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Choose the 'highest and best use' of your time

Realtor Notebook BY TERESA BOARDMAN



[Couch potato](#) image via Shutterstock.

It wasn't until I was an adult that I figured out that my parents were right about the whole TV thing. They decided that spending hours in front of the television set was the wrong way to spend a childhood, and I wasn't allowed to watch it very much.

It wasn't just about the quality of the junk I used to like to watch, like "Gilligan's Island." It was because when I was in the house sitting on the couch, eyes glued to the set, I wasn't outside socializing with friends, playing games, doing homework, riding my bike, or helping around the house.

*We all have **choices** on how we spend our “free time” -- and our “work time”, and our money -- and those choices matter. Each hour we spend doing one thing is an hour that cannot be spent some other way.*

We make decisions (**choices**) everyday on how to best use our time during the work day. For real estate agents, listing appointments and showing properties should always come first.

The way I see it, the rest of the choices we make will determine how many of those client appointments we will have, and client *appointments lead to closings*. If the goal is to sell real estate, then client appointments are a must. There have been times when I have made some poor choices and watched my income drop as a result.

So, you can “*choose*” to make a *contact* which may turn to a *lead* and in turn may lead to an *appointment* which could lead to a *closing*. Again, your *choice of activity* and the time you want to spend doing it.

Some experts consider social networks a waste of time. They can be if we make the wrong choices.

- On Facebook, we can interact with neighbors in neighborhood groups or on pages. Or we can interact with other real estate agents in groups for real estate agents.
- Who should we follow on Twitter -- other real estate agents and vendors? Or the local media, local businesses, community leaders and thought leaders?
- When we blog, are we writing articles for consumers and providing unique local content, photographs or video? Or are we writing articles for real estate agents?
- The same kind of choices must be made in deciding how we will spend our face-to-face networking time.
 1. Are we better off going to an event where we know only one or two people and no one else in the room has a real estate license, or attending a mixer with a bunch of real estate agents?
 2. Will we get more out of an educational event put on by local experts and industry leaders, or one that's just for real estate agents, in which the presenters are real estate professionals or vendors?

Before spending our time or money, we should consider the alternatives.

We can buy the latest and greatest iPad, or spend the money on travel and accommodations for an out-of-town conference where agents will be taught how to use an iPad.

Could spending an hour reading the manual for an electronic device that gets used for business every day be more worthwhile than attending a free webinar about some new tool or website that may not be around next year, taught by someone with no credentials as an educator or as a subject matter expert?

What if we have a choice between serving on an advisory committee for a vendor that sells products to the real estate industry, or being on the board of directors for a community-based not-for-profit?

Are we better off working out of a collaborative made up of local entrepreneurs, or working in an office or collaborative with other real estate agents? For me, the second choice is the right one. But for a newer agent, or one who would like to be in a management position one day, the first choice might be best.

There isn't anything wrong with any of the options or choices, but each choice we make matters.

Ideally, if a person had enough time they would not have to make any of these choices. Time really is money, or at least it can be converted into money.

Spending too much time in the company of other agents, online or off, can have a negative impact on business. As can spending too much money on technology education and not enough on technology, or choosing too many lightweight educational opportunities put on by "experts."

This year I missed the annual local REBarCamp, but I have not missed a single local Social Media Breakfast in 2012. I also attended the nation's largest BarCamp, held at Best Buy headquarters in Minnesota the week prior to the REBarCamp. Both were held during the height of the real estate selling season, and I had to make a choice.

If networking with other agents is not the highest and best use of your networking time, spend the time some other way.

Which activity is the most likely to lead to an appointment now or in the future? If most of your business comes through other real estate agents, then spend time with them. Which is a better use of a summer evening? Watching "Gilligan's Island" or taking a walk through your neighborhood?

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