



Lighten up: How this agent leans into the joy of real estate

Learn how John Barbato's previous professional experience as an architect informs the scope of his real estate career and how he learned to lead with joy

BY [CHRISTY MURDOCK](#)

December 31, 2025 [🏠](#)

SHARE [✉](#) [f](#) [X](#) [in](#)



Image by: Canva

The son of an Italian immigrant father, John Barbato is proud to have built his business from nothing based on his strong work. He's a big believer that working with the best is the only way to improve your [performance](#), a philosophy he puts to work when working with his own team.

Barbato's world centers on his husband, Ryan, and dog, Ziggy. "Ziggy has this beautiful way of grounding us," he said. "His constant need for adventure shapes our days."

"He's taught me so much about responsibility, compassion and unconditional love. The life the three of us share — simple, connected, joyful — is what I cherish most."

Learn how Barbato's previous professional experience as an architect informs the scope of his real estate career and how he learned to lead with joy.

Title: Licensed associate real estate broker

Location: New York, New York

Brokerage name: Compass

Rankings: In 2024, the John Barbato Team closed 37 transaction sides and \$46.23 million in sales volume, ranking among the top 1,500 teams nationally for volume, top 126 in New York State, and top 100 in New York City, with additional high placement at the borough level, including No. 45 for volume and No. 13 for sides.

Team: Seven team members, including Barbato

Sales volume: \$500 million+

Awards: In 2017, John was ranked among the top 200 brokers by sales volume in the tri-state area on the Best Agents in America List compiled by RealTrends.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Growing up, I wanted to be an architect. I achieved a Master’s degree in architecture and worked in the field for close to 10 years, which led me to renovate properties on my own and, ultimately, inspired me to become a broker.

What’s the best advice you ever got from a mentor or colleague?

I was fortunate early on in my real estate career to represent a large [penthouse](#) being sold by a well-known NYC developer. It was his own apartment where he lived.

I competed against some of the top agents at the time to win the listing, and I was just as excited about representing it as I was to learn how he got started in the industry and achieved his success. He was very open about it all, and it eventually led to a great friendship.

He shared many stories about his successes and failures in the business, but one thing I remember most is that he often said there is “nothing more permanent than temporary.”

I think about this often, and it has guided me in my [personal life](#), not only shaping how my husband and I think about our own homes, but it also helps me guide my clients in planning their purchases and determining the right time to sell.

What do clients need to know before they begin a real estate transaction?

There’s more than one perfect home. Many times, I see my buyers lament over the loss of what they feel is the perfect house or apartment, either in a bidding war or by not coming to terms with a seller. It can cripple a buyer from continuing the hunt. There are so many options out there and so many great ways to organize space and love living in it.

What do too few agents know that would make their lives easier?

Be nice and have fun. You don’t need to be tough or abrasive to achieve high heights in this industry. It has brought me great success to enjoy the work, laugh, and appreciate the time with my clients and fellow agents.

I’ve seen too many agents burn out from taking this way too seriously — some who have been far more successful than I have. No one wants to be known as the top successful broker that no one likes.

Tell us a story about your most memorable transaction

The most memorable “transaction” of my career is working on a new development rental project in Midtown called 18W55. I view it as the pinnacle of my real estate career. Few agents have the

opportunity to be involved in a building from the ground up, and for me, it has been especially fulfilling as the head of leasing for 18W55.

I have been on the project since its inception in 2018 and have gained insight into every corner and aspect of the new development process through every meeting with the architects, the interiors team, the marketing team, ownership, attorneys ... I have been there for all of it.

Over the eight years leading up to the building's opening this past October, my [architectural](#) background consistently proved to be an essential asset. Now, as residents sign leases and we've surpassed our first major leasing milestone, I am enjoying getting to know each new resident, from the moment they arrive for the first appointment to move-in day.

<https://www.inman.com/2025/12/31/lighten-up-how-this-agent-leans-into-the-joy-of-real-estate/>