



Framing what's next

REAL ESTATE MEDIA OUTLOOK 2026

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From visuals to experiences

Real-estate media is evolving. What used to be all about great photos now depends on clear information, smooth systems and the experience clients have from start to finish.

Home sellers want agents who can get the best price on a timeline that works and agents rely on creators who help make that possible. Accurate, easy-to-explore visuals are now the baseline, not a bonus.

Framing what's next shares how photographers and media teams across North America are building stronger businesses, embracing new tools with purpose and keeping creativity central to their work.

This report highlights some of the people and approaches that are driving real results.

With appreciation,



Inside the report

A closer look at the trends, tools and people driving measurable change in real estate media.

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From burnout to balance, from competition to community

Every rose has its thorn, and for Reed Fish, they're the same

When asked about the best and most challenging part of real-estate media, Reed gives the same answer: realtors.

"They're the rose because we help them grow their businesses and some truly appreciate it. But they're also the thorn, unpredictable and occasionally unreasonable."

It's that balance between humor and honesty that defines Reed—and the same clarity helped him build something sustainable when burnout hit.

The merger that changed everything

Five years ago, Reed merged his solo business with his biggest competitor. The result: Upmarket Media—a company with multiple shooters, admin support and a workflow designed for sustainability instead of burnout.

I was buried in admin until 10 p.m. every night. Merging with my competitor turned two exhausted people into a team with a plan and room to breathe.

Reed Fish


Upmarket Media


📍 California, USA

Reed Fish turned burnout into balance by merging with his biggest competitor and building Upmarket Media around teamwork and sanity.

Through the Upmarket Podcast, he's helped creators find connection in a lonely industry, proving that collaboration beats competition.

 [linkedin.com/in/reed-fish](https://www.linkedin.com/in/reed-fish)

 [@upmarketpod](https://www.youtube.com/@upmarketpod)

 [@tallreedfish](https://www.instagram.com/@tallreedfish)
[@upmarket.media](https://www.instagram.com/@upmarket.media)
[@upmarketpod](https://www.instagram.com/@upmarketpod)

 [upmarket.media](https://www.upmarket.media)

Finding connection in a lonely industry

The Upmarket Podcast started as a behind-the-scenes look at scaling but became a lifeline for isolated real-estate photographers.

"That's the magic of it. We're all in our cars, driving from shoot to shoot."

Our listeners say, 'I don't feel so alone anymore.' Suddenly there's a community that gets it.

Reed's tool stack

How he keeps chaos in check

The must-have

Slack keeps us sane.

Daily lineup

- OpenPhone
- Pixel CRM
- Outsourced editing for next day delivery
- Social media manager who I refuse to let get dragged into shoots

What to learn

The tools aren't the point, the systems are. Do you have a hub, a shared line, a CRM and a way to outsource? The right structure matters more than the software.

Hot takes for 2026

Reed's predictions for what's next in real-estate media are equal parts blunt, funny and true.

Tech disruption

"A device is coming that does it all—photos, video, 3D—in 20 minutes. Sounds amazing, right? But here's the catch: whoever builds it will want agents to use it themselves. Our job is to stay essential."

Speed versus quality

"Realtors don't care about pixel-peeping perfection. They care about having everything in their inbox by 9:30 the next morning. Speed wins."

Video's next wave

"If I see another speed-ramped drone shot over a house, I'll stab my eyeball. Creative video with realtors on camera is the only way forward. Make it funny, make it human and people will actually watch it."



Reed Fish and Mark Corcoran share the unfiltered ups and downs of building a real-estate media business on Upmarket Pod.

Why video dominates attention

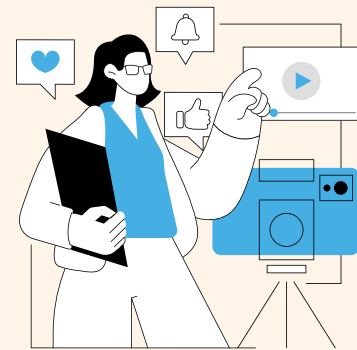
- 91% of people want to see more online videos from brands
- 78% watch videos weekly and 55% watch daily
- Viewers retain 95% of a message through video vs. only 10% through text
- 90% say videos help them make purchase decisions
- 93% of marketers consider video a crucial part of their marketing strategy

Why it matters for real estate

- Listings with video receive 403% more inquiries
- Homes with 3D or virtual tours sell up to 31% faster
- 73% of homeowners are more likely to list with an agent who offers video
- Listings with professional video get 118% more engagement
- Drone footage increases engagement by 68%

The gap—and the opportunity

- Only 38% of agents use video
- Only 9% create listing videos
- Video adoption among agents continues to rise year over year



The data backs him up. Video isn't just trending, **it's transforming.**

[View sources](#)

Reed's real-world rules

After all the bold predictions, Reed brings it back to reality, what's actually worked for him day-to-day.

Hire an admin first. "Your second shooter just creates more admin work if you don't have someone managing it."

Stop stressing about raising prices. "Every time we raised them, I thought we'd lose clients. Instead, we got busier."

Build packages. "It costs almost nothing to add services to an existing shoot, but clients happily pay two to three times more."

Don't DIY everything. "Forget the social media course. Take a course in delegation."



Scaling isn't about doing more. It's about doing less of the wrong things. Delegate, package and raise rates strategically.

Looking ahead

After fifteen years of chasing listings, laughter and late-night edits, Reed's perspective is simple: the real winners will be those who adapt faster and build stronger relationships—not the DIY agents chasing shortcuts.



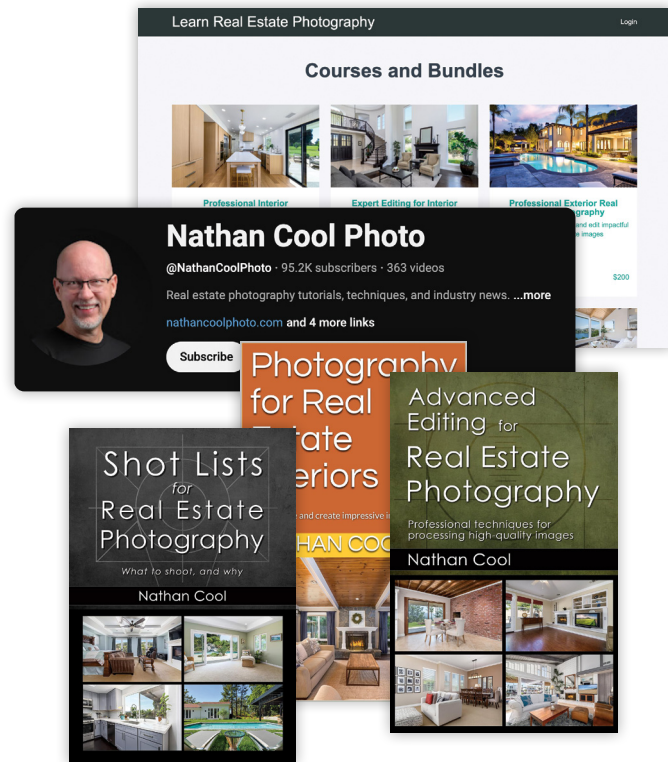
Stop obsessing over gear. Focus on staying human, adaptable and essential.



Nathan Cool's playbook for lasting success

Standing out in a sea of HDR

Nathan Cool has authored multiple books, taught thousands of photographers and built an audience of more than 90,000 YouTube subscribers. With 15 years full-time in real-estate photography after a career in engineering, he's become one of the industry's most respected voices. His formula for success? Don't look like everyone else.



Courses & books:





LearnRE.NathanCool.com
books.NathanCool.com

Nathan Cool

Nathan Cool Photo and Video

📍 California, USA

Nathan Cool built one of the most trusted voices in real-estate media by combining an engineer's precision with a creator's eye. His philosophy is simple: skip the hype, master your systems and let reliability and service speak louder than trends.

-  linkedin.com/in/nathancool
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Test before you trust

As new tools flood the market, Nathan's approach hasn't changed—question everything and master what lasts. That philosophy comes from his roots in engineering, where precision and repeatability were non-negotiable.

He has tested nearly every AI tool on the market and few impress him. From automatic HDR editors to programs that turn stills into video... his verdict? They don't hold up.

Once, the AI missed so badly it put the sky inside the house.

Cool points to MIT's recent study, arguing most startups will never survive.

"Adobe and Google have the money to integrate AI at scale. Everyone else is just swimming against the tide."

95% of Gen-AI pilots fail to deliver measurable value.



[View sources](#)



Rely on systems and technology that prove their value over time.

Think like an engineer

Cool's skepticism comes from experience. Early in his career, he worked on military contracts testing circuit boards where mistakes could cost lives—failure wasn't an option.

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"You can't just assume best-case scenarios," he explains. "You had to think through every failure mode. That carried into photography. I don't just ask, 'will this work?' but 'will it work every time, under any condition?'"

Reliability is what keeps your business alive.

Your work is your marketing

Cool's success started with word of mouth. After a friend asked him to shoot a listing, he used flambiant lighting—a blend of flash and ambient exposures that creates balanced, natural images with accurate color and depth. The technique made his work stand out from the standard HDR everyone else was delivering.

When that property went live online, other agents noticed immediately.

"I didn't realize that when the photos got posted on the listing service, other realtors would be seeing them," he recalls.

Suddenly my phone was ringing off the hook. People were asking the agent, 'who does your photos?'

The momentum snowballed—within three years he had doubled his income and left engineering behind.



Your best marketing is your work. One standout shoot can snowball into dozens of clients.

Service is the real product

“Customer service, customer service, customer service,” Nathan says.

It’s not just the product you deliver, it’s the way you handle problems, the speed of turnaround and how you treat people.

For all his technical precision, Nathan’s foundation hasn’t changed—people still matter more than pixels.

73% of consumers say experience is an important factor in purchasing decisions.

88% of customers say the experience a company provides is as important as its products or services.

72% of realtors say high-quality photography helps them win more listings.

Photos still rule

“I’ve seen slideshow tours come and go. I’ve seen 360 tours morph into floor plans. Videos shift constantly with social media. But photos always rule.”

He adds: “Buyers now expect layers of credible information—floor plans, accurate measurements, immersive walkthroughs—to back up what they see.”

Photos remain the foundation but pairing them with defensible data and transparency keeps photographers indispensable.

83% of buyers say photos are very useful when evaluating homes online.

86% of older millennials rate listing photos among the most useful features in their search.

118% more views—that’s how much listings with professional photography get compared to those without.

[View sources](#)

Looking ahead

For Nathan Cool, photography isn’t art for art’s sake, it’s applied engineering. Every frame, every system, every result is tested, refined and proven. He believes the next decade won’t be defined by new cameras, but by how photographers use data, precision and trust to remain indispensable.

How Matthew Anderson built his business on authenticity

Breaking in with Panera & positioning himself as an expert

“I was at a karaoke when a realtor friend told me, ‘We hire photographers all the time. People make a living doing this.’ And my first shoots were absolutely awful.”

That spark led Matthew to real-estate photography, then eventually into architecture and design photography.

I hit the ground hard in search of clients. I’d bring Panera or breakfast to brokerage meetings, ask for 10 minutes and give tips on how to get better photos.

Those early sessions didn’t just get him clients; they built a reputation for generosity and expertise.



Lead with education, not just promotion. People trust the person who helps them solve problems.



Matthew Anderson

Matthew Anderson Photography, Architectural, Interiors & Design

📍 Kansas City

Matthew Anderson turned a karaoke night conversation into a thriving photography career built on authenticity, education and ease of service. From real estate to architecture and design, he’s proved that keeping things real never goes out of style.

📺 [@MatthewAPhoto](#)

📷 [@matthewaphoto](#)

🌐 [matthewaphoto.com](#)

Ease of business wins

If you can make doing business with you quick, simple and easy, you are leaps and bounds ahead of your competitors.

Respect & reinvention

As his reputation grew, so did his curiosity about what comes next, beyond listings and into architecture and design.

“There’s this idea that architectural photography is the promised land, but it’s not. Real-estate photographers are incredible business people. The systems they run aren’t easy.”

His advice for newcomers?

Position yourself as a one-stop shop. One call, all the media they need. Use your work as a stepping stone to get in front of designers and builders.

73% of sellers say they’re more likely to work with an agent who uses video marketing.



[View sources](#)

The tech tidal wave: AI, fakes and the return of real

Matthew isn’t anti-tech, he’s just seen how easily it can flatten creativity.

“I’m looking forward to seeing where AI goes,” he says. “But I think what’s going to happen is the margin between fake-looking things and reality is going to grow even more.”

He’s watched how outsourcing and HDR automation have made many real-estate photos start to look identical. “Everybody’s photos look the same because overseas editors use very similar styles and techniques. Do agents care? Probably not. But that approach doesn’t carry over well into architecture and design.”

AI will flood the market for a while, but clients will start craving authentic photos again. Real shots of real work.

Matthew believes the industry will mirror what happened in the film industry. “In the ‘90s, every movie was using computer-generated imagery,” he explains. “Eventually, people realized they missed real explosions.”

TRY THIS!

Look through your portfolio and flag one image that leans heavily on artificial effects. Re-edit it for a more natural look—honest lighting, real color, authentic texture.



Entrepreneurship, unfiltered

Running his own business came with both freedom and pressure. “You’re in control of your destiny, but you still have to keep the lights on.”

Entrepreneurs are the only people who will work 60 to 80 hours a week because they refuse to work 40.

His biggest advice? Don’t let fear run your business. “So many photographers are afraid to raise prices or use contracts because they think it’ll scare clients. Push that fear aside. If you avoid things out of fear, that will hold you back both in business and in life.”

TRY THIS!

Pick one thing you’ve avoided—raising rates, sending contracts, or hiring help and take the first step to fix it.

Looking ahead

His advice for creators is simple: keep your systems sharp, your service easy and your images real.





Cheyenne Crawford on what it takes to last in luxury media

Built, not invited

Luxury real-estate media isn't for the faint of heart. Shooting, scheduling and managing revisions late into the night, Cheyenne grew her business one listing at a time.

"We killed it financially, but we were working nonstop. There was no room for growth."

By 2024, that relentless drive led to a merger with Infinite Views, a national agency offering photo, video, 3D, design and social strategy. As General Manager of the Atlanta branch, Cheyenne finally found what she'd been building toward: structure, support and the relief of knowing her business was future-proof.

"Agents weren't just buying photos anymore. They wanted creators who could produce and distribute content."

"A lot of people say they're a one-stop shop, photo, video, drone, 3D, floor plans. But the next level is actually being the entity that can make the content and distribute it," remarks Cheyenne.

With a team behind her, the grind gave way to growth—transforming what can often feel like a solitary industry into one driven by collaboration.


Cheyenne Crawford


Infinite Views Atlanta

📍 Georgia, USA

Cheyenne Crawford went from late-night edits to leading one of the top real-estate media teams in the South.

Known for her clean, story-driven aesthetic, she proves that ambition scales best when paired with structure.

 [linkedin.com/in/cheyennecrawford/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/cheyennecrawford/)

 [@infiniteviewsatl](https://www.instagram.com/@infiniteviewsatl)
[@cheyennecrawford.photo](https://www.instagram.com/@cheyennecrawford.photo)

 [infiniteviews.com](https://www.infiniteviews.com)

Curate before you connect

As Cheyenne refined her operations, she applied the same intentionality to her image.

From the start, she aimed for the luxury space, but she knew reputation came first. Every detail, from how she dressed to what she posted, was deliberate.

"What shows up on our business Instagram is just a drop in the ocean of what we shoot. That's very much on purpose, intended to attract luxury clientele."



"I'm a big believer in dressing for the job you want. You'll see me dressed up at shoots almost all the time. I want to look like I belong," she says.



In a visual industry, you are part of the product. Be visible, prepared and polished. Every shoot is a potential networking event.

The best type of client

"The best agents run airtight systems," Cheyenne says. "Properties are ready, reschedules are rare and they understand the power of great visuals."

61% say trust and familiarity will matter more when choosing an agent over the next two years.



[View sources](#)

Break the formula: Where imperfection wins

For Cheyenne, the next wave of real-estate media will value imperfection as much as polish. "Agents are paying for social media content that is more human. We need to merge that with the clean, data-driven visuals that define real-estate media."

"I used to think every shot had to be perfect, then I saw interior photographers using simple ambient shots that clients loved even more."

She's also experimenting with AI: "I dropped a living-room photo into ChatGPT and asked for a different vertical angle. You wouldn't have known. It looked hyper-realistic and it saved my tail."

Cheyenne turned late nights into systems and ambition into strategy, proof that lasting success comes from consistency, not chaos.





Alex Coombs


Northern Spruce Media

📍 Ontario, CA

Northern Spruce Media is an Ontario-based creative studio serving 600+ real-estate clients with full-service photo, video, design and storytelling. Founded by Alex Coombs in 2016, it has grown from a one-woman operation to a million-dollar firm.

 [linkedin.com/in/alexandracoomb/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/alexandracoomb/)

 [@northernsprucemedi](https://www.youtube.com/@northernsprucemedi)

 [@northernsprucemedi](https://www.instagram.com/northernsprucemedi)
[@alex_coombs](https://www.instagram.com/alex_coombs)

 [northernsprucemedi.com](https://www.northernsprucemedi.com)

Sleeping on a yoga mat to scaling a million-dollar studio

From ground floor to growth mode

Eight years ago, Alex Coombs was shooting five listings a day, editing until sunrise and sleeping on a yoga mat in her 300-square-foot office.

I was trying to be a robot and it's not possible.

Today, Northern Spruce Media has grown from \$30,000 to more than \$1 million in annual revenue, powered by a 20-person team spanning photographers, videographers, editors, designers and marketers.

It's one of the fastest-growing creative firms in the region, but its success isn't due to luck or virality but rather systems, empathy and relentless curiosity.

74% of buyers start their home search online.

61% more views go to listings with professional photos than those without.

50% faster sales for homes with professionally taken photos compared to amateur ones.

[View sources](#)

Building before burnout

For Alex, the turning point came when she realized hustle alone wasn't scalable.

I was doing everything, shooting, editing, scheduling, emails, invoicing and it worked until it didn't. I hit a wall. You have to build systems before you burn out.

She began documenting everything: file-naming conventions, agent prep checklists, client communications, you name it. Those notes evolved into Northern Spruce's operations manual, now running entirely in Notion.

When a new employee joins, they don't just get a job, they get a blueprint. Every process, every checklist, every client detail lives there. It's how we deliver the same quality across hundreds of listings.

The result: every team member follows the same blueprint, ensuring consistency across hundreds of listings. Each shooter now averages five listings per day.



Simulate real-world conditions in a controlled space. It's faster, cheaper and creates a shared culture of learning. Bonus points if the rental is sweet.

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Training that works

not just "shadow and learn"

When Alex started hiring, training new shooters during live listing appointments quickly proved impossible. "There were agents, homeowners, dogs, kids, distractions and no one was learning," she says.

Her solution was simple but effective: rent an Airbnb and turn it into a two-day bootcamp.

"We bring everyone together, photographers, videographers, editors. They rotate through stations: photo in the morning, video after lunch, twilight in the evening. They learn gear, lighting, composition and teamwork. It's hands-on and I can see right away how they handle feedback."

The “Four Seasons” mindset

Northern Spruce isn't just selling visuals, it's selling an experience.

We want to be the Four Seasons of real-estate media. If something goes wrong, we fix it.

That philosophy shows up everywhere:

- ✓ Pre-appointment checklists
- ✓ Editor notes in Notion
- ✓ Client milestones logged in CRM
- ✓ Personal calls to fix mistakes

“Take accountability, fix it fast and explain what happened. People remember that more than perfection.”

She's also built genuine friendships with clients—dinners, holiday parties and even sending flowers to a homeowner who was ill.

“That's the stuff that matters. People just want to feel seen.”

Scaling with AI, not surrendering to it

When volume exploded, editing became the bottleneck.

“We tried hiring overseas editors, but time zones killed us. Feedback took twelve hours each way.”

She tested four AI editing platforms before finding one that matched her team's look. “Clients started saying, ‘Your photos look so clean now.’ They didn't even know we'd switched to AI.”

Today, one human editor handles final QC while AI does the heavy lifting cutting turnaround times dramatically and improving consistency. Her team also uses ChatGPT daily, for scripting, prompting, captions and concept testing.

71% of real-estate photographers use AI tools for editing and retouching.

90% faster editing with AI, now used by 60% of photographers.

[View sources](#)

Systems are just there to protect your relationships. They give you time to show up like a human again.



Use AI for volume, not vision. Automate what doesn't require your creative judgment and reinvest that time into relationships and brand quality.

Educating clients in the AI era

As AI visuals flood the web, client expectations are shifting fast.

“We had a client ask for a basement to grow from the ground up,” Alex laughs. “That one took 50 prompts and hours of rendering. People think it's instant, it's not.”

To bridge the gap, her team now hosts short ‘tech transparency’ sessions at brokerages, walking agents through AI rendering and post-processing.

“It's not just about managing expectations, it's about building trust. Once they see what goes into it, they respect the price.”



Make education part of your sales process. When clients understand the craft, they stop questioning your value.

When the idea makes it out of the group chat...

For Alex, culture is strategy. Northern Spruce's group chat overflows with videos, experiments and trends. “We call it our real-estate inspo group. People post ideas and challenge each other to try new things. That's how you stay creative.”

She believes trend fluency will soon be its own role.

The media companies that will survive will have someone dedicated to trend research, someone who's just watching, testing and staying ahead.



Treat trend research as a system, not a hobby. Schedule time for it, assign ownership and keep learning loops alive.

Northern Spruce's story isn't just about scaling a business; it's about scaling people. From late nights on a yoga mat to leading one of the largest media teams in Ontario, Alex Coombs has proven that process doesn't kill creativity: it protects it.





How solo creator Brandon Cooper sparked PMRE's global community

From isolation to industry movement

In 2017, Brandon Cooper was photographing empty homes in Fort McMurray, Alberta, often going days without seeing another person. "It can be a lonely industry," he says.

"You can't really call your competition to talk about what's hard."

That isolation sparked an idea: what if there was a place where creators could actually connect?

Two years later, that idea became PMRE, Photo + Media for Real Estate.

Each November, more than 350 creators from 10–15 countries, including Canada, the U.S., China, Brazil, Mexico, Finland and Norway, gather in Las Vegas to connect, share and recharge.

"The magic isn't just in the sessions," Brandon says. "It's walking into a room, dropping your guard and realizing everyone here gets it, no competition, no ego, just shared experience."

Before PMRE, Brandon and mentor Tony Colangelo hosted small workshops across North America. The feedback was consistent: people came to learn lighting but stayed for the community. "They'd say, 'It's great to learn technique, but it's even better to meet people who understand this crazy business.'"

That was the aha moment.

From workshops to movement

PMRE quickly evolved from technical training to business and mindset development.

"When people refer to PMRE as a networking event, that's a compliment," he says. "Relationships are the one thing money can't buy."

Even the priorities of attendees are changing. In PMRE's 2024 post-event survey, more than half ranked business systems and work-life balance as their top goals.

"We used to talk about how to take a better photo. Now we talk about how to build a better business."



From photographers to full-service partners

In 2019, most PRME attendees identified solely as photographers. Today, nearly all describe themselves as full-service marketing partners, producing photos, video, drone, 3D virtual tours and floor plans.

"We used to be convincing agents not to shoot with their phones. Now we're a critical part of the real-estate ecosystem."

That evolution reflects how the field has matured, from creatives selling pictures to strategic partners shaping brands.

And he puts it even more simply: "We know how to do the things, the photos, the videos. What most of us need help with now is being better business people."

A business built on resiliency

Running both RealPics and PMRE has shown Brandon how tightly creative work is tied to economic confidence. "Interest rates, housing activity, consumer sentiment, they all ripple down to us," he says.

Those ripples can be seen in the data: when U.S. home transactions dropped nearly 35% from 2020 to 2025 and Canada's market cooled in tandem, many studios slowed temporarily.

"I never thought I'd have to pay attention to American politics or global trade from northern Canada. But here we are."

That realism grounds his leadership. "Every year, something changes: a market shift, a new technology, a global event and yet the community still shows up. That resilience says everything about the people in this industry."

Brandon Cooper

RealPics + PMRE Conference

📍 Alberta, CA

From solo creator to community builder, Brandon Cooper turned the isolation of real-estate photography into PMRE, the world's largest gathering of real-estate media professionals.

Today, the event reflects a maturing industry where collaboration, systems and business mindset matter as much as the work itself.



@realpics.ca
@pmreconference



realpics.ca

The currency of connection

For Brandon, the through-line across all this change, economic, political, technological, is relationships.”

Technology will always interrupt business. Not just ours, every business. But no one can replicate the relationship you have with your clients. That’s the real currency now.

Brandon believes that if you can serve without ego and stay humble enough to keep learning, you’ll always have a place.

We’re all chasing efficiency but the thing that will always matter most is trust. You can’t automate that.

The impact of PMRE is clear: attendees return home with new systems, renewed confidence and a shared belief that collaboration, not competition, will define the industry’s next decade.

What began as a few photographers swapping lighting tips has grown into a movement that challenges how creative businesses grow, learn and support one another.

You put your camera down for a few days, look at your business from 10,000 feet and go home inspired.

“It sounds cheesy,” he smiles, “but standing in a room with people who do what you do, who get the highs and lows, that’s priceless. This work can feel lonely, but you’re not actually alone.”



Invest in soft skills as deliberately as you invest in new gear.



Fraser Almeida’s rise in Vegas’ luxury real-estate media scene

Go guerrilla before you go glamorous

At first I was just documenting the property. Then I realized anyone can take a wide shot, but not everyone can make a space feel alive.

Fraser came from design and web, not real estate. When a friend connected him with a luxury agent, he showed up to shoot a penthouse armed with curiosity, not credentials.

That spark turned into strategy.

I’d pick up luxury magazines, find the agent emails and cold-pitch every single one. It was guerrilla but it worked.

Fraser scraped contacts by hand, sent personal pitches and built visibility before ads were really a thing. Luckily, his business’ name Luxury Homes Photography played nicely with SEO.





Fraser Almeida

Luxury Homes Photography


Las Vegas, USA

Fraser Almeida turned a single referral shoot into a 13-year career defining Las Vegas luxury real-estate photography. His playbook blends artistic intent, disciplined business systems and an unwavering focus on client experience.

 [linkedin.com/in/fraser-almeida-5631739/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/fraser-almeida-5631739/)

 [@fraseralmeida](https://www.youtube.com/@fraseralmeida)

 [@fraseralmeida](https://www.instagram.com/fraseralmeida)

 [luxuryhomesphotography.com](https://www.luxuryhomesphotography.com)

Actionable tips

Shooting your shot

- ✓ **Study:** Things that excite you, not MLS.
- ✓ **Direct:** Light for focus, not exposure.
- ✓ **Simplify:** Every frame should earn its place.

Capturing leads

- ✓ Build local visibility first: small events, presentations, word-of-mouth.
- ✓ Choose a keyword-friendly name, let search do the heavy lifting.
- ✓ Treat early clients as future advocates, not one-offs.

Build a business, not a bottleneck

When I went on vacation to visit family and stopped making money, I realized I didn't own a business. I was the business.

That trip changed everything. Fraser came home and built systems: scheduling tools, client surveys, SOPs and backup shooters.

Hire curiosity, train consistency

I don't hire experienced photographers. I hire people with a creative itch. You can't teach curiosity.

His training model pairs shooters on the same job, compares results and unpacks differences.

Actionable tips

- ✓ Let new hires fail safely. Review, compare, correct.
- ✓ Teach relationships between elements (lamp + couch + window), not isolated décor.
- ✓ Document your brand's visual standards so consistency scales.
- ✓ Automate booking, billing and feedback.
- ✓ Send post-shoot surveys (1-10 rating, open comments).
- ✓ Use the data to coach, refine and scale.

Be the mirror, not the megaphone

His biggest tip? Listen more than you shoot.

You can't treat every agent the same. Some want hand-holding, others just want results. Read the room.



Stay curious, stay relevant

Fraser treats creative growth like maintenance, something you can't skip if you want to stay sharp. He studies lighting, design and cultural trends with the same intent he brings to a shoot.

"I go to the movies to study lighting and trends," he says. "You've got to know what's visually connecting with people."

That mindset extends to technology. "AI won't replace photographers," he adds. "It'll replace those who stop evolving."

For Fraser, AI is another tool in the kit, an assistant that handles the busywork so he can spend more time on what matters: creating imagery that still feels human.

In Vegas, everyone's selling an illusion, Fraser built a business on truth. Authenticity, structure and care: that's the real luxury playbook.

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THE Fraser FRAMEWORK



Intent

Capture emotion, not documentation.



Systems

Automate tasks, earn trust.



Empathy

Know your client, not just their property.






PNW BASED
DOM DOES
- MEDIA -


Dominic Wilkerson


Dom Does Media


📍 Washington, USA

After breaking his leg twice in the Air Force, Dominic Wilkerson traded patrol shifts for property shoots. Eight years later, he runs one of Washington's busiest real-estate media companies built on discipline, efficiency and integrity.

 [linkedin.com/in/dominic-wilkerson-90560368/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dominic-wilkerson-90560368/)

 [@dominicwilkerson](https://www.youtube.com/@dominicwilkerson)

 [@domdoesmedia](https://www.instagram.com/domdoesmedia)

 [domdoesmedia.com](https://www.domdoesmedia.com)

How an Air Force mindset built a smarter media business

Built on discipline, not hustle

What started as a way to make ends meet after the military became the backbone of a business built on tight process and zero waste.

In the military, I was known for finding the fastest, most efficient way to do something.

When Dom's employer refused to adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic, he left to build his own systems-driven studio. He prioritized precise, repeatable workflows that protect quality under pressure.



I find the fastest route to consistent quality. That's how you fit more houses in, keep clients happy and get rehired.

Know when to walk away

I'll take a nap before I take a bad client.

Years of experience have taught Dom to spot trouble before a contract is even signed. "There's a pattern to bad clients," he says. "Once I hear the same questions in the same tone, I'll say 'I'm not the right fit, but here's someone who might be.'"

Connection, not clout

That same discipline shows up in how he markets himself, quietly, consistently and without a hard sell. He interacted with agents online, never pitched and let reliability speak for him.

People come to me because I don't push. I show up, deliver and let agents spread the word. I built a half-million-dollar business with only 3,500 followers.

Training as succession planning

Dom's crew started as automotive photographers he trusted. He pays above market and mentors them to build their own ventures, a rarity in an industry built on control.

Growth for Dom isn't just about scale, it's about legacy. "I want my shooters to stay but also to grow," he notes.

Don't ignore the red flags

- ✗ Low-budget buyers.
- ✗ Over-communicators.
- ✗ Late or inconsistent payers.
- ✗ Clients who question pricing or process.
- ✗ Disrespect for boundaries or time.

Some companies pay \$50 a shoot. I pay my shooters real money and train them to build their own business. When I'm done, I'll hand them my clients.

Mentorship → Mastery → Independence

When the grind gets noisy stay grounded

With success came perspective. For Dom, longevity matters more than hype.

Be a good person. Do good business. Karma handles the rest.

He has seen dozens of newcomers undercut pricing, overpromise and quit when things get tough. His solution is to focus on sustainability and client relationships, not quick wins.

“There are people who want me to quit so they can take my 300 active clients. That’s fine, I got here by doing the right thing for eight years straight. You can’t shortcut reputation,” he says.

Editing is the backbone

You can’t feed trash footage to AI and expect art.

Ask him what’s keeping the industry afloat right now and he doesn’t hesitate: “the real heroes are editors,” he says. “They make us look good. The industry is propped up by editors right now and we owe them. I feel we are doing a disservice to them, migrating to AI editing.”

Some people brag they got 50 images edited in ten minutes. My clients don’t need photos at midnight. Quality still wins by morning.

Adapting to change

“If real-estate photography failed tomorrow, I’d manage agents’ social media. Five clients at \$2,000 each, that’s \$10,000 a month. Easy math.”

He’s already adding vertical reel edits to every video package, a \$20 upsell that keeps clients’ feeds active and loyalty high. “Sometimes solving small pains keeps clients around for years.”

Actionable tips

- ✓ Add vertical reel edits to every video package.
- ✓ Build small upsells around client convenience.
- ✓ Look for pain points agents haven’t solved yet.



Work smart, not loud. Build systems, price with confidence and let good work speak for itself.



You don’t need to be viral to be valuable.

From startup grit to sustainable growth

From early grind to business mindset

Before Visual Advantage, Phil had already helped scale another startup from zero to multi-millions. “That experience taught me what most photographers never learn, how to actually run a business,” he says.

That early struggle shaped everything that followed. Phil built repeatable systems and treated his craft like a company from day one, not a side hustle.

Add value beyond the lens

Phil was forced to think beyond photography. Agents didn’t just need photos, they needed ready-to-use marketing.

Phil spotted that gap early, packaging photos, iGUIDEs and print-ready collateral long before it became standard.

“Even back then, we weren’t just taking photos,” he says, “we built slideshows, flyers and marketing kits because agents didn’t have time to do it.”

Actionable tips

- ✓ Look for what clients *avoid* doing, then solve it for them.
- ✓ Bundle visuals and marketing materials into one workflow.
- ✓ Revisit old services that may be valuable again.



Phil Maurion

Visual Advantage

Ontario, CA

Phil Maurion launched Visual Advantage in 2009, blending his love of real estate with hard-earned startup experience.

With a newborn at home and a camera in hand, he turned a small creative experiment into one of Ontario’s most recognized visual marketing firms built on quality, consistency and an almost obsessive focus on customer service.

[linkedin.com/in/philmaurion](https://www.linkedin.com/in/philmaurion)

[@visual_advantage_ca](https://www.instagram.com/visual_advantage_ca)

[visualadvantage.ca](https://www.visualadvantage.ca)

Know when to step back

“My goal was never to be a one-man show,” Phil says. “I wanted to manage a team, not a queue of shoots.” He intentionally transitioned from photographer to manager to build a scalable structure.

Today, he manages multi-region teams with shared editing systems and a unified brand look, proof that scaling doesn't mean losing consistency.

Consistency and scale go hand in hand

Visual Advantage thrives on systems that balance volume with service, managing dozens of shoots a day while maintaining fast and reliable delivery.

This business only works at scale. You can't survive with four clients. It's a volume game.

After training dozens of photographers, Phil says the fundamentals haven't changed, only the tools have. Visual quality is now universal, but reliability isn't.

We all use editors now. The photos look the same. The difference is how fast you deliver and how well you treat your clients.

🚀 Actionable tips

- ✓ Build systems that support scale without sacrificing quality.
- ✓ Set internal turnaround standards and track them.
- ✓ Treat speed as part of your value proposition.

Stay grounded while trends evolve

Phil says he's learned to stay steady while trends come and go. “Those swooping, text-heavy videos look great, until everyone does them,” he laughs. “I still prefer cinematic storytelling.”

His advice: study trends without chasing them, keep a “house style” that anchors your brand visually and reinvest in tools that enhance your process, not just your portfolio.

Relationships win the long game

Even after scaling across multiple regions, Phil says relationships remain his real competitive edge.

There's so much noise online, I still believe in shaking hands, presenting in person and being visible in the community.

After fifteen years, his philosophy still holds: technology levels the playing field but relationships win the game.

Chris White on AI ethics and keeping real-estate media real

When AI meets artistic license

AI makes it effortless to retouch a photo, brighten the light or remove an awkward hole in the wall. But it also raises a new question for marketers: how much artistic license is too much?

I prefer a more accurate style of photography. I've found that open and honest communication solves most problems in life generally. On the flip side, it ruins romantic comedies.

Property marketing has always been a balancing act—show a property as it is, make it appealing enough to attract buyers and help them imagine what it could be.

⚖️ The balancing act

- ✓ Show a property as it is.
- ✓ Make it appealing enough to attract buyers.
- ✓ Help them imagine what it could be.

“Clients used to ask me to remove power lines or patch walls,” Chris laughs. “I'd politely say no, though I secretly hoped someone would ask for something ridiculous, like a tiger in the living room. That, I would've done.”



Chris White

Planitar—makers of iGUIDE


📍 Ontario, CA


Chris White believes the next wave of real-estate marketing won't just change how properties are shown, it will change what buyers believe is real.

As AI tools blur the line between accuracy and artistry, he argues that trust, transparency and a sense of humour may be what keep the industry grounded.

 [linkedin.com/in/cwphotog](https://www.linkedin.com/in/cwphotog)

 [@iGUIDEtv](https://www.youtube.com/@iGUIDEtv)

 [@go_iguide](https://www.instagram.com/@go_iguide)

 [goiguide.com](https://www.goiguide.com)

Borrowing a page from the floor plan

Chris says real-estate media may soon follow the same principles of transparency that already exist in measurement data.

- ✓ **Disclose edits:** Indicate when elements have been added or removed.
- ✓ **Provide source data:** Keep and, when requested, share the unedited originals.
- ✓ **Enable interactivity:** Let viewers toggle between “as-is” and “staged” versions to see what’s real and what’s aspirational.

These steps would help balance creativity with credibility, ensuring enhancements inspire confidence, not confusion.

Accuracy doesn’t kill creativity

I spend a lot of time explaining that I’m not a wizard.

Chris believes realism and innovation aren’t opposites; they’re partners. Virtual staging, AI and interactivity can help buyers visualize potential without misleading them.

He imagines a near future where listings let users click “stage now” and watch an empty room transform into a furnished one, an honest, interactive before-and-after that shows both sides of the story.

That, to him, is the sweet spot: accurate enough to trust, but creative enough to captivate.

Borrowing a page from the floor plan

Long before AI became an industry disruptor, iGUIDE was already built around the principle Chris champions today:

- ✓ Clear accuracy statements and disclaimers.
- ✓ Defensible point clouds for every scan.
- ✓ User-controlled views and layered information.

It’s funny, everyone’s trying to figure out how to make property marketing more transparent. We’ve been doing that for years.

The takeaway

AI will make real-estate media more powerful and potentially more problematic. But Chris argues the path forward isn’t to reject it, it’s to use it responsibly.

AI will make property marketing look more magical than ever. But if you want to build trust, you still have to show the trick.

For Chris, AI isn’t the villain, apathy is. The future of real-estate media belongs to those who can blend accuracy with imagination and still tell the truth about what’s behind the lens.

Real-estate media playbook for 2026: The Wrap-up

A practical look at what’s working based on the patterns that showed up across this year’s conversations.

The people featured in this report work differently. Different markets, different volumes, different specialties. Yet certain behaviors kept repeating. They weren’t trends as much as operational choices that separated stable, growing businesses from ones stuck in constant firefighting.

This playbook pulls those patterns together. Not as rules, but as a reference you can return to as your market, tools and workload shift.

1. Build structure before adding volume

Most creators who grew quickly described the same breaking point: too many shoots, too many late nights, too much relying on memory. The ones who moved past that stage didn’t do it with talent—they did it with structure.

What that looked like in practice:

- ✓ consistent file naming
- ✓ reliable prep guides
- ✓ documented steps for editing and delivery
- ✓ one place to track client preferences
- ✓ workflows a team could learn without guesswork

The goal wasn’t efficiency for the sake of it. It was removing avoidable decisions so standards didn’t slip when things got busy.



If only one person knows how the work gets done, the business can’t grow without breaking.

“Growth breaks the parts of your business that aren’t written down.”

2. Remove friction at every step

Ease of working together came up more than any technical detail. The studios that kept clients and earned referrals removed friction at every point:

- ✓ clear expectations before the shoot
- ✓ simple booking
- ✓ predictable delivery
- ✓ straightforward revisions
- ✓ communication clients never have to chase

Strong visuals matter. But in a time-compressed industry, reliability and clarity carry just as much weight.

“Clients remember clarity long after they forget the gear you used.”

Is it easy to work with you?

A quick gut-check for your client experience.

Answer honestly—yes or no.

yes no

Can a new client book you without sending an email?
(Online form, calendar link, or CRM automation counts.)

Do you confirm every shoot with clear prep details and expectations?
(No guessing about access codes, timing, or staging.)

Is payment or invoicing automatic and friction-free?
(If they have to chase you or write a cheque, it's a no.)

Do clients always know when to expect their files—
and actually get them on time?

If something goes wrong, do you reply
the same day with a solution, not an excuse?

Could someone else on your team pick up a project mid-stream and
deliver it seamlessly? (If not, your systems live in your head.)

After delivery, do you proactively check in
or offer ways to make the next job smoother?

Scoring

6–7 “Yes” = You're frictionless. Clients will stick.

4–5 “Yes” = You're good. Focus on automation and communication.

3 or fewer = You're creating unnecessary drag. Simplify before you scale.

3. Pair visuals with information clients can trust

Photos still create the first impression, but they no longer carry the full load. Agents need more than imagery to support buyer expectations, sight-unseen interest and higher-stakes listings.

Creators who consistently win those projects pair visuals with defensible information—accurate measurements, clean floor plans and 3D virtual tours. It reduces questions and speeds up decisions. already exist in measurement data.



Visuals attract attention.
Information reduces risk.

“Everyone is integrating AI somewhere, but outcomes vary. The difference is how it's used.”

4. Use AI to streamline volume, not replace judgment

Everyone is integrating AI somewhere, but outcomes vary. The difference is how it's used.

Studios that stayed consistent used AI for repeatable work: first-draft text, light edits or admin tasks. They didn't rely on it for anything tied to accuracy or taste.

“AI handles repetition. Judgment still belongs to people.”

👍 Good uses of AI

- Automating repetitive edits (exposure, color balance, sky replacement when disclosed)
- Writing first-draft captions, scripts or emails that you refine with your own voice
- Speeding up admin tasks—scheduling, file naming, CRM notes
- Testing creative concepts or storyboards before production
- Training assistants or new hires with AI-based tutorials and simulations

⚠️ Risky uses of AI

- Replacing your full editing process with “one-click” tools and skipping quality checks
- Publishing AI-generated text or visuals without review or disclosure
- Using AI imagery that misrepresents real properties or violates MLS rules
- Substituting AI “renders” for real photos without client consent
- Feeding sensitive client data or imagery into unverified tools

5. Price in a way that protects the business, not just the month

Most contributors described a point where their pricing no longer covered the real cost of the work—time, travel, revisions or the stress of being overextended. Studios that stabilized raised prices, set clearer boundaries and stopped accepting projects that consistently caused friction.

They weren't chasing volume. They were designing a workload that wouldn't collapse under its own weight.



A workable business model is one you can maintain long term, not one you survive for a busy stretch.

“Some clients cost more than they pay.”

Patterns to avoid

Work that pulls you off your process

If every project requires exceptions, the workflow stops being reliable.

Requests that destabilize your schedule

Short-notice demands often cost more than they bring in.

Clients who ignore established boundaries

If the rules only apply when it's convenient for them, quality drops.

Projects that erode margins

When time, travel or revisions outweigh the value, the business absorbs the loss.

Volume that replaces strategy

More shoots aren't useful if they push out higher-value work.

6. Act like a partner, not a vendor

Creators who earned trust and more strategic work weren't only delivering files. They helped clients understand the why behind the work, what accuracy changes for buyers and what's shifting in media expectations.

They held workshops, shared trends and became a point of clarity for clients who don't have time to decode rapid industry change. That behavior moved them from task-based bookings to earlier involvement in decision-making.



When clients rely on your perspective, not just your deliverables, the relationship changes.

“Expertise becomes visible when you help clients make better decisions.”

7. Treat improvement as a system, not something you do when there's time

One pattern showed up across the strongest teams: learning wasn't reactive. It was scheduled, documented and shared.

Some ran in-house workshops. Some tested lighting setups in a staged home. Some built libraries of training resources. Some set aside an hour a week to analyze other creators' work. The common point was intentionality.

“Improvement works when it's designed, not squeezed in.”

Learn → Test → Document → Teach

8. Build relationships that outlast platforms

Most meaningful opportunities mentioned in this report came from relationships, not algorithms. Referrals, collaborations and shared clients came from people who stayed connected, shared knowledge and supported each other's work.

Platforms shift. Tools get replaced. Workflows evolve. The people who trust your work stay longer than any trend cycle.

“Expertise becomes visible when you help clients make better decisions.”

Putting it into practice

You don't need to overhaul everything at once. Most contributors didn't. They focused on small, structural changes that compounded over time:

- ✓ write down core processes
- ✓ simplify booking and delivery
- ✓ add one layer of trustworthy information to every listing
- ✓ set clearer boundaries around turnaround and revisions
- ✓ create one repeatable learning ritual
- ✓ reconnect with someone who shaped your business

The specifics differ by market and model. But across creators, one theme came through clearly: clarity, consistency and trust are becoming the real differentiators.

Thank you for reading. And thank you to the creators who contributed their time and experience. Their honesty and perspective shaped the themes in this report. We're grateful to be part of a community that shares so openly about the work and the challenges behind it.

—The iGUIDE team

Braden
 Brandon
 Bryan
 Chi
 Jeff
 Maja
 Misha
 Natasha
 Skylar

Data and sources

AI, automation and workflow trends

MIT Sloan – Why So Many AI Pilots Fail (95% of Gen-AI pilots fail to deliver measurable value)

https://mlq.ai/media/quarterly_decks/v0.1_State_of_AI_in_Business_2025_Report.pdf?

Customer expectations and experience

PwC – Experience Is Everything (73% of consumers say experience is an important factor)

<https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/library/consumer-intelligence-series/future-of-customer-experience.html>

Salesforce – State of the Connected Customer (88% say experience is as important as products)

<https://www.salesforce.com/resources/research-reports/state-of-the-connected-customer/>

Real-estate listing performance and photography

NAR – Home Buyers and Sellers Generational Trends (used for 72%, 83%, 86% stats)

<https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/home-buyers-and-sellers-generational-trends>

Zillow – Consumer Housing Trends Report (74% of buyers start online)

<https://www.zillow.com/research/buyers-housing-trends-report-2024-34383/>

PhotoUp – Real-estate photography statistics (118% more views, sales speed stats)

<https://www.photoup.net/learn/real-estate-photography-statistics>

Video performance and attention

Wyzowl – State of Video Marketing (91% want more videos, 78% weekly, 55% daily, 90% say video helps decisions, 93% of marketers use video)

<https://www.wyzowl.com/state-of-video-marketing/>

Insivia – Video marketing statistics (95% retention vs 10% for text)

<https://www.insivia.com/50-must-know-stats-about-video-marketing/>

HubSpot – Video marketing benchmarks

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/video-marketing-statistics>

Video and real-estate outcomes

REsimpli – Real-estate video statistics (38% of agents use video, 9% create listing videos, 403% more inquiries, drone +68%, etc.)

<https://resimpli.com/real-estate-video-statistics/>

Matterport – Impact of virtual tours on listing performance (homes with 3D/virtual tours sell up to 31% faster)

<https://go.matterport.com/rs/911-LXO-192/images/Residential%20Real%20Estate%20eBook.pdf>

NAR – Quick real-estate statistics (video usage and preferences)

<https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/quick-real-estate-statistics>

AI usage among photographers

Statista – Global adoption of AI photo-editing tools (71%)

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1404985/ai-photo-editing-usage-worldwide/>

AgentUp – AI in real-estate photography (60% usage, time savings)

<https://www.photoup.net/learn/ai-is-changing-real-estate-photography>

PhotoUp – AI editing time savings (up to 90% faster)

<https://www.photoup.net/learn/the-role-of-ai-in-real-estate-photo-editing-is-it-worth-the-hype>

Industry engagement

PMRE Conference – Attendance numbers (350+ creators from 10–15 countries)

<https://pmreconference.com/>

Contributor insights and internal data

All contributor quotes and operational benchmarks are from original interviews conducted by Planitar Inc. (2025).

About iGUIDE

Founded in 2013 in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, Planitar Inc. is the maker of iGUIDE—a proprietary camera and software platform for capturing and delivering immersive 3D tours and precise property data. iGUIDE is the most efficient system to map interior spaces, producing accurate floor plans, measurements, and reliable square footage. By integrating floor plans with visual data, iGUIDE provides an intuitive way to explore and understand built environments digitally.

See how iGUIDE is redefining real estate media

iGUIDE helps real estate photographers and media teams deliver more than beautiful visuals. With every scan, you capture accurate measurements, detailed floor plans and immersive 3D tours that help agents win listings and buyers make confident decisions faster.

Turn your next shoot
into a competitive edge—
book a demo at goiguide.com



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