

GRI Designation Core Course

Negotiation

SESSION FOUR

Lesson One

At this end of this session you will be able to:

- Understand what an agent's role is in a negotiation.
- Determine the best negotiation strategies to employ when representing buyers and sellers in a real estate transaction.
- Identify the role and purpose of a home inspector.
- Discuss the process of a home inspection and what a home inspection should cover.
- Explain the importance of a realtor in getting the excepted contract to and through the closing table.
- Be able to prepare clients for the closing day explaining what is likely to occur and what pitfalls may ensue.
- Discuss the common factors that makes real estate deals fall apart.
- Properly navigate the pitfalls that destroy real estate transactions and effectively keep deals together.
- Determine how to build a database for the long term.
- Decide what type of database is right for your business.
- Employ methods, strategies and set up a system to reach out to past present and future clients.
- Understand a DRIP prospecting system and how to implement on a consistent basis.
- Discuss the key features of website design and determine what your website needs and does not need.
- Discuss whether to hire a professional web developer or design the website yourself.
- Understand that smart phone applications have the potential to be a integral part of the real estate business.
- Determine what real estate applications are best for your business and implement them accordingly.

- Discuss how automated valuation models work and how these models are affecting the real estate industry.
- Explain the accuracy within the valuation models and be able to explain to your clients how these models affect pricing the property.
- Understand the importance of effective and proper communication between agents and their clients.
- Discuss good communication habits and how these habits can grow your business and help agents close transactions.
- Compare the habits of top real estate agents to the habits of the regular real estate agent.
- Determine if your business is ready to hire a real estate assistant.
- Identify what qualities are important for your real estate assistant and how to properly train someone to assist in your business.

Negotiation

A negotiation is a conversation and each encounter is a unique experience. In the role of negotiator, agents try to help their clients accomplish what is important to them. The agent owes the client their absolute loyalty.

What Buyers Want

- **55%** **Help me find the right home to purchase**
- **12%** **Help me negotiate the terms of sale**
- **12%** **Help me negotiate price**

REALTORS® frequently miss the opportunity to sell their negotiating skills. In all presentations, clients should be informed that the agent will help them negotiate the price and conditions. This is an attention getter because many other agents never focus on it.

Negotiation

Evaluate Your Position

Determine what is most important to the client.

- Price – Some sellers must get a certain amount for their home and time is not a factor.
- Closing time – There are buyers that may need to purchase a house very quickly. They can be flexible on the price but time may not be on their side.
- Terms – Buyers may need to sell their current home before purchasing another one or they may be worried about paying closing costs.

Convey the realities of the market to the client as they may not have a realistic expectation of the market. It is the agent's responsibility to educate them.

Plan an offer and negotiation strategy by taking the client through a negotiation role play. If they are listing their home for \$200,000 and an offer arrives for \$170,000 the agent should ask them how they plan to respond. This exercise allows them to begin visualizing how the negotiation will unfold and be prepared for many different scenarios.

Know the facts

In a negotiation, knowledge is power. If negotiating price, for example, the agent should ensure they have done an exhaustive search of both recently sold comps as well as what is currently on the market. Agents

should not only understand the market but they also need to know what the other side is likely to throw at them.

Think One Step ahead

Be one step ahead by anticipating possible objections and determine how to overcome them. Clients may get fixated on a particular issue, such as wanting to retain a fixture, and they do not see alternative solutions. It is the agent's job to show them another way.

Do Not Be Arrogant

Arrogance can work against the agent in a negotiation. It is never a time to make others look bad or showcase the agent's smart and clever nature.

Be Quiet

Listening allows the agent to find out what the other party really wants. Empathy goes a long way, even if the agent is not in agreement with the other party's position – they still need to understand it. An impasse can be worked through if the other party feels they are understood.

Do Not Get Emotional

Clients may get emotional but the agent should not. As an agent negotiating a transaction, you owe it to your clients to keep a level head. Negotiations should not become personal but should stick to the business points. If the situation becomes too heated, agree to walk away, think about possible solutions, and meet again at a later time.

As a reminder, this is not charity and you have a responsibility to your clients and their best interests. Be wary of a “sympathy play” and keep focused on what is most important to your clients.

Give and Take

Negotiations are give and take, so always be prepared to lose something. Before starting a negotiation, identify the points your clients may be willing to walk away from and work with them to write out the pros and cons of each issue. This will better determine their absolute sticking points.

Never concede anything without asking for something in return.

Deadlines Spur Action

Propose a deadline when the other party is deciding on an issue. If no deadline is in place, the other party may delay their decision and leave your clients waiting indefinitely. If need be a deadline can always be extended.

Gridlock

When there is an impasse and people are deadlocked on an issue, put it aside for a moment and try to get progress going on something else.

Negotiation Strategies

When representing the buyer, ask the listing agent for the lowest offer. Even though they are not supposed to divulge that information, you may be surprised at what they are willing to share. Use a personal touch when submitting offers. If you email a contract or counteroffer, always follow up with a phone call – otherwise, it may seem like you do not believe in your offer.

Dirty Tricks

In their book *Getting to Yes*, Roger Fisher and William Ury give examples of dirty tricks that can be used in negotiation: lies, psychological abuse and pressure tactics.

They recommend combatting these issues using a three-pronged approach:

1. Recognize the trick being played – so that you can ignore it.
2. Draw attention to the trick being played.
3. Negotiate about rules with which the negotiation will be conducted.

Lowball Offers

Prepare your seller for lowball offers. Let them know to expect lowball offers and not to be offended, as a low offer is better than no offer at all. Sellers can always submit a counteroffer they feel is reasonable.

Manage your buyers when they are considering lowball offers and remind them they may not be the only buyers submitting an offer. Use data like the list-to-sale ratio for the area as proof that lowball offers may not work for that property.

A successful negotiation has multiple winners, in that both parties leave the table feeling as if they have won something. In the future, you may be negotiating with the same person again, so it is important you both feel satisfied with the agreement. Always leave something on the table that makes the other party feel good.

Notes:

GRI Designation Core Course

Inspections

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Two

A home inspection is designed to put a question mark on an issue, but home inspectors are not qualified to determine whether or not it is a problem.

Responsibilities

Sellers

Sellers should be aware that home inspectors will be going through the house from top to bottom.

Buyers

Buyers need to be made aware that an older home cannot be made brand new. There will likely be issues that arise in the inspection of an older home and they will need to be discussed with the buyers.

Fixed vs. Flexible - When reviewing an inspection report, buyers should determine what must be fixed and what they are willing to be more flexible on.

Home Inspectors

The home inspector should be state certified/licensed and be ASHI Certified (American Society of Home Inspectors). The inspector is not a contractor, although they may have been a contractor in their previous career. While they may be able to shed light on what you can or cannot do to a property and its potential costs, their main purpose is to inspect the property, its systems and the overall state of the home.

A good inspector will remain impartial, not be an alarmist and identify issues that may need to be addressed. The inspector is not a part of the transaction and should not get in the middle of the deal. The inspector should look around, make notes and provide a detailed report as well as feedback on future maintenance needed.

What a Home Inspection Should Cover

For more information, check out the virtual home inspection at www.ASHI.org, the website of the American Society of Home Inspectors.

Structure: The skeleton of the home impacts how the property stands up to weather, gravity, and the earth. Structural components, including the foundation and the framing, should be inspected.

Exterior: The inspector should look at sidewalks, driveways, steps, windows, and doors. A home's siding, trim, and surface drainage also are part of an exterior inspection.

- Doors and windows
- Siding (brick, stone, stucco, vinyl, wood, etc.)
- Driveways/sidewalks
- Attached porches, decks, and balconies

Roofing: A well-maintained roof protects you from rain, snow, and other forces of nature. Take note of the roof's age, conditions of flashing, roof draining systems (pooling water), buckled shingles, loose gutters and downspouts, skylight, and chimneys.

Plumbing: Thoroughly examine the water supply and drainage systems, water heating equipment, and fuel storage systems. Drainage pumps and sump pumps also fall under this category. Poor water pressure, banging pipes, rust spots, or corrosion can indicate problems.

Electrical: Safe electrical wiring is essential. Look for the condition of service entrance wires, service panels, breakers and fuses, and disconnects. Also take note of the number of outlets in each room.

Heating: The home's heating system, vent system, flues, and chimneys should be inspected. Look for age of water heater, whether the size is adequate for the house, speed of recovery, and energy rating.

Air Conditioning: The inspector should describe the home cooling system, its energy source, and inspect the central and through-wall cooling equipment. Consider the age and energy rating of the system.

Interiors: An inspection of the inside of the home can reveal plumbing leaks, insect damage, rot, construction defects, and other issues. An inspector should take a close look at:

- Walls, ceilings and floors
- Steps, stairways, and railings
- Countertops and cabinets
- Garage doors and garage door systems

Ventilation/insulation: To prevent energy loss, check for adequate insulation and ventilation in

Who should be at the inspection?

The buyer's agent should attend the inspection and provide access to the property. It is not appropriate for an unlicensed person to be in a home unsupervised. If the buyer is there (or any other unlicensed person) then the agent should also be in attendance.

The only reason a listing agent should be at the inspection is to provide access, security and/or upon the sellers' request. The listing agent's responsibility is to open the property and stay out of the way; they should exercise caution when directly answering any questions about property as there are potential liability issues.

No one should interfere with the inspector while he/she is performing the home inspection.

Uncle Steve

Buyers should understand why having Uncle Steve on hand during the inspection is not a good idea. While it may seem logical to bring a relative or close friend who is a contractor, point out that these people are not licensed property inspectors. Sometimes well-intended people can end up causing harmful consequences.

Explain to buyers that Uncle Steve wants to feel useful so he may feel it is important to point out as many negative things as possible, just to seem helpful. He's far from impartial and can raise red flags when that may not be an issue.

Buyers are paying for a professional home inspector so let the professional do his/her work undisturbed.

Request for Repairs

All requests should be forwarded in writing and accompanied by the portion of the report that identifies the issue. Sellers should not repair or credit anything unless it is determined that problem exists.

Disclosure of Defects

Remind sellers that defects discovered in the inspection and subsequently verified must be disclosed during other negotiations if the current contract fails. If the seller refuses to disclose (because they question the results or simply do not want to do so) consult your broker

and/or attorney for the best course of action. License laws require agent disclose or the agent will

be held liable for the non-disclosure. If you and the seller disagree on the disclosure, it may be best to terminate the listing.

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GRI Designation Core Course

Contract to Closing

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Three

A REALTOR®'s job does not truly begin until after there is an accepted contract. Besides facilitating the actual closing, duties can include:

- assisting in arranging third party inspections and approvals
- preparing and explaining relevant documents
- preparing for closing
- assisting sellers in buying and/or finding a new home

This continued service to clients reinforces your credibility as an agent. It also helps clients remember you long after closing, encouraging them to recommend you to others.

Before the Closing

Follow Through

Take the initiative and follow through with third party providers, such as home inspectors. Keep all written records and notes when discussing and confirming appointments.

If a due date arises, get verification that this issue has been completed or get a written extension.



REALTOR® Code of Ethics Standard of Practice 1-8

Do I continue to show the property?

REALTORS®, acting as agents or brokers of buyers/tenants, shall submit to buyers/tenants all offers and counter-offers until acceptance but have no obligation to continue to show properties to their clients after an offer has been accepted unless otherwise agreed in writing. REALTORS®, acting as agents or brokers of buyers/tenants, shall recommend that buyers/tenants obtain the advice of legal counsel if there is a question as to whether a pre-existing contract has been terminated.

Property Insurance

The mortgage company takes the average of the Homeowner policies of the property in that area, so you should recommend the buyer go to their insurance company and get an accurate quote.

Title Insurance

Owner's (mortgagor's) title insurance is an insurance policy that protects the owner up to the selling price of the property and lasts until he or his heirs sell the property.

Final Walk-through

The pre-closing inspection is imperative to verify that contractual items agreed to have been completed. If the client decides to forgo the pre-closing inspection have them sign an agreement in writing holding you harmless.

Closing Day

Prepare clients for closing day by making them aware of who is likely to be at the closing – buyer, seller, real estate agents for the buyer and seller, lender, closing agent/attorney, etc.

Your clients should have a realistic expectation of what will occur at the closing – sign legal agreements, remit down payment and closing costs, receive the keys, receive copies of closing documents.

Closing Table Pitfalls

Several things can derail or delay a closing – some common occurrences are:

- Missing documentation
- Repairs not made
- Mortgage denial due to a change in the borrower's credit profile
- Past homeowners dues are not paid
- Mortgage rate increases

After the Closing

Make a copy of HUD, put in envelope and address with stamp (to both buyer and seller) and put in file. Both the buyer and seller will need that document for their taxes for the previous year. At the beginning of January, pull all of the envelopes out you have accumulated during the past year and stick them in the mail.

Feedback

Getting an honest assessment from your clients is an important practice when evaluating how you can be a better REALTOR®. You can get a more truthful response if you ask them to send feedback to your broker.

Would Your Clients Work With You Again?

Eighty-nine percent of buyers said they would use us again but only fifteen percent actually do. Most of the time it is our fault when our clients do not work with us again, as agents do not do a good job of staying in contact on a regular basis.

Ask for their business again. Clients have friends and relatives who may be buying or selling so do not forget to ask them for a referral.

GRI Designation Core Course

Why Deals Fall Apart

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Four

This section not only details why deals fall apart, but more importantly, how to keep them together.

REALTORS® have extensive experience in handling problems that may arise during the time between contract and closing; they can anticipate difficulties and address them in time to ensure a smooth settlement for all involved.

Exhibit 2-14

THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR LIMITING POTENTIAL CLIENTS IN COMPLETING A TRANSACTION

(Percentage Distribution, Brokerage Specialists only)

	ALL REALTORS®	RESIDENTIAL SPECIALISTS			Commercial Specialists
		All	Broker/ Broker Associate	Sales Agent	
Difficulty in obtaining mortgage finance	30%	30%	31%	29%	30%
Expectation that prices might fall further	18	18	16	19	8
Difficulty in finding the right property	12	12	10	14	17
Low consumer confidence	11	11	12	10	18
No factors are limiting potential clients	8	8	7	8	13
Ability to sell existing home	4	4	4	4	5
Concern about losing job	3	3	2	3	1
Expectation that mortgage rates might come down	1	1	1	1	*
Other	15	15	17	14	8

* Less than 1 percent

Other Deal Killers

1. Economic insecurity
2. Problems selling current home
3. Home inspection issues – will be covered in a different chapter
4. Bad service provider
5. Time - The longer it takes, the more fearful buyers and sellers get. Remorse and fear sink in which can quickly kill a deal.

Keeping Deals Together

Control the Transaction

Directly manage and supervise all aspects of the transaction. Keep a checklist of everyone’s responsibilities. Be prepared to do the work for everyone else to keep things moving.

Control the experience for the client

Communicate with your client on a regular basis and set and manage expectations about the closing process. Control what you can, realizing you cannot control when a lender modifies a loan or changes underwriting

standards. However, you can control when a seller lies about a material defect on a house your buyer loved.

Prepare clients

Prepare clients in advance of any potential pitfalls you may see with the transaction. Buyers and sellers are much more understanding if they are not caught offguard.

- Let them know what can go wrong during the transaction, “We are off to a great start but we are not out of the woods yet.”
- Prepare them for the next step. When the buyer or seller does not anticipate the next step or is surprised, fear sets in and the deal could fall through.
- Communicate regularly throughout the process as you keep them informed on progress and help them navigate any problems.

Relationships

Good relationships with those in the industry can sometimes help save a deal.

Keeping a deal together

Communication - There must be good and effective communication between all parties. Poor communication can delay and even kill a deal.

Understanding – Each party needs to have a clear understanding of the agreement.

Control Emotions - Good agents understand the emotions of both buyer and seller. Both parties need to believe they are involved in a good deal.

Notes:

GRI Designation Core Course

Lead Generation

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Five - Seven

Database Building

Build your database for the long term. There is no quick fix to database building. It will require time and a considerable effort in order to build and maintain a database, but in the long term, it's worth it.

Lead generation is based on three principles:

1. **Commitment** – You should dedicate time to developing your database.
2. **Consistency** – You must set up a consistent system that you will use.
3. **Repetition** – People need to hear from you (or about you) often.

There are two main focal points in building momentum in your business:

1. **Cultivate Existing Relationships** (*Business Retention*)
2. **Infusion of New Contacts** (*Grow Your Database*)

Spend time every day generating leads. Set aside time in your day (every day) to focus on growing your business. This needs to be the most important part of your day.

Find the Connectors

In his book *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell refers to those that can be trusted to spread information as “social glue.” People like Paul Revere. You can target these people and rely on them to spread the word about your business.

Contact Your Friends

Many times, prospects are right under your nose. Get over the fear of mixing business with pleasure. Call your friends. Those that like you will be the ones that will want your business to thrive.

40% of buyers were referred to their agent by a friend, neighbor or relative.

38% of sellers were referred to their agent by a friend, neighbor or relative.

Contact Past Clients

Every client is a referral source. If you serve them properly, referrals will follow. Contact all former clients, beginning with the oldest. (*Not the oldest, but the first client you with whom you worked.*) Those clients are the most likely to buy or sell.

23% of sellers used the agent they used previously to buy or sell their next home.

Acquaintances/Strangers

When you meet new people, albeit on airplanes, at parties, in elevators; when they find out you are in real estate, they take notice. Give your business card to those with whom you feel comfortable. If you meet someone at a function and you happen to talk real estate – FOLLOW UP. Contact them before they contact you.

The 30 Second Elevator Talk

What can you say in 30 seconds that makes you memorable?

Do not be afraid to ask for business. "If you know of someone buying or selling, please let me know."

What if I'm brand new with little or no clients?

Open houses – Sit in at an open house every week for one year.

Join Organizations

Get involved in organizations like the chamber of commerce, rotary club, church activities, etc. People do business with people they know and trust. Be sure people know you are in the real estate business. They are more likely to use you. Be sincere about your intentions. Do not join the organization to troll for business.

Get a New Hobby

Do something that interests you or have always wanted to do. Play in a tennis league, attend art /cooking/music classes or join a social media club. Have fun doing something in which you've been interested. It opens up lots of new avenues for business – and the same time, you have fun.

Database Options

The database you use is up to you. The most effective database is one you will use. It is unwise to pay for something you do not use.

What information goes in the database?

Get as much information about your clients as possible. Minimum requirements include: name, address, phone number and email address. Additional information that is beneficial consists of: birthdate, spouse and kids names, employer, dog's name, etc. (Believe it or not, this is helpful down the road). Get as much information as possible. Do not forget their Twitter handle and find out if they are on Facebook. If they are a past client, input the date you sold their home or the date you helped them buy their home. These dates are great for anniversary marketing pieces.

Lead Generation Plan

Have a Strategy

Set up a system in order to be successful. When building a plan for growing your business, there are two things you must do every day, two things to do monthly and two things to do annually.

Daily

1. Call 5-10 people from your sphere every morning. Prepare the list the night before. Get the names and phone numbers together and have them on your desk so it is on your radar first thing in the morning.

Example: Four old clients, three friends, two new prospects, one FSBO, one expired listing.

With friends and/or old clients you already have something to talk about. This is not a cold call, rather a regular call to catch up. You need not discuss real estate. However, they will likely broach the subject. The point of the call is to build (or continue building) relationships. After hanging up, follow up with hand written notes to all of them.

2. Write two (hand written) notes to other people – maybe someone you have been thinking about. Perhaps a Facebook post or a Tweet caught your attention. Instead of liking something on Facebook send them a note. Be sincere. It does not have to be real estate related.

Just Listed/Just Sold Postcards

Send just listed or just sold emails to EVERYONE in your database – unless they have opted out. Emails are free, and they keep your name in front of your contacts database.

Do not be concerned if they even open the email. All they need to see is what is in the subject line (“just listed” “another great listing” or “sold in 3 days!” or “another great house gone!”)

That keeps your name fresh in their minds and lets them know you are an expert.

Monthly

1. One monthly mailer – Do something every month to contact past clients. It can be in the form of an E-newsletter, a post card, etc. Postcards, update letters and quarterly emails are cost-effective ways to obtain this goal. The objective is to create consistency.
2. One meeting outside your “network.” In order to grow your sphere, you must go in search of new clients, in new places. For example, locate the running club in your area (yes, you have one). Ask your friends to tag along. You do not have to be an avid runner. Running clubs are very welcoming and accept all runners/walkers. Hate running? Find the local garden club. Call your local Chamber of Commerce and find out what is going on this month.

Annually

Choose how many times you want you want to touch your sphere in a given year. Remember, a “touch” can be as personal as a lunch or as generic as an email blast.

Example of 37 annual touches for a contact

- 2 - Personal phone calls
- 2 - Follow Follow-up hand written notes
- 1 - Saw them leaving the movie theater
- 10 - New listing blast emails to all contacts
- 10 - Just sold emails to all contacts
- 4 - Quarterly mailers/market updates
- 4 - Seasonal mailers
- 3 - Promotional postcards
- 1 - Hand written note because I saw on Facebook where his son got accepted into college.
- 1 - Postcard on their birthday
- 1 - Postcard on the anniversary they bought their current house.

Other Lead Generation Ideas

Handwritten Notes

Handwritten notes are the most powerful tool in real estate. Why so powerful? When people receive a note, they are always opened, mainly because other agents seldom take the time to write them.

Premier Clients

Premier clients are those who have sent multiple referrals or bought several houses. These clients are the ones working for you. They may not sell their home for seven years. However, they are sending you two or three referrals each year.

But not all of your clients should be treated equally. Similar to an airline frequent flier program, the airline treats those people flying with their airline differently than others. You should too. Plan something special four times a year for them.

House Warming Parties

Why don't most REALTORS® offer it? They believe it's too time-consuming. Or that it is too expensive. Two secrets to hosting a house-warming party are:

1. Hardly anyone ever agrees to having one.
2. Costs are minimal. It costs less than \$100 for house warming party with 25 people. And look at it this way, this equivalent to 25 paid leads.

Public Speaking

Speak to Homeowners Associations about state of the market in their neighborhood. Arrange for other speaking opportunities with social groups such as Kiwanis or Lions clubs.

Prepare a 15-minute real estate presentation that you can “perform” at any time. If public speaking is a weakness, take a Dale Carnegie or Toast Masters course. They are very helpful.

When fashioning your presentation – practice, practice, practice. It helps record yourself. You have no better critic than yourself.

Your Own Neighborhood

Become the REALTOR® of choice in your neighborhood. Send postcards to everyone in your neighborhood. Introduce yourself and let them know you live there. Let people know that you have an interest in the value of their property because, like them, you live in the neighborhood.

Lead Generation in a Down Cycle

The real estate business is cyclical. Downturns are inevitable. When faced with a dip in the market, continue going to the office. This presents the perfect opportunity to network. Cultivating your database will ensure results when the market rebounds.

Networking – Out of Area REALTORS®

When attending state and national conventions, be sure to follow up with other real estate professional that you encounter. Send an occasional email or give them a call. It helps to have someone in the industry supply a different perspective on your business. When they think of real estate in your region, they need to immediately think of you. If you refer someone to them ask them to reciprocate.

Networking – Local REALTORS®

Make others in your market aware of any specific areas in which you specialize. Someone may be working with a client in an area which they are unfamiliar or selling a specialized property with which you have dealt with exclusively.

Perhaps you are working with a client and things aren't going smoothly. Refer them to another agent in your market that you trust. Then ask for a referral. In the end, something is better than nothing.

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GRI Designation Core Course

DRIP Prospecting

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Eight

DRIP is a prospecting system which consistently places your name in front of your contacts/clients/sphere.

DRIP Tips

Have a Strategy – If someone mentions the words real estate, your name needs to be in their head.

Consistency – Make sure your brand is consistent. The photos and colors you use in all of your marketing and communication must be consistent.

Trial and Error – Just because something works for someone else, that does not mean it will not work for you. Take advantage of the possibility your competitor/competitors are terrible at marketing themselves. Your business is different from anything anyone offers - especially if it does not cost you anything.

Engage – Discover what you can leverage and engage people in that niche. Where are your skills? What is your specialty? If the client speaks different language, you will want to leverage that.

Sample Targets	
Sphere Contacts	Luxury and Distinctive Properties
Business Specialty	Resort, Vacation, 2 nd home area
Expired and FSBOs	Commercial, Business, Investment
Global Transactions	Cold Prospecting
55+ Markets	Geographic Area
Rent To Own	Maybe your own neighborhood

Drip Prospecting Ideas

After listening to the presentation,
circle the ideas that you are going to try.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Letters | 9. Magnets |
| 2. Brochures | 10. Postcards/eCards |
| 3. Movie Tickets | 11. Newsletters/eNewsletters |
| 4. Gift certificates | 12. Just listed/ just sold |
| 5. Personalized gifts | 13. Birthday/anniversary cards |
| 6. Recipe cards | 14. Holiday Cards |
| 7. Tip cards | 15. Calendars |
| 8. Do-it-yourself repair lists | 16. Lottery Tickets |

Quarterly or Annual Market Update

The President of the United State gives his state of the union address every year. Why shouldn't you?

At least once a year (or every quarter), you need to issue a state of the market report to your entire database. Using graphs and charts, compare your numbers versus the average agent in your market. Talk about local trends and your expectations for the market in the future. In order to be their trusted advisor, you must act like one.

Local Market Comparison

Appreciation rate vs. last year
Number of sales vs. last year
Average days of marketing vs. last year
Interest rate change
New housing starts

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Website

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Nine

Website Design

Your website is a reflection of you and your business. Make sure your site looks good. Your web address appears on every piece of marketing you produce. Putting the time into designing a dynamic and functional website is of the utmost importance.

The most popular button on the internet is the back button. The goal of a good website is to make sure visitors do not use it.

Do you know the purpose of your website? It is simple question, but is one many real estate agents cannot answer. Your site should address the needs of the people coming there. Showcase the product (homes), not the person (you) that sells the product.

Design equals trust

Researcher Elizabeth Sillence performed a study aimed at what causes people to trust one site over another. Her research shows 94-percent of people distrust a website with a poor design. If your site is poorly designed, difficult to navigate and contains outdated information, people will not return.

Your window of opportunity in conveying for information online is very small. Users will make a decision within seconds of logging onto a website. A Carleton University study found users make a decision about a website in 1/20th of a second.

Conversion matters

Everyone visiting your website is looking to buy, sell or lease. A well-designed site will pique their interest immediately.

What Every Website Needs

- **Search** – People want to search for homes. Your site should give them the resources to do so.
- **What is my home worth?** This is the question sellers want to know. Answer it for them on your website. Write a short paragraph (or produce a short video) detailing how you calculate the value of a home. Urge them to call you for an assessment.

- **An “About Us” page** – Provide high quality pictures of you working with buyers and sellers. Provide testimonials from past clients. If they brag on you, you don’t have to do so.
- **A “Contact” page** – Do not confuse people with multiple phone numbers on the contact page. Provide a single phone number and one email address.
- **FAQs/helpful articles** – What are the questions you get most from buyers and sellers? Answer those questions here.
- **Calls to action** – What do you want people to do when they visit your website? Call to action buttons encourage and remind users to take action. These buttons are critical in converting customers to clients. This is a vital feature of a website that goes a long way to make sure visitors contact you – not the competition.

What your site does not need

- ✓ Clever site names. Keep it simple.
- ✓ Cluttered, busy layouts – [Less options, higher conversions](#)
- ✓ Navigation Problems – test your site for broken links.
- ✓ Boring web design – Keep it fresh and simple. People do not trust old and boring.
- ✓ Pop-up ads – Do not mistake subscription boxes for ads.
- ✓ Slow load times – People [are impatient online](#).
- ✓ Small fonts – Size [14 is the new size 12](#).
- ✓ Too much text – Be brief. You can cut 50% of the words from your site.

Pictures

All pictures on a website must be high resolution, quality images. Do not use clip art, stock photos or outdated images. Stock photos can be used, but should be purchased from a website where you can download high resolution images.

Mobile Friendly

Websites must provide an optimal viewing experience for a mobile device. This is called responsive design. Quality responsive design aims to provide minimal resizing, panning, and scrolling across a wide range of devices. Test your site on different internet browsers, mobile devices, computers and screen sizes. Also, pay attention to font sizes. If they can’t read it right away, they won’t try.

55% of Zillow's traffic now comes from a mobile device;
on weekends it's over 60%.

source: @ZollowforPros

Google punishes websites that are not optimized for the mobile use. Test how you site appears on a phone.

Hire a Professional

Understand what information is important to be placed on your website. But hire a professional to design it. Unless you are skilled in this area of expertise, hire someone. The learning curve is too steep and quality will suffer. The design can be inexpensive because you only need a very simple website.

Analyze

Website analysis will help you improve your site and your business. Pay attention to site analytics, which provides you with a wide range of data pertaining to web traffic. This can be very important in helping improve your website and tailoring your approach.

Analytics are useless unless you study them regularly. Gathering information from this data is pointless unless you use it to implement new features and upgrades to your website.

GRI Designation Core Course

Social Media

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Ten

Why Social Media?

Cutting through the noise of traditional home mailings, billboards and yard signs is a challenge for agents seeking to differentiate themselves. That is why many REALTORS® have turned to social media to promote listings and attract new clients.

With hundreds of millions of people subscribing to social media channels, it is the greatest relationship building (and relationship sustaining) machine of all time. Social media allows you to build trust, and spread your marketing through friends and even friends of friends. And in most cases it is absolutely free!

Social media is a virtual space in which you can craft an identity and show clients and potential clients your personality and what you can do for them.

Here are some suggestions on how real estate agents can leverage social media most effectively.

Tell People Who You Are

Have a complete profile with a photo that shows your face. Would you connect with someone with no profile picture? Clients and potential clients check you out online. Make sure your profile looks as professional as possible.

Have a Strategy

Like any other marketing tool, to be successful you need to have a results-focused plan.

According to a recent study by the Home Buying Institute, 40 percent of agents have closed two to five deals as a direct result of their social media marketing. It is important to develop a plan to make social tools work toward your goals. You can expect to tweak and change the plan based on what you learn along the way.

Here are some questions to consider when preparing your social media strategy:

- Who is your target audience? Where are they online? How can you reach them?
- What are your primary objectives?
- When will you evaluate the social strategy? How will you evaluate it?
- Where does the social strategy fit into the overall business?
- Which social channels should you be using?
- How will you differentiate yourself from the competition?

Growth

Actively grow your network - by introducing yourself and starting a conversation. Find people you are interested in and ask to join. Sending a personal invitation request (not the standard invite) with an explanation of why you would like to join their network.

Consistency

Creating a great profile is not enough. You must consistently say something interesting and interact with people. Producing regular updates shows you are active and engaged. Soon people will realize that you have something interesting to say and are an interesting person to connect with.

When to Post? There are hundreds of articles about the optimal time to post content to social networks. Find times and days of the week that work best for your audience. Maybe it is in the evening or on weekends. Experiment with different times to discover when you are getting the most interaction.

How much should I share via social media? Each of us decides what is too much information and what is not. Social media has become such an all-encompassing platform that there are no “right” answers.

Engage in the Conversation

Posting on social media and creating a conversation are two different things. Social media is designed to communicate with clients and

prospects, building relationships and establishing trust. Provide local industry data and ask your audience how they feel about it.

Measure Your Success

Test what is working and what is not. All social media sites have ways to measure response and engagement. You can see how many people are reading your posts on different topics and learn from the data. You can see how many people shared or viewed a specific posts and you can try different status updates to see which ones get the most interaction.

Do not use poor grammar

34.1 percent of respondents to a poll conducted by SocialToaster said that poor grammar will prompt them to stop following someone.

Do not be repetitive

51.2 percent of say that repetition and recounting the same thing over and over will cause them to unfollow someone.

Do not try to be everywhere.

You cannot be on every social media channel there is. It is impossible. Try to master the networks you are already in.

Do Not Outsource

Many real estate professionals want to hire someone to manage their social media presence. Social media contractors do not have the ability to speak as you would speak. They do not know what is going on in your local market. Outsourcing your social media is a mistake.

Use Images

One of the biggest social media mistakes REALTORS® can make today is not capitalizing on the visual content in your everyday business. Take and share photos of clients with their new home, a new listing, or an interesting area in your market.

Tweets with images receive 150% more retweets. According to Kissmetrics, Facebook photos get 53% more likes, 104% more comments and 84% more click-throughs on links than text-based posts. Pinterest and Instagram are all about images.

Notes:

GRI Designation Core Course

Apps

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Eleven

Serious, Non-serious, Cannot Represent

Note: The explanations for these apps are taken from their app descriptions in either the iTunes app store or the Google Play store.

We are not affiliated with nor do we receive any compensation from any of the following apps or companies.

Google Apps

Google Calendar



The Calendar app displays events from each of your Google Accounts that synchronizes with your Android device. You can also:

- Create, edit, and delete events.
- View all your calendars at the same time, including non-Google calendars.
- Quickly email all event guests from a notification with a customizable message.

Google Voice



Make cheap international calls with your Google number. Send free text messages. Place calls and send text messages showing your Google number. Listen to voicemail and read transcripts.

Google Maps



The newly designed Google Maps app for mobile phones and tablets makes navigating your world faster and easier. Find the best spots in town and the information you need to get there.

- Comprehensive, accurate maps in 200 countries
- Voice-guided GPS navigation for driving, biking, and walking
- Transit directions and maps for over 800 cities

- Live traffic, incident reports, and dynamic re-routing
- Detailed information on more than 100 million places
- Street View and indoor imagery for restaurants, museums, and more

Evernote



Evernote is an easy-to-use, free app that helps you remember everything across all of the devices you use. Stay organized, save your ideas and improve productivity. Evernote lets you take notes, capture photos, create to-do lists, record voice reminders--and makes these notes completely searchable, whether you are at home, at work, or on the go.

Document Storage and Accessibility

Dropbox



Dropbox is a free service that lets you bring all your photos, docs, and videos anywhere. After you install Dropbox on your computer, any file you save to your Dropbox will automatically save to all your computers, your mobile device, and even the Dropbox website! With the Dropbox app, you can take everything that matters to you on the go.

Read your docs or flip through your albums when you're out and about. Save photos or videos to your Dropbox and share them with friends in just a couple taps. Even if you accidentally leave your phone in a taxi, your stuff is always safe on Dropbox.

Box.net



With 10GB free, Box makes it easy to access and edit your files, share content and stay connected with your team from anywhere on any device.

- * Share important files with your coworkers
- * Have your presentation at your fingertips
- * Comment on documents on the go
- * View updates to your spreadsheet instantly

Google Drive



With Google Drive, you can store all your files in one place, so you can access them from anywhere and share them with others

* Use the Google Drive app to access your photos, documents, videos and other files stored on your Google Drive

* Upload files to Google Drive directly from your mobile device

* Share any file with your contacts

* Access files others have shared with you on Google Drive

* Make any file available offline so you can view them even when you don't have an Internet connection

* Manage files on the go

Signature

DocuSign



Sign documents and get signatures quickly and easily from your mobile device. A must-have app that will save you time and eliminate the need to print, fax or mail documents and forms for signature.

Safe, secure and legally binding, DocuSign empowers you to sign documents and get signatures from anyone, anywhere, whether they happen to be standing right next to you or are halfway around the globe.

SignMyPad



SignMyPad is the new standard for paperless document transfer—a simple PDF signature tool for mobile devices. Go green with SignMyPad!

Open a PDF file on your phone or tablet, and SignMyPad lets you sign it, save it, and send it without ever printing it out. No more scanning, no more faxing, no wasting paper. It's the green solution for people on the go!

Working in real estate, law, finance, or any other field that uses signed documents? Impress your clients with SignMyPad...and save a tree while you're at it.

Now easier than ever with our optional magnetic stylus!

Simply open a PDF file from your email or DropBox with SignMyPad. You can view the document, add signatures, and then save it or send it.

PDF Expert



PDF Expert allows you to read and annotate PDF documents, highlight text, make notes and save these changes being compatible with Preview and Adobe Acrobat. Moreover, PDF Expert is the only iPhone application that can fill PDF forms!

Apps for Your Business

Open Home Pro



With Open Home Pro you can run your open house on your iPad in addition to the following:

- Manage all walk-ins at weekly open houses or broker opens
- Automatically follow up with leads using new contact methods that get opened and read more than 2x the industry average
- Create beautiful listing pages for all of your properties that buyers can leave feedback on or get in touch with you with one click.
- Export any collected data to excel or a CRM like top producer or directly pass the leads to iCloud
- Make your own custom questions

Magic Plan



MagicPlan MEASURES your rooms and DRAWS your floor plan, simply by using the camera on your device. It's as easy as taking a picture!

Your floor-plan is then exported in PDF, JPG, and DXF format, or can be published in an interactive web version.

JotNot



JotNot is an application that uses the phone's camera to scan documents and pictures into electronic PDF files that can be

saved on the phone. The application also processes the images to make them clearer.

Shoebboxed



Maximize your reimbursements and tax deductions in seconds with the free Shoebboxed Receipt and Mileage Tracker.

Shoebboxed is the fastest way to turn a pile of receipts into digital data to save you time, money and hassle.

Milebug



MileBug is a beautiful app that makes it easy to track your tax-deductible mileage on your phone. A great mileage tracker!

IRS tax deduction rates are 56.5 cents/mile for 2013! Take advantage of these rates by keeping track of the miles you drive for your businesses, for charities, or for personal medical reasons. With Milebug, it's never been easier to make a trip log!

Peak Producers from Brian Buffini



Brian Buffini is a well-known and respected real estate coach.

This app is free and you do not to watch the videos. There are additional classes and content available to subscribers of his Peak Producers program, but even if you are not, there are hours of free videos useful to real estate agents in all stages of their careers. This is one of the best apps for real estate agents looking for a little motivation or some marketing ideas.

Unisys USDA Loan Eligibility Checker



The Unisys USDA Loan Eligibility Checker provides you with a quick and easy-to-use interface for determining whether a location or address might be eligible for a USDA Rural Development home loan program.

This app is a perfect fit for REALTORS® looking to maximize their client's

house buying potential, or an ambitious home buyer looking to increase their financing options.

Mortgage Calculator



A basic mortgage and loan calculator apps should be able to calculate monthly mortgage payments and amortization. It should include PMI and other monthly expenses and a debt-to-income ratio calculator.

Cardcloud



Cardcloud is the only business card you'll ever need. Cardcloud allows you to create multiple cards. This way, you can have share info with business contacts, or rather have a personal card to send out. Freelancers working for multiple companies can create as many cards as they want. You can edit contact information, profile pictures, logos, and social networking profiles for each card you create.

Recipients don't have to have Cardcloud installed on their phone. You can send your card directly to an email address, and Cardcloud will deliver a beautifully formatted card directly to the recipient's inbox. You can also beam your card directly to other Cardcloud users in the vicinity, and store contact information on your phone's address book.

Cardcloud allows you to remember more about your new contacts. For each exchange, information is stored about the person you met. Remember who you met when, where and how. See where you met. Add a note. Was it at a conference, or perhaps a trade fair? Cardcloud takes your cards to the next level.

Apps for Your Clients

Homesnap



Snap a photo of any home to identify it and find out the value, the price it last sold for, how many bedrooms, how many baths, local schools, and much more!

Explore homes for sale, open houses, recent sales, and check values for 90+ million homes in the USA from the comfort of your couch! Search by address, customize your search, drag the map or flick the list.

When you snap, favorite, comment or recommend a home it is added to your photo stream, which is always up-to-date with the latest real estate info and prices. Add some friends to conduct your home search with input from friends and family.

iHomeButler



Record your valuables for insurance purposes. The ihomebutler app enables you to take photos of valuables which are uploaded and stored in your secure ihomebutler account for insurance purposes. This is a simple way for homeowners or renters to keep an inventory of their valuables. This app also provides a description field, serial number field and a comments field.

Sitegeist



Understand and uncover the identity of a location with a tap. Sitegeist helps you to learn more about your surroundings in seconds. Drawing on publicly available information, the app presents solid data in a simple at-a-glance format to help you tap into the pulse of your location anywhere in the United States. From demographics on the people and housing to the latest popular spots or weather, Sitegeist presents localized information visually so you can get back to enjoying the neighborhood.

Wunderlist



Wunderlist is the easiest way to manage and share your daily to-do lists. Whether you're running your own business, planning an overseas adventure or sharing a shopping list with a loved one, Wunderlist is here to help you get things done.

Benefits:

- Wunderlist syncs across all your devices to keep you on top of all the things you want to do, from anywhere.
- Easily share lists with your colleagues, friends and family to collaborate on anything from team projects to group dinners.
- Intuitive design and friendly reminders ensure you never forget important deadlines (or birthday gifts) ever again.

Updater.com



Updater helps take the hassle and stress out of moving. From safely filing your change of address with the U.S. Postal Service to getting the best deals on cable and utilities at your new place, Updater lets you complete tasks that used to take hours with just a few clicks.

Notes:

GRI Designation Core Course

Zillow and Trulia

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Twelve

What is my home worth?

In the past, clients and customers needed this question answered by a REALTOR®. Today, the answer can be provided by the real estate agent, Zillow or Trulia.

Automated Valuation Models

First you need to understand Zillow and how it works. You must then be able to explain how it makes a zestimate. If it is flawed – which it usually is – you have to show why it is inaccurate.

Ask clients if they have searched online for homes on these websites. Acknowledge the sites do exist and that you are not threatened by them.

Zillow offers zestimates and rent zestimates on approximately 100 million U.S. homes.

Online consumer valuation tools continue to improve over time. Automated valuation models are very basic now, but are quickly improving.

Why you should worry

Top five real estate websites (unique visitors per month)

1. Zillow (36 million)
2. Trulia (23 million)
3. Yahoo! Real Estate (20 million)
4. REALTOR.com (18 million)
5. Homes.com (5 million)
5. Redfin (5 million)

Zillow was founded and operated by the makers of Expedia. And what effect has Expedia had on travel agents and their business?

Why you should relax

Sure the public uses this data. However, when it comes down to buying and selling, they use a REALTOR®. Eighty-nine percent of buyers use a real estate agent. Eighty eight percent of sellers sold their home using a real estate agent. At the end of the day, when they want it done right, they hire an expert.

Zillow and Trulia are not replacing agents, rather newspapers and real estate magazines.

Accuracy

An agent benefits from Zillow now because it is admittedly inaccurate. Have your client Google “Zillow margin of error.” Show them Zillow’s own numbers and how inaccurate the estimate can be.

Tips

Upload your listings. It costs zero dollars.

Set up a profile. If someone found you through that medium, get them to post a nice review of you on those sites as well.

Manipulate the algorithm.

Add more photos. Those sites give a bump to listings with more photos.
Look at the price search parameters and price the home accordingly.

Add your sold listings. This increases your rank in the search results and shows up anytime a prospect views your profile.

Save the last picture on your listings for your name and phone number. When buyers look through photos and are interested in the property, they will call you instead of the featured agent paying to be on that site. After all, you are the best contact for the property.

Scams

Be aware of scams. Unscrupulous people will “steal” your listing photos and place them on free sites such as Craig’s List as rental properties. They then market your listing as a rental under your name and ask the potential tenant to write a deposit check. Once the check has been sent, the scam artist disappears. The only name the tenant has is yours.

To combat this scam, create a Google Alert for each of your listings. If someone is scamming or advertising your property, you will be notified. It is a great way to protect your owners, landlords and especially yourself.

Notes:

GRI Designation Core Course

Communication

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Thirteen

The biggest point of contention between an agent and a client is a lack of communication. A breakdown in communication, on either end, can spell certain doom on any transaction – at any time.

Communicate

Understand How to Communicate With Your Client

What is their preferred method of communication? Communication is generational. Adjust your vehicle for communication to accommodate the client – not vice versa.

Establish Good Relationships

People still want to do business with people. All of the technology in the world doesn't matter if there is a lack of personal connection.

Good Communication Habits

Listen

The digital revolution has made it very hard to listen. As email and social media has become a primary method of communication, there is a disconnect between the two parties. To establish effective lines of communication, every sentence matters – whether it's within a face-to-face conversation, during a phone call or in the words of an email.

Use People's Names

In Dale Carnegie's book *How to Win Friends & Influence People*, he says "Remember that a person's name is, to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language."

When talking to clients – particularly when you are making a point – call them by names.

Make the Complex Simple

A real estate transaction is a complex maze of details. You, as a REALTOR®, must be able to simplify complex issues and carefully deliver them in a manner the client can understand. Clients want to learn and be appreciated. Talking down to them using terms like "you don't understand" is a huge turnoff.

A confused client is an indecisive client. Take the time to explain a concept when they clearly aren't following you. They need to feel comfortable with you and the decision they are making.

Think Before Responding

Using the wrong words at the wrong time can damage a relationship quickly. Geoffrey Tumlín, author of *Stop Talking, Start Communicating: Counterintuitive Secrets to Success in Business and in Life* says it best; you are the “CEO of your tongue.” Think before you speak; it will save you from making irreparable mistakes.

Make the Client Feel Important

It is their house, so ask their opinion. They aren't necessarily interested in yours. This sounds simple, but it works. It is the time to show them how much you know. Showing them how smart you are gets you nowhere. You want them to be a part of the process.

Mean What You Say

Your behavior is your single greatest mode of communication. Therefore, it must be congruent with what you say. If your actions contradict your words, you will pay the price at some point.

Fix the Problem, Not the Person

Agents tend to shift into sales mode when they feel a client is wavering. The problem, however, may not be what you think it is. Discover what the true issue may be before jumping into sales mode.

Empathize

See the transaction from your client's perspective. Emotional intelligence is the ability to interpret and read your clients emotions. Use that emotional information to adapt within a selling situation. If you notice they are hesitant, address it and work out a solution.

Notes:

GRI Designation Core Course

Top Agent

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Fourteen

The Top Agents Do...

... Steal Stuff

There is no such thing as an original idea. It's certainly acceptable to check out what the competition is doing. Observe other methods and then tailor those concepts to fit your style. In the end, execution is what matters.

... Make Lists

Successful agents are notorious list makers. Making lists is a valuable organizational tool. An organized agent is a more productive agent. Become **rabid about lists; they lead to achieving goals.** Make a list of goals to accomplish for each year, each week and each day. Sticky notes come in quite handy to remind you daily of your goals.

... Learn

To get to the top of your game, you need help. Seek out mentors to talk to and regularly attend education classes. Successful agents are willing to pay someone to push them. Some of the most successful people are professional athletes. All have coaches and agents, which is a primary key to being successful.

... Start Strong. Finish Strong

Top agents use phrases like, "I was the first..." or "My business is the best at...". Ego and confidence allows an agent to take ownership of things that can't possibly be owned.

Most agents start strong, then fade out over time. This is not an option for top agents. They recalibrate and make the necessary adjustments to stay focused.

... Think Big

Tim Ferriss, author of the *Four Hour Work Week*, has stated a 60-percent success rate on stated goals is perfectly acceptable.. He knows he can't hit 100%, not on everything. However, the important point is to make goals loftier than what is possible. Therefore, achieving even portions of the stated goal is an accomplishment.

... Have Systems and Structure

Attempting to do everything by yourself is a recipe for failure. It's easy to find help to complete projects. Do not hesitate to hire an intern or a part-time assistant, then delegate tasks. Make inquiries on Facebook, LinkedIn

or Twitter for contractor referrals. It takes others to refer business to you. At some point you will have to rely on others to succeed.

The Top Agents DON'T...

... Ask for permission

Successful agents are not big on rules. They may be outlaws in some regards, but successful producers with big ideas do not limit themselves to what the “rules of business” may be. One must follow the law, office policy and REALTOR® Code of Ethics, but they constrain themselves into a box. Top agents are not shy about jumping into the proverbial pool head first.

... Shy away from their weaknesses

Top agents understand what they do not do well. Allow you weaknesses to become your strength. Face your deficiencies head on. Shying away from them only make more evident.

... Get “Soft”

A successful agent possesses a personality that disallows them to become a soft. They avoid it at all costs. Exercising regularly allows them to keep their body in top physical shape. Others exercise their minds by painting, reading or another mentally stimulating exercise.

Notes:

GRI Designation Core Course

Assistants

SESSION FOUR

Lesson Fifteen

Personal assistants allow you to run your business in an organized and efficient manner while you concentrate on taking your business to the next level.

Do I need an assistant?

Many agents are not sure if they are ready for a personal assistant. When an agent says, “I’m so busy I can’t generate leads or do the things that I do best;” it’s time for an assistant. An appropriate benchmark to set is completing 40-50 transactions on your own before needing help. At that point, you must have help or you will become a slave to your own success. Seventeen percent of REALTORS® have at least one personal assistant.

Who should you hire?

On average, 58 percent of assistants are part-time compared to 42 percent full time assistants. Depending on how much you are willing to spend, start with a part-time assistant and step up to a full-time aide if the need be.

You can even share an assistant with another agent in your office to cut costs. These options allow you the flexibility to see if you perform better with assistant.

What can they do for you?

Assess your daily tasks. Then circle the dollar productive activities. These are the projects *you* should be doing. Your assistant will handle all other tasks.

Most Common Tasks for Assistants

Send mailings to past clients or prospects	62%
Process new listings and enter them in the MLS	58
Schedule listing presentations, closings, and appointments	50
Manage closing paperwork	48
Place/track advertising of listings	46
Prepare comps	40
Send progress reports to sellers	38
Write ads	38
Photograph listings	38
order inspections	35
Prepare escrow files	30
Check MLS for expireds	28
Check newspapers for FSBOs	16
Prospect FSBOs	12
Other	36

Train Your Assistant

Make a list of the tasks you want your assistant to perform. Manage them. Do not just turn them loose. When hiring a personal assistant, be sure to spend time at the very outset training him or her on the duties they will be expected to perform. When you show up in the morning, they should give you a schedule and a brief synopsis of the day's calls, appointment, etc. Teach them how to do the things you want them to take off your plate—don't just expect them to learn on the fly. Doing so creates a precarious scenario and one that sets you up for failure.

Schedule regular meetings with your assistant. Create a system through which your assistant keeps you updated on the progress of tasks, informs you of any difficulties, etc. As with any working relationship, communication is a key factor in managing a productive personal assistant.

Licensed or not?

Depending on exactly what you expect your assistant to do will depend on if they require a real estate license. Having a licensed assistant may cost you more initially. But in the long run, they will be better equipped to do more. On average, 49-percent of assistants are licensed while offset by 51-percent of those who are unlicensed.

Ministerial Acts

Ministerial acts are those acts that a licensee may perform for a person that are informative in nature. Examples of these acts include but are not limited to:

- Responding to phone inquiries by persons as to the availability and pricing of brokerage services.
- Responding to phone inquiries from a person concerning the price or location of property.
- Conducting an open house and responding to questions about the property from a person.
- Setting an appointment to view property.
- Responding to questions from persons walking into a licensee's office concerning brokerage services offered or particular properties.
- Accompanying an appraiser, inspector, contractor, or similar third party on a visit to a property.
- Describing a property or the property's condition in response to a person's inquiry.
- Completing business or factual information for a person represented by another licensee on an offer or contract to purchase.
- Showing a person through a property being sold by an owner on his or her own behalf.
- Referral to another broker or service provider.