

10 Easy Ways To Increase Business

(Without Increasing Your Budget)

by Debbie Jo Evans

Does marketing yourself or your real estate business sometimes seem overwhelming? Maybe you're using big-business marketing and PR strategies which cost too much and are simply not effective for the specific needs of your business. Fortunately, cost does not have to be a deterrent to the effective marketing of your real estate practice. The key is to choose only those strategies which are proven to work for small businesses or individual professionals and invest the time and effort into making these strategies work.

Three Key Elements Are Required in Marketing Any Small Business:

Ongoing Commitment

One of the hallmarks of a successful marketing program is that every element builds upon every preceding element. A hit or miss, off and on program will simply not bring in new business.

Niche or Area of Expertise to Market

The most successful way to market any professional is to promote him as an expert in a specific, marketable area. This is easy for real estate professionals. Your expertise is your knowledge of the business and of the locations in which you're farming.

Specific, Measurable and Attainable Goals & Objectives for Your Marketing Program

Evaluate your progress in meeting your objectives on a regular basis.

The Perceived-Expert Technique

How many times have you heard a so-called expert speak and said to yourself, "Hey, I knew that". The perceived-expert technique ensures that you are the person everyone considers expert.

It's not enough just to say you're a real estate expert, the key is to let everybody know. (Now is not the time for modesty.) Only when you are perceived as an expert will you actually be an expert.

Here's a secret: you don't really have to know that much more than your competitors, you're just the guy who's eager to share his knowledge with the public, i.e. prospective clients.

10 Low-Budget Ways To Increase Your Business

This is not a top 10 list. Number one is not necessarily better than two or even 10. Pick those items which are most relevant to your individual business and those to which you feel you can make a commitment.

1. Write Feature Articles

Writing and publishing articles is an excellent way to present yourself as an expert. Not only does the article show your knowledge, but you also receive the added benefit of an implied endorsement from the publication that published your article.

The key to these kinds of articles is to know your target market and where to find them (neighborhood weeklies, the real estate section of the daily newspaper) and to write clearly and concisely (no jargon) with practical information the reader can use right away (without the need for further information). However, the information should also tease a little so that the reader wants more information (and will call you). The best subjects for these types of articles are how-to articles, common real estate problems and their solutions, and new information articles which explain, in layman's terms, something new in real estate. Ideas include: How to Sell Your House - Fast, How to Plan a Move and updated market information. Think of your prospective client as you choose the topic and write your article directly to him.

Use reprints of your articles as mailers or stand-alone brochures to give to prospects. You can also reprint your articles in your own newsletter. (Be sure to ask permission and credit the publication.)

2. Become A Media Source

Develop relationships with real estate writers/editors. Let them know that when they're working on a story, you are the expert available to answer questions, confirm information and /or provide quotes. Regularly keep them informed about interesting developments or the latest trends through press releases, letters and/or phone calls (only call after established).

There are two important things to remember if you want to be a media source: 1) Don't be a pest—only contact the editor when you truly have something newsworthy to report; and 2) Make absolutely sure you're available when the editor calls you for a quote or to answer a question. If you're not available, he'll cross you off his list (permanently), call the next "expert" on his list and you've wasted weeks or months of work.

3. News Releases

Develop a regular program of sending informative news releases to the media. Face it, editors want to publish news that is beneficial to their readers. If you sent a news release which explains a difficult process or gives a solution to a common problem, they'll be much more interested in publishing it.

The difference between these "mini-articles" and feature

articles is that you can send these same news releases to every media contact on your list. Your feature articles, on the other hand, will be targeted to only one publication each.

Establish a regular schedule for sending your releases (every one or two months is preferable); however, only send newsworthy information. You may want to go ahead and choose your first six topics in advance, just to make sure you can pull this technique off. Again, think of your prospective clients as you write.

The advantages of this type of PR are numerous. Not only do you establish yourself as an expert with the publication's readers, you're reinforcing your role

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