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Are “Almost Now” Clients Slipping Through Your Fingers?

By *Denise Lones*

Learn the key to moving a client from "almost now" to "right now please!" by providing information and positioning yourself as a resource.

Over the years I've talked a great deal about "**not right now**" or "**almost now**" clients - those buyers and sellers who may have expressed a smidgen of interest in buying or selling real estate, but **not right at the moment**.

We get caught up in the activities around "right now" clients, the folks we are actively working with. These are the clients who are making demands on us as they try to achieve their goals. It's pretty hard to ignore these clients; in fact, they are usually very quick to let us know when we drop the ball and don't follow through on our promises to them.

Because we're busy with "right now" clients (as well as the business of life itself!) it's pretty darn **easy to forget** about the "not right now" client. They live in the **no-man's land** between "now" clients and past clients. And they've told you they may be living there for three months or even three years before they're ready to take any action. So, human nature being what it is, **you leave them be, hoping they'll come back to you when they're ready**. Or perhaps, if you're more assertive, you add them to your database and mail them something every once in a while.

I firmly believe that these "almost now" clients are a gold mine of opportunity that goes untapped. And I know from talking to my coaching clients, that the clients that you leave and hope to hear from later, often never come back. Not

because you're not a good agent, or they didn't like you. More often it's because you didn't keep in touch with them, and you weren't top of mind when they were ready to move forward.

Discovering your "almost now" goldmine

The first step in converting these clients is to figure out who they are! You may not even have them on your database. Take some time to think about all the people you've spoke to who want to make a move in the future. The mother of one of your children's friends? Your girlfriend's parents? What about your partner's co-worker, who you met at a company party? The checker at the grocery store? If you really stop and think about it, chances are you've spoken with lots of people are "almost now" clients.

Put all these names on a list. Be sure to include:

- Their name
- Their real estate needs - are they buyers, sellers, or both?
- Any specifics about what neighborhoods they're interested in, or what type of property they want
- The potential price of the property
- Your potential commission (I'll come back to this later)

Now, post this list someplace you can refer to it easily. After all, you want to keep these people top of mind!

Deliver what they want... even if they don't know they want it!

Create a structure for reviewing the list. For example, every Monday morning look at the list and ask yourself what you can send to each person that would move them toward action.

One of the most important things you need to build in to contact with your "almost now" clients is a degree of personalization. It's not enough to send them your generic monthly newsletter. These clients need a reason to take action. And because you've met them at some point, and talked to them about real estate, you have an advantage over trying to create interest in someone you've never met - these folks have already told you what they want!

Buyers

If the mom who sits next to you at the PTA meeting told you she loves the Silver Firs neighborhood, and would like to move there someday, it's an easy thing for you to track market activity in Silver Firs. Each week you can send a short email, with a quick market update. It might look something like this:

Hello Nancy and Dennis!

I wanted to let you know that there are three homes currently listed in Silver Firs that match your "someday" criteria. I know you're not quite ready now to move, but wanted to let you know what's happening in the neighborhood. Here's a link to the listings in the MLS:

<include link>

Also, one home in that neighborhood got an offer last month, and is now closed. The new buyers moved in last week. Here's the link to that home; note the final sales price!

<include link>

Feel free to give me a call if you have any questions... and I'll see you at the next PTA meeting!

They may, or may not, respond to your emails immediately. But I guarantee they'll be surprised, and excited, that you keep them in mind as you go about your business!

Sending an email, and including a link to properties which match the needs of the "almost now" client is a good first step, but I suggest you go one step further.

What about providing more data on the neighborhood your client is interested in? Homes are, after all, investments - and buyers love to see information on appreciation in neighborhoods they're interested in. They also might want to know about community issues, zoning changes, and proposed developments that would impact their neighborhood of choice.

Is this work? Yes! But it's well worth the effort required to gather the data. And an "almost now" client will be stunned that you did this much work for them. Do you think they'll remember you when the time is right? I know they will!

Sellers

If anyone on your "almost now" list currently owns a home, send them information on homes in their area. Let them know when houses come on the market, when they receive offers, and when they close. Along the way, be sure to provide comments that help them understand how the home compares to then. And of course, include details on initial asking price, final selling price, and market time.

Just as you did with buyers, make it personal! Rather than simply sending a listing from an MLS, think about an email like this:

Hello Nancy and Dennis!

I wanted to let you know that another home has come on the market in your neighborhood. I know you're not ready to sell yet, but I do want to keep you abreast of neighborhood activity. Here's a link to the full data from the MLS.

<include link>

As you can see, this home has three bedrooms, as compared to the four you have. It's also quite a bit smaller, but has a much larger yard.

Also, the home that got an offer last month is now closed, and the new buyers moved in last week. Here's the link to that home; note the final sales price! There seems to be high demand for your neighborhood - market time for listings this year is only 11 days.

<include link>

Feel free to give me a call if you have any questions... and I'll see you at the next PTA meeting!

Counting your chickens

Remember earlier when I asked you to put together your list... and to include your potential commission right along with the "almost now" client information?

That may have surprised you - after all, we're always taught not to count our chickens before they're hatched, and not to regard clients as nothing but a paycheck.

While I'm not advocating that you simply see dollar signs when you think about clients I do believe that you should be keenly aware of what you may be losing by not reaching out to "almost now" clients. Add up the total commissions possible from the people on your list. Are you surprised?

I do this exercise with my [live coaching group](#) and they are always stunned by the amount of money in the "almost now" client database. I think you'll be shocked too - and motivated to devote time and energy to this easy-to-lose-track-of group.

The Benefits to You

The key to moving a client from "almost now" to "right now please!" is providing information and positioning yourself as a resource. Do that, and you'll reap three benefits:

1. The client may be motivated to take action sooner than you (or they!) expected
2. The client will remember you when they are ready to take action
3. You will have established yourself as a trusted advisor, not a salesperson

I challenge you to look through your list of potential clients. Are there "not right now's" on the list that you could be sharing information with? I bet there are and I encourage you to put together a plan to do just that.

By Denise Lones CSP, M.I.R.M., CDEI - The founding partner of The Lones Group, Denise Lones, brings over two decades of experience in the real estate industry.