

IS TECHNOLOGY ON THE WEB JUST ANOTHER POORLY PLANNED OPEN HOUSE?

Written by Walter Sanford

Well you guys, It's happening again. We've got a new spider web for real estate buyers and sellers. You know, one more to add to our long list of up-time, open houses, non-solicited personal referrals and walk-ins. There will be many that will argue with me that all of the above mentioned lead generations have been profitable one time or another, but one thing is true with all of the above and that is they require a decision of the client to interact with you and not visa versa. These are all methods called passive prospecting or passive lead generation. Basically you build your web and you wait for your client. In fact, the new vernacular is to make your web site sticky!

For 25 years I have tried to add value to every client-agent relationship. Whether the lead was pro-actively obtained or passively obtained. I have found that the dividing line between top producers and low producing real estate agent is usually that the low producers depend on a passive form of lead generation without good interaction skills and have no pro-active methods to obtain leads. I am worried that the web will become just another poorly planned open house.

I believe it is the brokers' and managers' responsibility to hold their real estate agents at a much higher competence level. They must make sure that there is a business plan in place to effect the client's lives for the better not just order takers. Remember there are web sites much bigger than any of us will hope to be that are going to be professional order takers.

What we must learn as we have in the past, is we must turn our passive lead generation activities into client pleasing activities and supplement the business with more pro-active activities.

We have taken the open house and shaken it up over the last few years. My students have learned how to:

- Notify all of the clients surrounding the open house, including the agent's database so they will all be excited about the open house.

- We have added additional advertising sponsored by affiliated lenders so that more people will be able to find the open houses.

- We have had multiple open houses in the usual time of 12:00-3:00 so that each open house is shorter but more people will be able to see different homes.

- Lastly, we have implemented follow-up campaigns including thank-you notes and search systems supplied to the potential buyers.

This takes the usual passive open house and turns it into a pro-active prospecting client pleasing and helpful activity. We are doing the same with the Internet. No longer should a real estate agent be encouraged to have a web site that does not pro-actively change the client's life. It's no longer good enough to build your web site, have pretty pictures and have your listings on there and hope that someone will contact you. It is time that we built complete business plans around our web sites.

For instance, maybe have a section on absentee owners. The real estate agent would call and write to absentee owners and direct them to the web site for copies of rental applications and other services supplied to people who own real estate in the real estate agent's town but do not live there. Or maybe a section on alternative agent compensation programs that will educate the clientele on different ways that they can pay for a real estate agent's services.

The bottom line is the days of waiting for an incoming phone call from an ad, a walk-in, or someone at an open house is over. The Internet and a real estate agent's personal web site should not be just more of the same. Let's build ancillary services around these contact points and fill them with value.