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5 things consumers want in a Realtor

There's one marketing tactic that many perceive as 'creepy'

BY BERNICE ROSS



[Salesman](#) image via Shutterstock.

Are you still using hard-sell, manipulative sales tactics in your real estate business? Whether you do or don't, the recent Hear It Direct real estate conference in Dallas had some great tips on what you can do to attract more clients and turn them into raving fans.

Hear It Direct took an in-depth look at what consumers want from their Realtors. Some of the findings were expected, but many of them were surprising. If you want to better serve the buyers and sellers in your market, here are five key points to implement in your business.

1. **Realize they are scared**

For the last few years, researchers have continued to report that consumers begin their online search for a home 12-18 months before they are ready to transact. During this time, they want information but they don't want to be contacted by a "pushy agent who calls them constantly." Instead they want to know as much as possible about the property, market conditions, local neighborhood, schools, recreation and other lifestyle factors.

A major reason for all the research is that they are scared. This translates into buyer reluctance. Given this fact, a consistent theme throughout the conference was, "We hate being pushed or rushed." The panelists also expressed the other following concerns:

--"Our Realtor got impatient with us. She didn't realize we were scared about making this decision."

--"We still have college loans to pay off. It just feels safer to rent."

--"Taking on all that debt is a big decision. It feels like you are being shackled."

What did this group appreciate? It comes as no surprise that patience and understanding were repeatedly noted as points the panelists valued in their Realtor. As one panelist put it: "Our Realtor took the time to 'learn us' and she was never pushy!"

2. Avoid being stalkerish

The Hear It Direct panelists were in agreement that they surfed past any site that forced registration to receive listing information. On the other hand, they would provide their information if there was a report, coupon or something that they perceived had value to them.

Nevertheless, if they provided information, they didn't want you to stalk them. To illustrate this point, 1-800 Call Capture systems have been a pivotal part of real estate lead generation strategies for many years. Because the agent pays for the call, the agent is entitled to that person's contact information.

The panelists, however, found this whole process "creepy." Furthermore, agents who called them back right away and then continued to flood them with calls or unwanted emails moved from being creepy to being "stalkerish." In other words, what constitutes a good business practice from the agent's side (following up on leads and being persistent) is perceived quite differently from the person who is on the receiving end of this experience.

What's ironic about this whole situation is that these consumers actually engage in a different version on this very same activity. They research you online, they watch your blog if you have one, collect brochures from your listings, and may even drop by your open house. Part of this is based upon their desire to know, but it all boils down to fear: fear of choosing the wrong person, the wrong house, or not being able to get what they want.

3. Epic fail

Numerous studies have shown that consumers want as much information as possible about the properties they view online. This includes a large number of pictures, video, complete data about schools, the neighborhood, recreation and other lifestyle-related variables. Consequently, if you post only three or four pictures or if you provide only

limited data in the comments, not only will these potential buyers skip over your listing, they become frustrated. Furthermore, if the person viewing your listing is a potential seller, you have just lost the opportunity to compete for that listing.

As one panelist put it: "No pictures ... I'm gone!"

When agents pay thousands of dollars each year for advertising, websites and other lead generation tools, failing to handle these basics can be among the most damaging and costly mistakes that you can make. Because your listings are viewed so many times online, you are not only hurting your reputation with one potential client, you could be hurting it with hundreds.

4. Facebook is for social, not business

Several panelists noted that they view Facebook as a place to connect socially, not to do business. If you are marketing your listings on your Facebook profile page, not only are you violating the Facebook terms of use, you are also aggravating the very people who could be potential customers. Furthermore, when the moderators inquired about whether the panelists paid attention to Facebook ads or to the paid ads on Google, the answer was an overwhelming "no!"

5. By referral works, but ...

The panelists repeatedly noted that when they were ready to buy or sell their property they liked getting referrals from those they trust. There was a huge "but," however. Several panelists said they hated it when their Realtor constantly bombarded them with requests for referrals. They enjoyed hearing from their Realtor on a personal basis or when the information was relevant to owning their home.

What does this all mean for your business? One of the smartest moves you can make is to sit down with five of your most recent clients and spend an hour with them inquiring about what they did during each step of their purchase process. Discover what they liked about working with you as well as what you can do to provide them with better service. The more you incorporate their suggestions into your business, the better you and your business will become.

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