CRD®
CERTIFICATE
COURSE



STUDENT MANUAL

Marketing Strategy & Lead Generation

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®
CENTER FOR REALTOR® DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

Welcome

As a buyer's representative, you know how critical it is to employ a creative and memorable marketing approach to generate quality leads, while clearly communicating your services and value based on your buyer's needs and expectations. But what is the best way to strike this balance? Do open houses and postcard mailings still work? Can the same strategies work for different target markets? How are blogs and social media sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, used for marketing? As a real estate professional, you know that lead generation is critical for growing your real estate business, but what lead generation strategies yield the greatest return? How will you know where to invest your time, efforts, and money? You are about to embark on a journey where you'll gain valuable real estate education that sharpens your skill and knowledge in the eyes of the homebuyer and gives you a practical set of tools to elevate your business.

What You Will Learn

Module 1: The Importance of Marketing

- Summarize basic marketing principles and explain the importance of marketing for your real estate business.
- Describe the relationship between marketing and lead generation.
- Identify the framework for developing an effective marketing strategy.

Module 2: Creating a Personal Brand

- Understand and create your own unique value proposition.
- Assess your competencies and target market to determine the most effective techniques for maintaining top-of-mind awareness.
- Define your brand and identify essential steps to building and enhancing your brand.

Module 3: Developing Your Marketing Plan

- Identify your spheres of influence and evaluate your current marketing strategy.
- Summarize ways of connecting to and communicating with your spheres of influence.
- Understand how to develop a marketing plan that aligns with your personal brand and can capitalize on and extend your spheres of influence.

Module 4: Digital Marketing Tools and Tactics

- Examine the marketing hub and spokes strategy.
- Maintain an online presence that reflects your personal branding and engages your target audience.
- Explain the most effective techniques for using websites and social media for generating leads.

Module 5:
Tracking and Measuring Marketing Efforts

- Explain the importance of measuring and evaluating your marketing efforts.
- Describe how to research, quantify, and analyze leads.
- Identify the tools and systems that are most effective for tracking and communicating with leads.

Module 6:
Going Forward: Converting Clients and Creating Your Marketing Plan

- Know how to effectively respond to and communicate with leads.
- Understand the importance of qualifying leads and representation agreements.
- Apply what you learned in this course and start creating your own marketing plan.

Activities and Class Procedures

This course incorporates a variety of activities designed to involve students, such as work group assignments, exercises, and discussions. Students are strongly encouraged to ask questions and engage in class discussions and group exercises. The range of experience levels among students offers a rich opportunity for learning from your peers. Your active involvement will enrich the learning experience for yourself and others.

Knowledge Base for the Course

Presentation of the course assumes that participants have a foundation of knowledge of certain real estate principles and laws.

- **REALTOR® Code of Ethics**
  Real estate is a profession built on relationships, and relationships can be complex. This is why NAR has created and continually updates the REALTOR® Code of Ethics. It is assumed that students understand and know how to apply these principles in day-to-day business conduct.

- **Agency Representation**
  As the course is presented, issues involving client representation—sellers and buyers—may be discussed. As with application of the Code of Ethics, real estate professionals who work with clients and customers may encounter circumstances that appear to blur the lines of client responsibility. When necessary, this course will examine how to remain true to agency representation principles, as defined by your state's real estate laws, in sensitive situations.

Become an ABR® Designee

This course fulfills the elective course requirement to earn the valuable market distinction as an Accredited Buyer's Representative (ABR®) and a member of the Real Estate Buyer's Agent Council (REBAC). With nearly 25,000 members, REBAC is the world's largest organization of professionals who specialize in representing buyers in residential real estate transactions.

Becoming an Accredited Buyer's Representative (ABR®) designee is a multiple-step process requiring elements of active membership, continuing education, and real-world experience. This course fulfills the elective requirement. In order to apply, you must take the 2-day ABR® designation course. For anyone to be considered an ABR® designee, they must first be an active member of the National Association of REALTORS® or similar cooperating association.

1. Complete the ABR® designation course. Upon successful completion of the ABR® designation course, an email will be sent to you with information on how to log onto abr.realtor and verify your first year of complimentary REBAC membership.
2. Complete an ABR® elective course. Take one ABR®-approved elective course within 36 months of the initial ABR® designation course. Find the full list of courses at abr.realtor/abr-course-and-electives.
3. Submit the ABR® application. Send in the application with documentation verifying five completed transactions in which you acted as buyer representative. Any transaction closed before taking the ABR® designation course or closed within 36 months after completing the course are valid.
4. Maintain active membership in both NAR and REBAC. Participants who successfully complete the ABR® designation course will receive a free year of membership in the Real Estate Buyer's Agent Council (REBAC). Second year dues will be $110, prorated on when you completed the course. Third year dues and every year thereafter will be $110.

For more information, visit abr.realtor or email REBAC@nar.realtor.

Exercise: Marketing Self-Assessment

Take the following self-assessment to determine your current marketing acumen. For each question that you answer with yes, assign yourself one point.

Question	Point?
1. Can you describe your brand?	
2. If someone asked you about your unique value proposition, do you have an answer?	
3. Do you have a lead generation strategy that includes both online and offline tactics?	
4. Have you completed a SWOT analysis in the last 12 months?	
5. Can you identify the leading competitors in your market?	
6. Have you defined your target audience?	
7. Do you have a dedicated marketing budget, and can you describe where the money is being spent?	
8. Have you set goals related to your marketing efforts? Are they written down?	
9. Have you developed a specialty or niche within the real estate business?	
10. Are you measuring the success of your marketing? Can you describe the metrics you're using and why?	
TOTAL:	



MODULE 1:
The Importance of Marketing

After learning the materials in this module, you should be able to:

- Summarize basic marketing principles and explain the importance of marketing for your real estate business.
- Describe the relationship between marketing and lead generation.
- Identify the framework for developing an effective marketing strategy.

Not to sound dramatic...but your success as a real estate professional depends upon your ability to do two things. One: to provide excellent service to your clients. And two: to effectively leverage marketing tools and tactics to stand out from your competition and attract your ideal clients.

Easier said than done, right? There are hundreds of marketing tools and lead generation tactics to choose from—and you are probably already doing some of them. But do you know why you are doing what you're doing? Are your efforts producing results? Which ones are the most effective? What are you missing out on? Let's start with a quick self-assessment.

What Is Marketing?

Marketing is how you communicate your unique value to consumers. It's the systematic implementation of a mix of strategies to effectively communicate with your target market and tell your story.

In real estate, the goal of any marketing plan is to generate leads. Without leads, it's impossible to generate revenue to grow your business. And without a marketing plan, it's much more difficult to generate leads.

This course will help you assess your current marketing efforts and give you the tools you need to build out a new and improved plan for your ever-evolving business.

Marketing Strategy

Research shows that almost half of small businesses fail within the first 5 years, and a poor marketing plan is listed as one of the primary reasons for failure. That percentage may be even higher for real estate agents. Lack of effective marketing and inadequate lead generation are common factors that contribute to this high failure rate.[1]

An effective marketing strategy is essential to your success in the real estate business. In this course, you will learn how fundamental marketing principles and strategies can help you generate leads that allow your business to grow and thrive. The marketing process includes three basic steps: planning, selecting tactics, and measuring results.

1 Handy, K. (2023). "Why Real Estate Agents Fail: Top 9 Reasons to Watch Out For in 2023." https://www.kylehandy.com/blog/learn/why-real-estate-agents-fail/.

Figure 1.1:
Fundamentals of Marketing



YOUR MARKETING PLAN

Effective marketing starts with a plan, and the best plans are the ones that are written down. Putting your marketing strategy in writing not only provides a clear roadmap but also fosters accountability and consistency. It serves as a tangible reference point for your goals, tactics, and timelines, ensuring that your efforts are focused and aligned with your overall business objectives.

Your marketing plan should answer these questions:

- Who are you marketing to?
- What unique services, products, or skills are you marketing?
- How are you marketing?
- Is your marketing consistent and effective?

WHO ARE YOU MARKETING TO?

Understanding your target audience is fundamental to effective real estate marketing. Who is your ideal client? Are you targeting first-time homebuyers, luxury property investors, or a specific geographic area? Each of these audiences has different pain points, needs, and communication preferences. Therefore, you'll need to intentionally use the types of marketing and lead generation tactics that have the best chance of reaching and providing value to your target market.

WHAT UNIQUE SERVICES, PRODUCTS, OR SKILLS ARE YOU MARKETING?

The primary goal of marketing is to attract business by effectively communicating how your specialized skills, experience, and services can provide value to your clients. Your marketing plan should highlight your unique selling proposition (USP)—whether it's your deep local knowledge, innovative marketing techniques, or exceptional negotiation skills. Communicate what makes you the go-to choice in a crowded market.

HOW ARE YOU MARKETING?

Your marketing plan will detail the channels and strategies you'll employ to reach your target audience and communicate your value. This includes both online and offline methods, such as social media marketing, email campaigns, traditional advertising, networking, and more. Each channel should align with your audience and objectives, ensuring a comprehensive and cohesive approach.

There are no limits in terms of the tactics and tools available to attract prospects—as long as you are doing so ethically and within the bounds of fair housing laws. Be sure you are ensuring compliance with your state's Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) laws. More infomation on TCPA compliance laws can be found at www.nar.realtor/videos/window-to-the-law/updated-guidance-tcpa-compliance.

AVOIDING BIAS AND STEERING IN MARKETING EFFORTS

Are your marketing messages and ads in any way biased or discriminatory? You need to be mindful of face-to-face networking as well. Whenever inquiring about the wants and needs of potential clients within your market, your questions should focus on obtaining objective, non-discriminatory information, such as price range, property features, and preferred locations. Offer a range of choices that meet their criteria in a variety of neighborhoods. Avoid telling leads or clients that they cannot afford a particular home or neighborhood, because that could be considered steering, which is a discriminatory act under federal law. (For more on steering and other areas of real estate transactions that pose risk of discrimination, see the Resources section.)

You should never estimate or give an opinion on the racial, religious, or ethnic composition of a neighborhood, even if a client asks about it. Provide objective data from third-party sources. Point them to websites that offer statistical information and allow them to do the research for themselves. Be sure to provide the same information to all clients.

In short, you need to know the laws and policies that govern ethical real estate marketing and transactions. Your relationship with a potential client and how you work together is determined by:

- **State Law:**
  State real estate laws regulate the relationships between agents and clients. Some states assume that a real estate professional is the agent of the consumer with whom they are working unless the agent specifically states otherwise. Some states allow a non-agency transaction facilitator approach; the real estate professional helps a buyer and seller reach an agreement, but does not represent either party as a client.

- **REALTORS® Code of Ethics:**
  References to applicable Code of Ethics articles and standards of practice are noted throughout the course. Also note that the REALTORS® Code of Ethics includes sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes.

- **Brokerage Policy:**
  Within the parameters of state laws, your broker's business policies can specify the type of agency relationships the company offers.

REALTORS® CODE OF ETHICS: ARTICLE 10

REALTORS® shall not deny equal professional services to any person for reasons of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. (Amended 1/14)

IS YOUR MARKETING CONSISTENT AND EFFECTIVE?

Your marketing plan is a living document that should evolve and change based on the outcomes of your efforts. It's helpful to decide how you will measure success before you implement each part of your strategy.

Consistency is key in maintaining brand recognition and trust, so it's important to evaluate how consistently you are utilizing each marketing tactic. Did you try it once before giving up, or did you devote an adequate amount of time and energy to implementing the strategy?

It is critical to track your results and regularly review and adjust your strategies based on data and feedback to optimize your results.

Understanding Your Market

A mistake many agents make in their marketing efforts is not having a precise understanding of who their target market is or how to break that market down into different segments and audiences. We often use the shorthand term "market" to refer to the general population of people who might want to buy or sell a home, but each market is different, and agents don't have the same relationship with everyone in that market. Therefore, it's important to start understanding the market in relation to your particular business.

If the goal of your marketing efforts is to generate leads, it's critical to understand exactly what a lead is. The answer's not as straightforward as you might think.

Ask a dozen real estate professionals "What is a lead?" and you are likely to receive a dozen different answers. A lead is generally defined as "a potential client"—someone who wants to buy or sell a property. But in terms of your marketing efforts, a better definition might be "a person in need of a solution or information."

If you consider any person in need of information as a lead, then anyone could be a potential lead, as most consumers desire and crave information. Your objective is to help people find the solutions or information they seek and then use that opportunity to establish a relationship that will ultimately translate into a real estate transaction. A real estate professional who concentrates on establishing relationships with people and understanding their needs will be more successful than one who just sees everyone as a potential source of business.

LEADS VS. PROSPECTS VS. CLIENTS

Some real estate professionals make a distinction between a "lead" and a "prospect." A lead is anyone who might be seeking information, whereas a prospect is someone who is ready to move to the next step in the process. With online lead generation, for example, a lead will use websites to look at listed properties. Leads become prospects when they complete an intake form or contact an agent—in short, when they are serious about taking the next step in their search to sell or buy a house. A "client" would be the final phase in which a prospect commits to you as being their exclusive agent to buy or sell a property.

APPROACHES TO LEAD GENERATION

As we will discuss in this course, many leads in real estate are generated by people we already know. But the most successful real estate agents are always seeking to expand their universe to find more leads.

Lead generation that extends beyond one's immediate sphere of influence is sometimes referred to as "prospecting," "farming," or "networking." The terms all have the same goal in mind—to generate leads—but the different usages indicate something about the mindset of the person using them, as well as the marketing tactics they would employ in executing their plan.

Just as a prospector sifts through tons of earth to find precious gems or gold nuggets, prospecting in real estate implies sifting through thousands of potential buyers or sellers who might need your services. An agent who wants to "prospect" might, for example, send out mass emails across an entire region without pre-selecting for specific demographics that may be more inclined to be engaged in the real estate market.

Farming is often used to describe targeted local or property-type marketing. Farmers select a small patch of ground, plant seeds, then nurture them until they result in profitable crops. Real estate farming similarly involves using specific marketing tools and tactics, such as door-knocking, direct mail, or Facebook ads, to target a specific geographic area and continuing to do so on a regular basis to build name recognition and top-of-mind awareness that will ultimately generate business.

Networking is another approach to generating leads. Networking is a method of making new contacts and using the ones you already have for mutually beneficial relationships. Those relationships might ultimately result in a referral, which is a lead based on a recommendation from someone you know. A networking marketing method might be to attend trade gatherings or sponsor or create events in the community.

Your Integrated Marketing Approach

A sound marketing strategy begins with an understanding of the tools available to effectively communicate your message to your target market. There are more marketing tools available to real estate professionals than ever before. Some have been around for decades, while others have been around for only a few years. New marketing tactics emerge all the time, while others fade in obscurity. It is an ever-changing landscape. You don't want to limit the tools you use or the ways in which you use them. The smartest marketing approach is an integrated one where you employ a blend of traditional and new online and offline tactics and tools to promote your services and generate brand awareness in your market.

In this course, we want to start thinking of new ways to integrate marketing tools and strategies to tell your story and highlight your brand most effectively. Let's take a few moments here to review some of the more traditional, "offline" marketing techniques and then some of the online marketing methods that are currently used to great effect by real estate agents around the country.

TRADITIONAL "OFFLINE" REAL ESTATE MARKETING TECHNIQUES

Technology and social media are essential marketing tools, but there is still a place for traditional offline techniques. NAR's 2023 *Home Buyers and Sellers Generational Trends Report* indicates that significant numbers of buyers use open houses, yard signs, and newspaper advertisements in their home search. These traditional marketing techniques are still effective.

Figure 1.2:
Information Sources Used in Home Search

	All Buyers	24 to 32	33 to 42	43 to 57	58 to 67	68 to 76	77 to 97
Real estate agent	86%	87%	83%	84%	87%	88%	86%
Mobile or tablet search device	73	84	86	77	70	49	54
Online video site	40	26	30	45	51	40	41
Yard sign	39	41	42	36	5	39	39
Open house	28	31	30	29	25	27	36
Print newspaper advertisement	12	9	11	12	8	21	14
Home builder	9	8	8	9	8	11	17
Home book or magazine	7	4	7	7	8	7	8
Billboard	2	2	3	2	1	3	2
Television	2	1	3	2	1	1	6
Relocation company	2	1	2	2	1	<1	3

Source:
National Association of REALTORS® (2023). Home Buyers and Sellers Generational Trends Report. https://www.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/2023-home-buyers-and-sellers-generational-trends-report-03-28-2023.pdf.

Yard Signs

Yard signs continue to be a low-tech, fairly inexpensive method of advertising properties to prospective buyers. Using techniques such as putting a website address for buyers to get more information about the listing, providing a phone number that allows them to hear pre-recorded information about the home, or even including a scannable QR code on the sign, are ways to incorporate technology into an old-school yard sign and make it a more useful tool for you and for potential buyers.

Open Houses

Open houses provide an excellent opportunity to meet buyers who are considering a purchase and might not be under contract with an agent. Even if the visitors to your open houses are not ready to buy now—or they are nosy neighbors—keep in mind that being a credible and willing source of information could lead to a phone call down the road or to creating a relationship that leads to referrals.

Share information about open houses on your website, in blogs, in the property listing, and via social media. Invite the neighbors and post signs throughout the neighborhood. Be sure to check with local ordinances and homeowner's associations for any yard sign restrictions. Try to capture as much information as you can about each visitor, and remember to send follow-up email messages the next day.

One idea for adding value to your open houses is to set up an information center with reports, articles, and financing information, or invite a lender to be on-site to field questions. Know and follow your state laws regarding agency and disclosure issues during open house events.

Direct Mail

Direct mail marketing involves sending postcards or flyers to a targeted list of prospects. Consider including helpful tips and reminders in your direct mailers as a way of adding value. For instance, send out a reminder to change smoke detector batteries during National Fireman's Week, or offer lawn care tips for the change of seasons.

Direct mailings can also be more customized, in the form of a personal letter that focuses on the features of a property that might be desirable to a particular prospect. Personal letters can be comparatively expensive and time-consuming; however, the personalization itself can greatly influence the prospect. Disadvantages of direct mailings include the high (and rising) cost of postage and typically low response rates.

Print and Display Ads

Printed and display advertising is another tried-and-true form of media that can generate name recognition and awareness in your community. Billboards, newspapers, home books, magazines, and trade publications are all information sources that still reach a considerable number of consumers.

Consider placing ads in specialized publications and media outlets to attract target audiences, such as airline magazines for busy professionals, wedding publications for newlyweds, hospital newsletters for expectant families, and community-focused local websites or news outlets.

When deciding on ad placements, consider the following:

- What publications or media outlets does your target market read and subscribe to? What advertising opportunities do they have available?
- What makes a good ad stand out to you? Include those elements in your design.
- What do other industries do well in their advertising? What can you learn from them?

Handwritten Notes

In an age of emails and texts banged out on smartphones, a handwritten note stands out. Many very successful agents, including "under-30" agents working hard to build a client base, use this touch. Such a method might speak to your unique brand of "personalized attention and client care," for example. If it becomes a part of your systematic marketing strategy, dropping a quick thank-you note to visitors who attended an open-house will become second nature in no time.

YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

Online marketing encompasses any strategies and promotions that are shared using the internet and digital technology. Building a professional and consistent online presence is one of the most important tactics in an agent's marketing toolkit. One of the first things savvy prospective clients will do when someone passes along a referral is Google your name or your business. What will they see? For modern consumers, if you don't exist online, you don't exist. They expect to see your business website as one of the first few search results, as well as links to your social media profiles, other professional profiles, and client review sites—just to name a few. Ensure that the following outlets are projecting a professional and consistent brand that effectively communicates your value and appeals to your target market:

- Your Business Website
- Your Social Media Profiles
- Your Brokerage Profile or Site
- Other Professional Profiles (LinkedIn, Zillow, Realtor.com)
- Online Reviews and Testimonials (Google, Realtor.com, RateMyAgent, Zillow, Facebook, Yelp)

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Social media is an essential marketing tool for real estate professionals today. Every marketing strategy needs a social media strategy as well: one that helps you stay engaged with your market, keeps you top of mind, and continues to tell your story. Use your social media platforms to provide value to your friends, followers, and connections by posting articles, insights, and commentary about the housing market, mortgage rates, property listings, and community news and events. Be sure to share glimpses of your personal life and behind-the-scenes content that aligns with your branding too.

For example, once you've worked with a client and connected with them on Facebook or Instagram, you'll be able to maintain that relationship for years to come. By staying in touch and engaging with them via social media, you'll be clued into big life events that might trigger a move, such as engagements, baby showers, and job transitions. Marketing is an ongoing process. It doesn't end when one deal is complete. Social media is a way of keeping that process going.

Here are the most prominent social media platforms today. Choose the platforms that your target market is using the most and focus your marketing efforts there.

- Facebook
- Instagram
- TikTok
- LinkedIn
- YouTube

EMAIL MARKETING

Email is one of the most effective and cost-conscious forms of marketing out there. Divide your contact list into segments and audiences and use different types of emails to stay in contact with your network, follow up with leads and prospects, and provide value to your current and recent clients.

CONTENT MARKETING

One of the best ways to attract quality leads is to provide value to the consumer. Create content that answers client questions, addresses customer pain points, provides useful information and insights, and offers recommendations. Use the outlets and methods that align with your personal brand and that will appeal to your ideal client.

Here are a few ideas:

- SEO-Friendly Blog Articles
- Video (YouTube, YouTube Shorts, Live Broadcasts, Instagram Reels and Stories, TikTok)
- Podcasts
- Downloadable E-Books and Guides
- Webinars, Workshops and Virtual Seminars

DIGITAL ADVERTISING AND PAID LEADS

There are many paid advertising options that can be used to generate leads and fill your pipeline. Choose the outlets that have the highest chance of getting your ads in front of your ideal market and that work within your budget.

- Paid Social Media Ads (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)
- Paid Advertising (Zillow, Realtor.com)
- Paid Real Estate Leads (Zillow Premier Agent, Realtor.com, smartzip, BoldLeads, REDX, RealGeeks, Offrs, Market Leader, Zurple)
- Google Search and Google Local Ads
- Retargeting Ads (Facebook)

CALLS TO ACTION

No matter what type of marketing or advertising you choose to employ, each piece should prompt the consumer to do something that will get them in your pipeline and database. This prompt is called a Call to Action (CTA). Whether it's requesting information, calling you, downloading a guide, emailing/messaging you, commenting on a post, booking an appointment, or subscribing to your newsletter, CTAs bridge the gap between your content and your desired outcome. CTAs help your audience understand what action to take and why they should take it. Without CTAs, your marketing efforts may lack direction and fail to capitalize on valuable lead capture opportunities. In essence, CTAs empower you to harness the full potential of your marketing and lead generation efforts, turning casual leads into prospects and, eventually, committed clients.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Your marketing strategy should include both offline/traditional methods and online/digital marketing tactics. The key is to use them in a new or innovative way! Creativity and innovation are key in a marketing strategy. Successful real estate professionals are always thinking outside the box. They look for new ways to create value for consumers through existing tools, products, or services, or they come up with new ideas. The goals of innovative marketing are to generate new business and keep you top of mind. Remember, innovative does not necessarily mean expensive.

So, how can you nurture innovation? Consider adopting the following thought processes to inspire fresh marketing ideas:

- **Challenge Assumptions:**
  Free your mind from preconceived notions and encourage alternative perspectives.
- **Embrace Brainstorming:**
  Foster an environment conducive to brainstorming, where judgment is temporarily suspended, allowing novel ideas to flourish.
- **Explore All Possibilities:**
  Consider every idea, no matter how unconventional, and explore their potential.
- **Break Away from Tradition:**
  Identify and break free from the "we've always done it that way" mindset, opening doors to unconventional approaches.
- **Revamp Existing Ideas:**
  Reimagine and rejuvenate existing concepts with a fresh perspective.
- **Question and Test:**
  Continuously ask questions and challenge assumptions to unveil untapped opportunities.
- **Seek Inspiration from Other Industries:**
  Gain insights from diverse industries and observe how they attract and engage clients.
- **Banish Negative Thinking:**
  Eliminate self-doubt and negative thinking that can stifle innovation.
- **Start Small, Grow Bold:**
  It's perfectly acceptable to commence with modest steps.
- **Track and Learn:**
  When experimenting with new strategies, use unique identifiers to measure success, allowing you to distinguish results from other approaches and refine your innovative marketing tactics accordingly.

There are many ways to bring innovation to your marketing efforts. For example, content marketing, giveaways, and community involvement are easy ways to enhance your current efforts. Based on your goals, innovative techniques may include starting a podcast, collaborating with other professionals from related industries, or revamping your personal brand. Whatever approach you take, you want potential clients to think of you when they think real estate. Next, we will discuss examples of innovative marketing.

- **Become Part of Their Daily Routine**
  Create a marketing strategy that helps integrate you into your clients' everyday lives. Organic integration like this will surely keep you top of mind when someone needs to buy or sell a home. Chicago's Dream Town Realty, for example, creates specially branded bags of coffee and sends its best clients a pound of beans each month. The effect is simple: Dream Town's branding is in front of its customers every morning.

- **Create Memorable Events**
  Host an annual or biannual event to create positive community experiences and keep your visibility high. Every Halloween, the Wonder Women Team of Keller Williams North Pointe in Oklahoma City sets up a trick-or-treat stop in front of a home they're selling. They photograph children in their costumes with parents' permission, and then mail the photos to the parents with a branded magnet to hang on the refrigerator. Why not host an egg hunt this April? Or a neighborhood community service project? Being associated with positive experiences and special occasions leads to your name being associated with trust and respect.

- **Create FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)**
  Add excitement to your next event by posting photos and videos to your social media, adding them to your blog and newsletter, or issuing a press release to the local paper or news outlet.

- **Save Them Some Money**
  There's no better way to make clients happy than to save them money! In West Orange, New Jersey, for example, broker Ken Baris of Jordan Baris, REALTORS®, taught his sales associates to throw neighborhood get-togethers at which homeowners file petition papers to lower their property taxes. Baris prepares the paperwork and invites everyone on the block to come to one house. Partygoers fill in a few items in the paperwork and enjoy some wine. "People will remember you if you've helped them save cash," Baris says.

↘ Find Unique Ways to Get Your Brand Recognized

A great way to stay top-of-mind is to keep your brand in sight as much as possible. The more people see your brand, the more likely they will be to call on your services when needing to buy or sell a home. Angie Matessa, owner of HER Real Living in Columbus, Ohio, realized that since she was in the moving industry, she should brand items to help her clients move. She personalizes moving tape with her company logo, name, and phone number. "I give tape to someone when we start looking at houses," Matessa says. She distributes more tape when the client actually makes the move, and often it remains on the boxes for months and years to come.

Group Discussion: Effective Marketing Tactics

Consider the various online and offline marketing tactics and strategies that we've discussed so far. Which ones have you used? Which ones were most effective? Which marketing tactics might be best for your target audience? Are there any tactics that you want to try?

Marketing and Lead Generation: An Ongoing Cycle

It's important to understand marketing as a continual, ongoing process—a process, in fact, that never ends. Many agents fall into a complacency trap where they come up with a few marketing techniques they find useful, and maybe a few tools they find helpful, and then never think with intention about marketing ever again. But real estate markets are always changing, tastes and preferences of our clients are always changing, and the ways in which we can reach potential clients are always changing. Nothing stays the same, so your marketing plan shouldn't either.

In this course, you'll learn the importance of setting clear goals, finding ways to measure your progress and results, and then seeking ways to revise your strategy to maximize lead generation and return on investment (ROI). That kind of monitoring and revising doesn't happen only once. It should happen constantly to keep your business current and thriving.

Figure 1.3:
Marketing and Lead Generation Cycle



Practitioner Perspective: Bobbi Decker



Bobbi Decker
ABR®, CIPS, CRS, GRI, SRS, SRES®, AHWD
San Carlos, California

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CHALLENGE OF BECOMING A MARKETER FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Marketing is the least understood skill as part of your entrepreneurial requirements when becoming a real estate professional. People get the roles of salesperson, chief negotiator, educator, executive administrator, and contract expert. Most hope their broker will do most of their marketing. The good agents begin to understand quickly that this plan will not work. Only a few will step up and embrace the marketing needed to build their success. As a true entrepreneur, your success relies on you getting the word out and measuring your success often.

How did you get started with using marketing strategies to grow your business?

My growth has a couple of layers. First layer—I have always been a teacher/coach starting as a high school biology and chemistry teacher and evolving through the years. I have always studied my topics in detail, so I understood what I was after as a result. As I moved into real estate, I first looked at the entire picture and all of its components and requirements; then I drilled down into the details. I wanted to explore as many avenues as possible: newspaper columns, TV, radio, podcasts, and blogging to see what worked best. Some of it brought solid business and some just brand awareness. It is all about measuring the ROI to keep your business moving forward.

How did you learn what integrated marketing techniques worked best for you?

In the beginning of my career, it was trial and error. Marketing is becoming more of a science these days, but it remains that trial and error is the best teacher to find what works for you and your audience.

Do you feel like the same top marketing tactics work for every agent?

Not at all. I get that it can be very specific to the agent and what their skill set is. Some agents that like to talk are terrific at socializing and chatting with clients and leads. Others are print ad competent and some shine with video to get their message out. Currently, social media is the vehicle for a growing percentage of agents. My best advice is to truly understand your target audience. It is critical to know where, how, and even when your target audience consumes information (will midday posts be more effective than early morning or evening posts). Be strategic for best results. And oh yes, the old-fashioned "word of mouth" still counts. Your reputation does precede you.

What advice would you offer to an agent who is sitting down to develop their marketing plan for the first time?

Determine who is your target audience: buyers, sellers, millennials, Gen Xers, boomers, seniors. Or do you have a geographic, vertical, or horizontal farm target? Do you have some specific interest or expertise in something other than real estate that may allow you to connect with a specific audience? Write it down. Then be consistent with efforts, outreach, budget. I see agents take on more than they can afford or have time to execute properly and then they abandon what they have already tried to set in place. That's just time and money wasted. Build your database immediately, add to it daily, and nurture it. And I am a firm believer that NAR designations and certifications create distinctions and differentiation that can make a big impact on an agent's success.

Summary

Now that we have identified a framework for developing an effective marketing strategy, let's explore the most important element: you and your personal brand.



MODULE 2:
Creating a Personal Brand

After learning the materials in this module, you should be able to:

- Understand and create your own unique value proposition.
- Assess your competencies and target market to determine the most effective techniques for maintaining top-of-mind awareness.
- Define your brand and identify essential steps to building and enhancing your brand.

With the huge number of online and offline tactics, tools, and ideas available for you to market your real estate services, how do you go about deciding which ones to implement and what will appeal most to your target market? It's impossible to use them all. So how do you narrow them down?

When you're deciding what restaurant to go to on a Friday night, what helps you make that decision? Chances are, you're looking at the type of food offered, the vibe or atmosphere of the space, and maybe searching for a unique feature such as outdoor dining or a place that can accommodate large groups. These are just a few of the factors that make up that restaurant's BRAND. Branding is important in any industry, and it's the way competitors in a market distinguish themselves and attract customers.

Just like consumers make judgments on where to eat based on branding, they are making decisions on which real estate agent to work with based on your personal brand.

With approximately 3 million real estate licensees in the United States alone,[2] creating a unique brand for yourself is essential for success. So where do you start? Your brand is made up of the services you provide; your personality and communication style; your passions, specialties, and interests; and the key traits that set you apart from your competition. This module will explore how to create a unique, recognizable personal brand—or strengthen an existing one.

Aligning Brands: You and Your Brokerage

When thinking about branding, it's tempting to dive right in and start getting creative. But if you are part of a brokerage, it is wise to take a moment to consider your broker's branding policies, procedures, and guidelines.

CHECKLIST: ARE YOU IN SYNC WITH YOUR BROKERAGE?

Make sure you know all the rules and policies of your brokerage. Don't rely on assumptions, and make sure your brokerage isn't relying on the idea of "everybody knows that." Asking the right questions may inspire development of written policies, which may benefit you and your colleagues.

2 National Association of REALTORS® (2023). *Quick Real Estate Statistics*. https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/quick-real-estate-statistics.

ASK YOUR BROKER OR OFFICE MANAGER THE FOLLOWING:

- Are there brokerage brand guidelines that we need to keep in mind when developing our personal marketing assets?
- Are there staff or resources available to help us develop our brand, logo, imagery, etc.?
- Do we have policies with regard to the use of social media for business? Personal?
- Do I need to get approval on my personal branding assets before using them? What is the process for that?
- Where can I find the company-branded materials? Can they be customized with my branding?
- What are the requirements for creating a personal branded website? Do you offer templates that we can customize?
- Are there any restrictions around including affinity networks or external collaboration networks (i.e., Place) in our branding?

Your Unique Value Proposition

Now that you know your brokerage's policies, it's time to jump in and create your personal brand. The first step to establishing your personal brand is defining your unique value proposition.

Real estate professionals are not all alike—and that's a good thing. Your differences—those qualities that distinguish you from other real estate professionals—stand to give you a competitive advantage by telling your story and attracting those consumers who will most value working with you over a competitor. Therefore, you need a unique value proposition that is tailored to the clients in your market and that fits your personal style.

Your unique value proposition is your market distinction expressed as the services you offer. It answers questions such as: What sets you apart from other agents? Why would a client want to work with you over anyone else? What value do you bring to the table that your competitors don't?

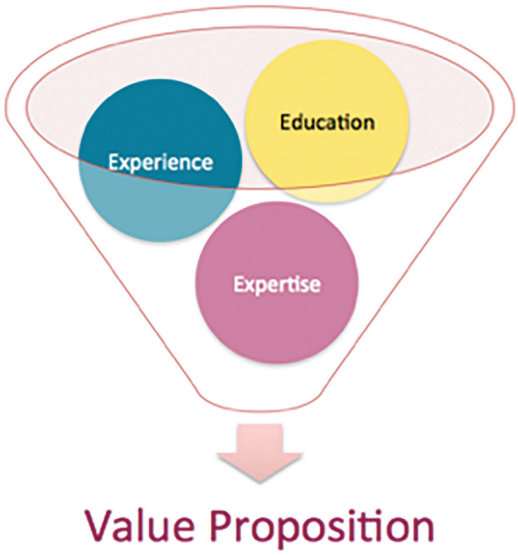
To get started defining your unique value proposition, it's helpful to start with the three E's:

- **Education:**
  What education and specialized training have you gained throughout your career? What degrees, designations, and certifications have you earned?

- **Expertise:**
  What in-depth knowledge do you possess about the real estate market in your area? How well do you understand local trends, neighborhoods, and property values? Are there particular niches or segments of the real estate market where you have deep expertise, such as luxury properties, first-time homebuyers, or commercial real estate?

- **Experience:**
  How long have you been in real estate? What types of clients/ transactions do you have the most experience with? What other professional experience do you bring to the table? What community activities are you involved in?

Figure 2.1: Unique Value Proposition



Your value proposition should influence every marketing strategy you employ and is the foundation for your personal brand. So it's important that you understand how your unique mix of experience, education, and expertise benefits your clients. What's in it for them?

Exercise: What Makes You Valuable?

Ask yourself what you offer in the following three areas and determine how it benefits your clients.

EDUCATION

What VALUE can I offer my clients?	How does this BENEFIT my clients?

EXPERTISE

What VALUE can I offer my clients?	How does this BENEFIT my clients?

EDUCATION

What VALUE can I offer my clients?	How does this BENEFIT my clients?

Building Your Brand

Once you have a better idea of your unique value proposition, it's time to flesh out the other critical elements of your personal brand.

Your brand is the engine that drives and powers all of your marketing activities. It encompasses a myriad of components, including your logo, color palette, typography, imagery, and visual style, all of which work together to create a visually appealing and memorable identity.

Beyond aesthetics, your brand is also defined by your messaging, tone of voice, and the stories you tell. While much of your brand is informed by YOU (your personality, life story, location, and interests), you must also consider what will appeal to your target market.

CONSIDER YOUR TARGET MARKET

When building your brand, think about how best to appeal to the people you are hoping to serve.

For example, if your target market is rural consumers, you would want to create a brand that is relatable, accessible, and trustworthy for that demographic. Alternatively, if your target market consists of more affluent, urban consumers, then creating a relatable, trustworthy brand would be somewhat different.

The same goes for choosing marketing tactics and outlets. If your buyers are seniors who don't spend much time on the computer, then using social media ads and launching a podcast might not be effective marketing tactics. However, these strategies might work quite well for 30-something busy professionals.

At the end of the day, your brand and your marketing need to be appealing to those you hope to serve. Considering your audience is a critical step in creating your personal brand.

BALANCING ACT: FAIR HOUSING
MAKE SURE YOUR TARGET MARKETING IS LAWFUL

Remember that it is unlawful, under the fair housing laws, to target market based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin. Additional protections may exist in your state or city. Advertising should be inclusive and not target specific groups to the exclusion of others. Visit https://www.nar.realtor/fair-housing/fair-housing-program for more information.

Exercise: Who's Your Target Market?

Consider the following characteristics and others and take a moment to define your target market.

- Applicable fair housing laws
- Age group (e.g., Gen Z, millennials, Gen X, baby boomers)
- Life stage (e.g., newlyweds, growing families, retirees)
- Income level (e.g., high-income, middle-income, budget-conscious)
- Location preference (e.g., urban, suburban, rural, international)
- Property type preference (e.g., single-family homes, condos, apartments, multi-unit buildings)
- Occupation or industry (e.g., healthcare professionals, tech workers, military)
- Real estate goals (e.g., first-time homebuyers, investors, relocators)
- Communication preference (e.g., social media, email, phone)
- Technology adoption (e.g., tech-savvy, traditional)
- Language preferences (e.g., bilingual)
- Special interests (e.g., outdoor enthusiasts, sustainability, arts and culture)
- Pet owners (e.g., clients with specific pet-related needs)
- Transportation preference (e.g., commuters with specific transit needs)

Defining Your Difference

Even though it's tempting to define your target market as "all homebuyers and sellers" in a specific region, it's hard to stand out in the crowded real estate landscape without a clear and compelling niche specialty.

Developing a specialty allows you to channel your expertise and energy into a specific area, whether it's waterfront properties, eco-friendly homes, or senior living communities. This specialization not only sets you apart in a competitive market but also plays a pivotal role in shaping your branding and marketing messages. By honing in on a niche, you can craft highly targeted marketing messages that resonate deeply with your intended audience, showcasing your in-depth knowledge and commitment to addressing their unique needs.

ACCREDITATIONS

Special accreditations or certifications that you acquire can be used to boost your authority within a niche, show your expertise, and help you stand apart from the competition. If you're acting as a buyer's representative, for example, you offer a specialized set of skills and services. These skills and services are complemented by the ABR® designation. There are many designations and certifications that can help you define a niche in the industry and strengthen your brand. Visit www.nar.realtor/education/designations-and-certifications to see the full list of NAR designation and certification programs.

VALUE-ADD SERVICES

Another way you can build a unique and memorable brand is by offering specialized services or highlighting those that you excel in delivering and that your ideal clients genuinely value.

Here are some examples of value-add services that can be incorporated into your branding:

- **Market Research and Analysis:**
  Provide clients with comprehensive market research and analysis tailored to their specific needs and requests.
- **Home Staging:**
  Offer guidance on staging or connect clients with professional stagers to make their property more appealing to potential buyers.
- **Negotiation Expertise:**
  Highlight ways that you advocate for your clients' interests, whether it's securing a lower purchase price, negotiating favorable terms, or navigating complex transactions.
- **Tech-Savvy Marketing:**
  Emphasize the cutting-edge online marketing strategies you use to market your client's property.
- **Local Knowledge and Insights:**
  Be the go-to source for information and recommendations about your community and the local market.
- **Post-Purchase Support:**
  Continue to provide support after closing, from recommending contractors for home improvements to assisting with post-purchase questions.
- **Customer Appreciation:**
  Demonstrate your commitment to forming long-term relationships with clients by implementing customer appreciation programs. This could include organizing client events, sending personalized thank-you notes, or thanking a friend for a referral with a gift card.
- **Bilingual Services:**
  Highlight your ability to communicate fluently in multiple languages, making your services more accessible and appealing to a broader range of clients.

UNIQUE SKILLS AND SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE

Opportunities for differentiation also come from highlighting advanced skills, knowledge, and experience, such as unique backgrounds, community and school knowledge, and property-specific experience.

Opportunities for differentiation also come in displaying and honing skills that are important for all real estate professionals. Don't forget the basics! Successful agents have strong communication skills. They know how to convey their story, present their value, listen to clients' wants and needs, and articulate appealing solutions.

Similarly, successful agents also understand the importance of effective collaboration. Sometimes this means working with other agents to find the right fit for particular leads, but it also means collaborating with local business owners and entrepreneurs to find and create opportunities for the benefit of both businesses—yours and theirs.

PERSONAL INTERESTS

When a personal interest meets a professional opportunity, great things are possible. Targeting your energy and excitement to help buyers who share your interests is a great way to offer a unique home-buying experience. For example:

- Sustainability and green homes
- Architecturally significant or historic homes
- Rehab properties
- Recreational properties

PERSONAL TRAITS

Just as personal interests can be used to help define your brand, so can personal traits. After all, you are your business, so you need to feel, be, and appear authentic. Why not make who you are an integral part of your brand? Clarity of message and approach comes from focusing on one or two distinguishing attributes. When used consistently, a clear theme creates memorable branding.

Exercise: Exploring Your Uniqueness

Use these questions to discern your own distinguishing characteristics that could be incorporated into your personal brand.

When it comes to customer service, what are you really good at? What do your clients appreciate about you? What are you known for?

What interests, activities, or hobbies do you have that could be a point of connection with potential clients?

What unique or specialized services do you offer clients?

Do you specialize in any specific area, property type, or niche market?

Why do people give you referrals? Is there a trend in terms of service or expertise?

How would you describe your personality? What type of vibe do you want to project as a professional?

Image Building and Brand Identity

Now that you've delved into your unique value proposition and the array of services and characteristics that can be incorporated into your brand, it's time to transform these elements into a cohesive and compelling brand identity.

Two important goals of image building are to be memorable and to be consistent. Building a memorable brand involves a multitude of facets, each contributing to the overall impression you make on your audience. Here are a few of the components that work together to create your brand identity.

↘ Name

Your name is the cornerstone of your brand. Whether you're using your personal name or a brand-focused name, consider the following:

- The name should clearly convey that the business is related to real estate. A name that is too vague or unrelated may confuse potential clients.
- Ensure that it is unique and distinguishable from other real estate businesses in the area.
- Think of ways to make your name memorable. Can you rhyme your name with other real estate related words to make it catchy? Can you associate your name with a picture, song, or phrase? Check out these examples: Hasani Steele, Steele Consulting Group, http://whatasteele.com, and Jeremias Maneiro, JMan Sold Team, www.jmansoldteam.com.
- Avoid overly long or complex names that may be forgettable or challenging to spell.
- Consider including geographic keywords, which can help with local search engine optimization (SEO) and establish a strong local presence.
- Think about the potential for growth and expansion. Will the name still be suitable if you decide to broaden your services or geographical reach in the future?
- Check the availability of domain names for your business website. Having a matching domain name is crucial for an online presence.

- Research and ensure that the name you choose is not already trademarked or registered by another business.
- Remember that your business name is a crucial part of your branding and changing it later may be challenging and costly.

Color Palette

Your choice of colors plays a significant role in brand identity. Colors evoke emotions and associations, so selecting a palette that aligns with your brand's personality and appeals to your target audience is essential. Consistency in color usage across all branding and marketing materials reinforces brand recognition.

To find the right combination for you, research the psychology of color and select a dominant color that aligns with the brand characteristics you want to convey. It's also helpful to reference other prominent agents in the area so that you don't choose a palette that's too similar.

Logo

While not essential, a well-designed logo serves as a visual symbol of your brand's essence. It should be unique, memorable, and easily recognizable. Make sure it's not too complicated and will look equally good online and in print in a multitude of formats. Ensure that you abide by your brokerage's brand guidelines.

Slogans/Taglines

A concise and impactful slogan or tagline can reinforce your brand message and make it more memorable to your audience. It should encapsulate what sets you apart and why clients should choose you.

It could be based on:

- Tempo, rhythm, rhyme
- Property type such as condos, new homes, vacation homes
- Consumer type—relocation, new home buyers
- Professional designations
- Your services
- Locale

Headshots and Brand Imagery

Professional headshots are a crucial aspect of your brand. They provide a face to your name and help build trust with potential clients. Choose headshots that reflect your personality and professionalism and—most importantly—that look like you!

Additionally, the images you use throughout your marketing channels should tell your brand's story and resonate with your target audience. Consistency in imagery helps reinforce your brand identity and messaging.

Take a look at the headshot and images you are using in your current marketing and ask the following questions:

- Is your headshot an accurate and current depiction of you?
- Do the photos look professional?
- Do the images you use on your website and throughout your marketing tell the story you want to tell about who you are and who you serve?
- Are the images inviting to your target market?
- Do they look like the types of properties you specialize in?

Tone

Your brand's tone of voice sets the tone for all communication. Whether it's friendly, authoritative, or informative, defining your brand's tone ensures consistency in messaging and helps build brand personality.

Social Media Presence/Engagement

Social media is a powerful tool for brand building. Your presence on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn should reflect your brand's identity and engage with your audience authentically.

Website

Your website is often the first point of contact with potential clients. A well-designed real estate website should be visually appealing, user-friendly, and informative, providing a cohesive representation of your brand.

Marketing Materials

From business cards to brochures, your marketing materials should align with your brand's identity. Consistency in design and messaging across these materials reinforces brand recognition and professionalism.

Customer Experience

The way customers interact with the brand, including customer service, support, and user experience, should reflect the brand's values and personality.

There is also an abundance of personal branding resources available at the NAR website: https://www.nar.realtor/library-archives/references. Just type "branding" into the search box and get hundreds of results.

BALANCING ACT:
KEEPING YOUR COMPANY AND PERSONAL BRANDING EFFORTS COHESIVE

Be sure to consider your company's overall marketing goals and objectives when identifying your personal brand and position. Leverage your unique skills and services in your marketing messages, but be sure to complement your company's approach.

Brand Consistency

It's important to remember that as a real estate professional, your business and your brand is you. To gain trust and respect from potential buyers, your brand needs to be consistent and aligned with your value proposition at all times.

Brand consistency may in fact be the difference between gaining a client or losing one. The image a lead forms of you initially, either directly or indirectly, is what they will expect throughout all interactions. Your brand has to be consistent.

Your photo on the brokerage website, the way a past client described you, your social media profile(s), or the ad you recently took out in the local newspaper are a few of the ways that your brand is disseminated to potential clients. Your brand should convey a consistent message of the value and service consumers can expect.

Use the list below to help:

- What is the feel of your brand? Are you buttoned-up formal and professional or are you more casual?
- Do you act the same with all types of people during all seasons, hectic and slow?
- Do you dress the same when meeting people at the office as you do when going out for showings?
- Are you presenting the same brand on your social media profiles as you are in your print marketing?
- How do you describe yourself on the brokerage website? What picture of you is posted? Do the text and photo align to reflect your brand?
- Do your business cards accurately convey your brand and branding?
- Have you bought any advertising? Is the messaging consistent across media?

Home buying and selling is often a stressful event in people's lives. Part of your service is to be a reliable, calm guide that clients can trust. Brand consistency is critical in achieving this end.

Exercise:
Be an Image and Branding Consultant

As a group, review the following fictional agents' profiles and describe aspects of their brand identity.

1. Describe the agent's value proposition.
2. Identify characteristics that distinguish the agent from competitors.
3. What unique, value-add services could the agent offer to their clients?
4. What types of content should they post on their social media and on their website?
5. What should their headshot look like?

AGENT #1: HOWARD CHAMBERLAIN, ABR®, CRS, RSPS

- **Market:**
  Mountain resort area
- **Years in business:**
  25 years
- **Likes most about job:**
  Helping buyers find their dream vacation home
- **Interests:**
  Skiing, horseback riding, and wine connoisseur
- **Reputation:**
  Well-connected and respected within community. Dedicated and willing to spend as much time as necessary with buyers. Careful, deliberate, and thoughtful.

AGENT #2: MARIA FOLDS, ABR®

- **Market:**
  Small historic town
- **Years in business:**
  7 years
- **Likes most about job:**
  Helping buyers purchase historic properties
- **Interests:**
  Writing, cooking, and reading
- **Reputation:**
  Expert in historic properties. Warm and friendly. Speaks Spanish. Known for customer service and a consistent client experience.

Exercise:
Building Your Image and Your Brand

> **How do you currently brand yourself? What steps will you take to create or revise your brand in your local marketplace and make your name synonymous with real estate?**

Practitioner Perspective: Chris Donaldson



Chris Donaldson
SFR, ePRO®
Metairie, Louisiana

HOW TO DEFINE YOUR BRAND

How did you apply your brand across your business and evolve it as you grew?

There's a saying I learned as a youngster: "everything I say and do is carved in water" (thanks Grandpa!). In essence, who I am today and what our business is today is different from when we first started. Of course it is—that is the point! However, from the beginning, even if by accident, I always made sure we were communicating from a solid core foundation of values that is ours. As we grow, I grow, things evolve, the business changes—we stay true to those values no matter what!

Was building a brand a one-and-done or was it a process over time?

It is a process. I think one-and-done is the wrong mindset from the start. Nothing worth doing is easy, and that certainly includes presenting your brand and value proposition to the marketplace. Consider how many variations there are of the Coca-Cola® logo. While the "formula" of the drink may largely have remained the same ("new" Coke anyone?!)—the brand maintains a certain steady presence that has evolved since 1887. Regardless of the version, you know it when you see it, and the consumer should know you and your work when they see it.

How does authenticity lend itself to a believable personal brand?

It's everything. Actually, it's the only thing! In the real estate business, the consumer might see and believe that all REALTORS® are the same. Why? Too many out there have canned messages that either sound good—or worse—they copied from someone else. BE YOU—that is good enough as long as you are using your natural-born gifts to succeed in real estate. Tell the market who you really are and how you can really help, and scrap the rest. You never have to worry about false advertising if you are always presenting an image that is authentically YOU.

Are images and photos important in the real estate branding process?

Yes. Human beings are visual creatures; just look at the massive growth of Instagram and YouTube as a reference! People cannot connect with who you are or what you do without being able to see you and examples of what you do. This doesn't mean you need your picture on the side of a bus, for example, but connections between people are augmented exponentially with pictures and video. Don't hide; it is hard to connect with a wall of text!

How do you keep your value proposition believable?

By keeping it authentic and yours. Don't waiver, and never copy others. A great example I like to use is when you hear agents say "I am available anytime 24/7/365—contact me for your real estate needs!" The intent is GREAT; the value proposition is NOT. You are not a robot; you cannot answer your phone 24/7, so don't start by telling the consumer a lie. Instead, share with the person you intend to do business with how you can help THEM get what THEY WANT. That's what buyers and sellers really care about. At the end of the day, people visit my website, watch my YouTube channel, or listen to the podcast because it offers value to THEM. I share with the audience what I know well and always try to be helpful. No false promises, no episodes about something I cannot offer you value on. If you stay focused on the other person, and you mean it, the market will respond positively because you are helping consumers win with you.

What advice do you have for an agent who might be working to define their personal brand for the first time?

I'd boil it down to two simple things: knowing exactly who you are, what the consumer you are trying to reach wants; and then being very intentional about connecting those two. For instance, if you are a data-driven numbers freak, then make sure you are talking pricing and market data regularly because it is your expertise. If you are a super marketer and have past marketing successes to show off, make sure you share success stories and show the market how much you care and how it works! In other words, don't just tell me—SHOW ME. And one more time, be authentic. BE YOU.

What about an agent who is recreating a brand?

Start today. If no one noticed before, then WOW, what an advantage! Look at Madonna, she recreated herself dozens of times and sold millions and millions of albums. You might reach new people you could not before with your refresh, or you might finally reach the right ones who missed you previously because you were not sending the right message. Everything you do is carved in water; start today and always be authentically YOU.

Summary

Successful real estate professionals welcome the opportunity to share their unique value proposition with potential home buyers and sellers. They know that their services present the best opportunity for clients to find the right home at the right price. Knowing your own value is the best way to get value for your clients.

You are selling trust—you are marketing you. How do you do that? You need to start thinking through your plan.



MODULE 3: Developing Your Marketing Plan

After learning the material in this module, you should be able to:

- Identify your spheres of influence and evaluate your current marketing strategy.
- Summarize ways of connecting to and communicating with your spheres of influence.
- Understand how to develop a marketing plan that aligns with your personal brand and can capitalize on and extend your spheres of influence.

Once you've been able to articulate your unique value proposition and create a brand that distinguishes you from the competition, it's time to begin developing a marketing plan that will effectively communicate your brand and services to your target market. As we touched upon in Module 1, it's important for agents to take an integrated approach to marketing; that is, using conventional and new methods in creative and innovative ways to best tell their story and reach their target market. This module will explain the fundamental principles that will help you develop a successful marketing plan for your real estate business.

Components of an Effective Marketing Plan

Like a homebuilder that looks to the blueprints before making the first cut, the marketer looks to the marketing plan before making the first investment of time, money, or resources. A part of an overall business plan and strategy, the marketing plan details the goals, objectives, and tactics of the marketing strategy.

In addition to identifying your target audience and articulating your value proposition, your marketing plan includes market research and assumptions and addresses budget and tracking. But that does not mean it must be complicated. Like your business plan, your marketing plan can be as simple or complex as you'd like it to be. The best plan is the one you will follow.

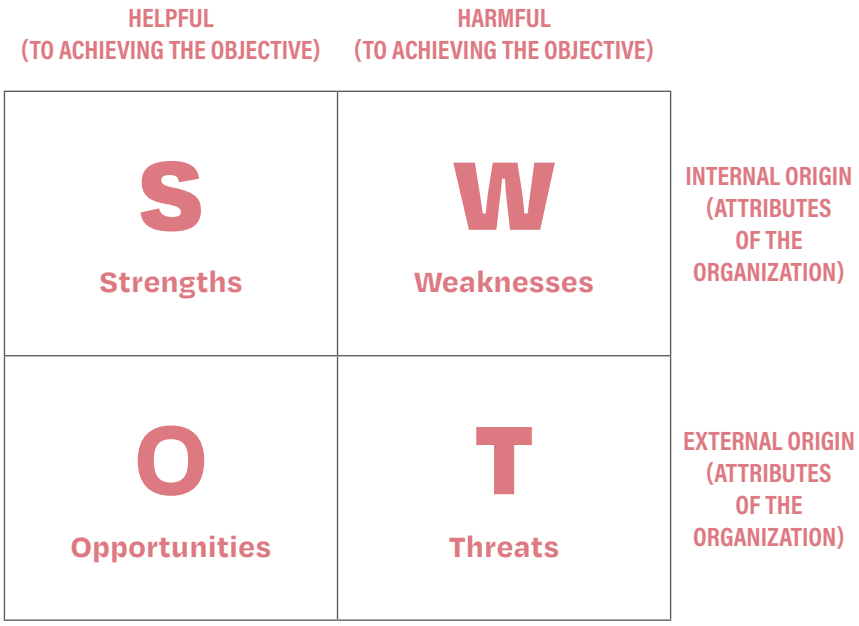
Recall from Module 1 the three basic steps in marketing process: planning, tactics, and measurement. We talk about marketing concepts separately, but in reality, they all work together. In fact, in creating your brand, you've already begun developing your marketing plan! Let's look at each phase in more detail as you develop your plan.

Do a Competitive Analysis

As important as it is to know yourself, it's just as important to know what you're up against. We might think we excel at some aspect of real estate, but if the agent at the brokerage across town seems to be consistently more successful at it, it is likely an aspect of our business that needs to be reassessed.

Ultimately, to be truly successful, we need to know ourselves by knowing our competition. A SWOT analysis is a tool to help us do this. SWOT stands for Strengths–Weaknesses–Opportunities–Threats, and it's a way of doing a competitive analysis of both internal and external factors that influence your business.

Figure 3.1: SWOT Analysis



Strengths and weaknesses are typically internal factors that you have some degree of control over. In real estate, this could mean your personal attributes or perhaps the brokerage you work for. Ask yourself the following:

- Does your brokerage have name recognition in your market?
- Does it have a lot of resources you can access?
- How experienced and knowledgeable are you?
- Do you have a strong list of contacts and connections?
- What is your current advertising strategy?

Assign each factor you can think of into either a strength or weakness category.

Opportunities and threats typically consist of external factors, which you have less control over. Ask yourself:

- Who are the most successful real estate agents in your area? Why?
- Are there new brokerages moving in?
- Is the market heating up or cooling down for buyers?
- Are there any government regulations that will make home buying easier or more difficult?
- What do mortgage rates look like?
- What are the latest home-buying apps?

Again, assign any factor you can think of as either an opportunity or a threat.

When you look at the analysis in total, you can begin to see ways to gain competitive advantages (i.e., external opportunities + internal strengths) as well as mitigate places where you might be at a disadvantage (external threats + internal weaknesses).

By taking a look at the full competitive landscape and assessing where you fit in it, you can choose marketing tactics and strategies that will help you gain an advantage in your local market.

Remember, self-assessments and SWOT analyses are not something you merely do once; they should be revisited at least every year during your business planning.

A blank SWOT Analysis worksheet is located in the Resources section of this workbook.

Planning

An integral part of the planning phase is creating a brand centered around your target market, which you've already begun doing. It's in this phase that you also conduct a competitive analysis, such as a SWOT analysis. Knowing your internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as your external threats and opportunities, will help you determine another important aspect of this phase: setting your goals.

MARKETING GOALS

Goals are essential to any plan. Goals give us a target to aim for. They help us measure how well we're doing. But perhaps most importantly, they determine the process we will use to achieve them. In many ways, goals determine the plan.

But not all goals are the same. Some goals are more helpful than others. A helpful, constructive goal is one that you can measure. The more defined the goal, the easier it is to measure. For example, let's say your goal is to "be more physically fit." That's a nice goal, but how will you know if you've achieved it? If you said, however, that you wanted to "be more physically fit by running a 5K in under 35 minutes," then you have a measurable goal by which to judge success or failure.

The same goes for your business. It's not enough to say, "I want more leads" or "I want to generate more revenue." It's too difficult to define whether you're achieving that goal. For example, if you made one dollar more than last year, did you achieve your goal? When establishing goals for your business, be sure to set specific targets.

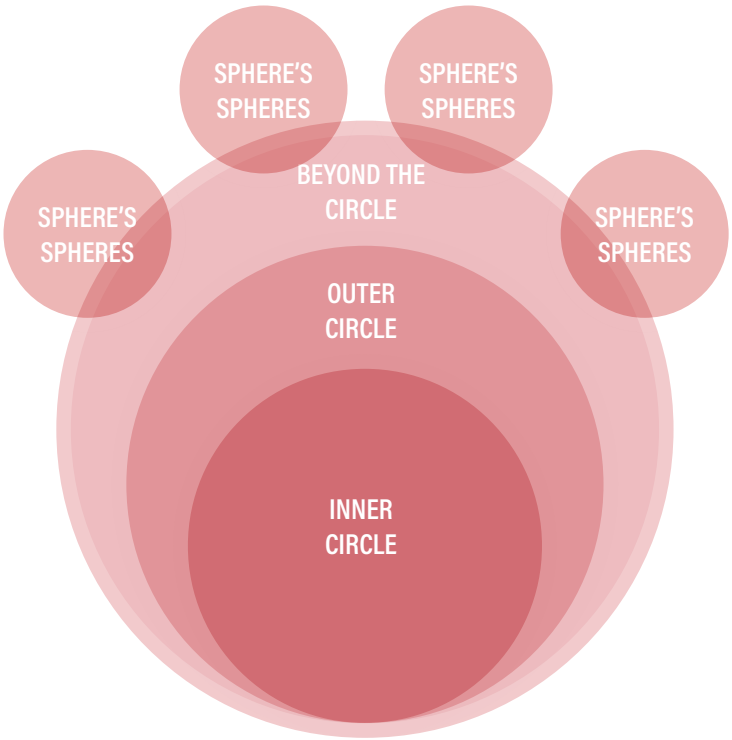
Your goals can be expressed in any number of ways—dollar volume, units, market share, clients, to name a few—but it's important to set the target in order to know whether you've hit it.

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Another aspect of the planning phase is determining your spheres of influence. Establishing and maintaining relationships is critical to building your business, whether you hope to generate business from cold leads, referrals, or repeat customers. Your spheres of influence include everyone you might come in contact with, including family, friends, acquaintances, and people you don't know.

You need to identify who comprises these separate spheres so you can market yourself accordingly. Identifying these spheres also helps you set your marketing goals.

Figure 3.2: Spheres of Influence



INNER CIRCLE

The inner circle consists of your closest networks. It is essentially your sales force. Marketing to this group results in the "biggest bang for your buck." It involves building upon established relationships with friends, family, and past clients to generate more leads and increase referral business, which we will discuss more in the referral section to follow.

OUTER CIRCLE

The outer circle includes contacts such as former clients, professional service providers, other agents, and former classmates. There is a tremendous opportunity to build your leads by establishing and nurturing personal or professional connections within this group.

BEYOND THE CIRCLE

Any new and not-yet-referred prospects are beyond the circle. Marketing to this group involves reaching out to the consumer market as a way to develop leads and initiate relationships. For both new and experienced real estate professionals, continual marketing beyond the circle keeps a stream of prospects in the pipeline.

Don't limit yourself once you move beyond your immediate circles. Don't be afraid to think big! With the right marketing strategy, the world could be in the palm of your hand. NAR has an abundance of resources that can help you take your business global. Here are just a couple to get you started: https://www.nar.realtor/global/global-alliances; https://www.nar.realtor/global/real-estate-practices-around-the-world.

Exercise: Marketing to Your Spheres

Consider the various marketing channels and tactics we've discussed so far. Which ones would you use to reach or connect with people who know you versus those you've never met?

Discuss which of the following tactics you would use to appeal to each of your spheres of influence.

- Email Campaigns
- Social Media Engagement
- Client Appreciation Events
- Personalized Gifts
- Content Marketing
- Direct Mail Campaigns
- Phone Calls
- Networking
- Online Networking
- Advertising
- Personalized Updates
- Educational Workshops
- Community Involvement
- Blog Articles
- Video Marketing
- Online Reviews
- Social Media Content
- Videos
- Podcast

INNER CIRCLE

OUTER CIRCLE

BEYOND THE CIRCLE

Marketing Techniques

Once you've created your brand, come to understand your target audience, and set clear marketing goals, it's time to determine what methods you will use to communicate your message and achieve your goals.

Different marketing techniques may be more or less effective depending on the sphere of influence you want to reach. An email marketing campaign is not necessary for your inner circle, but it may be an appropriate way to reach beyond the circle. Similarly, you can't arrange to meet someone for lunch beyond your circle; however, doing so with someone in your inner circle is a smart marketing technique.

Of course, the same methods can work for all spheres. For example, social media allows you to connect with all spheres at once:

- **Inner circle**
  Posts about life updates and insights enable family and friends to feel connected and invested in your life and business, which can lead to referrals.
- **Outer circle**
  Highlighting and tagging service providers that you know and trust will provide value to those who see your posts and will position you as a knowledgeable source of information and referrals.
- **Beyond the circle**
  Your posts about neighborhood events or features may capture the attention of some prospective clients.

The trick is finding which methods work best for each of your spheres of influence. Let's look at some different marketing methods and tools that will help you achieve your goals.

NETWORKING AND REFERRALS

Networking is one of the most basic and effective marketing techniques available. There are many ways to initiate, build, and maintain relationships through networking, with the ultimate goal of generating referrals and attracting prospects. As with all aspects of marketing, a planned approach yields the greatest results and maximizes your return on investment (ROI).

The importance of face-to-face networking cannot be overemphasized. Real estate is primarily a "people business." Pushing away from your desk and computer to interact one-on-one is a must. Although social media sites make connections easier and more efficient, there is no substitute for face-to-face networking.

FACE-TO-FACE NETWORKING ALLOWS YOU TO:

- Observe body language and be aware of your own body language
- Establish a deeper level of trust
- Discuss potential issues and solutions in depth
- Let your personality shine through
- Showcase your brand
- Demonstrate customer service and client appreciation
- Close a deal

THE FOLLOWING GROUPS FOCUS ON CONNECTING BUSINESSPEOPLE:

- **Business Networking International**
  www.bni.com
  - International referral organization
  - Members can share ideas, contacts, and business referrals
- **LeTip International**
  www.letip.com
  - Professional leads organization
  - Chapters meet to exchange leads, build relationships, develop presentation skills, and become proficient networkers

The Leads Club
www.leadsclub.com

- Business referral organization
- Advertising service dedicated to increasing members' business

Local Chamber of Commerce

- Local networking and marketing opportunities and advocacy support
- Various state and local resources

Rotary International
www.rotary.org

- A global service organization focused on community service, leadership development, and networking
- Opportunities to connect with local business professionals and engage in community projects.

Kiwanis International
www.kiwanis.org

- An organization dedicated to serving children and communities.
- Provides a platform for networking with like-minded professionals while contributing to local causes.

Lions Clubs International
www.lionsclubs.org

- A service organization with a focus on humanitarian projects and community service.
- Offers networking opportunities and a chance to make a positive impact in your local community.

TIPS FOR MAKING A GOOD IMPRESSION

When you're face-to-face at a networking or educational event, or meeting with listing agents or clients, it's important to make a good first impression. And you might be surprised to know that it's not actually what you say that makes the impression, it's the nonverbal messages that you are sending with your body language. Here are a few tips to help you come across as confident, sincere, and professional in every room you walk into:[3]

- Stand tall or sit up straight in your chair. Good posture increases your confidence.
- Pull your shoulders back and tilt your chin up slightly. This creates a sense of presence and expectation.
- Project an attitude of energy and interest when engaging with others.
- Maintain eye contact and nod your head to show that you are listening.
- Angle your body toward the person you are talking to and keep your posture open. If sitting, lean toward the other person.
- Put your phone away. Looking at your phone conveys lack of attention and interrupts the flow of conversation.

3 Matthews, J. (2018). "Build Better Communications, Practice Being Present." *REALTOR® AE Magazine*. https://www.nar.realtor/realtor-ae-magazine/build-better-communications-practice-being-present.

AGENT-TO-AGENT NETWORKING

Another source of client leads is through agent-to-agent referrals. There are many ways to connect and build relationships with your colleagues:

- Attend conventions, expositions, and real estate education classes outside of your marketing area
- Participate in REALTOR® association activities
- Teach real estate education courses
- Include other agents in email distribution
- Participate in online networking groups
- Attend NAR Tech Edge events

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS NETWORKING

Networking with other professional service providers in your community can also generate referrals. They want to reach the same customer base. Service providers to consider include:

- Attorneys
- Bankers
- Accountants
- Lenders
- Insurance agents
- Builders
- Movers
- Contractors
- Teachers
- Inspectors
- Financial advisors
- Carpet cleaners
- Interior designers
- Locksmiths
- Handymen

REFLECTION: BUILD YOUR OWN BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

Start building your business roundtable by selecting three to four people who would be good business network contacts. Invite them to lunch, outline the plan, and ask each of them to invite one more contact to a future meeting. Contributions and assistance must flow in both directions, and members must stay focused on the network's purpose.

REFERRALS

A referral is a lead that is based on a recommendation by someone you know, not one you generate yourself. Most agents get the majority of their leads from referrals, and those referrals come from the people they know best—their sphere of influence and past clients. But there are other types of referrals that real estate agents use to generate leads based on the professional relationships they develop while conducting business.

Successful agents prioritize referrals in their marketing strategy, recognizing that they help build their business and generate significant income. The longer your career in real estate, the more referrals can become a core source of your business. To gain referrals you must do two things: (1) run a business that creates exceptional value for your clients, and (2) make sure you are continually asking for referrals. This is where all your networking strategies also come into play.

As you work with other vendors/service providers, such as lenders, closing attorneys, and home inspectors, consider exchanging referrals (becoming "referral partners"). Share your business cards and contact information, and, of course, thank them for their trust in you. Take the time to get to know those referral partners by asking them to coffee and lunch and finding out how you can support each other. Professional organizations such as Business Networking International (BNI.com), LeTip (letip.com), and Leads Club (leadsclub.com) also provide opportunities for networking with people in different fields with the goal of exchanging referrals. And, of course, your agent-to-agent networking is a valuable resource as well, as just discussed.

PHONE AND EMAIL REGULATIONS

Marketing activities must comply with federal and state regulations on phone calls, faxes, and emails. The two most important of these are the CAN-SPAM Act, which covers electronic communications, and the National Do Not Call Registry, which covers phone calls.

DO NOT CALL

The federal "Do Not Call" regulations make it illegal to call any residential phone number listed in the National Do Not Call Registry "for the purpose of encouraging the purchase or rental of, or investment in, property, goods, or services, which is transmitted to any person." As of January 1, 2005, telemarketers and sellers (including real estate licensees) are required to search the Do Not Call Registry at least once every 31 days and drop from their call lists the phone numbers of consumers who have registered.

- Bans telephone solicitation calls to any residential telephone number on the national Do Not Call list
- Applies to both interstate and intrastate calls (check federal and state lists) and preempts any state laws
- Managed at broker level
- Must search the national Do Not Call registry every 31 days and purge numbers of registered consumers from its call list
- Must receive express written permission or have an established business relationship (EBR), which applies to clients and extends for 18 months after the transaction, except if a request to be removed is made to anyone in firm
- If a prospect makes an inquiry, calls can be made for up to 90 days
- Access the registry on a subscription basis by registering at https://telemarketing.donotcall.gov

Be sure to avoid violations of the Do Not Call rules, which can result in fines of $50,120 per call.[4]

4 Federal Trade Commission (2023). National Do Not Call Registry FAQs. https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/national-do-not-call-registry-faqs.

EMAIL

The CAN-SPAM Act (which stands for "Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing") establishes requirements for any email that advertises or promotes a commercial product or service, including website content. Emails must include:[5]

- Accurate header
- Accurate subject lines
- Easy opt-out method
- Legitimate return email address and valid physical postal address
- Disclosure that the message is an ad

CAN-SPAM MOBILE SERVICE COMMERCIAL MESSAGES (MSCM)

- Bans delivery of unwanted MSCM to wireless devices or domain names (includes cell phones, PDAs, and smartphones)
- Check the FCC's list of wireless domain names at www.fcc.gov to ensure that commercial emails are not being sent to prohibited domains.

SAMPLE COMPLIANT EMAIL

[Emails must contain the following information]

To: undisclosed-recipients (use bcc)
From: "ABC Agent" abcagent@abcrealty.com
Re: Experts discuss latest home buying trends

<Body of Message>

Email Footer:
This is an advertisement. If you wish to be removed from ABC's email mailing list, please click here.

To review ABC's privacy policy, please click here.

ABC Headquarters – Address – City – State – Zip - Telephone
© 2023. ABC Realty. All rights reserved.

5 Federal Trade Commission. "CAN-SPAM Act: A Compliance Guide for Business." https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/can-spam-act-compliance-guide-business.

Measuring Marketing Results

As the saying goes, what gets measured gets done. A critical component of a successful marketing strategy is the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the tactics you choose to implement. Measuring the results, including return on investment (ROI), allows for adjustments and reallocation of resources for maximum return.

It is critical to measure what marketing tactics work and what tactics do not yield much ROI. To provide a true measure of effectiveness, consistently track results over time and evaluate them compared to costs. Methods for tracking results include:

- Using numeric or color-coded tags or QR codes on your physical marketing pieces (i.e., mailers, letters, flyers, brochures)
- Using unique telephone numbers or extensions for different lead sources (i.e., billboard, mailer, website)
- Unique email addresses
- Tracking the number of referrals you get from your networking groups and activities
- Tracking website and blog visits
- Comparing email open rates and click-through rates from month to month
- Social media follower growth and engagement rates (likes, comments, shares, follows, saves, direct messages)

Blogs and social media sites present a unique challenge in terms of measuring success. ROI is difficult to quantify. For example, you may have someone on your email newsletter list who hasn't contacted you in years, but who might have forwarded the newsletter to a friend who is getting ready to sell. Similarly, you may have hundreds of Facebook friends resulting in only one referral, but it's a free way to get exposure for your business, and you enjoy connecting with others. Depending on your goals, a handful of transactions may be worth the effort.

Regardless of the type of data you collect, your goal is to monitor results and adjust tactics accordingly.

TRACKING RESULTS

Tracking results is a vital part of accurate measurements. We will discuss tracking in detail in Module 5. For now, here is a brief list of ways you can track the results of the tactics you are using:

- Contact Management Systems (CMS) help you organize, sort, and track networking leads.
- Monitor the type of online posts that are shared frequently and generate the most comments.
- Plot the number of unique visitors to your blog or website each week. What did you post that week?
- Track the number of followers you gain on Instagram or Facebook and your overall engagement on posts. How many people liked, saved, commented, or sent you a direct message?
- Search for the frequency of your name or your company's name on various search engines. Why did it appear?
- Ask people where they heard about you. How did they get your name? Did they read your blog?
- Check how many people have signed up for your newsletter.

UTILIZE RESULTS

Tracking results is fruitless unless you do something with the data you collect. You use your data to evaluate what's working and what's not. You can then revise your marketing plan accordingly. If you see that one tactic is generating a lot of leads, then perhaps you can invest more time and money into that tactic. Conversely, if you see that a tactic is not yielding many leads or revenue, you can shift time and money away from that tactic. Remember this quick checklist when assessing your results:

- Get a sense of what resonates with your target audience.
- Determine where you should devote more or less time and money.
- Understand when a change of marketing strategy is necessary, such as when what worked in the past is no longer generating the same results.
- Identify ways to make the tactic more effective in the future.
- Prioritize and reallocate your time and resources.

GOOGLE ALERTS

By creating a Google Alert, you can receive an email notification any time Google finds new results on a topic that interests you.

For example, you could receive updates about a product you like, find out when people post something about you on the web, or keep up with news stories. Visit Google.com/alerts to receive an alert when someone is talking about you or your brand.

Practitioner Perspective: Mark Given



Mark Given
ABR®, CRS, GRI
Littleton, North Carolina

NETWORKING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

How important is networking to your business?

Without networking, my business comes to a screeching halt. Top salespeople understand that selling real estate is primarily a face-to-face business, and although we have tools to streamline communication, we build the deepest levels of TRUST through personal interaction. Just think how many times your emails, text messages, and brief written messages are misunderstood or misinterpreted. Networking is the key element to keep me relevant, trusted, and personally connected.

What are the most important things for agents to keep in mind when they network with other agents?

We're all in this together, and there is no place for conflict, unkindness, or keeping our distance. In fact, the more time we invest in creating and developing relationships with other agents, the more successful our clients will be and the more profitable our businesses will become. The more purposeful we are in investing our time and money in strategically traveling to relevant locations for education and networking, the more referral opportunities will come our way. I believe we are swimming in an abundance of referral opportunities, only stagnated by our lack of strategic and more purposeful networking.

What are the most important things for agents to keep in mind when they network with other businesses?

I love the principles taught in the classic book *The Go-Giver* written by my friends Bob Burg and John David Mann, and those principles are so applicable here. The lesson...be a giver! The more we are willing to help others succeed, the more those business owners are interested and willing to help us succeed. A perfect representation of the old adage: "The more you give, the more you get." Zig Ziglar may have said it best when he said, "We can have anything in life that we want if we just help enough other people get what they want."

What advice do you have for an agent who doesn't feel comfortable networking?

The industry teaches, "chase more strangers." Master agents recognize that the more time and energy they invest in their SOI (Sphere of Influence) the more TOMA (Top of Mind Awareness) they create, which guarantees higher ROI (Return on Investment). Agents can buy all the leads they want from all kinds of resources, but business is more enjoyable, less stressful, and much more profitable when your working time is focused on better networking creating deeper relationships. It's just a GIVEN...but you get to choose!

Summary

You have the outline of a plan, but you need to think about the marketing channels that work the best for you and your business. In the next module, you are going to explore several marketing tools and tactics. Do you need to use them all? Certainly not. Is the list exhaustive? Not at all. But you will start to get a feel for the possibilities; you need to find the best fit for realizing a meaningful and measurable marketing plan.



MODULE 4:
Digital Marketing Tools and Tactics

After learning the material in this module, you should be able to:

- Examine the marketing hub and spokes strategy.
- Maintain an online presence that reflects your personal branding and engages your target audience.
- Explain the most effective techniques for using websites and social media for generating leads.

Successful marketing depends upon getting your messages in front of your ideal client. To do that, you have to figure out where that client is spending their time. And these days, the answer is online.

That means that your online presence and your participation in social media are more important than ever before. There will always be a place for the face-to-face, more traditional marketing tactics discussed in Module 3, but the truth is that if you do not have a consistent and professional brand identity across the internet and are not leveraging the power of digital marketing to promote your brand and generate leads, you are leaving money on the table.

Your digital presence creates an opportunity to open a dialogue with your niche, foster a sense of community, and build social capital. The real estate professional can be a trusted guide who points the way to useful information, products, and services. In this module, we will explore ways to refine your brand online and capitalize on the many opportunities the digital space offers.

Hub and Spokes Strategy

The first thing most prospects do when someone passes your name along to them is Google you. Everything that comes up in the search results leads back to you—your website, social media profiles, blog posts, ads, Yelp reviews, etc. You want to make sure that your digital footprint tells the story you want it to tell and positions you as a knowledgeable and successful real estate professional. In order to do that, it helps to follow a "hub and spokes" strategy for organizing your online efforts.

Start by defining your hub. Your hub is your digital home base—one centralized place where prospects can learn about your brand and your services and get a sense of who you are.

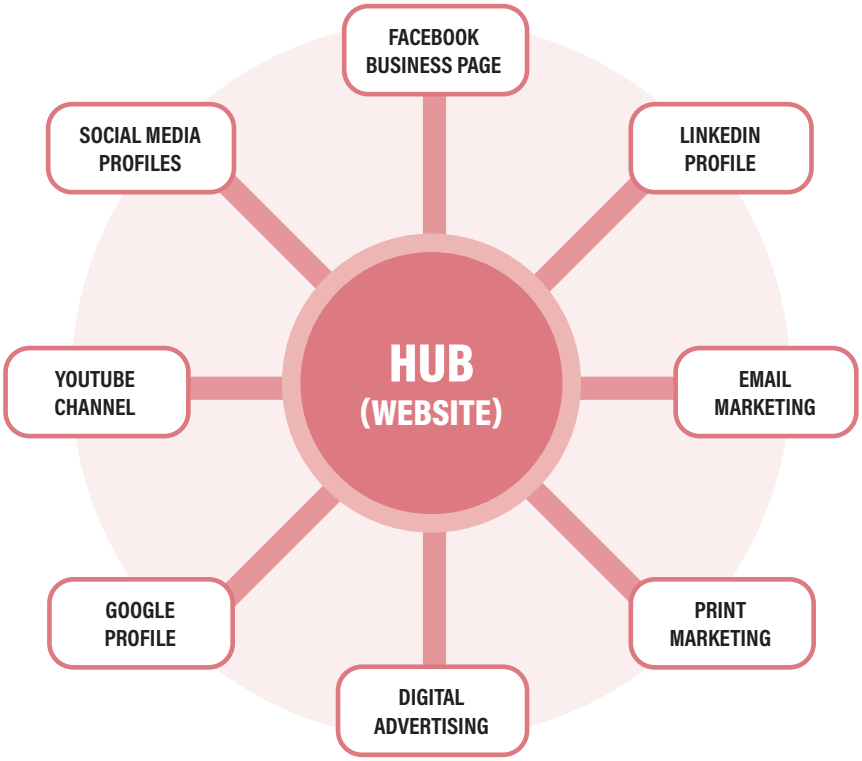
For most agents, your hub is your website, and it allows you to demonstrate your expertise, provide valuable tools and information, build community, and capture and convert leads.

All of your other online activities and profiles are "spokes." They should lead to your hub and vice versa.

As shown in Figure 4.1, spokes are where you interact with prospective leads in all of your digital activities, and in many cases, your offline activities as well. It's a two-way street: consumers find you via your hub and interact with you via the spokes, and you use the interaction that occurs in the spokes to drive traffic back to your hub.

The information you use in your various online profiles should be consistent and amplified and reiterated in your hub/website. On the flip side, your hub/website should link to your various spokes. Your hub is a public place to display and promote your personal and business information. Your hub gives you the opportunity to present a narrative of what you care about, what you know, how you work, and why visitors should care. The bottom line is always the same: to generate leads.

Figure 4.1: Hub and Spokes Model



YOUR WEBSITE HUB

Your website is an important online source for marketing. It should be the foundation of your online presence and where you direct consumers. Your website gives you an opportunity to demonstrate your expertise, promote your listings, and capture information from prospective clients. It's important to make your website a two-way street—customers use it to learn about you and the services you provide, and you use it to begin a relationship with them, collecting contact information and learning about their needs.

A website makes the perfect hub for your business, but only if it contains the right content. By the numbers, 89% of buyers rated photos and 86% of buyers rated detailed information about properties for sale as the most useful website features.[6]

Buyers also look to websites for virtual tours, neighborhood and community information, information about recently sold properties, and information about open houses.

6 National Association of REALTORS® (2021). Real Estate in a Digital Age. https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/real-estate-in-a-digital-age.

Your website is the public face for your business, so it needs to reflect the services you offer and concern for your clientele. It gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your expertise, your knowledge of the market, and your familiarity with the community you serve. Showing your unique personality will gain the attention and trust of prospective clients. People are more likely to do business with you because they like and trust you, not because of the properties you market.

SOME OF THE FEATURES AND CAPABILITIES YOUR WEBSITE SHOULD INCLUDE:

- **Your Branding**
  Ensure that your website reflects your personal branding (colors, logo, images, content, features, etc.). Include a current headshot that looks like you and gives visitors a sense of who you are and what it would be like to work with you. (If you're a happy, relaxed, and approachable agent, don't post a serious headshot of you wearing a black business suit.) Include a branded, professional video on your home page, if you have one.

- **Consumer Content**
  Ensure that you have the ability to add frequently and update content on your website. Most websites have a blogging platform built in, or one can be added easily. Provide useful, valuable content that answers consumers' most important questions and addresses their most pressing needs. Provide hyper-local information about the neighborhoods you service and their standout features.

- **Property Search**
  A valuable resource your website can offer to consumers is a place to search for property. Creating a large inventory of properties is a fundamental need. IDX gives MLS participants a tool for displaying each other's listings on their websites. Under IDX, brokers consent to display each other's listings online. Some agents don't believe that it is worth the expense of incorporating IDX listings because most prospects use sites such as Zillow or Realtor.com™ to search for homes. However, a high-quality MLS will give consumers a reason to go to your site repeatedly and consistently, meaning they are revisiting your hub rather than a third-party marketing site. An alternative is to create individual landing pages for each listing on your site with detailed information, and then highlight listings using your blog

Mobile Responsiveness

Today it is important to have a website that is mobile-responsive and works on all devices. More than 50% of all home buyers search for homes using a mobile device.[7]

Market Insight and Expertise

Your website provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate your expertise, your knowledge of the market, and your familiarity with the community you serve. Prospects are looking for someone to help them through the buying and selling processes. By including FAQs, videos, fact sheets, local data, and market reports, you make the process more manageable. Showing your expertise helps build trust.

Videos

Incorporating videos into your website is another way to highlight your expertise and engage visitors. Include videos showcasing individual properties or about the local area. Take visitors on a virtual tour of a neighborhood, pointing out features that might interest your target audience.

Testimonials

Many agents use client testimonials and online reviews as a way of demonstrating their value to prospective clients. Video testimonials can be posted on your website (and/or on a YouTube channel) and linked to social media. Agents can encourage clients to make their own video testimonials, or make it easier by asking them to come into the office to record the video, providing a thank-you gift card as an incentive.

Lead Capture

Implement lead capture forms on property pages and throughout the site to collect contact information from potential clients. Offer valuable resources, such as property guides or market reports, in exchange for user information.

Community Information

Offer comprehensive information about the communities and neighborhoods you serve. Include details on schools, local amenities, transportation, and lifestyle.

Social Media Integration

Include social media sharing buttons and links to your social media profiles for seamless integration with your online presence.

7 National Association of REALTORS® (2021). Real Estate in a Digital Age. https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/real-estate-in-a-digital-age.

- **Clear Calls to Action**
  Place prominent and clear calls to action (CTAs) throughout the site to encourage user engagement, such as "Schedule a Consultation" or "Request a Free Home Valuation."

- **Remember SEO**
  Keywords are important for search engine optimization (SEO). They should relate to your target market, what you do, and your local area. Many people use locations when searching for real estate, so remember to include location-specific keywords. Use tools such as Google Keyword Planner (http://adwords.google.com/keywordplanner) to find out what is being searched for and what the competition is for each keyword or phrase.

YOUR SPOKES

Now it's time to consider which spokes will work best for your brand and have the best chance of reaching your ideal audience. In the following sections, we'll review some of the most important spokes that can be leveraged by real estate agents for digital marketing and lead generation.

Exercise: Your Spokes

> **Whether it's a Facebook post, an email campaign, an article, or an ad, a spoke is where you interact with your target audience. Choose five spokes that can effectively drive traffic to your hub given your particular target market.**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

One of the most important "spokes" in your marketing strategy is email. Keeping lines of communication open is essential when it comes to nurturing leads. That usually means finding ways of reaching out to prospects and continuing to provide valuable information. There are many techniques that agents use to keep themselves top of mind and keep leads warm until they are ready to move to the next step in the buying or selling process.

Most agents use email drip campaigns to nurture leads. A drip campaign is a targeted series of email messages sent over an extended period of time. Drip campaigns are usually incorporated into the agent's customer relationship management (CRM) system so that they are based on the information the agent has on each lead. The process is automated so that once a lead has been entered in the appropriate category, that lead receives drip emails on a set basis with no additional effort needed by the agent (see sample scenarios in the Resources section).

Many agents manage their drip campaigns or email marketing within their CRM systems. However, there are many other easy-to-use email platforms that offer robust features to help you reach your database. Here are a few of the most popular.

- Mailchimp
- Constant Contact
- ActiveCampaign
- GetResponse
- Sendinblue
- AWeber
- Benchmark
- iContact
- Keap (formerly Infusionsoft)
- BombBomb

When deciding which email platform to use for your client communications, look for a variety of features, such as:

- Easy-to-design email templates
- List segmentation and automation tools
- Comprehensive analytics to track the performance of your campaigns
- Integration with other popular real estate CRMs

YOUR LISTINGS AND PROFILES AT REAL ESTATE PORTALS

Many real estate consumers visit online real estate portals. Consumers can search for the newest listings, research pricing history and property taxes, get mortgages prequalified or preapproved, and shop real estate agents. Savvy real estate brokers syndicate their listings to portals, and savvy real estate professionals complete their profiles so that consumers can learn about their credentials and experience.

PAID LEADS, PAID PLACEMENT

For many real estate professionals, a critical online source of leads is buying leads or paying for placement at real estate portals. Online real estate vendors can generate significant leads for real estate professionals for a price that varies from several hundred dollars to several thousand dollars per month. These vendors create custom Internet Data Exchange (IDX) home search websites and offer dashboards that allow real estate professionals to track buyer and seller leads as those leads navigate online.

AGENT REVIEWS AND RATINGS

On websites such as Google Reviews and RateMyAgent, consumers can review and rate real estate professionals for all to see, whether the feedback is positive or negative. Some consumers might rely on the feedback of others before reaching out to an agent. Real estate portals are now incorporating reviews and recommendations so that client feedback may be reflected in online agent profiles. RealSatisfied is a testimonial and review service that acts as a third party to survey past clients and to collect reviews and testimonials that agents can use on their websites and social networks.

VIDEO

Video content has become an integral part of the modern real estate marketing landscape due to its effectiveness in engaging and informing potential clients. It can be a powerful "spoke" that will enhance your online presence and help you connect with your target audience—both inside and outside of your spheres of influence. Videos have the power to convey information, emotion, and authenticity in a way that text and images alone cannot.

Videos can be uploaded directly to your website (depending on its capabilities), or they can be posted first to YouTube or another social media platform and then embedded into your website, emails, and newsletters.

By incorporating a variety of video types into your marketing strategy, you can enhance your online presence, build trust, and effectively reach and connect with clients and prospects. Here are some examples:

- **Property Tours:**
  Property tour videos are one of the most valuable tools for showcasing listings. They provide potential buyers with a virtual walkthrough of the property, allowing them to get a feel for the layout, design, and overall ambiance.

- **Agent Introductions:**
  Personal introduction videos help agents establish a connection with their audience by putting a face and personality to their brand. Sharing insights about your background, expertise, and approach to real estate builds trust and credibility.

- **Market Updates:**
  Market update videos keep clients and prospects informed about local real estate trends, such as property values, market conditions, and emerging opportunities. These videos position agents as knowledgeable industry experts and valuable sources of information.

- **Testimonials:**
  Client testimonial videos build social proof, instilling confidence in potential clients who see real people benefiting from your services.

- **Educational Content:**
  Long-form and short-form educational videos on various topics related to real estate (such as homebuying tips, seller's guides, financing options, and neighborhood highlights) position agents as trusted advisors and valuable resources.

- **Neighborhood Tours and Features:**
  Neighborhood tour videos help potential buyers explore the lifestyle, amenities, and attractions of different neighborhoods.

- **Social Media Updates:**
  Short videos on social media (i.e., Instagram Reels and Stories, Facebook Live, TikTok) provide a quick and informal way to stay connected with your audience, share insights, and showcase new listings.

SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING

Search engine marketing (SEM) strategies like pay-per-click (PPC) advertising can be healthy online sources for leads for some real estate professionals. These strategies drive traffic to other online sources—your website or your listings, for example.

CONVENTIONAL OFFLINE MARKETING TACTICS

As we discussed in Module 1, conventional marketing methods are still effective and are an important spoke in your marketing strategy. Conducting open houses, using yard signs, advertising in newspapers and local magazines, direct mailings, postcards, and sponsoring events in the community are all effective ways to generate leads and prospects and to gain top-of-mind recognition. Just like the digital outlets, your offline assets and efforts should also lead back to your hub.

POST-TRANSACTION MARKETING

Marketing continues after the transaction. It's part of the ongoing marketing cycle that all agents must continually engage in. We will discuss post-transaction marketing in Module 6 as a way to continue to nurture leads and create loyal, lifelong clients.

Social Media

Social media is one of the most powerful top-of-mind marketing tactics. When used strategically, your social media profiles can become lead generation engines that fill your pipeline with potential clients.

However, creating content to fill the social media "beast" can quickly become a burden and a drain on your time and resources. The good news is that you don't have to be on every platform! Begin with the one site that makes the most sense for you and your target audience and give it a try. (If you are not comfortable with technology, you might want to hire an assistant to help you make the most of your online presence.)

HAVE A PLAN

It is important not to jump into the social space half-heartedly, uninterestedly, or without a solid strategy. Determine your goals, target audience, platform, and content.

SET GOALS

Typical goals for a real estate professional might be to:

- Increase your brand awareness
- Improve your reputation
- Market specific properties
- Drive traffic to your website
- Engage with your sphere and potential clients

WHAT PLATFORM IS BEST FOR YOUR TARGET MARKET?

When determining what sites you will use and how you will use them, consider your target audience. Who are they? What are they looking for? Where are they looking for information now? Before you decide where to focus your social media efforts, consider where your audience is already going online. For example, most consumers are already comfortable interacting with brands and businesses on Facebook. So, a Facebook business page might be the best way for you to communicate with prospects.

On the other hand, a commercial real estate investor might already be on X (formerly known as Twitter), where there is an established professional commercial real estate community. If you want to increase awareness among that group, you might want to open an X account.

CREATE ENGAGING CONTENT

Once you've chosen the platform(s) you'd like to use, it's time to start thinking about your content. Consumers and other social media users will not be interested in interacting with you if all you do is post promotional content. The type, source, and frequency of your posts should support the goals that you've already established.

You might already be generating content that can be posted on social media. If you already have a blog, you should link to those postings from Facebook and LinkedIn. Do you write newsletters? White papers? FAQs? Any kind of content that you would share with a potential client is content that can be linked to or repurposed for use on social media sites. You can also post links to other sources of content. Scan your local news for business and market reports, community event listings, and other items of interest to your community and region.

The most important reason for using social media is that it is social. It allows you to engage with your leads more effectively because you interact with each other. Although posting good, relevant content will attract followers, it is the interaction that keeps them coming back and develops a sense of familiarity and trust.

Don't assume that because someone is lurking and not engaging with your content that they aren't hearing your message and you aren't still "top of mind." They might have to hear your message over and over again before they take the next step, but just by following your Facebook page, they have taken action. And you are nurturing them just by continuing to post.

Strategies to foster engagement include:

- Post frequently and schedule posts according to the times your audience is likely to be online.
- Ask questions and solicit feedback. Something as simple as "What do you think?" or "Do you agree?"
- Publicly respond to posts on your page and profile or replies to your account. If you want people to interact with you, you have to interact with them.
- Always thank people for posting, answering your questions, and participating.
- Include high-quality photos. They are eye-catching and attract attention.
- Incorporate video. Videos are attention-grabbing and provide a dynamic way to connect with your audience, whether the videos include local features, property tours, market updates, or personal messages. Videos often receive higher engagement rates and encourage viewers to interact with your posts.

In the following sections, we offer tips and information on some of the most prominent social media platforms. However, new platforms are always emerging while others fall in popularity. This is not a comprehensive list.

FACEBOOK

You can use Facebook to generate and nurture online leads, using your personal account and a business page. Here are a few ways to use Facebook effectively:

- **Share Information**
  Don't be afraid to share information about your personal life. People want to know about you as a person and your life beyond real estate.

- **Connect with Others**
  Friend your clients as well as friends and "like" their posts.

- **Source Information**
  People use Facebook to share information about the events in their lives and those of their friends and family. Some of those events, such as marriage, divorce, a new baby, or a child going to college, might affect buying or selling real estate. As you read about the events in the lives of your friends, comment on their posts and message or call them to inquire about their needs.

- **Stay Active**
  As with most communication, consistency is key. Post a mix of appropriate personal and professional updates four to seven times per week. Follow what friends are doing and make comments. Activity is visibility, and visibility equals top-of-mind awareness.

- **Foster Engagement**
  Encourage engagement by posting polls, contests, and information about local events. Partner with local merchants and feature discounts.

- **Make Yourself Visible**
  Personal profiles show up higher in search results than business pages. Make some posts public so that prospective clients can find you and learn a bit about you.

- **Be Visual**
  Make your profile picture a recent photo of yourself that looks cheerful and pleasant. On your business page, include a professional cover photo that reinforces your brand.

- **Organize Your Friends**
  Group your friends into lists. You can separate clients from family, and update local friends with upcoming events more easily.

- **Keep It Personal**
  Your personal Facebook page should be just that: personal. Don't overload your personal page with listings and promotions.

- **Don't Violate the NAR Code of Ethics**
  At all times your online communications should adhere to the NAR Code of Ethics, specifically Articles 10, 12, and 15.

- **Be Responsible**
  Even if you are posting on a personal page, you are still presenting yourself publicly. Avoid being angry or controversial. Be civil and polite, and check your spelling and grammar.

There are many ways Facebook can be used for cultivating leads. When you get the name of a lead—from your website, an open house, or a sign call—spend a few minutes searching for the lead on Facebook. See if you have any mutual friends. Add them as a friend or send a message. For example:

> *Hi* **[NAME]**, *it was great meeting you at* **[EVENT]**. *I noticed we have some mutual friends* **[NAME(S)]**. *I'd really like to help you with your home search. Feel free to get in touch via message or email. In the meantime, feel free to follow me on Facebook. Thanks.*

For more on marketing through Facebook, go to https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/. Facebook offers a variety of training resources to assist marketers with setting up and promoting pages and ads. There's helpful information and best practices on all aspects of paid and free marketing on Facebook.

INSTAGRAM

Instagram started as a simple photo-sharing app, but it is so much more than that now. Here is a quick overview of the four main features of Instagram that you can use to drive engagement and connection with your network and potential clients:

- **Main Feed Post**
  Post an image, set of images, or video along with a caption and a few relevant hashtags once a day. Tag people and accounts if mentioned and add a location. Be sure to write an engaging caption that includes a question or Call to Action. Vary your content and types of posts so that you rotate through new listings, personal interests/updates, neighborhood features, real estate news and statistics, local event information, client testimonials, etc.

- **Reels**
  Fun, entertaining short videos up to 1 minute and 30 seconds often set to music and with text overlays. Consider creating reels with tips targeted toward buyers or sellers or reasons people love a certain neighborhood. Have fun, but keep your brand in mind.

- **Instagram Stories**
  Post more informal and authentic photos and short videos to your stories. Post multiple frames daily and use a mix of content. Add stickers, questions, polls, and gifs to boost engagement. Stories are typically less polished than what you would post to your main feed. Use stories to give sneak peeks at upcoming listings, highlight a neighborhood hotspot, give a behind-the-scenes look into life as a real estate agent, etc.

- **Instagram Live**
  Go "live" on Instagram to communicate with your followers in real time. Aim to stream for 10 minutes or longer—anything shorter belongs in your stories. Go live from an open house before the doors open, interview a local resident or business owner, or go on a walking tour of a neighborhood. Your live streams can be saved and posted to your feed.

TIKTOK

TikTok is a short-form video platform known for its creative, entertaining, and educational content. Users typically create and share videos ranging from 15 seconds to 5 minutes in length. The platform is particularly popular among younger demographics, including Gen Z and millennials.

TikTok's fast-paced and creative environment presents an opportunity for real estate agents to connect with a younger and tech-savvy audience. By creating engaging and informative content tailored to the platform, agents can effectively market their services, showcase properties, and establish themselves as trusted sources of real estate knowledge. Here are a few ways to use TikTok effectively:

- **Keep It Short and Engaging**
  TikTok users have short attention spans, so aim for concise, captivating content.
- **Use Trending Music and Effects**
  Incorporate popular music tracks and effects to make your videos more entertaining.
- **Authenticity Matters**
  Be genuine and authentic in your content. Authenticity resonates well with TikTok's audience.
- **Engage with Comments**
  Respond to comments and engage with your audience to build a loyal following.
- **Post Consistently**
  Maintain a regular posting schedule to stay visible and relevant on the platform.
- **Check Your Analytics**
  Monitor metrics like views, likes, shares, and comments to gauge the success of your marketing efforts.

YOUTUBE

According to a recent NAR report, more than a third of house hunters watch videos on sites such as YouTube.[8] Here are a few ways to use YouTube effectively:

- **Target Your Audience**
  You don't have to make a video that goes viral across the web; you just need to reach your target audience. Consider what your clients want to know, and spend your time addressing those needs.

- **Post Regularly**
  Create long-form video content on a regular basis (once a week) and short-form video posted as YouTube Shorts more frequently. Encourage people to join your subscriber list by adding a subscribe button to your videos and website.

- **Remember SEO**
  Optimize videos for search by using keyword phrases in the title, descriptions, and tags. Keyword phrases for real estate videos should be geographic location, property type, and property features. Drill down to neighborhoods or even street addresses.

- **Don't Ignore Comments**
  As with other social media sites, comments are your opportunity to make connections and defuse critiques.

- **Drive Traffic to Your Site**
  Don't forget to brand your video with your company logo and a final screen with your website URL and your phone number. Of course, you should also include a link to your website in the video description.

- **Consider Advertising**
  YouTube is owned by Google, so you can start a YouTube advertising campaign from your Google AdWords account.

- **Share on Social Media**
  The best way to get your video seen is to help it along by sharing it on social media and encouraging others to share it. Of course, others are more likely to share if the video is particularly entertaining or informative.

8 National Association of REALTORS® (2021). *Real Estate in a Digital Age*. https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/real-estate-in-a-digital-age.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is a business networking site focused on professionals in the workforce or those looking for work. User profiles are set up like résumés. Users can indicate if they want to connect for career opportunities, expertise requests, recommendations, and so forth.

Because of its business focus, many professionals find LinkedIn to be a logical place to start with social media. It is ideal for reaching out to working professionals, expanding you network, and generating more leads.

If you have a professional profile on LinkedIn, chances are it ranks very high in Google search results. Google your full name as it's used in business (if you have a very common name, you may want to add "REALTOR®" or "real estate"). Did your LinkedIn profile show up on the first page? In the top five?

If a client or potential client conducts the same search, they are likely to find the same results. This speaks to the importance of maintaining a current, active, and effectively branded LinkedIn professional profile. Here are a few ways to use LinkedIn effectively:

- Be sure that your LinkedIn profile has a picture, reflects your brand identity, and clearly shows that you are a working real estate agent.
- List your credentials and any professional awards and recognition you have earned.
- Post local news and information, market insights, and NAR statistics to your LinkedIn feed to stay active.
- Engage with other businesses and professionals on the platform to maximize your reach.

Blogging and Vlogging

Many real estate professionals use blogging and vlogging (video blogs) to create valuable content that is of interest to their target market. A blog allows you to:

- Position yourself as an expert in your market
- Drive traffic to your website
- Boost your rank in search results

Although blogging may seem intimidating, it's also one of the most effective methods of increasing your online exposure. Blogging also allows you to build consumer trust and credibility. As you share information about your community, you demonstrate your expertise and position yourself as an information provider, a reliable source, and someone who provides solutions.

Here are some tips and considerations for blogging:

- **Leverage AI Tools**
  Consider using AI-powered writing tools to streamline the content creation process. These tools can help you draft blog posts, proofread, and even suggest content ideas based on keywords and trends. This can save you time and ensure your content is high-quality.

- **Create Valuable Consumer Content**
  Your goal shouldn't be to promote new listings; it should be to share what readers really need to know. One of the most effective means of finding new content is using the questions most frequently asked by consumers. By answering their questions, you know that you are addressing the concerns of your target audience. Examples include:

  - Explaining the buying process to first-time home buyers
  - Describing the features of different neighborhoods
  - Sharing news about local events or local businesses
  - Providing reviews of local restaurants
  - Explaining the difference between prequalification and preapproval
  - Sharing sources of funding or tax relief
  - Giving advice about home remodeling or decorating

Focus on Your Community

Create content that focuses on hyper-local topics and resources. This could include neighborhood spotlights, local event calendars, school district information, and updates on the local real estate market. Hyper-local content positions you as an authority on your area and attracts individuals interested in specific neighborhoods.

Utilize Videos

Incorporating video into your blog can make it more engaging for your audience. Videos don't have to be long or require professional production values. If you just spend 3 to 5 minutes on camera covering the same frequently asked questions mentioned earlier, you will have a quick blog post without writing anything. Add occasional property or neighborhood tours, interviews with other members of your team, and client testimonials.

Showcase Your Expertise

Use your blog to showcase your expertise in your chosen niche or specialty. Whether it's luxury properties, first-time homebuyers, or investment properties, demonstrate your in-depth knowledge through informative and insightful blog articles.

Cross-Post and Repurpose Your Content

Blog posts are the perfect thing to share on social media sites. And the more you share, the more visitors you are likely to get to your site, and the more traffic you have, the higher you will rise in search rankings.

Maximize the reach of your blog content by repurposing it for other platforms and spokes in your online presence. For example, you can transform a blog post into a video for your YouTube channel or create social media posts that link back to your blog. This strategy extends your content's lifespan and reaches a broader audience.

Optimize for Keywords

Research and include relevant keywords in your blog posts. Keywords help improve your website's visibility in search engine results. Think about what your target audience might be searching for and include those keywords or phrases in your post, but don't overdo it. The length of your posts should typically run around 300 to 500 words and contain a keyword density of 3 to 5%. Don't forget to include location-specific words and to put them in the title. Tools like Google's Keyword Planner can assist in finding keywords that potential clients are searching for in your market.

NAR Standards of Practice

When creating and posting content online, remember Standard of Practice 12-10, which covers REALTORS®' obligation to present a true picture in their advertising and representations to the public, including internet content, images, and the URLs and domain names they use. Standard of Practice 12-10 prohibits REALTORS® from:

- engaging in deceptive or unauthorized framing of real estate brokerage websites;
- manipulating (e.g., presenting content developed by others) listings and other content in any way that produces a deceptive or misleading result;
- deceptively using metatags, keywords, or other devices/methods to direct, drive, or divert internet traffic;
- presenting content developed by others without either attribution or without permission; or
- otherwise misleading consumers, including use of misleading images. (Adopted 1/07, Amended 1/18).

Exercise:
6-Minute Brainstorming—Blog Content

Brainstorm real estate topics that would be relevant to your target market and that local consumers might be searching for.

Managing Your Brand Online

Always be mindful of your brand across all of these platforms and systems. Each interaction, video, and profile you post should reflect your best professional self. Your reputation is everything in real estate. You are your business. Remember, your digital footprint is a permanent record. You want that record to be trustworthy, reputable, and successful.

DO'S & DON'TS

It's helpful, then, to keep some general rules in mind.

DO'S:

- Be nice. Remember the Golden Rule.
- Be yourself. Behave online as you would in person or offline.
- Respect privacy and confidentiality.
- Give more than you take: Contributing is a great way to build good will and establish yourself as an expert in your field.
- Abide by the posted rules of a particular group or channel.
- Remember that selling is viewed as spam on social media.
- Be mindful of what you click, like, or share on your social media.
- Support other local business by engaging with their content.
- Ask if your brokerage has a social media policy.

DON'TS:

- Type in all-capital letters; it's the equivalent of shouting.
- Respond in anger.
- Engage while intoxicated.
- Forget that regulatory and ethical obligations apply online.
- Forward or copy/paste dialogue that was intended for your eyes only. For example, an email thread or private message.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS AND NEGATIVE COMMENTS

Dealing with online complaints and negative comments is one of the more frustrating aspects of an agent's job, but it is a fact of life. How you deal with negative posts is an important part of managing your online reputation. Here are a few strategies to employ:

- **Monitor and Respond**
  Don't ignore negative comments, even if you think they are unwarranted. And if they are on social media, don't delete them, which makes you look like you are trying to hide something. Use monitoring tools to track comments so that you can respond as quickly as possible to defuse the impact.

- **Respond Publicly**
  Respond publicly to complaints (even if the final resolution is handled privately), so that others see that your business takes customers seriously and handles complaints professionally. If you can resolve the complaint satisfactorily, you have the opportunity to turn a vocally dissatisfied client into a vocally happy one.

- **Acknowledge Concerns**
  Writers of complaints often just want an opportunity to be heard. Thank them for posting, acknowledge their feelings, and let them know that you appreciate their concerns. Something like "Thanks so much for the feedback, we're always trying to improve" is sufficient.

- **Keep Your Cool**
  Avoid being defensive or argumentative in response to negative reviews. Don't hesitate to correct inaccurate information or invite additional discussion offline. The best response is factual, empathetic, and public.

- **Try to Fix the Problem**
  If a mistake was made, admit it, apologize, and tell the individual that you want to fix the situation. Ask permission to contact them directly. Even if you resolve the complaint by phone or email, it is important to respond publicly where the complaint appeared because others will see your response. If the complainant refuses your offer, they appear unreasonable while you look professional.

One final note: Establishing your reputation should never be at the expense of another agent. Article 15 of the NAR Code of Ethics explicitly prohibits defaming another real estate professional: "REALTORS® shall not knowingly or recklessly make false or misleading statements about other real estate professionals, their businesses, or their business practices." (Amended 1/12)

Practitioner Perspective: Marki Lemons-Ryhal



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ELEVATING YOUR DIGITAL PRESENCE WITH VIDEO AND BLOGGING

How did you get started using videos?

Once I embraced social media and technology back in 2006, I instantly surrounded myself with people who utilized technology and social media in their businesses. Frankie Taylor and Anita Clinton forced me to create my first video and to elevate my video production.

What are the advantages of using video?

Videos create more engagement because the brain can digest video content 60,000 times faster than written word. Also, video creates the opportunity to build likeability and trust because people feel as though they get to know you through your videos.

Is it time-consuming making videos?

I create a lot of live video content, so I do not have to edit the videos. My rule of thumb is to create 60 seconds of video content daily because 60 seconds of video content is equivalent to 1.8 million words—60 seconds per day will enhance your online visibility.

What are some best practices for video creation that you would like to share?

1. People do not care how you look; they care if you can solve their problems.
2. Always clean your lens before taking photos or creating videos.
3. Hold your device at or above eye level.
4. The light should always be behind the device and not behind you.
5. Create 60 seconds of video content daily.

How do you integrate blogging into your real estate business?

I create 1 hour of video content for my podcast. Utilizing tools like Temi.com and Otter.ai, I transcribe my video to text content and create my blogs from the text that is extracted from the video. To make the blog post more engaging, I embed the video in the blog post.

How would you advise someone to get started using blogging in their business?

Repurpose your video content by transcribing your video to text.

Should every agent use video and blogging in their business strategy?

Every agent should consistently create video content. I've created a system where I'm repurposing my video content to a weekly podcast, email, blog post, and online marketing content.

Summary

We've talked about traditional and digital marketing tools and tactics. You don't have to be an expert in every area or use every tactic that is out there. What you must do to have a successful business is track and measure your marketing efforts.



MODULE 5:
Tracking and Measuring Marketing Efforts

After learning the material in this module, you should be able to:

- Explain the importance of measuring and evaluating your marketing efforts.
- Describe how to research, quantify, and analyze leads.
- Identify the tools and systems that are most effective for tracking and communicating with leads.

This module will explore ways of tracking your marketing efforts to generate strong leads. As with any strategy, you are most likely to achieve your goals if you can measure your results. Ideally, the metrics you choose to track will quantitatively demonstrate the return on your efforts. By regularly measuring and evaluating the results, and then making necessary changes to your strategy based on your evaluations, you can create a continuous feedback loop that helps improve your marketing and lead generation activities.

As you measure your efforts, you will want to determine:

- Which methods are most successfully reaching target audiences?
- Which marketing methods are generating the most leads?
- How many leads am I converting into clients?
- Which marketing methods didn't yield results?
- Which marketing methods yielded the best return on investment?

Customer Relationship Management

Generating, tracking, measuring, and evaluating leads can be a time-consuming process. That's where a good customer relationship management (CRM) system comes in.

Most successful agents today use a CRM system to manage information about interactions with leads and clients. A CRM system allows you to work with your hot leads and have access to the warm and cold leads in an organized system.

CRMs typically capture information such as address, telephone, email address, and birthday. Additional customized categories help you remember the details of how and when you made a contact and also help you to segment your marketing efforts. They allow you to categorize and cross-reference contacts and include personal information for future conversation starters.

A robust CRM lets you track and plan activities for staying in touch with your contacts. From sending holiday cards and acknowledging birthdays to attending conferences together, you will always have records of your networking efforts.

You can categorize your contacts on social media sites and online communities based on your CRM categories. As a timesaver, many social media sites allow you to import your address book, which facilitates reaching out to existing contacts online.

However, it's important to note that a CRM system is only effective if you actually USE it.

CRM QUALITIES AND BENEFITS

Many brokerages provide their agents with access to a CRM system. Other agents choose to subscribe to a separate system such as LionDesk, Wise Agent, or Follow Up Boss. Consider earning NAR's e-Pro® certification to learn more about different CRM systems.

No matter which CRM system you are using, they all offer similar benefits:

- **They're Intuitive**
  The software you use should be quick, effective, and easily navigable. If it takes you more than 20 minutes to understand how to effectively use a CRM system, it's outdated.

- **They Exist in the Cloud**
  File storing and file sharing have become a cinch thanks to cloud computing. The best CRM solutions allow you to store files, such as listing photos and sales documents, online and drop and grab them with ease.

- **They're Widely Accessible**
  The latest and greatest CRM tools have apps for iPhone, iPad, Android, and other popular mobile devices, making them simple to use on the go.

- **They're Customizable**
  Some professionals may require software that can be altered to their specific marketing and sales needs. Many modern CRM systems offer just that.

- **They Automate Real Estate Marketing and Sales Tasks**
  Gone are the days of manually sending out emails and publishing other marketing collateral. The top CRM software offers professionals the chance to schedule their tasks ahead of time and communicate with contacts automatically.

- **They Allow for Real-Time Tracking**
  Want to check the open rate for messages sent to leads? Curious about which contacts filled out a form on your real estate website? You can find this data using today's CRM solutions.

WHICH CRM SYSTEM IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

So, what questions do you need to ask when choosing a CRM system? How powerful of a system do you want? What do you want it to do? Consider the following:

- **Cost**
  Spending $40 to upwards of $500 a month for a program that not only tracks your business but sends out mass email messages and creates a website where consumers can track their listing activities might make sense, and the cost might pay for itself.

- **Longevity**
  How long has the vendor been around? Have the bugs been worked out? If the vendor is newer, can you get in early, perhaps at a lower price?

- **Email Interaction**
  Do you have to use the vendor's embedded email client, or can you still use Microsoft Outlook or Gmail? Do you have to bounce from email message to your CRM system?

- **Support**
  When considering CRM systems, make it a point to call the vendor's tech support to see how the representatives do. Just because a company offers 24/7 support doesn't mean it can solve your problem. Is it really worth it?

- **Phone Syncing**
  Does the CRM system sync with your phone? Not all CRM systems do. The best option is to use the phone's existing software rather than load the vendor's software. Your phone's contact software will sync the information from your CRM system.

CRM databases provide numerous other conveniences for real estate agents. Each solution is a bit different, so assess your own CRM needs and compare them against what the market has to offer.

Exercise:
Useful Apps for Managing Leads, Organizing Tasks, and Simplifying Communications

Your CRM is not the only tool at your disposal. There are many innovative tools available today to help you manage and communicate with leads and clients. It's important for you to find and effectively utilize the ones that work best with your brand and your marketing goals.

Below are a few tools that real estate agents find useful, but please note that this is not a comprehensive list, and technology changes quickly. New apps will emerge, while others will become outdated. For the most up-to-date recommendations, ask your colleagues and classmates what apps they are using in their day-to-day lives that make their job easier.

Share with the class some of your favorite apps for the activities below and use the space provided to take notes.

Open House Lead Capture
(e.g., OpenHomePro)

Voice & Text Messaging
(e.g., Slydial)

Video Emails & Text Transcription
(e.g., BombBomb, WeVideo, Temi.com, Otter.ai)

Email Management
(e.g., MailChimp, MailerLite, Zendesk, Hiver, ActiveCampaign, Brevo)

Social Media Scheduling and Management
(e.g., Later.com, Hootsuite, Buffer, Sprout Social, Social Pilot)

Organization & Team Communications
(e.g., Trello, Slack, Hola Spirit, Monday.com)

Content Creation
(e.g., ChatGPT, Canva)

Sources of Leads

The most important data to track is the source of the leads you generate through your marketing efforts. If you know which sources are most productive for you, you can focus your marketing efforts there. Although it is important to play to your strengths when it comes to lead generation activities, there is no point in pursuing something that isn't providing sufficient ROI. Tracking the source helps you understand which marketing methods were the most productive.

CATEGORIZE LEADS

Categorize your leads in as much detail as possible. For example, you can create categories such as the following:

Buyers	Sellers	Possible Referrals/ Leads
Prospective Buyers—Hot	Prospective Sellers—Hot	Renters
Prospective Buyers—Warm	Prospective Sellers—Warm	Landlords
Prospective Buyers—Cold	Prospective Sellers—Cold	Ancillary Service Providers
Current Buyers	Current Sellers	Colleagues
Buyers Under Contract	Sellers Under Contract	Past Clients
Clients Referred Out	Clients Referred Out	
Clients from Other Agents	Clients from Other Agents	

It's important to try to get as much specific information as possible from leads about how they heard about you. If they say they "saw a sign," find out which sign. If they "saw an ad," try to determine where it was located. If it was a result of direct mail, try to determine which piece they saw and what list their address was on. If they say they found you online, which website? Always go "three deep"—in other words, ask three follow-up questions. For example, if they say they found you on Zillow, find out what listing (yours or another agent's?), which ZIP code (one that you're paying for?), or which page (your profile or testimonials page?) prompted them to call.

Tracking the source of your leads gives you the ability to more effectively execute your marketing plan. When you know what works for you, you can begin to maximize your profit potential. Over time, you develop a better understanding of your marketing planning for the coming month, quarter, or year.

REFERRALS

Don't forget to track how many leads you are getting from referral sources—sphere of influence, friends/family, current clients, past clients, returning clients, other agents—and what activities generated those referrals. For example, if you are spending money each month on pay-per-click ads to reach your target market, but the majority of your leads are coming from your past clients, you can redirect those payments to activities that nurture your client base. Instead of paying for ads, you can sponsor more events or send more gifts. But you can't reallocate your resources if you don't know the sources of your leads.

Researching and Quantifying Leads

Many agents spend a lot of time and money to generate leads and then make the mistake of not looking at the data to determine which efforts are yielding the most value. That means determining your goals (volume, income, or number of transactions) and then calculating how many leads you will need to meet those goals.

Setting your financial goals and budget is traditionally part of a yearly business planning process. With those goals in mind, you can then work backward to see how many leads you need to reach daily, weekly, monthly, or annually, to generate the number of closed sales you need.

You can then determine your marketing strategy and allocate your budget accordingly. Analyzing the results of last year's efforts will be very helpful in creating next year's goals and strategy.

Exercise: Financial Goals and Marketing Activities

> **Start aligning your marketing efforts with your financial goals. Fill out the form below to get a sense of how many leads you need in order to achieve your financial target. For any data you don't have precise figures for, just provide a rough estimate. This will give you a starting point to work from as you begin refining your marketing plan moving forward.**

A. Income goal for this year:_____

B. Average compensation per transaction (last year):_____

C. Number of transactions to reach your goal (A ÷ B):_____

D. Percentage of closed sales (last year): _____

E. Number of listings needed to meet goal (apply D to C): _____

F. Number of buyer closings to reach goal (C–E) _____

CONVERSION RATES

One of the most important figures to calculate is your conversion rate, which is the number of leads that resulted in closed sales. There is a simple equation for determining your conversion rate: the number of closed leads divided by the number of total leads.

➘ **EXAMPLE:**
If you contacted 200 leads and 5 leads closed on properties, your conversion rate would be 0.025 or 2.5%.

The number of leads you want to generate for an effective conversion rate will be related to your income goals.

Use the below chart to begin calculating how many leads you need to generate monthly. (Note: This is based on a "lead-to-sale ratio" of 25-to-1. Your results will vary, so these numbers are an approximation.)

A. **Number of closings desired:** _____

B. **x 25 (lead-to-sale ratio = 25-to-1):** _____

C. **= Total number of leads needed per year:** _____

D. **= Total number of leads needed per month (C ÷ 12):** _____

Market Leader offers an online calculator (http://marketleader.com/leadcalculator) that shows you how many leads you need, based on the amount you want to earn in compensation annually, and provides a suggested mix of lead sources (based on an informal survey of top-producing real estate agents). Close rate is based on a mix of paid, free and referral sources.

TRACKING MARKETING ACTIVITY

Many agents recommend using a worksheet to track marketing activities each week. It can be a simple one-page document that collects the data you need, which can then be entered into a spreadsheet for analysis. For example:

ACTIVITY	# OF CONTACTS MADE	# OF LEADS	# OF APPOINTMENTS	# OF CONTRACTS	# OF CLOSINGS
COLD CALLS					
OPEN HOUSES					
SOI CONTACTS					
DIRECT MAIL					
BLOG/WEB CONTENT					
SOCIAL MEDIA					

You should add any activities that are appropriate for you. Not every column will have a number every month, and each column is independent. You might make contact with a lead at an open house but not close a sale for that lead for many months. But when you do, that still counts as a lead you closed as a result of an open house. That information also needs to be captured in your CRM system, which we discussed earlier in this module.

The more data you collect, the more you can begin to see patterns, and if there are problems, you can begin to diagnose the causes. For example, if you are getting plenty of leads but not many appointments, you can look at what you are doing or saying during the initial contact or whether you're dropping the ball with consistent follow-up. If you are getting appointments but not contracts, perhaps there is a problem with how you are conducting your presentation. If you keep data about where your leads come from and when and how you responded, you might be able to determine whether the problem is the speed of the response or the quality of the response.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT METRIC

Tracking the outcomes of your marketing tactics is not a simple process. One metric is the number of leads by source, and another is conversion rate. But there are other metrics to collect for data analysis. If you are paying for leads, for example, you need to consider:

- **Cost per lead**
  If you spend $2,000 on a direct mail effort and receive 25 leads, your cost per lead is $80. If you spend $1,500 and receive 20 leads, your cost per lead is $75. The second promotion is more cost-effective.

- **Quality of the leads**
  If after one year, 25% of the leads generated by direct mail are rated as hot leads, and only 3% of those generated by online ads are in that group, you might want to focus more of your marketing efforts on direct mail.

CONDUCTING SURVEYS

Another method for evaluating your marketing effectiveness is to conduct a survey of past and current clients. Applications such as SurveyMonkey or RealSatisfied.com make it easy to create simple surveys and distribute them via email. You might also consider a survey to determine the effectiveness of your marketing efforts and your name recognition in your market. Use online surveys to evaluate online marketing, and mailed or phone surveys for traditional direct mail efforts.

Cost of Marketing Activity

There is a cost to every lead generated—in time, tools, and marketing. It is more cost-effective to nurture the leads you have than to generate new ones. By tracking the "cost per lead," you have a dollar amount for creating each lead. Don't forget that your time has value. Even if you didn't spend any money to generate leads, if you are spending 20% of your time each week generating leads, you can make a calculation. The bottom line is: the more you try to factor cost into all of your marketing efforts, the more efficient and cost-effective your efforts will become.

DETERMINING THE VALUE OF YOUR TIME

How much is your time worth per hour? If you spent 8 hours per week generating leads through various marketing activities, at $25 an hour, that would be over $10,000 you spent each year on lead generation. If you generated 1,000 leads, that would be $100 per lead. What if 25 of those leads led to closed sales or a 2.5% conversion rate? Let's assume that doubling the number of leads would lead to a 5% conversion rate. Would you have to double the amount of time you spent generating leads? Would that take 40% of your time, at a cost of $20,000?

What if you increased the conversion rate of the same 1,000 leads? Would that be more cost-effective?

To use your data effectively, you need to look at each step in the process—how many leads, how many appointments, how many signed contracts, how many closings. You also need to evaluate the highest and best use of your time. For example, is your time better spent, more productive, and worth more per hour calling past clients and people in your sphere of influence than it is cold-calling or door-knocking?

For most agents, the difficulty is not in finding enough leads; it is closing the leads they already have. Using the data you've collected, you can determine where to focus your efforts to increase your conversion ratio.

TRACKING PAID SOURCES

If you buy leads from portals such as Realtor.com™, Zillow, or Zurple, you want to look at the metrics that they generate. Specifically, where did the leads come from? What pages did they look at? Were they looking at one of your listings? When you are paying for leads, it is especially important to consider the cost per lead, and whether those leads are worth what you are paying for them.

For example, if a lead came from Zillow, which ZIP code did it come in on? Was it one of the ones you paid for? Which listing did it come in on? Was it your listing or someone else's? Did it come from your profile? If so, do you have reviews from past clients, or should you make sure that some get added? Is your profile up-to-date and reflecting accurate contact information and other pertinent information that might entice a consumer to pick up the phone and call?

Using Google Analytics

Google Analytics lets you collect data about the activity on your website: how many visits it receives, where people come from, how long they stay, and what they're looking at while they're there. Best of all, the features you need come free of charge.

GOOGLE TRACKING

Some of the data Google Analytics collects and the terminology it uses include the following:

SITE METRICS

- **Sessions:**
  The number of times a user actively engaged with your site within a specified time period.
- **Users:**
  The number of unique users who initiated at least one session on your site within the selected dates.
- **Pageviews:**
  The total number of times a page is viewed on your site. Repeated visits to the same page by the same user are counted.
- **Pages/Session:**
  The average number of pages users viewed during a session; demonstrates quality engagement with the site.

- **Average Session Duration:**
  Average amount of time spent on your site per session; time spent on your site is one way of measuring visit quality.

- **Bounce Rate:**
  The percentage of single-page sessions in which there was no interaction with the page.

- **New vs. Returning Visitors:**
  An estimate of the ratio of first-time users to returning users of your site.

PAGE-SPECIFIC METRICS

- **Unique Pageviews:**
  The number of sessions during which a specified page was viewed at least once.

- **Average Time on Page:**
  Average time spent on a particular page.

- **Exit Percentage:**
  How often users left the site from a particular page.

REVISING YOUR STRATEGY

You can use the data you collect from Google Analytics to discover how effectively your site is performing. Look at different metrics to determine what changes need to be made to your site:

- **Users**
  If you don't think you're getting enough users to your site, consider your content and your SEO. What are you doing to drive traffic to your site?

- **New Sessions**
  A high new-session percentage demonstrates that you are reaching new users, but you also want to look at the repeat visitor ratio to determine if previous users are returning. If your content is informative and engaging, you might be generating new visitors, but you need to ensure that you have sufficient new material to entice previous visitors to return. Use social media and email to inform previous visitors of new content.

- **Average Time on Page**
  There are many reasons why average time on pages might be low. The content might not be what the user expected or it might be difficult to read. Make sure headlines are appropriate to the content and not misleading readers. Ensure that the content is "scannable" by adding subheadings and bulleted lists.

- **Unique Pageviews**
  This metric can reveal the pages on your site that are generating the most traffic. They can tell you what users are looking for and finding. Pages with few unique pageviews might need stronger keywords or more compelling graphics or content.

- **Pages/Visits/Duration**
  Looking at the number of pages that users view and how long they stay on your site gives you some idea of how compelling your content is. Viewing more pages but staying a short time could mean that users aren't finding what they are looking for.

- **Exit Percentage**
  If users are leaving your site from a particular page, consider ways to increase engagement on that page or add a call to action.[9]

- **Bounce Rate**
  If you're getting users to your site or to a particular page, but they are not engaging with it, consider adding clickable links to related content or adding a call to action or contact form.

9 Stitch. "14 Key Metrics in Google Analytics for Digital Marketing." https://www.stitchdata.com/resources/google-analytics-metrics-for-marketers/.

Measuring Social Media

At the most basic level, your number of Instagram followers, Facebook "likes," and LinkedIn followers can tell you how many people you are reaching. Obviously, these numbers should grow over time. Should they ever start to decline at a meaningful rate, it could be a sign that your communication efforts are not resonating with your target market. It can also be a sign that the platform has changed its advertising policy or its method or reach.

But social media metrics can go beyond just your number of followers. More advanced metrics might include:

- Number of referrals to your company website from your social media profiles
- Number of comments or direct messages in response to an Instagram post or story
- Number of shares or forwards of your content
- Number of clicks on links posted to your social profiles
- Number of positive recommendations on LinkedIn
- Impressions per LinkedIn update

Keeping track of these numbers might seem daunting, but there are a number of low-cost and no-cost, built-in, and third-party solutions available to you. The specific metrics you decide to track will in some ways be determined by how easily you can find them, but try to map them to your social media goals.

Measuring Email Efforts

The effectiveness of your email marketing campaigns can be measured by tracking several key metrics. By regularly monitoring and analyzing email marketing metrics, you can fine-tune your email campaigns, improve engagement, and ultimately connect with more clients and prospects.

Most email service providers allow users to track the following key metrics:

- **Open Rate:**
  A higher open rate suggests that your subject line and sender name were compelling. To improve open rates, consider using personalized subject lines and optimizing the sender's name.

- **List Growth:**
  Measure how quickly your email list is growing by tracking the rate of new subscribers. A healthy list growth rate indicates that your email marketing efforts are attracting new leads and potential clients.

- **Click-Through Rate (CTR):**
  CTR measures the percentage of recipients who clicked on one or more links within your email. A higher CTR indicates that your email content and call-to-action were effective.

- **Conversion Rate:**
  The conversion rate represents the percentage of recipients who took the desired action after clicking through from the email. In real estate, conversions may include scheduling property viewings, requesting more information, or signing up for newsletters.

- **Bounce Rate:**
  This measures the percentage of emails that were not delivered due to invalid email addresses or other issues. High bounce rates may indicate the need for a cleaner and more accurate email list.

- **Unsubscribe Rate:**
  A high unsubscribe rate suggests that your email content or frequency may not align with recipients' expectations.

- **Spam Complaint Rate:**
  A high spam complaint rate can harm your sender reputation and email deliverability. Ensure that your emails have clear opt-out options and provide valuable content.

Practitioner Perspective: Alasandra Whitley



Alasandra Whitley
ABR®, CIPS, CRS, GRI, SRES®, AHWD, ePro®, RENE
Fairlawn, Ohio

DOES DIRECT MAIL STILL WORK? CAPTURE, QUALIFY, CONVERT.

How did you get started using direct mail?

I began using direct mail when I was first licensed. I sent out "just licensed" and personal promotion mailings to my sphere. I continued with "Just Listed" and "Just Sold" cards to sphere and neighboring properties.

What did you do to make direct mail successful for you?

I think it's important to add a personal touch to your mailings. The verbiage should "sound" like you. When possible, I like to handwrite a personal note to the recipient. And remember to follow up with a call to past clients and personal contacts.

Why do some agents struggle to make a success of direct mail?

Direct mail takes time, and consistency is important. Many agents begin strong but don't see the immediate results that they'd like. Follow-up is key. Direct mail can create an opportunity, but building relationships requires personal contact and conversations. Taking that next step to foster the relationship will greatly improve your results.

What advice do you have for agents who want to do direct mail?

Commit to your plan, be diligent about your system, take steps to create relationships, and positive results will follow.

Summary

You have explored everything from what marketing is to some tools that are available and ultimately how to measure your success. Now let's talk about final steps so you can go forth, convert clients, and create a meaningful plan.



MODULE 6:
Going Forward: Converting Clients and Creating Your Marketing Plan

After learning the material in this module , you should be able to:

- Know how to effectively respond to and communicate with leads.
- Understand the importance of qualifying leads and representation agreements.
- Apply what you learned in this course and start creating your own marketing plan.

It isn't enough for an agent to fill a database with leads. A successful agent needs to convert those leads into clients and eventual sales. But that doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and attention, patience, and persistence.

Nurturing Leads

An essential part of converting leads into clients is what real estate professionals call "incubation" or "nurturing." No matter how you found the lead (or how the lead found you), you need to continue to work on your relationship and keep yourself top of mind until they are ready to move to the next stage.

Nurturing leads means taking your lead's interests and stage in the process into account, providing them with valuable information, and building awareness until the lead is ready to begin working with an agent. All agents develop their own systems for nurturing leads based on the market they work in and their personal style, but there are

some aspects that are universal. Nurturing leads requires maintaining top-of-mind awareness, and top-of-mind awareness requires consistent visibility.

Every system for nurturing leads involves a series of "touches." Those touches might be more or less personal, but they involve the agent reaching out in some way to remind the prospect that the agent wants to establish a relationship and provide assistance.

THE 35-TOUCH PLAN

A well-designed system such as the 35-touch plan doesn't have to be overwhelming. Most agents use a CRM system to send automated messages on a regular basis (such as home buying anniversary messages or seasonal tips and greetings). Use your CRM system or calendar app to remind you to make calls, particularly on birthdays or anniversaries.

The systems can be different for cool versus warm leads. For example, you could have a system for leads that you've generated from online sources, cold calls, or sign calls, and another for those who are in your sphere of influence, who have referred business to you, or who have worked with you in the past.

Agents take different approaches to systems such as these. For example, they might send different messages at different frequencies to warm and cold leads. Warm leads get messages more often than cold leads. Warm leads start out with messages every few days for the first 2 weeks, then once a week for a month, then every 21 days for 3 months, then once a month after that for 2 years unless they become current clients. Cold leads get messages every other month. A similar principle might be true with buyers and sellers: The messages might be different, but the frequency would be the same. See Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.2.

Nurturing leads and maintaining top-of-mind awareness doesn't mean bombarding leads with email messages or other materials, hoping that they'll be overwhelmed by your persistence. You want to send strategic, targeted messages that let them know that you understand their situation and can help them. Yes, persistence is important, but so is ensuring that they remember that you're the one they should be working with. You want to be seen as a knowledgeable professional, not as a nag.

Figure 6.1: Cold Lead Nurturing System

Activity	Frequency	Touches
Monthly Email Message: Include information of value (e.g., market report, tax advice, seasonal info)	Monthly	12
Direct Mail Piece	Monthly	12
Quarterly Newsletter (print or email)	Quarterly	4
Holiday and Personal Observance Cards (e.g., birthday, Mother's/Father's Day, winter holidays)	As Appropriate	3
Phone Calls (e.g., check in to ask, "How are you?" or "What can I do for you?")	Quarterly	4
	TOTAL	**35**

Figure 6.2: Warm Lead Incubation System

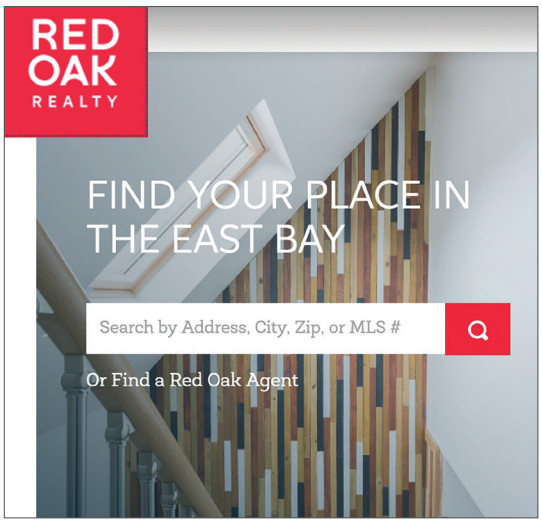
Activity	Frequency	Touches
Monthly Email Message (or Newsletter): Include information of value (e.g., market report, tax advice, seasonal info)	Monthly	12
Holiday and Personal Cards (e.g., anniversary of home purchase)	As Appropriate	4
Client Appreciation Events	Quarterly	4
Phone Calls ("How are you?"; Ask for referrals; "Who do you know?")	Bimonthly	5
Follow-Up Note or Email Message (follow up on phone calls)	Quarterly	4
Usable Giveaways (e.g., calendar or notepad)	Quarterly	4
Personal Meetings (e.g., lunch, dinner, drop-by)	As Appropriate	2
	TOTAL	**35**

CALLS TO ACTION

As we discussed in Module 3, you want to drive as much traffic as you can to your hub. But getting leads to see your name and view your content is one thing; getting them to engage is another. Your hub and every "touch" in your plan should inspire prospective leads to take action.

For example, at RedOakRealty.com, consumers are invited to search for East Bay properties by neighborhood, city, ZIP code, MLS number, or address (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3:
Sample Call to Action



Your hub might include any of the following CTAs:

- Search for properties.
- What is your home worth?
- Receive email updates about market statistics.
- Learn about the neighborhood.
- Request more information.
- Download a checklist or white paper.

Keep opt-in forms and registration processes as simple as possible. Registration forms that are overly detailed can turn consumers away. Fields for first name, last name, email address, phone number, and the ability to enter a specific message are generally sufficient. Only require them to submit an email address to contact you, as requiring a phone number can turn off some prospects.

Incorporate as many calls to action on your site as you can—at the end of blog posts, on individual pages, etc.—offering different items of value that consumers might be interested in. The more opportunities you provide for leads to actively engage with you, the more likely you are to convert those leads into clients.

Four Steps to Lead Conversion

Lead generation puts names into your database, and incubation keeps them warm. The next step is to convert those leads into clients. Converting leads requires putting in place a method that involves response, distribution, prioritization, and follow-up. The four keys to converting leads to clients are:

1. Respond to the lead.
2. Connect with the person.
3. Add value.
4. Set an appointment.

RESPOND

Perhaps the most important aspect of gaining new clients is responding to inquiries from leads as soon as you can. Many agents make it a point to respond within 15 minutes. The reason for being so quick to respond is that many people who conduct online searches contact more than one agent, but they end up working with the one who responds first.

A recent NAR survey found that buyers from every age bracket interview only one agent, and 93% of home buyers list responsiveness as a quality they find "very important." [10] Given this evidence, it's safe to say that responsiveness is critical to converting leads to clients, as well as subsequently generating more leads from client referrals after a deal has closed.

It is generally best practice to respond to an inquiry the way that it came to you: If you receive an email message, respond by email; if you receive a phone call, reply by phone. The same goes for social media messages. If you get a direct message through Instagram or on LinkedIn, respond to the message within that app. Some agents are beginning to consider alternative tactics, such as using a video response emailed and/or texted to the prospect. The advantage of having a prepared video lead response is that you can respond immediately, getting the jump on the competition. How you choose to respond largely depends on your personal style and comfort level. Some agents believe that a personal connection is best, so if they have a phone number, they will make a call.

10 National Association of REALTORS® (2023). *Home Buyer and Seller Generational Trends*. https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/home-buyer-and-seller-generational-trends

But what if it's simply not possible for you to give a call back right away? If you have an email address but not a valid phone number, be sure to send an introductory email message. The best strategy is to have pre-written texts and email messages available so you can let prospects know that you've received their inquiry and will be with them as soon as possible. (This is also where having a ready-to-send video response can come in handy and set you apart.) Your response should set the expectation that you will contact the prospect later with more information. Your message should be as conversational as possible, so it doesn't seem like a canned response.

WHEN YOU DON'T GET A RESPONSE

If you don't get a response within 48 hours of your initial message, you might try one of the following approaches by sending text or email:

- Demonstrate your knowledge of the market by sending details of three or four comparable properties that are currently active or a link to MLS listings for comparable properties.
- Inquire whether the prospect is still interested in the property and include your professional bio to showcase your expertise.
- Provide information about the buying process and show how you can help with the transaction.

For example, "As a real estate broker, I have access to the most current property information that isn't always available online. I'd like to have an opportunity to talk, so I can better understand what you're looking for. Please call me at _____."

Even if you still don't get a response, always remember to keep prospects in your database and add them to your email drip campaign. Don't stop trying to make contact—many internet leads convert after over 10 attempts.

CONNECT

Responding quickly is obviously critical, but then the next step is making a human connection with your lead. It's up to you to make that connection as swiftly as possible. Much of this goal will be achieved (or not) during the initial call and will depend on your personal style and personality. However, there are some general guidelines that are helpful to keep in mind.

A general rule when responding to an online lead or sign call is to respond quickly, as we've just discussed, introduce yourself, and offer to help. Because most leads are seldom ready to make a purchase, your goal is to get them into the pipeline.

Your first call to a lead can be brief. Your goal needn't be to make an appointment, which could in some instances come across as too aggressive, but rather merely to gather and provide information. Before making the call, gather information on the property the lead looked at (e.g., neighborhood, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, etc.). This will help you better understand the lead's tastes and get a better sense of who this person is—all of which will help you make a stronger connection.

ALL CALLS ARE DIFFERENT, BUT THERE ARE FIVE THINGS YOU CAN KEEP IN MIND FOR THE INITIAL PHONE CALL:

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Provide information about the status of the property.
3. Ask a few questions to determine motivation: "When do you plan on moving?" or "Have you spoken with a lender?"
4. Offer additional assistance, such as permission to send email alerts when new listings that might be appropriate come up.
5. Offer to answer questions about the buying and selling process.

Some do's and don'ts for the initial contact include:

DO:	DON'T:
↘ Respond as soon as possible. ↘ Build trust. ↘ Answer any questions. ↘ Send them to your website. ↘ Collect information for your database. ↘ Follow up with useful information.	↘ Keep new leads waiting. ↘ Try to oversell the appointment. ↘ Talk too much about yourself. ↘ Push them to accept your services. ↘ Ask for more than they want to provide. ↘ Send boilerplate, generic information.

ADD VALUE

Of course, part of making a connection is to show the lead you are a valuable and knowledgeable resource who can be an asset in the home buying or selling process. The question is, how do you show your value in such a limited time frame?

There is a school of thought that says you shouldn't share important information about a listing (positive or negative) until you're able to speak with the prospect or to meet in person, because if you reveal too much information up front, the prospect has no reason to respond to you. However, by demonstrating your experience and market knowledge, you are more likely to develop a relationship with a prospective client.

Send complete property information and add some context, such as your personal observations about the property or the neighborhood (within the bounds of fair housing), or a market report for the area. The sooner you can provide solutions for the prospect, the more likely that prospect is going to trust you.

Another option is to provide less information but move to get a face-to-face meeting (by showing the property). For example, you could say, "Hi, I received your request for information about the property at 123 Jane-Doe Street. The property is still active. I can meet you at my office and then arrange to show you this home tomorrow morning, first thing."

There are risks in both tactics: one might render your services superfluous and the other might be off-putting by sounding too aggressive or "sales-y." You need to find the strategy that best fits your personal brand and style.

SET AN APPOINTMENT

As we've discussed already, it's not essential to make an appointment to meet during the initial call, but in order to make a lead your client, a meeting will have to happen eventually—and the sooner the better.

Some agents prefer to use the LPMAMA technique for screening sign calls and online leads. By asking specific questions and not worrying about countering objections, the agent can begin to understand the lead's motivation, with the ultimate goal of setting an appointment.

- **L: Location**
  Where are you looking?
- **P: Price**
  What is your price range?
- **M: Motivation**
  Why and how quickly do you need to sell or buy?
- **A: Agent**
  Are you working with an agent?
- **M: Mortgage**
  How will you be paying for the property (cash, mortgage, etc.)?
- **A: Appointment**
  When would be a good time to meet?

For a sample of how this technique might play out in a call, see the sample scenarios in the Resources section.

Maximizing the First Meeting

When you meet a lead for the first time, how can you convert that contact into a successful transaction that adds to your bottom line? Achieving a positive outcome requires two skill sets:

- People skills to foster an interpersonal relationship
- Client-representation skills in accordance with state agency laws, the REALTORS® Code of Ethics, and your broker's business policies

Your goal during this first meeting is to formalize your relationship with the prospect by signing a representation agreement. By the time buyers are willing to sit down with you for a consultation, they have most likely moved beyond the "just looking" stage and are ready to take action. This is your opportunity to show the client how your unique experience and expertise will benefit them in their home buying journey. The goal for both the agent and the buyer is the same: to find the right relationship to sell or purchase a home.

MAINTAIN BRAND CONSISTENCY

Remember that your business and your brand is you. To gain trust and respect from potential clients, your brand needs to be consistent and aligned with your value proposition at all times.

Brand consistency during the first meeting may in fact be the difference between gaining a client or losing one. The image a lead forms of you initially, either directly or indirectly, is what they will expect at the appointment. Your photo on the brokerage website, the way a past client described you, your Facebook profile, or the ad you recently took out in the local newspaper are but a few of the ways that your brand is disseminated to potential buyers.

Home buying and selling are often a stressful events in people's lives. Part of your service is to be a reliable, calm guide that people can trust. Brand consistency is critical in achieving this end.

QUALIFYING LEADS

Before you make a time commitment to begin working with a lead, you need to ascertain whether they are ready, willing, and able to work with you. As noted earlier, many people begin the process of looking at homes long before they intend to actually buy or sell. The time you take now to determine whether a lead is committed to moving forward will save you time later—and in real estate, time is money. This is called qualifying leads.

It is important that you ask all prospects exactly the same questions and treat all clients and potential clients the same so that you do not violate fair housing laws. To ensure equivalent treatment, use a standard set of qualifying questions for all potential clients. Below is a brief overview of the four criteria you should consider when qualifying a prospective client: motivation, expectations, ability, and authority.

MOTIVATION

Your goal is to try to understand the rationale behind the decision to buy or sell and to determine how eager the prospect is to move forward. Questions could include:

- Why are you moving?
- Do you rent or own? If you rent, when is your lease up?
- How long have you been looking?
- When do you want/need to be in the new home?

EXPECTATIONS

You are more likely to establish a good working relationship with prospects if you understand their expectations. You can find this out by asking questions such as:

- How do you feel about the home buying process?
- What do you expect from an agent?
- What are the top three qualities you are looking for in an agent?

ABILITY

If you are working with leads, you need to ensure that they have the financial capacity to make the purchase they are considering. Here are a few preliminary questions to ask:

- What price range are you considering?
- How much of a down payment will you be making?
- Have you consulted a lender?

The most important thing you can do is have the prospective client get mortgage preapproval. The benefits are many:

- **Saves time**
  If buyers are preapproved, you know the amount they can afford and you can show them properties in the appropriate price range.
- **Ability to act quickly**
  If buyers find their dream home, they might need to submit an offer on the property immediately so they do not risk losing it while waiting for mortgage approval.
- **Better acceptance rate**
  Sellers are more willing to accept offers from preapproved buyers.

If you are working with seller leads, you also need to make sure that they are in a position to be able to sell. Here are some preliminary questions to ask:

- What price are you hoping to get for your home?
- How much do you currently owe on your mortgage?
- When did you purchase your home?
- Do you know where you'd like to move and have you already secured your new property?

AUTHORITY

Before you begin working with a prospect, you want to be sure that you know all of the individuals who might be party to the transaction. For sellers, don't just find out who owns the property, but also who the owner might be consulting. You might check tax records or court records to see if there are additional owners on the title who might not reside in the home. For buyers, make sure you know who will be financing the purchase and who has a say in the decision-making process, not just who will be living in the home.

- Is there anyone else buying the home with you?
- Who are the decision makers in the transaction?
- Is there anyone else you plan to consult when buying/selling this home?

GETTING A COMMITMENT

Qualifying the lead transitions into the next step: the contractual relationship. The nature of your first meeting will help inform the type of relationship you'll establish. But only when you are working with the lead as a client can you offer the full range of services, especially when representing buyers. The services buyers value most—opinions about property value, property evaluation, help negotiating—can be offered in only a contractual buyer–agent relationship.

Of course, discussing legal contracts is not necessarily the easiest thing to broach with people, and some agents make the mistake of delaying, or avoiding entirely, this important discussion. Here are a few mistakes that some agents make related to buyer representation agreements:

- Talk and act like a buyer's representative without clarifying the relationship.
- Avoid discussing a representation agreement because they don't want to pressure a buyer into signing anything.
- Rely on their state's default agency position.
- Assume that buyers know they're "on their side."
- Delay signing a buyer representation agreement until the buyer is ready to make an offer.

The consequences of this are many, and never beneficial for the agent. Performing client-level duties without full disclosure and, preferably, a signed agreement opens the door for a range of conflicts, misunderstandings, lost income, disloyal buyers, and potentially serious legal consequences.

RESPECTING EXCLUSIVE AGREEMENTS

It is important that you determine as soon as possible whether the buyer is in an exclusive agreement with another brokerage firm prior to moving forward. You might want to start with something like this:

- How long have you been looking for a home?
- How have you been searching?
- Have any agents shown you properties already?
- Did you see anything you liked?
- What kept you from buying it?

Ultimately, it's your ethical responsibility to make a reasonable effort in determining whether the buyer has already signed an exclusive agreement with another agent or brokerage. Clarifying this from the outset will spare you and the client a lot of potential problems down the line.

REALTORS® CODE OF ETHICS: STANDARD OF PRACTICE 16-9

REALTORS®, prior to entering into a representation agreement, have an affirmative obligation to make reasonable efforts to determine whether the prospect is subject to a current, valid exclusive agreement to provide the same type of real estate service. (Amended 1/04)

Exercise: Converting Leads to Clients

Review the following lead scenarios and construct a plan to convert each lead into a client. What would you do? What would you say? How would you tailor your plan to each different case? Share your ideas in small groups.

Sam and Tina

Sam and Tina have been referred to you by your college roommate. They are relocating from Maryland because Sam has a new job in the area. You don't know much about them, except that Sam is a college professor and Tina is an attorney, and they have three children.

Josh

Josh has filled out a form on Zillow asking for information about one of your listings. You have his name, email address, and a phone number.

Betty

You met Betty several years ago when you conducted a program on home selling for senior citizens. At the time, she was recently widowed but not ready to change her situation. You've touched base with her by phone every few months (she doesn't use email). You've just called her, and she said, "Oh, I'm so happy to hear from you. I wanted to call you and tell you that I'm thinking of selling my house."

Ryan

Ryan Googled "real estate agents" in your area, found your name, and called you.

Victoria and Jamie

Victoria spoke with you over the phone about a property listing. You established that she and Jamie are first-time home buyers and are looking to buy in the next 6 months. You know that they're not working with an agent, and that they spoke with a lender and have been prequalified for a mortgage of $375,000. They're eager to start looking at houses and have agreed to come to your office to speak with you.

Katie

Katie attended one of your open houses. She didn't tell you much at the time, but she did provide her name and contact information and indicated that she wasn't working with an agent and doesn't have preapproval.

See the Resources section at the back of this manual for sample scenarios for nurturing and converting leads:

- Online lead
- Sphere of influence lead
- Inviting neighbors to an open house
- Asking for a referral from a current client
- Asking for a referral from a local business
- Contacting an old lead
- Expired listing
- For Sale by Owner (FSBO)

Post-Closing Marketing

Marketing continues after the closing. It's part of the ongoing marketing cycle that all agents must continually engage in to nurture leads and create loyal, lifelong clients. Agents lose repeat business because the buyers never hear from the agent again. You want buyers to remember who helped them find their home. You want to always be top of mind.

Remember, your current and past clients are your best source of leads and repeat business. If you work to make it a lifelong relationship rather than a one-time transaction, they will recommend you to their friends and family, and they will call you the next time they buy or sell.

The most effective method for remaining top of mind with past clients is to set up a targeted email drip campaign lasting at least 24 months, with one message per month. The operative word here is "targeted." They've just moved into a new property, so your messages will cover specific topics relating to settling into a new home and neighborhood. Here are a few ideas to incorporate into an email drip campaign for the first year after a home purchase:

- **One Week After Closing**
  Send a message and congratulate them again on the purchase of their new home.
- **After the First Month**
  Send a message about redecorating or remodeling, with contact information for local providers that you recommend.
- **After Two Months**
  Send a quick message asking them if they know anyone who is thinking of buying/selling. Warmly ask for a referral.
- **After Three Months**
  Ask them how they are settling into their new neighborhood. Share a few of your favorite local coffee shops, restaurants, and businesses that they might want to try.
- **After a Year**
  Send a message about making the home more energy efficient, with information about free energy audits, tax incentives, or rebates available.

The messages can also be targeted based on what neighborhood they live in, not just when they purchased the home. Of course, you don't expect your clients to sell their home within 2 years. The goal of this strategy is to continue to remind contacts that you are helpful and knowledgeable, so that they will tell members of their sphere of influence about you.

You don't have to restrict yourself to emails. Be creative! The best post-transaction marketing methods always consider the clients' needs and lifestyles, have a long shelf life, and/or provide a valuable service. Browse the ideas below to get a sampling of things you can do to encourage client loyalty and remain top of mind:

- Provide free service for changing locks, minor repairs, or professional consultations with an interior decorator or landscaper.
- Prepare change-of-address materials such as postcards with a photo of the new home or return address labels.
- Use "acquired through" yard signs.
- Provide a lunch or dinner on moving day.
- Give gift certificates for local restaurants, hardware stores, nurseries, and community activities.
- Furnish a moving truck (loaner or rental).
- Develop a drip email campaign to stay in touch periodically after the transaction and ask for referrals.
- Provide useful reminders—check air filters, change batteries in smoke detectors, etc.—or information about community events and sports teams.
- Give a gift of flower bulbs that will bloom every year.
- Contact buyers on the anniversary of the date they bought the home.
- Create a "New Home Purchase" checklist with tips and resources and send them the link or provide them with a printed copy.
- Host a move-in party or housewarming party.

Drafting Your Marketing Plan

Now it's time to bring all the pieces together and formulate your comprehensive real estate marketing plan. You've learned about various marketing strategies, tactics, and tools that can help you connect with clients, establish your brand, and grow your real estate business. Before we dive into drafting the plan, it may be helpful to review some examples.

Sample Marketing Plans

Adapted from REALTOR® Magazine Online, July 2018, with permission from the National Association of REALTORS®.

These days, real estate marketing is a complex maze of narrowly targeted social media and print outreach campaigns. With that in mind, we asked Greg Herder, of Hobbs Herder, a real estate marketing company in Newport Beach, Calif., along with Vinny LaBarbera, a marketing expert who runs Real Estate Marketing Blog, and Rich Levin, of Success Corps, to divulge their best ideas for salespeople based on three different budget levels. Their thoughtful ideas can easily and dramatically change the nature of a real estate professional's approach to sourcing clients.

With help from Herder, LaBarbera, and Levin, we have pulled together three plans designed to capture a specific demographic and work within your budgetary constraints.

PLAN 1: GETTING YOUR SEA LEGS

This is the first of three marketing plans (the second and third are for salespeople with higher budgets) and is designed for real estate professionals who have between $2,000 and $5,000 to spend on marketing over 6 months. The most effective way to allocate limited funds is through a clear, focused social media ad campaign. Consider this plan the foundation for salespeople of all budget levels.

OBJECTIVE:

Create an impactful online presence that will quickly generate enough cash flow to allow for the longer-term marketing approach of Plan Two.

MONTH ONE

1. Define your personal brand by identifying who you are, how you're unique, and what you can offer that clients want. Remember, you can't be all things to all people, so take a stand.
2. Get to know your geography farm. Pick the neighborhood you live in or one you are familiar with and/or are eager to learn more about. Go see every house that is for sale. Be the first to see every new listing. No one should know more about your neighborhood than you. The most impressive agent is the one who knows everything about the house for sale down the street. And, best of all, being this agent doesn't cost you a penny.
3. Identify an ideal demographic, such as teachers, military personnel, or seniors. Think long and hard about the types of people you know and whom you want to target. You may already be in touch with a natural pool of people.
4. Understanding which social media sites cater to your demographic will help determine where you want to plan an ad.
5. Establish a personal page or profile on your chosen social networks. Use the first month to get an in-depth understanding of what kinds of posts are popular and who the users are.
6. Unless you are an accomplished copywriter, start looking for a professional who can develop a single landing page for your ads. An ad isn't worth anything if it doesn't take the clicker to an engaging page.

7. Use a smartphone and a tripod to start filming short form videos for your social media channels. Have a co-worker film a Q&A session with you and post the video on social media, your website, and your specialized landing page once designed and written. These videos will not only allow potential clients the opportunity to learn more about you, but will also introduce you to the neighborhood as a friendly face of real estate.

8. Divide your email contact list into different segments based on your relationship and their specific needs. Brainstorm email topics that would be helpful/valuable to each of these audiences, and create an email campaign strategy.

MONTH TWO

1. Finalize the social networks you are going to use to promote content. Don't try to get on every social network. Pick one or two and really focus on those. Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are the big sites to consider.

2. Work with a professional writer if necessary to determine what your landing page is going to say, and create a catchy story to bring viewers in. If your ad is for teachers, your landing page might tell the 500-word story of a teacher who bought a house and how they did so in this market. Be sure to include a simple call to action for teachers who are interested in buying by requesting their name, email, and address. Avoid asking for a phone number—people are more likely to share their address without this.

3. Send out your first round of emails to your spheres of influence, former clients, prospects, and leads.

MONTH THREE

1. Launch your landing page in conjunction with your social media ad.
2. Create a letter on a personalized letterhead to follow up with your leads. The letter should not be a resume, but rather another catchy message to your targeted demographic. The purpose of this letter is to emerge from the realm of social media as a tangible entity and leader; someone who can physically guide people to their new homes. By reaching out to potential clients in print, you are essentially taking them to the next level. If you stay consistent with these simple print follow-ups for 3 to 6 months, you will generate a steady flow of business. "Print is the greatest closing tool for online advertising," Herder says.
3. Begin to consistently post on your social media sites. Offer links to resourceful articles and photos of homes you find interesting in your farm. Make your posts engaging, conversational, and helpful rather than a barrage of listings.
4. Continue executing your email campaign. Offer market updates, tips, or or a list of local events/activities that your contacts might find interesting and useful.

MONTH FOUR

1. Monitor your social media ads and presence. Focus on testing many different things. Experiment with alternative content, and try to update at different times on different days. Find out which call to action works the best and gets the greatest response.
2. Start an organized log of all inquiries, leads, and phone calls. If a specific tactic is not delivering, switch it up a bit.
3. Continue executing your email campaign. If your open rate is low, pay particular attention to your subject lines. Make them catchy! Think about the last email you opened—what prompted you to do so?

MONTH FIVE

1. Continue to monitor your ads and social media presence.
2. Continue to send print letters on letterhead to leads generated from your landing page.
3. Mail a customized follow-up letter with a reminder to leads if you have not heard from them.
4. Continue executing your email campaign.

MONTH SIX

1. Take a simple mobile phone video of a listing that might appeal to your target demographic and post it on your social media channels. If it is good quality, consider uploading it to YouTube or Vimeo. Include your contact information at the end of the video.
2. Promote this video link on your social media sites and via email.
3. Mail a postcard to your leads that promotes this video and sends them to your YouTube link.
4. Continue executing your email campaign.

PLAN 2: DRIVING TO SUCCESS

A mid-level salesperson has a budget of approximately $1,500 a month to spend on marketing. This does not mean the salesperson should abandon the practices recommended in the previous plan; rather, these practices should be expanded upon. In theory, this marketing plan could carry a mid-level salesperson for the rest of their career, or it could generate the funds necessary to execute the superstar marketing plan outlined later.

Follow the same steps and timeline as the limited-fund salesperson, but with these additional measures.

OBJECTIVE:

Establish consistent, permanent, name recognition and deal flow that will lead to new and repeat business and generate a stable level of income.

MONTH ONE

1. Determine your primary call to action and become intimately familiar with the personal brand you plan to promote.
2. Get to know your geography farm. Become a familiar face at all open houses and neighborhood or community meetings.
3. Identify your target demographic.
4. Study the top social media sites to determine where you want to run your ads and create personal profiles. When you buy an ad, you pay for clicks. Plan to run at least one ad a month.
5. Hire a web-savvy professional who can set up your landing page (where your ads will take leads) to complement your professional website. Keep in mind that, according to Herder, the cheap template websites simply do not grab people's attention. Your landing page should include a link to your site's home page and social media pages, as well as your email address and phone number, which should all be listed at the top of the page.
6. Start plotting how often you want to post content on your website, what kinds of content in the real estate world appeal to potential clients and drive traffic, and what resources you would like to include on your site.

7. Hire a copywriter and designer to create a color brochure that you can use to follow up on leads from your landing page. This brochure should not read like a resume but more like a prospecting tool. It should include a link to your website.

8. If you are not doing so already, establish a monthly plan to send out a personal letter to past clients.

9. You should already be sending out regular emails to your segmented contact list. Consider adding a monthly email newsletter to the mix. Design an email template that is consistent with your personal branding and will appeal to your target market. Aim to include unique, original content and hyper-local information. If your brokerage supplies you with a monthly newsletter template and content, be sure that you customize it and make it your own.

MONTH TWO

1. Finalize your content development plan.

2. Determine the social networks you are going to use to promote content. Pick one or two and really focus on those.

3. Finalize your landing page and website design.

4. Finalize and sign off on your brochure. Allow at least 2 weeks for copy and 2 weeks for design.

5. Go live with your website before the end of this month. You want to drive all traffic to this site and push it to garner search engine recommendations.

MONTH THREE

1. Go live with your landing page and social media profiles.
2. Launch your social media ad(s) so they are current with your landing page and online presence.
3. Immediately follow up on leads generated from your ads with color brochures.
4. Mail your brochure to your sphere of influence with a nice cover letter telling them that you have just completed a new marketing brochure and would love feedback on whether the brochure accurately reflects your personality. This is not a sales letter!
5. Hold an open house every Saturday or Sunday and hand out brochures.
6. Post regularly on your chosen social media sites. Keep your banter cheerful yet informative. Offer links to resourceful articles and photos of homes you find interesting in your farm. Review a cool new restaurant in your target neighborhood, or mention the fresh flowers in a nearby coffee shop.
7. Write—or post content written by your copywriter—on your website. Try to update something on your site every week, and make sure that you post new content (videos, blogs, articles, event listings, etc.) at least once a month (more if you can swing it!).

MONTH FOUR

1. Monitor your social media ads and your social media presence. This is the month for testing to see what call to action worked the best.
2. Keep an organized log of all inquiries, leads, and phone calls.
3. Continue to post original material on social media and your blog about news and neighborhood happenings.
4. Have a mailing system established where you are regularly sending print materials to the people you advertise to on social media. This physical direct mail list should lead to more clicks.

MONTH FIVE

1. Repeats Steps 1 through 4 from Month 4.
2. Mail a customized follow-up letter to leads if you have not heard from them.

MONTH SIX

1. Take a simple mobile phone video of a listing that might appeal to your target demographic and post it on your social media channels. If it is good quality, consider uploading it to YouTube or Vimeo. Or, if you have some money left in your budget, hire an amateur videographer to shoot the video. This could cost as low as $100 for a basic filming. Extras, such as music and titles, can be added on, but you can expect to have a decent video for well under $500. Include your contact information at the end of the video.
2. Promote this video on your social media sites.
3. Mail a postcard to your leads that promotes this video.

PLAN 3: BECOMING A STAR

Once a REALTOR® has surpassed both the limited-funds salesperson's financial constraints and the mid-level salesperson's budgetary restrictions, there's not much separating them from personal marketing superstardom. By this point, the successful salesperson already has a firm target audience and a brochure mailing system that is working. Chances are, the successful salesperson has a large sphere of influence online and is a well-known name in certain neighborhoods. What they may not have, however, is an online presence that is interlocked with the local media landscape.

↘ Objective:
To generate at least 200 transactions a year, which should result in between $20 million and $30 million in gross annual sales.

MONTH ONE

1. Start looking for a professional videographer who understands the art and science of real estate. You want to produce sleek films of your listings that tell a story. Study other agents' films in the high-end bracket to see what is stunning—and what doesn't work at that level.
2. Hire a writer to create an engaging storyline for your marketing video.
3. Find a marketing agency or create an in-house marketing arm. You should have a marketing person who can help you tie together your print, online, and outside media presence.
4. Scope out industry magazines that are focused on your target demographic. For example, if you target teachers, find a magazine published by the National Education Association and price out the ads for particular zip codes. Ask your copywriter and designer to create an ad that has the same look and feel as your Facebook page, your social media ads, and your website.

MONTH TWO

1. Be ready to explore any new network that pops up. As a high-volume salesperson, you should plan to be an early adopter of effective new tools as they become available.
2. Scope a location site with your writer and videographer for a sophisticated video. This first film is important because it will solidify your reputation.
3. Launch an industry magazine ad, making sure it links to your online presence.

MONTH THREE

1. Continue looking for ways to integrate into higher-priced media choices.
2. Film your listings with your videographer and add a targeted-audience spin. If it's an ad for teachers, interview a teacher (client) about buying a house. Make sure your contact information is listed at the end of the video, but don't just list a phone number with a directive to call if ready to buy or sell. That may be perceived as too aggressive. You want to build a trusting relationship with your viewers, so include with that phone number a Facebook link and your website as well. These are places they can go to comfortably gather more information—and hopefully leave an email address or number for further contact.
3. Have an experienced editor work on your video to ensure good sound and flow, smooth transitions, and catchy music where appropriate.

MONTH FOUR

1. Post your video on YouTube or Vimeo.
2. Post your video on your website and social media pages.
3. Send out a brochure with a video link that promotes your work. The key in today's marketplace is to link together all types of media connections so that potential leads are seeing your name on a variety of platforms.
4. Immediately replace any old social media ads with new ones that drive traffic not only to your landing page, but also to your video.

MONTH FIVE

1. Continue running ads, publishing SEO-rich content on your website, maintaining your social media presence, and mailing print brochures with regularity.
2. Now that your video is up and running, seek out other platforms on which it can be shown.
3. Now is also the time to consider running an advertising campaign in your region. Make sure that you have a stellar website in place where leads will go after seeing or hearing this ad. Place the ad this month so that you can see the results by the end of Month 6.
4. Establish a log that measures online traffic and lead generation and ties together all your platform's online and offline marketing efforts.

MONTH SIX

1. Continue with the steps from Month 5.
2. Start planning for an annual appreciation event for your past clients and referrals. Hire an event planner to make this an extravaganza that people will not want to miss.
3. Evaluate the number of transactions you have completed in the past 6 months, and compare them with last year's results. Analyze your cost per transaction from marketing.

Final Exercise:
Putting It All Together—Your Marketing Plan

Now that you've examined three marketing plans, it's time to apply what you've learned in this course and develop a marketing plan to execute for your business.

OBJECTIVE

To create _____ **and generate** _____.

MONTH ONE

Budget: $ _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

MONTH TWO

Budget: $ _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

MONTH THREE

Budget: $ _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

MONTH FOUR

Budget: $ _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

MONTH FIVE

Budget: $ _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

MONTH SIX

Budget: $ _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Congratulations! You have a plan! Now that you have created a short marketing plan, use the extended marketing template in the Resources section to document your future plans.

Practitioner Perspective: Todd Beckstrom



Todd Beckstrom
ABR®, PSA, CRS
Chapin, South Carolina

GETTING A GRASP ON FUNDAMENTALS OF GENERATING QUALITY LEADS

What lead generation tactics do you use?

Lead generation is the lifeblood of my business and is a way of life and not an event or something I do when my business is down. My most effective lead generation comes from inside my sphere of influence and my past clients. I prefer to work with buyers and sellers who already want and value my services. My favorite lead generation is my "Hour of Power." Each day for nearly 20 years, I pick up the phone and call my past clients and sphere. I try to make it a 2-minute phone call that focuses on them as this is about cultivating our relationship. I focus on F.O.R.D, which is an acronym for Family, Occupation, Recreation, and Dreams. They have to actually ask me about real estate. I never bring it up. I rarely finish the hour without a warm referral from someone.

How do you make sure those leads are quality leads every single time?

The leads are coming from someone who knows me and trusts me. They will definitely be willing to make the introduction and let the person who they are referring know the way I conduct business and how much they appreciated my services.

What strategies do you use for hosting open houses?

I don't do open houses, as they are not the most effective use of my time. I recognize that they are very effective in other markets and will have newer agents in my office man them if the seller insists.

What other tactics do you use?

I set up "Affinity Programs" with local companies in my area. We all know about companies who offer relocation benefits to their employees who are moving to different markets, but what about those who are moving locally? I offer to not only provide "Concierge Service" when their employees use me, but also to offer a cash back program. They allow me to market to their employees and to do lunch and learns about real estate related topics. I, in essence, become their companies' "go to" agent. An HR Director has never turned me down. It is a win-win! A housewarming party for your buyers is a great way to turn one deal into five to seven! First, I ask them for a list of everyone they want to attend (effectively expanding my sphere), and I invite the entire neighborhood to "come meet your neighbor and say hi." I have light snacks and beverages, show up with career apparel on and a nametag (not a secret agent). The buyer introduces me to their sphere and tells them that I am the agent that got them their fantastic home. The neighbors show up and have questions about buying or selling. They also comment that their agent did not throw them a party! I always leave with three to six quality warm leads.

Get involved with local charities and donate back to them. Also, market your services in their newsletter and offer to give back to the charity with each closing. People like to work with like-minded people. I am on the Board of Directors of a local animal shelter and market to their 9,000 subscribers. It is very cheap to do and I love writing that check to the rescue! It is a win-win!

The thing with prospecting is that you have to fully commit. If you want more business, you need to talk to or engage with more people!

What digital marketing tactics do you use?

I utilize social media and boost my listings. I "E-Farm" neighborhoods, sending them valuable market reports via targeted social media boosted posts of active properties, recent sales, and more importantly, supply and demand dynamics with a personal commentary on what I see going on in their neighborhood. I become their trusted market expert of choice when they are ready.

I love to do a "slybroadcast" call targeted to a neighborhood when I have a buyer and cannot find them a property in that neighborhood. The slybroadcast goes out to as many folks that I am willing to pay for and goes directly to their voicemail. In the voicemail that is left, I explain that I do have an actual buyer and I get specific about their situation and the type of home they are looking for and say that their home seems to be one that would work for my buyer if they would be willing to sell.

I literally have over 100 different prospecting techniques that I routinely use, and I am not afraid to try something different. Just track your results and figure out what is giving you the best results for the time and money invested. "If it is worth doing and paying for, it is worth tracking!"

↘ Do you have a preferred CRM?

My preferred CRM is Top Producer® because it is an all-encompassing program. I will never need to upgrade. I also really like BoomTown for lead gen and a CRM.

↘ What advice do you have for agents who feel like they struggle with generating quality leads?

As a very wise agent once told me when I was new, "Something works, nothing doesn't." If agents are struggling with quality leads, they need to concentrate on people they already know. They also need to try different techniques and find out what works best for them. There is no one right way to prospect for business.

About 20 years ago, I had the pleasure of hearing David Knox speak at a real estate conference. I really enjoyed it and asked (since I was just beginning my career) if he had any advice that he did not share in the program that he could give me as an agent. He said, "Todd, you either have to be good or you have to be there, and if you can be both then you will be a star." I never forgot that nugget.

Summary

You have taken your first steps in understanding the process of marketing and lead generation. You are thinking about your unique value proposition, your personal brand, and your target audiences. You have selected some marketing tools and tactics that you want to implement. You are thinking about budget, outcomes, and are tracking your metrics. You are using multiple methods to connect with your clients and build a strong pipeline of prospects. But this is just the first step! You won't just create one marketing plan for the rest of your career. This is just one iteration of your journey. Use this workbook as a tool and revisit it often. Create a marketing plan yearly. Stay on top of your marketing strategy and lead generation tactics, and you will find that your skill, strategy, and success will continue to grow, too. Best of luck on your marketing journey.



Resources

Extended Marketing Plan Template

DEFINING YOUR BRAND

- **Title**
  Marketing Plan for **[COMPANY NAME]** for **[YEAR]** to **[YEAR]**

- **Executive Summary:**
  Include all of your services and how long you've been in business. Introduce your team and the structure of your marketing strategy. Mention your mission statement, your objectives, and your tactics.

- **Mission Statement:**
  Insert your mission statement here.

Unique Value Proposition

Description of Brand

Tools and Tactics:

Include your social media platforms as well as your website and email publishing platforms. List any tool and tactic you plan to use.

OBJECTIVE

To create _____ **and generate** _____.

SWOT ANALYSIS:

SWOT ANALYSIS	HELPFUL	HARMFUL
Internal:	**Strengths:** 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____	**Weaknesses:** 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
External:	**Opportunities:** 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____	**Threats:** 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
ACTIONABLE ITEMS: **Two ways to capitalize on advantages:** 1. _____ 2. _____ **Two ways to mitigate disadvantages:** 1. _____ 2. _____		

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

For each competitor, list the tools and tactics they are using, as well as the voice, tone, and delivery of their marketing.

Competitor One

Competitor Two

Competitor Three

TARGET MARKET/FUTURE CLIENT INFORMATION:

↘ Who Are They?

↘ What Problems Are They Facing?

↘ How Does Our Team Help Solve Those Problems?

MONTH-BY-MONTH PLAN EXECUTION:

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

BUDGET:

Advertising Method	Amount Budgeted
Budget for social media:	$
Budget for website:	$
Budget for video:	$
Budget for traditional advertising:	$
TOTAL BUDGET:	**$**

MEASURING SUCCESS:

↘ Goal One:

- Metric to be measured: _____
- Goal: _____

↘ Goal Two:

- Metric to be measured: _____
- Goal: _____

↘ Goal Three:

- Metric to be measured: _____
- Goal: _____

↘ Goal Four:

- Metric to be measured: _____
- Goal: _____

↘ Goal Five:

- Metric to be measured: _____
- Goal: _____

↘ Goal Six:

- Metric to be measured: _____
- Goal: _____

Balancing Act: Playing It Safe Online

By Katherine Johnson, General Counsel, NAR Legal Affairs

There's no disputing the fact that social media has opened many new avenues for buyer's representatives to connect with potential home buyers and other agents. The possibilities seem almost limitless. Online conversations can occur just as easily with people in your local community as someone on the other side of the world.

But along with wide open online communication, opportunities also come with potential risks. Some users simply invite trouble. For example, imagine that you post an article on your blog about why buyer's reps are uniquely qualified to serve home buyers. The post draws several comments, including one from Joe REALTOR® claiming that Jane REALTOR® is dishonest and untrustworthy and regularly steals clients by lying to them. In a fury, Jane decides to file a defamation lawsuit against Joe, including your brokerage in the action.

How do you prevent such negative repercussions from spilling back on you? While the risks of participating in online forums are higher if you're the host, anyone who engages in social media should consider ways to play it safe online and avoid being drawn into a formal complaint or legal action.

REVIEW THE GROUND RULES

Preventing such a scenario is one reason why any website that allows users to post their own content should have a Terms of Use (TOU) statement that governs participants' actions and gives the host certain privileges and protections. Sometimes this statement is called the Terms of Service or Terms and Conditions. Typically, it appears as a link at the bottom of the page.

What should be included in your TOU? First, you want to set forth the ground rules that users of your site must abide by, including agreeing not to use your site to take certain actions such as:

- Defaming, abusing, harassing, or stalking others
- Publishing or uploading any inappropriate, profane, or obscene content
- Advertising or offering to sell any goods for commercial purposes
- Transmitting surveys, contests, or spam
- Falsifying or omitting any author attributions
- Collecting or storing personal information about other users
- Impersonating any person or entity
- Engaging in illegal activities, including posting any content to which the user does not own the intellectual property rights

GIVE YOURSELF ROOM TO ACT

What happens if users don't comply with your TOU? To address this possibility, your terms should include provisions that allow you, at your sole discretion, to refuse, move, or remove any material that users submit. You also want to disclaim any liability and warranty for anything posted by a third party, more commonly called user-generated content.

Many TOU statements also include an indemnification clause, stating that users will defend you in the event that you are sued because of their content. But don't rely too much on such a provision, because it's only as good as the user's ability to defend.

MANAGING COMMENTS

Once you've laid the proper groundwork by constructing and posting your Terms of Use, the next question becomes how will you monitor users' posts? Do you want to review each comment, and will this occur before or after comments are submitted?

In considering your options, it is helpful to review the immunity provisions in the Communications Decency Act, or CDA. The CDA, also referred to as the Good Samaritan law, encourages but does not require websites to review or filter user-generated content. As long as you aren't editing the content of user's posts, you will not be held liable for their substance. You will be immune from publisher's liability as long as you are merely providing the forum in which comments are made—and not creating the content. However, if you solicit or encourage the offending content, then you may be subject to liability as the creator or publisher of that content.

Even though the CDA provides some protection, it's still a good idea to implement a review process of user content. If you want to review the comments prior to posting them, the best scenario is to review them immediately after they are submitted so your users can enjoy almost-instantaneous posting. However, a more ideal solution may be to establish a process that reviews comments as soon as they are posted, removing any that violate your TOU.

It's also a good idea to encourage users to assist you in monitoring your site. This could be as simple as adding a hyperlink that says, "Click here to report any inappropriate content."

DON'T FORGET INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Who owns the copyright to the material that is posted on your blog? The overwhelming trend is to have the copyright remain with the user and to require a nonexclusive (royalty-free) license for you to use the content however you'd like.

Even though the CDA does not provide immunity for copyright infringement, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) does. If you adhere to this statute, you won't be liable for copyright infringement when a third party posts someone else's copyrighted works, including text, images, or video, to your blog. To comply with the DMCA, you must register a designated agent with the copyright office who can be contacted to report any copyright infringement found on your site. You must also post this person's information on your site to help users report such infringements.

PROTECTING YOUR OWN CONTENT

How freely are you willing to share the content that you generate on your website or blog? If your primary objective is to elevate your online presence by posting content that you hope will be picked up by others, you may be comfortable relaxing your rules and trusting that anyone reposting your content will exhibit common courtesy and good online etiquette by giving you credit for the material and including a link back to you as the original source.

However, if you're concerned about not giving anything away, you'd want to include "all rights reserved." Or maybe you'd prefer to require written permission prior to allowing others to use your content, which is a common provision on many websites. Another option is to allow limited use for personal, noncommercial purposes. For example, NAR allows users to print or download one copy of its material for their own use.

In all cases, however, it's a good idea to require anyone using or reposting your content to attribute the material back to you. Your TOU can address this, suggesting specific language such as "Reprinted with permission of XYZ Realty."

MAKING SMART CHOICES

Hopefully I've raised your awareness of the potential pitfalls of hosting or participating in online forums. Not that those risks should prevent you from connecting with others online. On the contrary, online social media is a very attractive way to expand your networks, your knowledge, and potentially your business. Just make sure you're informed about steps you can take to maintain a positive experience.

Plagiarism and Copyright Infringement

PLAGIARISM

Put simply, plagiarism occurs when you copy someone's work and present it as your own. Although plagiarism is not illegal, REALTORS® should as a general matter avoid using another's work without permission even though the REALTORS® Code of Ethics does not address the issue directly. They should also be sensitive to the obligations of Article 12 that require presenting a "true picture" in their communications.

To avoid plagiarism, you must provide proper attribution; that is, you must make it clear when you are using material or presenting an idea that you have not created. Guidelines include:

- Any time you source someone else's words or ideas, that person must be given credit by you linking to their thought or quote.
- Merely saying, "I read this in *USA Today*" doesn't cut it; you must refer or link to the specific article.
- When quoting someone else's material, writers are advised to put the excerpted words in quotes or in block quotes.
- As discussed below, use of another's content may also raise issues regarding copyright infringement depending on how much material is used and whether the material used is copyright protected. As a general matter, if using more than a very small portion of text from the work of another, you should secure permission from the author or not use the material. Photos or other similar graphical material should never be used without permission or purchasing a license.
- If the owner of content requests that you remove the content, we would recommend that you do so immediately to avoid litigation. You might be able to find another source or another way to make the statement you need to make. Providing proper attribution avoids the problem of plagiarism, but it does not give you permission to use someone else's work.

COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

Copyright infringement is a legal issue. Copyright infringement occurs when works protected by copyright are used without consent.

Copyright is secured automatically upon creation. As a real estate professional, you should assume that everything you see on the web is copyrighted, unless you have reason to believe otherwise. Mentioning the name of the creator of the content or otherwise providing source attribution when reusing or reprinting the content of another is not sufficient. You need to have a license or other written permission, which is often granted as a result of a simple courteous request.

LPMAMA Sample Scenario

Lori Ballen, "Life of a Lead," LoriBallen.com

- **L: Location**
  Where are you looking?
- **P: Price**
  What is your price range?
- **M: Motivation**
  Why and how quickly do you need to sell or buy?
- **A: Agent**
  Are you working with an agent?
- **M: Mortgage**
  Are you buying with cash or are you financing the purchase?
- **A: Appointment**
  When can we meet?

SAMPLE SCENARIO

- **Agent:**
  Hi, this is Richard Shore. I'm an agent with the Blue Group. I see that you're interested in the house at 321 Plainview Place. Do you have time to talk about what your plans are?
  - **Prospect:**
    Yes, OK.
- **Agent:**
  Are you interested in properties near Plainview Place?
  - **Prospect:**
    Yes, I like that area. I also like the area near the river. [Agent makes a note of these locations.]
- **Agent:**
  And the 321 Plainview house is listed at $250,000—is that the price range you are considering?
  - **Prospect:**
    Yes, I think so. Somewhere between 225 and 275. [Agent notes price range minimum to maximum.]

Agent:
Before we go any further, I need to ask you, are you working with an agent?

- **Prospect:**
  No, I've just been looking online. You're the first agent I've spoken with.

[Note: If the prospect is working with an agent, end the transaction. Offer to send the detail sheet for the property and suggest that the agent call you back to schedule a showing, if it's your listing.]

Agent:
Have you spoken to a lender or will you be paying cash?

- **Prospect:**
  Oh, yes, I did. He said I was pre-qualified, or something, for an $180,000 mortgage.

[Note: If there has been no contact with a lender, provide information with a contact and explain pre-approval.]

Agent:
That's good to know. I'd really like to help you find a home in a location that interests you and that you can afford. Can you tell me if there is a certain time frame by which you wish to be in a home?

- **Prospect:**
  Yes, I'd really like to find a place before my lease is up in March. [Make a note of motivation and date.]

Agent:
That sounds great. The next step would be for you to come into our office, and we can get more information from you and give you some information about the buying process. How does that sound?

Four Areas that Pose Danger of Discrimination

Even with the best of intentions, we can sometimes inadvertently be discriminating against others. There are four areas that especially pose a risk of discrimination in real estate transactions: screening, steering, advertising, and predatory lending.

1. Screening of potential buyers must be done using objective criteria, such as financial situation or credit history. These objective criteria must be applied to all buyers consistently, not selectively, to comply with fair housing laws.
2. Steering is the unlawful practice of guiding buyers toward or away from a particular property or neighborhood based on their race, gender, or other protected class criteria. We can steer clients, even inadvertently, through our recommendations or when editorializing about certain homes or neighborhoods a client should be considering.
3. Any advertising we do must also comply with federal and state fair housing laws. All advertisements must not be favoring or disfavoring any particular demographic.
4. Predatory lending is the practice of deceiving buyers that could result in the loss of home equity or damaged credit, or that is in violation of federal consumer protections. We can do our clients a great service by watching out for such practices.

Sample Scenarios for Nurturing and Converting Leads

ONLINE LEAD

Hi, this is **[NAME]**. I see that you were looking at **[SITE]** and requested information about **[PROPERTY]**, and I wanted to follow up with you. Are you interested in properties in that area?

Great. I'd like to help you. Can I send you my **[SOMETHING HELPFUL]**?

OK, I'll send that out to you. If you'd like, I can also send you periodic emails with properties I think you'll be interested in. Would that be OK?

In the meantime, if you see something you want to view, let me know and I can set up an appointment for you to walk through it.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE LEAD

Hi _____ , this is **[NAME and AFFILIATION]**, how have you been?

I wanted to reach out and remind you that I'm in real estate. I know that sometime in the next month or two you are going to talk to someone who is planning to buy or sell a home. Can I just ask a favor...? **[WAIT FOR "YES."]**

If you talk to someone about buying or selling real estate, would you be willing to pass along my contact information?" **[PAUSE AND WAIT PATIENTLY FOR A RESPONSE.]**

Oh, thank you so much. People want to do business with someone that is recommended by someone they know. Of course, I'm happy to return the favor any time, so I really appreciate it. **[IF APPLICABLE.]**

[FOLLOW UP WITH A THANK-YOU CARD OR EMAIL MESSAGE. IF THE LEAD SENDS YOU A REFERRAL, FOLLOW UP WITH A GIFT OF SOME KIND.]

INVITING NEIGHBORS TO AN OPEN HOUSE

Ideally done in person...

Hi, this is **[NAME and AFFILIATION]**. We've just listed your neighbor's home at **[ADDRESS]**. Do you know them? If you'd be interested in seeing the property, I'm having an open house on **[DATE]** and you are invited to come. Here is a flyer with all the information about the property and the date and time. As you can see, it is listed at **[PRICE]**.

[OPTIONAL, DEPENDING ON HOW DIRECT YOU WANT TO BE:]
Have you given any thought to selling your home? The market is good right now, and I think you'd have plenty of interest.

Thanks for your time. I'll be back in touch and will let you know when the property sells.

[FOLLOW UP WITH A HANDWRITTEN NOTE, A REMINDER OF THE DATE, AND INCLUDE A BUSINESS CARD.]

ASKING FOR A REFERRAL FROM A CURRENT CLIENT

I'm so enjoying working with you, and I want to work with more clients like you. I know that people who are looking to move know others in the same position. If that is the case, how would you feel about referring my services to them?

ASKING FOR A REFERRAL FROM A LOCAL BUSINESS

Hi **[NAME]**, this is **[YOUR NAME and AFFILIATION]**, and I'm in the process of creating a list of preferred business and service providers in the area to give to my clients. I frequently have clients ask me for a good **[TYPE OF SERVICE]**, so I'm looking for a trusted company to refer them to. I've heard good things about your company **[OR "I'VE USED YOUR SERVICE AND THINK IT'S GREAT"]** and I'd like to include you. Would you and your business be interested in being included?" **[WAIT FOR YES.]**

Great! These kinds of professional referral partnerships can help us grow each other's businesses, so if I refer clients to you, would you be willing to refer your clients that are looking to buy or sell a home to me? Of course, with the understanding that I will provide them the same excellent service that you offer your clients. **[WAIT FOR YES.]**

Excellent! Can you give me your email address so that I can send you my contact information and get yours?

CONTACTING AN OLD LEAD

[CALL OR EMAIL.]

Hi _____, this is **[YOUR NAME and AFFILIATION]**, how have you been?

In case you don't remember, we met **[WHEN AND WHERE]**. I'm sorry for not being in touch for so long, but I wanted to touch base and see how everything is going with you. I remember that you said you **[SHARED INTEREST OR REAL ESTATE NEED]**. Is that still the case?

Great! Well, I just wanted to say hi and see how you're doing. I'm in the process of updating my databases so I can do a better job of staying in touch with people. Is it OK if I keep you in my database, and send you an email every now and then? Is it still **[EMAIL ADDRESS]**?

It was great talking with you. And, of course, if there is anything I can do to be of service in the future, please let me know.

[ADD TO DRIP CAMPAIGN.]

EXPIRED LISTING

Hi _____ , this is **[YOUR NAME and AFFILIATION]**. I see that you had listed your home for sale.

Is your home still on the market? I'm asking because I sell real estate in your area, and I think I can help you find a buyer. Could you spare a few minutes to talk about your home?

Can you tell me what you think are the biggest selling points of the property? Why do you think it didn't sell? If you were to sell again, what would you be looking for in a listing agent? When and where are you planning to move?

I would love an opportunity to talk with you about your property. I've helped many clients sell their homes after working unsuccessfully with other agents. I know how frustrated you must feel. Is there a time you would be available when I could come out and look at the house and share my thoughts with you? You'd be under no obligation, of course; I'd just be offering another perspective for you.

FSBO

Hi _____ , this is **[YOUR NAME and AFFILIATION]**.

I noticed the sign that you're selling your home. I'll be honest with you, I'm a real estate agent, but I'm not going to try to sell you on my services. I just wondered if you'd mind if I dropped off some information for you?

I've got some information that I think can help you with the sales process. All I ask from you is that, if at any point you decide you do want to hire an agent, you give me an opportunity to meet with you and tell you about my services. OK?

[CALL BACK EVERY FEW WEEKS AND ASK HOW THINGS ARE GOING, AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING YOU CAN HELP WITH.]

Email Templates

REFERRAL TO CLIENT

Hi **<insert client first name>**! I hope all is well with you!

You had mentioned that you were in need of a real estate referral in **<city, state>**. I can definitely help you with that and know just the person who can be of assistance.

<insert broker/agent firm> has been a great resource to many of my referrals in the past, has extensive experience in **<insert city/ geographic area>**, and I'm confident they will take excellent care of all your needs.

[FOR A MORE SERVICE-ORIENTED APPROACH, INCLUDE THIS LINE:] *If you'd like for me to schedule a conference call between* **<agent's name>***, you, and me, please let me know. I can assist you with the initial call and make sure you get all the information you need to help you make the best choice.*

If you have any questions or need anything else at all, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Have a great day, and good luck!

<first name>

CHECKING IN

Hi **<insert client first name>**! I hope you're doing well!

I wanted to take a second to check in to see how much you are loving your new home. Have you met any of your neighbors yet?

Is there anything I can help you with?

If you ever need a handyman, landscaper, plumber, or really, just about anything home-related, I hope you won't hesitate to ask. That's what I'm here for.

Going forward, I'll be checking in with you from time to time. As a homeowner, I want to make sure you stay up to date on relevant news, articles, tips and tricks, and anything I think you'll find useful.

Have a great day—we'll talk soon!

<first name>

OPEN HOUSE

Hi **<insert lead first name>**,

It was a pleasure meeting you **[and your family, if applicable]** at the open house at **<address of property>!**

I've attached **[A FLYER AND/OR THE MLS LISTING SHEET]** for this property to this email, in case you didn't pick one up at the house.

Do you have any questions I can answer for you at this time? I'd be more than happy to set up a private showing for you, should you feel that more time in the house would help you in deciding if this is the right house for you **<and your family>**.

If you decide that this home just isn't the right home for you, I'd be happy to talk with you about your home search and help you find one that meets your needs.

[FOR A MORE AGGRESSIVE APPROACH, IF YOU ARE NOT THE LISTING AGENT OR ARE TRYING TO CAPTURE THEM AS A BUYER, YOU MIGHT ADD THIS LINE:]

I've also attached a few other similar properties in the area, which may also meet your home search requirements—if you'd like to schedule a showing for any of these properties, please let me know!

If you have any questions about this home or others that have piqued your interest, please feel free to email me or contact me anytime.

<first name>

INTERNET LEAD FOLLOW-UP

Hi **<insert lead first name>**,

We recently received your information from **<name of website lead came from>** indicating that you were interested in **<insert listing/ property name and link to listing on your website>**.

I'm sure you're busy, but I wanted to see if you had few minutes for me to answer any questions you might have about this or similar properties. I'd also be happy to set up a time for us to go see the home in person.

Some of our best clients are referred to us from **<name of website lead came from>**, so I hope we will have the pleasure of working with you. Please let me know when a good time to speak would be, and I'll be in touch with you soon! Have a great day—I look forward to speaking soon!

<first name>

REFERRAL TO AGENT

Hi **<agent first name>**,

I hope all is well with you and that your business in **<city>** is going well this year!

Thank you for taking the referral of my good friend and client, **<client's name>**. Because I recognize you as a leader in your market, I'm excited that my client has the opportunity to work with you. I have extensive experience working with **<client's name>**, so if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

And if you have any future referrals to **<enter your city here>**, please think of me. I'd love to be your referral partner in the future!

<first name>

THANK YOU FOR MEETING WITH ME

Hi **<client first name>**,

It was great to meet with you today—thank you so much for your time! I am looking forward to the opportunity to work with you on your home **<sale AND/OR purchase>**.

Choosing a real estate agent can be an extremely personal choice, and I understand that. I enjoyed learning about your home **<sale/purchase>** needs, and I hope that I was able to answer all of your questions. However, if there are any other questions I can answer for you or additional information I can provide, please don't hesitate to call me.

Looking forward to speaking with you again soon!

<first name>