

as expert with the editors. And, by regularly sending news releases, you're assured that when those editors need a source, they'll remember you.

However, if you sent one really fantastic news release, but it was six months ago, they probably won't remember you.

4. Response Publicity

Also known as targeted public relations, response publicity ensures that your PR efforts will achieve a response from your target market. Most PR is designed to create an image for a business. However, you can't afford image-building or ego-stroking; you need concrete leads. Here's how to get them.

Select a freebie you can give away which will have a definite perceived value to your prospects and to editors. This can be an informative report or a comprehensive list of some sort. This is your offer.

In every news release or article you distribute, include a brief paragraph with your offer: "For a free copy of 10 Easy Ways to Increase Your Business, call..." Even if a prospect has no immediate need for a real estate agent, he is likely to call you for your freebie. You then have his name, address and phone

number on your prospect list and he has tangible proof that you are an expert in your field.

Without an offer, that same prospect may have read your news release and been impressed, but without having an immediate need for a new house, may not have saved the information or even remembered your name. When that prospect is eventually ready to buy, you are back at square one, lost in a sea of competitors.

The key to using response publicity is to make sure that your offer is newsworthy and informative, otherwise an editor will just cut out the paragraph with your offer. Editors have no reason to publish a self-serving, blatant attempt to get prospect names, unless they feel their readers will truly benefit from the information in your offer.

5. Response Advertising

This is the same technique as in response publicity. Include your offer in every single piece of advertising you produce. Give the potential prospect a reason to save your ad and give the active prospect a reason to call you (and not another agent).

Since you're paying for your ad space, you don't

have to be as careful with specific wording of your offer; however, your offer should still have a strong perceived value to your customers.

Choose an offer that is of interest to those prospects who do not need your service at this exact moment. You'll be on their minds down the road when they do become active and decide to buy or sell their home.

6. Networking

Don't just join - get active in various civic and/or business organizations (whose members happen to be in your target market). Become a visible member of your groups. Join a variety of committees. People generally like to give business to people they know and like, so make an effort to get to know people in your organizations on friendly terms.

When members need real estate advice or they're ready to buy or sell, they'll be much more likely to turn to someone they know and like (you) than to a stranger. Likewise, if any are asked for referrals, they will be more likely to refer you, whether or not they've actually worked with you on a real estate deal.

7. Speaking

Networking and speaking go hand in hand. The organizations you belong to all need speakers. You can't sit back and wait for them to ask you, though - you have to volunteer. Let them know why you should be their speaker. Your speeches and articles can be very closely related (less writing time).

Mention to your current clients that you're a speaker. Many of them belong to associations that need speakers. Let attendees at your speeches know that you'd like their business (be subtle - no hard sell, please). For added benefit, when you speak for an organization, submit a copy of your speech to their newsletter for publication later on (for those who missed it - you're just trying to help).

8. Get Referrals

Work your network. The best way to get referrals is to give referrals. Cultivate other professionals or small-business owners who have the same target market as you, but who are not directed competitors.

To get a referral from another professional, you have to be liked and respected by that person. He wants to feel good about referring to you. Always

follow up with a thank-you note within a few weeks. Make clear in your note that you intend to reciprocate the favor. Then do so at the first opportunity.

Let clients or customers know that you'd like their referrals. Sometimes clients think that you're so busy you don't want or need new clients - they don't want to burden you. This is especially true for professionals with small practices. When they find out you want their referrals, however, most clients are eager to cooperate.

9. Knock-Your-Socks-Off Service

Your best source of new business is current clients. The customer may not always be right, but he should always be treated with respect and compassion. Buying a home is a huge purchase, so your clients should always feel like you care about their house as much as they do. If they like you, they'll recommend you - and come back.

10. Make the Most of Your Mailers

If you distribute a newsletter or use direct mail (excellent for farming), clean up your mailing lists on a regular basis. Wasted postage can add up quickly.

Make sure your newsletter sticks to a regular schedule so prospects can look forward to it and that it contains up-to-date information they can't (easily) find anywhere else. Don't target your newsletter just to buyers and sellers. Most of your readers will not be in the market (yet). Keep most of the information about home ownership, investment and the specific neighborhood, including clip-and-save items such as important phone numbers and school or neighborhood calendars.

These ten techniques can all be very effective methods of marketing your real estate practice. Remember, however, that marketing doesn't always show immediate results, don't get discouraged. It takes time to achieve measurable results, but it's definitely worth the wait. Once the results start coming in, they are usually ongoing, steady and impressive. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Debbie Jo Evans is a copywriter/publicist based in Austin, Texas who specializes in writing newsletters/client publications, publicity materials, direct mail and brochures for small businesses, including real estate professionals.

Tired of Waiting for Your Commission Checks?