

Give Your Showings the Spa Experience
Fun and effective tips to market high-end homes.



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29

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6 Steps to MARKETING MAGIC

Your guide to creating a plan
that nets you more business

6 STEPS TO MARKET

Your guide to creating a plan that nets you more business

BY LISA A. BEACH

Vou're shopping for groceries, and someone screams across the aisles, "It's my favorite Realtor®!" Sounds like a dream, doesn't it? Well, thanks to her intentional branding, this happens regularly to Saria Finkelstein, a sales associate with Keller Williams Realty Partners in Plantation.



Saria Finkelstein

"I built a persona, so anything I posted on social media, any email I sent, any business card I handed out—everything said, 'Your Favorite Realtor,'" says Finkelstein, named one of the National Association of Realtors' "30 Under 30" in 2017.

This simple approach has helped Finkelstein define her marketing. "I'm all about building relationships and having a customer experience with my [customers] and my brand is where I started," she says.

Creating an effective marketing plan like Finkelstein's is an essential part of positioning yourself as a go-to Realtor in your market. Without one, you're just another real estate professional.

But if you take the time to carefully develop and implement a real strategy, it will change how people perceive you, says Bubba Mills, owner and chief executive officer for Corcoran Coaching in O'Fallon, Ill. "You're not 'just an agent,'" he says. "You're the CEO of your company."



Bubba Mills

A NEW YOU

Whether you're just starting in real estate or feel you need a brand refresh, it's important to develop a marketing plan that hones in on your niche, your brand message and, ultimately, your promotions.

To help you craft your plan, Florida Realtor tapped the expertise of top real estate consultants, along with several finalists in NAR's 2017 "30 Under 30" program. They recommended these six steps.

IDENTIFY YOUR STEP ONE: PRIMARY GOAL.

Do you aim to double your income, boost your market share or increase the number of your listings from last year? Whatever your goal, to reach it you first need to define it—and put metrics in place to track your progress.

"Too many people set vague goals, such as 'I want to sell more houses,'" says Louis Savinetti IV, a buyer's agent specialist with RE/MAX Dynamic in Tampa. "Instead, select goals that are as specific and measurable as possible. For example, 'I want to sell 30 homes in 2017' or 'I want to grow my referral business by 20 percent within 12 months.'"

Finkelstein suggests you focus on a stretch goal, but one that's achievable. Then, create an action plan with daily and weekly steps to move you toward your end goal.

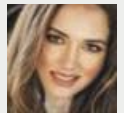


Louis Savinetti IV

STEP TWO: DETERMINE WHAT MAKES YOU UNIQUE.

Think about what you bring to the table that's different than the competition. Once you've identified it, you can use this unique selling proposition to market yourself.

For example, Karen Elmir, a Realtor Associate with Miami-based Cervera Real Estate, has established herself as a luxury market Realtor in the energetic



Karen Elmir

Coconut Grove area, where she was raised.

Because she targets upper-tier properties and affluent prospects, she created a logo that reflects her niche. "It's very elegant and conveys high-end luxury. My logo is white (elegant) and purple (a royal color)."

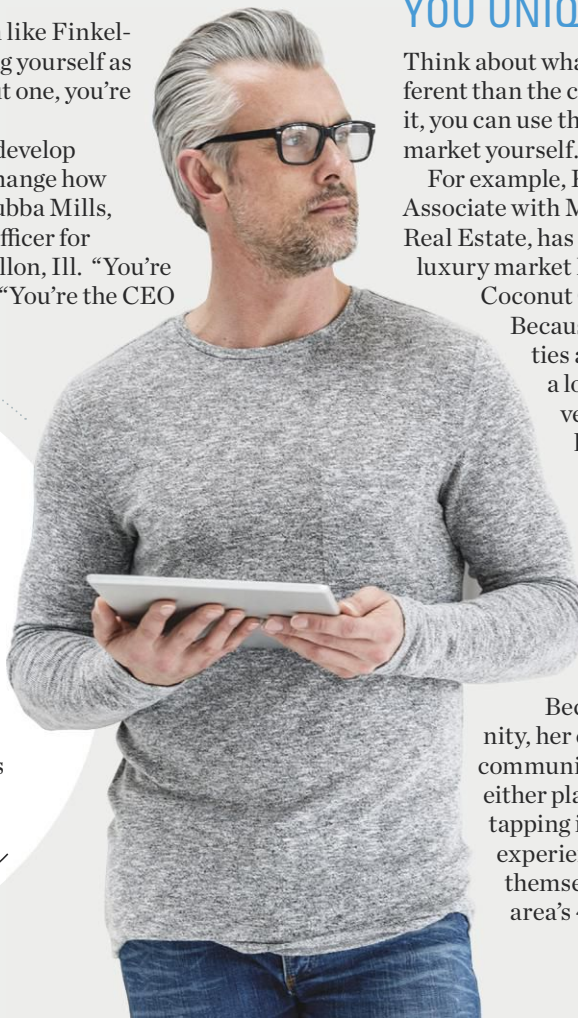
Or consider Laurie Weston Davis, CEO/owner/broker of Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Lifestyle Proper-



Laurie Weston Davis

ty Partners in Pinehurst, N.C.

Because she's located in a golf community, her company specializes in golf course communities, and several sales associates either play or teach golf professionally. By tapping into their location and unique experience, she and her team can market themselves as the go-to experts for their area's 40 golf clubs.



TING MAGIC

STEP THREE: DEFINE YOUR TARGET MARKET.

Davis targets prospects who golf and want to live in a golf community. “We sell lifestyles, not houses,” she says.

For Tami Simms, of St. Petersburg, it’s more a matter of geography. “We’ve got a hot condo market in a very walkable downtown area,” says Simms, a Certified Luxury Home Marketing Specialist™ at Coastal Properties Group International in that city. “It was a natural to target this segment because [our office is] located near this area so some of that business comes right through our doors.”



Tami Simms

STEP FOUR: IDENTIFY THE BENEFITS OF YOUR SERVICES.

Do you have an NAR designation in a particular field that is valuable to buyers and/or sellers? Did you grow up in the area you’re serving, making you the source for local market information? Tap into your special background and experience to show prospects how you can help them.

“For me, the buyer consultation is the benefit,” says Finkelstein, who spends one to two hours on her initial conference with buyers. “Most real estate professionals will ask what neighborhood or the number of bedrooms buyers are looking for, then send dozens of listings. I’d rather ask 500 questions and show five homes than ask

five questions and show 500 homes.”

The value of the service you bring to customers earns you referrals and repeat business. “As a real estate professional, you’re the local expert. But many sales associates don’t use that community service badge to best serve people who are new to their community. Nor do they use it to help grow businesses already in their community,” explains Mills. “Grow your business by helping other businesses grow their businesses. Build a brand of reciprocity, of service, of a customer-first mentality that others can’t compete against.”

STEP FIVE: CHOOSE YOUR MARKETING METHODS.

Choosing your approach will depend on unique variables, such as your budget, skill set and target market. If you’re tech savvy and trying to reach a younger demographic, podcasts, drone videos and livestream events might be the way to go. If you prefer an old-school approach to reach small-town prospects, you might prefer cold-calling, door-knocking and meet-and-greet events.

For example, Savinetti, a Millennial, says mailers are dated and don’t work for him, so he taps into technology. “Instead of voicemail, I’ll text or email a video,” he says. “Videos generate better interactions, and you can post them on social [media].”

Even if you prefer low tech, it can help if you take a unique approach. For example, says Mills, if you want to establish yourself as a friendly, knowledgeable Realtor, “You can sit at Starbucks with a sign that says, ‘Ask me any question about real estate.’”

continued page 29

Free Marketing Template

Need a little hand-holding to walk you through the process of creating your own marketing action plan? No need to fret—simply download a free template from BreakthroughBroker.com. This marketing plan provides a 12-month road map to lead generation, a calendar to schedule your action strategies and practical tips on creating your marketing message, budgeting and choosing your strategies.

“Build a brand of reciprocity, of service, of a client-first mentality, that others can’t compete against.”

—BUBBA MILLS, OWNER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF CORCORAN COACHING

GREAT IDEA! Track Your Time and Money. Bubba Mills, owner and CEO of Corcoran Coaching, says you should set up your marketing to track both ROI (return on investment) and ROTI (return on time investment). He gives the example of a \$150,000 house you can sell in two months versus a \$400,000 house that might take six months to sell. The \$400,000 sale may be more enticing but, he points out, you might sell multiple lower-priced listings faster than one higher-priced listing, allowing you to make more money in the same amount of time. “Time is a huge influencer,” adds Mills.



home's 32 windows and two doors is specific. Reference and attach copies of the photos to the contract.

Maintain copies of the photos or video in your electronic files. If your contract has a list of default items that convey with the home, be certain to strike through items that do not exist on the property.

If you learn, through the listing broker or the MLS, that the sellers are not conveying certain items, make certain that those items have been clearly removed from conveyance in the contract.

5. VERIFY THAT EVERY ADDENDUM, RIDER AND DISCLOSURE THAT SHOULD BE PART OF THE CONTRACT IS ATTACHED TO THE OFFER.

As you draw up the offer, make certain to include all addenda and disclosures that are triggered by your offer terms or property characteristics. Be thoughtful in your selection.

Even if your buyers are not required to sign an addendum until the other party discloses certain items listed on it, you should still be sure the contract references the addendum and send the unsigned addendum with the offer. This assures that it will not be overlooked and that it will be included within the final bilaterally signed contract.

A blank addendum should be used only to accommodate situations that arise outside the scope of the existing forms. If you find yourself having to draft verbiage for a clear-cut, deal-specific situation, use the blank addendum. However, be cautious with your wording, and never be vague. If the addendum will address the legal rights of the parties, it is best for an attorney to draft the language to avoid future issues.

Slow down, think of all the possible misunderstandings or problems that could result and choose words that address those issues.

For example, your buyers want the sellers to agree to remove a built-in shelving unit from the property. The typical agent might quickly write up the

addendum exactly to that effect:

Sellers agree to remove the built-in shelving unit from the Property.

That's what the customers wanted. But does that statement protect them properly? After some thought, you will realize that your buyers aren't just asking you to make sure the unit is gone, but also that the property is not damaged in the process and that the unit is removed in a timely manner.

The wording of the quickly written addendum does not protect your buyers from unscrupulous sellers who might rip the shelving out of the wall on the way to the closing, leaving a mess behind.

A strong, well-thought-out addendum would read as follows:

"Sellers and buyers agree that, at the sellers' expense, the built-in shelving unit in the master bedroom will be removed from the property and that the wall to which it was attached will be patched and painted so that no visible evidence remains. The work is to be completed no later than three (3) days prior to closing."

Remember, if the deal requires a complicated, expensive or legal issue to be addressed using a blank addendum, protect your buyers and reduce your liability by having a real estate attorney write it.

Do not fall into a situation where you could be accused of practicing law without a license. Preparing a legally sound offer leads to an easy transaction and helps avoid misinterpretation by sellers, buyers and the listing agent. Remember, take your time to do it correctly the first time, and you'll save yourself and your customers headaches down the road. #

This article was excerpted from the book "Dear Real Estate Agent, There Are Answers," by Realtor® Katherine Scarim, Gregory R. Cohen, Esq., Gerald Pumphrey, Guy Hartman, Mark Shanz and Kelly Sturmthal, Esq. Available on Amazon.com.

Marketing Magic

continued from pg. 25

STEP SIX: EVALUATE YOUR EFFORTS

Once you've worked your system for a while, look at the metrics you outlined in Step One to determine if you're on track.

Simms tracks changes in production and sources after every transaction. "In addition to looking at where, geographically, we got the business, we track *how* we got the business. For example, was it a referral, and if so, how did they know about us?" she says.

Avoid using marketing approaches you can't measure, advises Davis. Whether it's metrics provided by social media ads or calls generated by postcards, track and measure every marketing method. Evaluating your efforts lets you focus on what's working and tweak what's not.

As Mills points out, "Review it; don't just do it. You've got to know your numbers, or you're throwing money in the trash."

Finally, when you've developed a marketing action plan that works, keep at it. "The most important thing is consistency," says Davis. "Be consistent to build your business over time." #

Lisa A. Beach is an Orlando area-based freelance writer.

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