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60 Minutes to Success...

by Julie Escobar



Time Management Tactics & the Difference an Hour Makes

Time – as they say is LIFE. It's also a powerful stepping stone to success. Sales professionals eager to get more than just “now” business and instead build a reliable foundation for longevity know one thing for certain – time management – is a **MUST** do.

On the road to time management master, consider the difference just one hour can make in terms of repeatable, sustainable success in this business. This business, like most sales industries is above all else, a people business, which means if you want to **STAY** in business, you've got to make staying top of mind with your customer base a priority.

What hour you ask? Real estate expert and coach Bernice Ross once shared with me, “Just about every top producer that I know starts their prospecting first thing in the day. They know that of the activities that are closest to the income line for them – prospecting is right there in the top three. Getting those things done first allows them to continually grow and stay connected to their book of business. Secondly, it really gives those agents a sense of control, power and self-accomplishment – and isn't that the **BEST** way to start a day?”

Many agents choose to stagger their prospecting time and map out their week in advance, selecting 8:00-9:00am three days a week, and evening hours from 6:00-7:00pm two to three days per week. It's a good way to maximize their ability to reach prospects and past clients, and for many successful professionals – it's the smart habit to take a look at their schedule in ADVANCE of the week. That way everything gets put on the table. And don't forget family and personal obligations in that task setting process. Prospecting time, showings, open houses and listing appointments are all vital – but so are soccer games, recitals, date night and lunch with friends. With a nod to wanting to be in this industry for the long haul – it's the little things that will help you stay on the top of your game, avoid burn out and find that slippery thing called balance we all strive for.

Sherry Chris, CEO for Better Homes and Gardens shared with me in a previous interview that in her experience, top producers generally still can be found sticking close to that old rule of thumb investing about 80% of their time getting face-to-face, on the phone or online sharing with both past and potential clients. “Things have certainly changed in our industry and prospecting has truly taken on a new pace with the advances of social media. It's definitely developed into a more ‘give before you get’ mode of contact. Whereas our old methods of prospecting meant picking up the phone and offering a service, now we can feed valuable information, fun facts as well as personally connect with our clients.” Sherry, for example, spends roughly 60% of her time building the Better Homes and Gardens brand and shares some valuable tips when it comes to building ‘social capital.’ “To be truly effective you have to successfully balance business information with personal touches, photographs, upcoming events, career milestones, etc. If the only thing you have on your Facebook or Twitter is your listings, you're missing the boat. Let's not forget too, that as valuable as social media is in today's prospecting world, there is still no substitute for getting face-to-face or on the phone with your clients.”

How do you stick to it? While not always easy, it is important to find the motivation to continuously invest the time in building and maintaining your business. Consistency and repetition are certainly a start. Habits – both good and bad are rooted in those two components. Start forming the good habit of blocking your time by making an appointment with yourself on the same day every week, to plan the week ahead. You'll feel more in control, more accomplished and more balance. And again-don't forget YOU time. It is the key to sticking with it because there's a reward for you! It's like "time off for good behavior" every week – and a way for you to re-charge your batteries. As keynote speaker and change expert Connie Podesta shares in her new book *10 Ways to Stand Out From the Crowd*, "Make an appointment with yourself to be by yourself – even if it's just for a few minutes a day. When it comes to balance – you don't have a personal life and a professional life – you have a LIFE. Achieving that balance is not about making things equal in terms of time but having a sense of well-being in your life at all levels." That little re-connect with yourself every day helps give you the resolve to see the week through.

Another good strategy is to connect with an integrity partner. Someone with whom you can share that same high level of goal setting and stick-to-it mindset – after all, where you may find it easy to put off your tasks for the day – it's not QUITE so simple when you know someone else is counting on you to hold up your end of the agreement.

Having an effective system certainly helps as well. For busy agents, it's no longer a 'should do' but a 'must do' if you expect to keep up. What's interesting is to note how these systems still run the gamut from complex contact management systems to good old fashioned 1-31 files. Bernice Ross shared a story of one agent who is among the top in the business who makes it

his goal to talk to fifty clients a day. “Sometimes he talks to 5-10, leaves messages for a few more and uses social media options such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to send out links or messages to 25 or more additional clients. The point is that every day he’s making that commitment to sustain contact with his clients. When you consider the average person now knows at least six REALTORS®, you can be sure that the one they’ll do business with is the one they’ve heard from the most.”

Do you HAVE to get involved in social media? Well, you certainly don’t HAVE to do anything you don’t want to, but in terms of keeping pace with today’s consumers, it’s a step in the right direction. Reggie Nicolay, Director of Social Media for Cyberhomes.com wisely pointed out, “It’s interesting to note that Facebook was originally designed to be an online address book, which perpetually updates itself so it’s always evolving as opposed to an offline solution such as Outlook which is always out of date. It’s also a tremendous resource for changing the face of how you prospect. Where in the past, building rapport may have been difficult or cumbersome and time consuming, social media allows me to market on a more one-to-one level with my target audience. Clive Thompson said it well when he called it an ‘ambient awareness’ that occurs. You’re offering bite-size pieces of information and solutions with your customers and getting to know them better through these social networks. It’s kind of like making deposits and withdrawals from a social ‘account’ if you will. You get to know your customers better and they get to know you better, and in doing so, you build that trust that’s necessary to grow your business.”

Sherry Chris added, “Technology has really allowed us to become more specialized in that it makes it easier for agents to identify their niche and build a network around it in a far faster, and easier way than ever before. That’s great news for all agents, but especially for those just coming into the business.” In talking with agents every day, I couldn’t agree with her more. With time,

energy and marketing dollars all in short supply these days, it just makes sense to pick a niche you're passionate about, find those groups both in your community and in all of these online communities and build your business that way. It's less time, less money and a whole lot more fun!

“If you're looking to engage with Gen X and Gen Y consumers, social media is by far the way to go,” shared Mrs. Ross. “It's important to communicate with people in the manner and method that's most comfortable for them. Social networking is also a great way to get outside the box a little. I'll give you an example. I had an agent tell me that she met a new doctor in her community who was obviously just getting started and looking to spread the word. What did she do? She went over and interviewed him then wrote about him in her blog. Soon after, she heard from the doctor who was happily getting referrals from her article, and he was happily referring customers to her as well. That's a classic case of 'giving to get,' of helping first and reaping the rewards for a long time to come.”

What I loved about speaking with all of these talented experts is that while all brought wonderful new ideas and insight to the table, is that they all did seem to find common ground on three major points:

1. You've got to be willing, in today's market, to make a friend first and a sale later. Take the 'get by giving' approach to your business.
2. Whether its one hour a day, ten hours a week or 80% of your time, make and KEEP your prospecting appointments with yourself. Put them right up there with a payday in terms of importance – because they are!
3. There's still no substitute for personal contact. Getting on the phone, meeting face to face and getting to know your customers will ALWAYS be tops on the

‘to-do’ list.

I hope you’ve picked up few lessons along the way. Our customers need us now more than ever, and it’s up to you to let them know that you are there for them, with answers, with integrity and with resources they can trust. It’s incredible to me to hear story after story of agents who are literally having their best year ever despite tough economic times and sometimes shaky markets. Why? They know that it’s a people first business and they do just that – put people first.

Thank you to all the extraordinary people who lent me their voices for this article. Sherry Chris, Bernice Ross, [Connie Podesta](#), and Reggie Nicolay. I challenge you to find them on Facebook and make them your friends! You’ll find all have incredible ideas to share, stories to tell and certainly set an example of what to do right in today’s marketing arena! Thanks all!

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