

ACHIEVING RELATIONSHIP EXCELLENCE

As a real estate agent, your success depends on the quality and durability of the relationships you build with your clients, and the one and only way to build solid, enduring relationships is to deliver excellent, unrivaled service. To be an outstanding agent you need to lavish your clients with service that exceeds their expectations -- from the get-go and throughout a long business relationship.

The challenge is that not all clients expect or want the same kind of service. What constitutes excellent service to one client might seem inadequate or even like overkill to another.

It seems hard to imagine, but an agent could sell a client's home in less than a week, at full price, and still have a dissatisfied customer. This could be due to some action or oversight during the negotiation, inspection, or closing process that simply didn't match with the client's service expectations.

To avoid service mismatches, learn each person's service expectations by doing something that few agents take time to do: Ask.

Then put your findings to work by following these steps:

- Learn each person's service expectations. Before you enter a new prospect presentation, make it a rule to learn everything you can about what your prospects are looking for in an agent and how they define their excellent service.

- Customize and personalize your service delivery. In your initial presentation and in subsequent contacts -- whether you're working to make the sale, service the client, build an after-the-sale relationship, or request a referral -- refer to your initial research and highlight the service aspects that each client finds important. Weave in the words you heard them use to define great service. Highlight the communication points they described as essential service attributes. Let them know that you understand their needs and are focused on exceeding their expectations.

- Never get complacent. Don't assume that, if your service falls a bit short, your best clients will simply turn a blind eye. And, by all means, don't think

that if your clients want more or better service they will say something to you. They won't, because they don't want the confrontation. They'd rather just go away quietly and never come back.

I've met agents who are successful in spite of their "my way or the highway" approach to service delivery. Rather than focusing on customized service and long-term relationships, these agents prefer to serve a stream of "here today, gone tomorrow" clients that they acquire through relentless prospecting and high-volume lead development. These agents have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude about service. They practice what I call a fast-food hamburger joint philosophy: "We sell hamburgers and fries, and if you don't like hamburgers and fries, pick another restaurant." The difference, of course, is that the number of people who want hamburgers and fries is huge, and, if the fare is good, most customers automatically come back for more. The same is hardly true when it comes to homebuyers and sellers.

As an agent, your prospect universe is limited, and your customers aren't apt to become repeat customers unless they are treated with the kind of unparalleled, consistent, and customized service that turns them into clients for life.

Dirk Zeller, President of Real Estate Champions, is recognized as the premier coach for the real estate industry. He has developed a system that takes "regular" agents and "regular" managers and transforms them into "top gun" agents and managers. Dirk's coaching systems are built around his incredible success in the 90's as one of the top agents in all of North America. He closed over 150 transactions annually while working Monday through Thursday and taking Friday, Saturday & Sunday off. Copyright© 2000-2001, Dirk Zeller. All rights reserved. To contact Dirk about his availability to speak to your group, please call the Frog Pond Group at 800-704-FROG (3764) or email susie@frogpondgroup.com; <http://www.frogpondgroup.com>.

