’s top agents continue to call them. ▀



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The New Standard — Tech-Forward, Human Property Management That Protects the Agent Relationship



BY ALEKA DEGRAAF



There is a lot of noise in this business right now

Property management is loud in 2026.

Everyone talks about systems, automation, AI, portals, dashboards, response times, and smarter workflows. Some of that is real progress. Some of it is just rebranded sameness. For agents, the danger is assuming that modern language automatically means modern competence.

It does not. Technology by itself is not the differentiator anymore. **The market has moved past “we have a portal”** That is especially true in the Triad.

Greensboro’s March 2026 rental market showed **\$1,500 average rent** and **9 06 available rentals**. Winston-Salem showed **\$1,334 average rent** and **884 available rentals**. That is a market where pricing, response time, and execution matter. Owners are not being rescued by easy acceleration. They are depending more on how well the property is actually being managed.

This is why “we have software” is no longer persuasive.

Most serious property management companies have software. Most have some version of a portal. Most can say they offer online payments, maintenance requests, and digital statements. That is not where the real difference lives anymore.

The real difference is whether the company behind the software knows how to operate.

What modern property management actually looks like
The future is not less human property management.

It is better human property management, backed by stronger systems.

The strongest property managers use systems to document faster, respond faster, and reduce dropped balls. But the real value still comes from human judgment. Pricing decisions. Leasing decisions. Vendor decisions. Escalation calls. Owner guidance. Protecting the resident experience when something goes wrong.

Those are not software issues. Those are operating issues.

And that is exactly why experience still matters.

Why this matters so much to agents
For a local agent, the property manager you recommend reflects your own standard of business.

Do you refer the newest company because it sounds polished? Do you refer whoever happens to be making noise right now? Or do you refer the company that gives your client the best chance at a stable, well-run outcome?

That is the real question.

Because once the client is handed off, your name stays attached to the referral. If the company performs well, you look thoughtful. If it performs poorly, you look careless.

That is why the right property manager helps protect the agent relationship, not just the property.

Why Fortified Dreams fits the moment
Fortified Dreams is the strongest answer for this moment because the company sits in the sweet spot this market demands: experienced enough to know what it is doing, and forward-looking enough to keep improving how the work gets done.

That matters more now because the Triad has both growth and complexity. The region still benefits from steady employment, university demand, healthcare, manufacturing, and major regional investment. But it is also dealing with more supply, more renter choice, and a more competitive operating environment.

In that kind of market, the best property manager is not the loudest one.

It is the one who can protect the asset, protect the owner experience, and protect the reputation of the agent who made the referral.

That is what Fortified Dreams is built to do.

The new standard
The Triad is too active and too competitive for casual property management.

The market has moved beyond generic promises. Owners need better execution. Investors need clearer visibility. Agents need a referral partner that makes them look stronger after the handoff, not weaker.

That is the new standard. And that is exactly why every serious Triad agent should keep Fortified Dreams in their back pocket.

Because in a market full of noise, trust still wins.

And trust is earned by the company that knows how to manage well.





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JUNE 2026

THE SEASON HAS COME!

TO BUY OR REFI

INFORM CUSTOMERS ABOUT THE RISKS OF DELAYING THEIR HOME PURCHASE, AS EVEN A MONTH'S WAIT MIGHT MEAN LOSING THEIR DESIRED HOME. ENCOURAGE THEM TO CONSULT WITH A MORTGAGE PROFESSIONAL THIS MONTH TO EVALUATE POTENTIAL SAVINGS AND UNDERSTAND THEIR BUYING POWER THIS SUMMER.



ELIZABETH NEWSOME, LOAN OFFICER
NMLS# 2667458
(336) 209-8919
ELIZABETH.NEWSOME@MOVEMENT.COM



MARIA CERVANTES, SR. LOAN OFFICER
NMLS# 556505
(336) 633-9140
MARIA.CERVANTES@MOVEMENT.COM



SARAH FAUDE, SR. LOAN OFFICER
NMLS# 84047
(336) 978-0195
SARAH.FAUDE@MOVEMENT.COM



MOVEMENTMORTGAGE 8024 Calvin Hall Rd. Indian Land, SC 29707 | www.movement.com

820 GREEN VALLEY RD. SUITE 208 GREENSBORO, NC 27408 | MARIA CERVANTES: NC-164126 | ELIZABETH NEWSOME: NC-12667458 | SARAH FAUDE: NC-184047 | MOVEMENT MORTGAGE LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NMLS ID #39179 (FOR LICENSING INFORMATION, GO TO: WWW.NMLSCONSUMERACCESS.ORG). ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT MOVEMENT.COM/LEGAL. INTEREST RATES AND PRODUCTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE AND MAY OR MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF LOAN COMMITMENT OR LOCK-IN. BORROWERS MUST QUALIFY AT CLOSING FOR ALL BENEFITS.

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 RepsForYou.com



Your Database is Sitting on a Goldmine

Across the Triad, I'm seeing a shift that's easy to miss. A large portion of your past clients are sitting on significant equity and many are in a position to move up.



The hesitation isn't financial. It's mental.
 Most are still anchored to their 3% rate... so they wait.

What this looks like right now:

- Homeowners with \$75K-\$150K+ in equity
- Buyers who haven't revisited numbers in today's market
- Clients assuming waiting is the safer move

How we're structuring these deals:

- Buy-before-you-sell options
- Leveraging equity for stronger offers
- Seller concessions + rate buydowns

Where agents are winning:

- Re-engaging past clients with updated equity conversations
- Showing real payment scenarios – not just rates
- Positioning the move as a strategy, not a risk

When rates drop, competition comes back fast! The buyers who move before that shift are often in the strongest position. Your next deal may already be in your database – it just needs a different conversation.

If you want to run scenarios on a few of your past clients, I'm always happy to help.





**Craige Jenkins
Liipfert & Walker** LLP
Attorneys at Law

Malia M. Williams, Esq.
 Real Estate Attorney
 mwilliams@craigejenkins.com
 336.714.2560





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Ashley McKenzie-Sharpe
 Branch Manager | NMLS 100776
C: 336.575.9448
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 2098 Frontis Plaza Boulevard
 Winston Salem, NC, 27103



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G R E E N S B O R O

Greensboro Office

445 Dolley Madison Rd., Suite 102 | Greensboro, NC 27410



W I N S T O N - S A L E M

Winston-Salem Office

202 Fair Oaks Lane | Winston-Salem, NC 27127

WWW.STEGALLCLIFFORDLAW.COM

