**NAR S2E1 Final Transcript: New Agents
Guests: Alexandria Reed and Sean Konja**

**Intro**: You're listening to Drive with NAR powered by REALTOR® Magazine. Listen in as real estate pros talk tools of the trade and share stories of inspiration. Get ready to step up your business. This episode is sponsored by the Center for Financial Wellness.

**Melissa**: In our careers, we all have to get our starts somewhere. Think back at the beginning of your real estate career. Maybe you're at the beginning of it right now. And every new agent wants to know, what does it take to succeed and become a top producing real estate pro? That's what we're talking about on today's episode of Drive with NAR. How can new agents prove their value, even before you have all that experience to back it up? Hi there, I'm Melissa Dittmann Tracy, your moderator for today's episode. I'm a news editor for REALTOR® Magazine and it's “Styled, Staged and Sold” blog. And today I have two special guests joining me to share their secrets of starting out new in the business. First up, I'd like to welcome Sean Konja. He is an Associate Broker at Keller Williams Professionals based in Plymouth, Michigan. Sean began his real estate career in 2018 and in just a short time has already emerged as a top producer in his market, selling more than 100 homes a year. Next, I'd like you to meet Alexandria Reed a REALTOR® with Guide Real Estate based in Denver. She first began her real estate career during the pandemic in 2020 and has already been making her mark in sales as well as elsewhere, including her own podcast “Gladiate Beautifully,” which is focused on uplifting women. You can also see Alexandria working her real estate magic in season two of NAR’s “First-Time Buyer” series streaming on Hulu. By the way, season three is also now available. Sean and Alexandria, welcome to Drive with NAR. Let's get started by having you tell us how you got your start in real estate, and the biggest challenges you faced over that first year.

**Alexandria**: I got into real estate actually, because I wanted to live a life that felt authentic to me. And a lot of people get into real estate because, oh my god, I just love looking at houses. That was not my reason. I just got to the point where I was like I need to show up in life the way that I want to, and get going into real estate gave me freedom. But then that was twofold for me. Because outside of that, especially as I started going through coursework, and things like that, I realized how many people of color aren't educated on homeownership. So in addition to, of course, me being able to show up authentically the way that I wanted to as a mom, as a wife, as I love to volunteer those kinds of things. I also wanted to be able to educate and get people on the road to financial wealth when it came to homeownership. And as far as the challenge within my first year. I mean, I started in 2020. And so as we know, we went on lockdown in March of 2020. So I think my challenge was definitely COVID and trying to walk in authenticity when it came to being in real estate, but still being such a newbie and trying to adjust to what is normal, so to speak in real estate versus what is COVID normal in real estate. What about you, Sean?

**Sean**: Absolutely. So originally, I got started in real estate, just basically because I wanted to get into investments. And I always enjoyed real estate in general, as far as you know, looking at homes and seeing new homes, different construction architecture, and it's just something that I found fascinating. So moving forward, I figured that I might as well get my license and do my own purchasing, investing for myself, about 23 years old at the time, and basically just told my parents one day that I was like, you know what, I've always liked real estate, kind of more entrepreneurial. And at the time, I was just pretty much finished up my bachelor's in health science, double minor exercise science and nutrition for physical therapy. And I said no, I want to give real estate a shot and mom was not really happy about it. And dad was kind of like you know, you do things at a high level. He's going to give it a shot, go ahead, like the next day signed up for the real estate class took those finish that signed up for the exam, took the exams, passed them and got started shortly after that, which would have put it about April 2018.

**Melissa**: I always love to hear how REALTORS® have come to the career because everybody has such a unique background and so many agents have joined the real estate business since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. Alexandria, you being one example of that. Unlike seasoned agents who have been in the business for many years, these newer agents have only known this frenzied market of the last couple of years. And now that's changing. And they may be getting their first taste of what a housing slowdown looks and feels like. How are you both handling this slowdown in your business or possibly preparing for one? Is this changing market influencing how you're reaching out to your clients?

**Sean**: Definitely feeling the slowdown of course. In our local real estate board and area as well, as you know, nationally, it's pretty much the same story. So with this, we're finding, you know, a lot of clients or a lot of, you know, potential homebuyers and sellers, they do reach out a little more unsure, uneasy, compared to before, they felt a little more confidence, I think in being able to sell their home, or being able to get the most money. Now, it's a little bit more worrisome of, you know, will I get what I need? is the market going to work? What's it going to take for me to move? So it's taking a lot more explanation and potentially a little more time, individually, with each client to make sure they understand where the market is today, because of some things they may have heard where the market was previously the year or even last year, and then where the market is now. I think that's an important thing to make sure they're fully educated.

**Alexandria**: Yeah, I mean, I totally agree with Sean. I think it's a lot of education that is having to take place to make sure that this is this, I don't know, as the market shifts, I felt like this is really getting ready to separate the, I hate to say it like this, but the good from the great. It's gonna take the good from the great of the approach that we're taking, as we serve our clients. And I think, when it comes to what I'm doing to kind of adjust to this slowdown in the marketplace is really positioning myself from a place of servant leadership, of really making sure that when I'm talking to clients, whether it be on social or one-on-one, really taking it from the perspective of OK, one, how can I add value? And two, I want to be known for what I'm for, and not what I'm against. And so I'm not going to talk about, you know, the negative pieces of it, but I want to talk about, OK, you know, this is what you can do, not what you can't do in this market, or what I wouldn't do in this market. But this is what we can do in this market. And this is how we take advantage of what's currently happening economically around us. And so that's kind of my approach of just OK, how am I adding value? And how am I educating from a perspective of this is what we can do. And this is what you should do in the season, even if it doesn't always benefit me. My mindset is OK, I want to serve this client long-term. So if maybe buying and selling is not in their best interest right now, but maybe it will be in six months or maybe it will be in a year. I don't know. But I'm kind of in it for the long game, if you will. Sean, are you doing anything differently when it comes to the way that you're showing up on social media, when people are posting all of these crazy things about “don't buy now, don't buy now” just waiting for another housing crisis to crash or something like that, like, how are you responding to that on social media?

**Sean**: Yep, good question. So as far as social media goes, I think that I take everything with a grain of salt. And, you know, it's different for everybody, everyone's situation is different. So you got to look at their local market, and kind of the market, in general. And like you said, you always got to think long-term. So when it comes to people's goals, you know, that can vary, that can change. So that might be a big differential between two people that are looking to buy at the same time, you know, it wasn't in the 2008-2009 market. But where we're at now, it does remind me of when I first began actually, like 2018-2019, I guess more of a normal market, if you will. And, you know, this is something that, it's a change, it's different people are a little sticker shock. However, the market we were in in 2020 and 2021 was just not normal. So I think that kind of became the new normal quickly, and now it's quickly shifted out into, you know, more of that normal and a more balanced market.

**Melissa**: Definitely educating clients again about what is normal after what we've all been through the last few years. One problem we see so often from new agents is that it can be difficult to build a book of business when you don't have that experience to prove your value to clients. As you may have heard, NAR recently kicked off a nationwide tour called [Riding with the Brand](https://www.nar.realtor/riding). It aims to help REALTORS® in every corner of the country understand how their membership sets them apart from their competitors. Tell me, Alexandria, how did you first get clients to work with you?

**Alexandria**: My first listing actually came from a lead, just a lead from my brokerage at the time. And I was so nervous, because I was like, Oh my God, like, what if he just sees right through this? Like, yes, I know what I'm talking about. I had great mentor at the time. But I was really concerned about the question coming up of how long you've been in the business. So before that question could even be asked of me, I made sure they knew the difference between a real estate, just a real estate agent, a real estate professional, and a REALTOR® and that I was held to a higher standard of excellence and service and ethics. And that question never came up. And I really attribute to that to being a REALTOR®, because I was able to kind of lean on that as like a back as a backbone, letting you know, hey, this is what sets me apart before anything else. And so the question never came up. And granted, maybe it wasn't going to come up, but I was terrified that it would. But outside of that first listing for that lead, it really was trying to find ways to provide value, trying to find ways to provide value to my current sphere.

**Sean**: I think that's exactly right about what you said, basically, when you're first talking to people, anything real estate-related, they may ask you, you know, are you a REALTOR®, you know, what they want to know who you are, and what exactly your credentials are. So being able to say that does definitely give that immediate validity and a little more comfort. I think you can kind of feel the walls come down, after you'll, you know, tell a potential client that. Being newer in the business, too, of course, you know, you can't really go out there like when I first started, I can't say I’m selling 100 homes a year, right? Yeah, I did it in, you know, almost 20 and 21 and 22. Now, but when I first started, I did definitely lean on, you know, the company, which I think is important to know, being surrounded by, you know, high-level producers. Or you can, you can emphasize your company stats, and your company's, you know, success and professionalism. And I think people do resonate well with that.

**Alexandria**: And I do think, just to add on to what Sean said, too. And when I would have clients that would ask that question, especially within that first year, I was very honest about, yes, I am a REALTOR®. But outside of that, if I don't know the answer, I guarantee you that I will get you the answer. Because I am supported by again, like you said, a great team of brokers that allow me to serve you to the greatest capacity and with excellence. So it's, I think, even in that first year, when you don't have a ton of experience, it is owning the fact that I have a fantastic brokerage behind me.

**Melissa**: So another big challenge when starting out in the real estate business is having the finances to endure that startup time. Not only do you need to have enough money to live on until you start closing sales, but you also must know how to invest in your business to help it grow. Some real estate pros turned to the [Center for REALTOR® Financial Wellness](https://www.financialwellness.realtor/), for financial tips, whether you're new or a seasoned agent. And in February, there's an upcoming tax summit with additional advice. I'm curious, what financial decisions did you make to support your business in its earliest months? And how did you decide which areas to invest in?

**Sean**: So I do have a lot of, you know, I say a lot of people that reach out via social media in person, people we know that will inquire about becoming a real estate agent and that's literally one of the first things I'll tell them is, well be prepared to not have any income coming in for about six months. Because you know, the way our business works in the cycle. So, you know, that means, you know, maybe you having to reduce your finances a bit, make sure you have that money saved up. And that way you can really focus on building your foundation, learning the business, you don't have to be worried about or stressed about paying bills or making the money because you should be thinking this business and entering this business for a long-term. And you know, you need to take care of your clients at a high level and be able to do that you need to be comfortable financially as well. So that's a big important thing. What do you think, Alexandra?

**Alexandria**: Right, I agree. 100% I think I was very, very fortunate that I wasn't a single individual single income or single income household when I started, but we did have to make some big adjustments. I actually, my daughter was born on November 2, 2019. And then I started in January 2020. So I was on maternity leave from my 9-to-5 when I got into real estate, and we just had to make some really big adjustments and some sacrifices to modify our lifestyle, so that I can invest in this. I mean, one thing I definitely wasn't prepared for were the initial costs, of great, I passed my test now what, and I was like, whoa, the cost for my license and oh, insurance, like all of these things you don't realize that you have to do, but because of the sacrifices that we had made, and just adjusting our budget allowed us to show up in that capacity as far as getting me that ramp up period. But also in that ramp up period of starting, like when I was doing the licensing portion and getting applying for my license, or even going through the courses, I was already talking real estate to people, just to let you know, hey, when I get this license, are you gonna be ready, because I knew I had to be successful in order to support my family.

***Mid-Reel Ad Spot:***

*Melissa: Now more than ever, newer REALTORS® are facing a long list of tax changes for the 2022 filing year. Complex rules, annual inflation adjustments, and tedious documentation can impact any taxpayer without a plan or expert guidance. New agents can hear from certified professionals to get the tips needed to save time and money while reducing stress this tax season. Register to attend this 4-part series Tax Summit event starting Wednesday, February 1. The event will be recorded, and participants will receive a certificate of completion at the conclusion of the event. Let Financial Wellness help you prove your value by gaining expert advice this tax season. Visit* [*nar.realtor/CFFW/live*](https://www.nar.realtor/center-for-realtor-financial-wellness/virtual-summits) *to register today.*

**Melissa**: New agents have to start from square one to build awareness of their business in their communities. Sean, what strategies did you use? At first to get your name out there?

**Sean**: Great question, Melissa. So sort of like Alexandria is that you need to really make sure you're getting your name out there, especially to your local, you know, friends and family, your sphere of influence, I always say, you know, don't be a secret agent, you got to put yourself out there to your friends, your family, maybe your colleagues, you know, former colleagues. You know, like even getting on social media, and posting about real estate at first is kind of weird, and, you know, you'll get used to it, just that beginnings can be a little tough. I think it's very important to learn your sales skills, you know, as REALTORS®, we're mostly salespeople. And I think people don't realize that. So making sure you can really understand how to answers people's questions in the best way possible to help them. So you know, getting a lot of practice in the beginning too that's something that really helped. And I don't know if that resonates with you, Alexandria, or what you did.

**Alexandria**: Yes, it does. And I definitely agree on that secret agent piece of, you to teach people to use you, if that makes sense. You know, you have to teach also your sphere to refer, like if you have to actually teach them and you have to make that request. So I think that was one of the big things that I had done. But when I was getting my sphere up and turn up my client database, it came honestly, I have such, I love experiences and like gifting. And so, as old school as it sounds, I love a good pop-by, a little pop-by was definitely my thing, because I love to like gift and like things that were really cute that were Instagram-worthy. Or I would add like a call-to-action along with the gift to be like, “Tag me on Instagram during your unboxing of this.” Things like that were kind of my things, I knew social media was going to be a big pull for me, because that's where my sphere exists right now, it was a lot of people, everyone's on social media all the time. So I needed to make sure I incorporated that.

**Melissa**: Alexandria, you had a very unique opportunity to appear in season two of the National Association of REALTORS® [“First-Time Buyer” series](https://firsttimebuyer.realtor/), which is streaming on Hulu. How did you make that opportunity happen? And how have you used it in marketing your brand?

**Alexandria**: I was able to first, honestly, I kind of played it down a little bit and not realizing what a privilege that was to be able to be a part of, one, this community that were part of being REALTORS®, but also having the opportunity to be on that show. As far as opportunity, I feel like it just happened so fast. I want to say it came from like someone in my DMs, to be honest, on Instagram. And I just was like, Absolutely, like, why not? You see Hulu in the name and you're like, Oh my God, yes, who doesn’t you know? As far as using it to leverage my business, I think it pushed me to really make sure that I was educated on the differences or the significance of being a REALTOR® so I could speak to those things. And so I do speak on those things on social media a lot to know that there is a difference and the privilege that it was to be on the show, that kind of thing. So I just leverage it by like talking about it and why I'm a part of the organization and the association, opposed to, oh my god, look at me, I was on TV.

**Melissa**: Which is also cool.

**Alexandria**: Yeah!

**Sean**: One thing, too, I'll say for the newer agents is number one, check that out right number two, don't be afraid to go to networking events, go to seminars, go to trainings. When you're first starting, this is something that's huge. Not only just for the knowledge, but for the connections, right? You meet other REALTORS®, maybe from different markets, different states, and you're able to connect. And in real estate, definitely having the connections can go a long way for your business and in turn for your clients, right? The more people you know, the more connections you have, the better experience they’ll get.

**Melissa**: Do either of you have any other ideas of what real estate professionals can do to take advantage of opportunities to gain exposure in their communities. I know we touched on several already, but any other ideas you'd like to add?

**Alexandria**: Serve, serve, serve, serve, serve, serve, get involved in nonprofits, I think it's such an, it doesn't have to be you donating thousands of dollars every month, but if you can go volunteer, I definitely challenge you to do that. And then also even running giveaways on your social media. And not giveaways for giving people things, but for every like and comment I get on this post, up to X amount of dollars, I will donate $1 for every like and comment, or things for every like and comment, I'll donate one canned food item, to where you're being a tangible resource in your direct communities that you do business at. And so I think my biggest thing would just be to serve, serve your people, serve your community.

**Sean**: Yeah, I love that. I love doing giveaways. And especially when you're first starting out, right, and let's see, you may have more time on your hands and other agents who are showing homes and listing homes and actively working their business. So there's a lot of things you can do. Some things we talked about, write handwritten cards to your sphere, you know, thank you things, gratitude things, I think it's important to also make sure that you're very aware, and you're very knowledgeable and as much knowledgeable and awareness as you can get. And learning the real estate language, the real estate dialect, like negotiation. So I'm very high on that. I worked very hard to have my foundation as strong as I could, you know, there's all kinds of books on power negotiating, and there's books and client relationship, and, you know, even just real estate, that just the actual verbiage, right, learning the language of real estate. I think these are things that you should learn and emphasize in the beginning when you have the time. So when opportunities do arise, you're able to capitalize, and you're able to take action and help somebody out that maybe someone else may not have been able to or you might not have been able to how do you not have that knowledge already.

**Melissa**: To wrap up, what's the one thing you wish you knew when you first started in real estate? And how would you do things maybe a little differently with that knowledge?

**Alexandria**: I think I wish I would have known that people work with you, for you. So like people work with me, for me, not necessarily for the brokerage behind me. Because I put so much emphasis, and granted, it is important that you hang your license. But I think I put a lot of weight into that, as opposed to kind of agent I want it to be instead and I'm focused on where I wanted to be an agent.

**Sean**: Real estate can be very daunting, like it's a difficult business. And it is that it's definitely not easy. It's simple, maybe, but not easy. When you're able to rise to success at a high level quickly, you might find that some people you thought maybe supported you or stand behind you, or even people that were happy for you might not have been right people might fall off, or you might get people that can be envious of you. So I think that's something to keep in mind. And maybe not something you might keep at the top of your mind. But maybe success in general can be that way. But I think in our industry, just because we do talk about our success a little bit to show our validity. And it's very important that we're not bragging, right, you never want to be that person who brag and boasts but it is good to put out there that you know you're doing things at a high level and your clients do trust you and this just adds to your validity as a you know, REALTOR®, broker, etc.

**Alexandria**: No, it's so real. It's so real. Because once you start being like successful, it’s easy to become isolated when you're an entrepreneur and independent contractor, it can become very isolating and people that you thought supported you maybe don’t necessarily support you.

**Sean**: Yeah, yeah, that's exactly right.

**Melissa**: We've come full circle from the beginning to high success. So many great insights, Sean and Alexandria, thank you both for joining us on this episode of Drive with NAR.

**Alexandria**: Thank you so much for having me.

**Sean**: Thank you. It's great to be on.

***Outro****: Thanks for joining us on this episode of “Drive With NAR.” Tune in every month on* [*Magazine.realtor/drive*](https://magazine.realtor/drive) *or subscribe wherever you get your podcasts. Find more tips to boost your business at* [*Magazine.Realtor*](https://magazine.realtor/)*.*