



Mark Sampson

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5 unique ways to market your real estate listings

Get on a bus, Gus; go out on the lake, Jake

BY BERNICE ROSS

Are you still marketing your listings with the standard "Just Listed" cards and the typical interior photos that most agents use? If you're ready to dump this ho-hum approach, here are tips from some of America's top listing agents about what they do to stand head and shoulders above their competition.

Several years ago I was conducting a six-week training program for a major firm in Los Angeles. When it came to the segment on marketing, I asked if anyone was doing something creative that was really working.

One agent had a great alternative to the traditional "Just Listed" cards that was garnering tons of seller leads. The front of her card showed a group of people "partying hearty."

The caption said, "Guess What Your Neighbors Did Last Night?" The other side of the card said, "They listed their house at ..." Imagine how this card stood out compared to all the other cards with the property address, description, and a big picture of the agent.

The key to creative marketing begins with having a very narrow, lifestyle-based niche and then staking out your claim as the person who is the specialist in that area. Here are five great examples of agents who have taken this approach to heart.

1. **An Academy Award winner**

Eric Lavey of Keller Williams used the perfect approach to selling a

Hollywood Hills, Calif., home: He made a [short movie](#) perfectly illustrating the Hollywood Hills' hip lifestyle.

You see the Lexus convertible pulling into the gated driveway, the owner walking into the walk-in closet to shed his business clothes for his night-outlook, a quick meal prepared on the outdoor grill as the sun goes down, then off to the Sunset Boulevard hot spots. The video ends with the passenger door swinging open in front of his house -- who's getting out?

2. 50 showings in a single day?

A number of agents who represent distressed properties are using a strategy called the "foreclosure bus" to show multiple properties to multiple buyers on a single day. The agents market the foreclosure bus on various social media sites, in newspapers, and on Craigslist.

All buyers are preapproved before they're allowed on the tour. On the day of the event, the atmosphere is fun, much like what you would experience at an auction. In many cases, a local vendor will sponsor a lunch. Because of the competitive atmosphere, agents often end up selling much of what they show that day.

3. Attract high-profile clients to high-profile listings

Frank McKinney, America's "pirate developer" who builds \$30 million to \$50 million homes, has made staging an art form. He once arrived at one of his extravaganzas dressed as a pirate in a hot air balloon. McKinney has used numerous themes to attract the ultra-wealthy, although almost every event features charitable fundraising, which is his passion.

You can capitalize on McKinney's approach by asking your luxury sellers if they would be comfortable holding a charitable fundraising event at their property. Another strategy would be to contact a local art gallery about holding an opening party for a local artist.

Either way, the event will be sure to draw some of the most affluent people in town. Best of all, even if they don't buy your listing, there's a good chance they may know someone who will.

4. Show lakefront or oceanfront listings an entirely new way

If you have access to a boat, a great way to show waterfront listings is to do so from on the water. When we were in Surfer's Paradise in Australia, we had a

chance to see that area's most expensive homes and condos from the water. While we had driven past many of the properties, seeing them from the water provided an entirely different perspective.

For example, you could see how easy or difficult it would be to access your slip, the types of boats your neighbors own, plus a host of other important factors.

If you can't afford the time or money to take clients out on a boat regularly, rent a boat for a day and take a videographer with you to capture the various locations. You can then edit your video to include only the areas where the buyer is searching. It's also a powerful tool for giving sellers a more comprehensive look at the comparable sales.

If you want to take this to an even higher level, tour the properties by helicopter. Your sellers will love the exposure and so will your buyers!

5. Giddy-up, horsey.

Many major cities have carriage tours of the downtown area, especially in the historical areas. A great way to create a marketing video is to rent the carriage and shoot a video of some of the historic properties in the area. If you are marketing horse properties, you could also shoot a video of the property on horseback, or if you don't ride, ask the owner to do it.

Keep in mind that your video should be 90 seconds or less. Your goal is to create an emotional hook that gets your viewers excited enough to contact you about seeing the property.

If you want to get stellar results from your marketing efforts, add a little fun and creativity and watch your business soar.

Bernice Ross, CEO of RealEstateCoach.com, is a national speaker, trainer and author of the National Association of Realtors' No. 1 best-seller, "Real Estate Dough: Your Recipe for Real Estate Success." Hear Bernice's five-minute daily real estate show, just named "new and notable" by iTunes, at www.RealEstateCoachRadio.com. You can contact her at Bernice@RealEstateCoach.com or [@BRoss](https://twitter.com/BRoss) on Twitter.