

Managing and converting real estate leads

Guest perspective: 5 easy steps to turn inquiries into sales

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It boggles my mind.

We know as surely as the sky is blue that real estate consumers choose sales agents who respond first to their inquiries. It's a plain fact. Research has proven it.

And yet, lead management remains the single biggest problem in real estate.

I know this from personal experience. When my wife and I went house shopping in Southern California three years ago, we visited 11 homes and I left 11 messages. Know how many agents returned my calls? One. And it came two days after I left the message.

But what's equally surprising to me is this: the solution to the lead management problem is simple. Yet, few have caught on.

Here are five steps for converting leads into customers.

1. Know the goal. One reason agents do poorly with lead management is this: they fail to understand the goal of lead management. And the goal is to get the appointment. Nothing more, nothing less.

Stay focused on just getting the appointment and I promise you'll begin to see a difference in your lead conversion ratio.

2. Craft a powerful experience. Pay close attention here, because this is where it either happens or it doesn't. To get that appointment you must craft a powerful experience for all the kinds of leads that come to you. An experience that makes them say, "Wow, that's amazing!"

Create that experience by determining what your customers want, then give them that and more. What would make them truly want to do business with you?

- A response to their inquiries within 15 minutes?
- A small gift as a token of thanks for contacting you?
- An information packet on you and the community – e-mailed instantly?

Spell out on paper how to make leads say 'wow' for the different ways leads come to you. For phone calls from an ad, decide how they'll be handled. The same for getting a referral from a past client, and for an e-mail lead from your Web site.

You're the architect. Build something special!

3. Know your "A B Cs." Assign your leads to one of three categories. "A" leads are ready to buy or sell now. "B" leads plan to buy or sell in the next month or two. And "C" leads might buy or sell in the next three to six months.

Develop an action plan for each kind of lead. And don't salivate over the "A" leads so much that you forget about the "Bs" and "Cs" – they're your future business. So consider a "drip" e-mail system that automatically sends helpful e-mails to them every week or two – maybe information on homes that fit their criteria – and remember to get their permission before adding them to your e-mail list.

4. Use technology. I'm a big proponent of technology and specifically, I often recommend a program called [Lead Master](#) for lead management. But even though technology is clearly essential for agents, remember this: real estate is – at its very core – a people business.

So determine if the software or gadget you're looking to buy will give prospects the experience you've spelled out in your plan, and will it get you in front of them quickly? Technology can help you manage leads but converting them – that's a face-to-face and ear-to-ear job.

5. Embrace the basics. A secret of the industry is that top producers make money because they embrace the basics. They focus on the fundamentals – day in, day out. They get back to people quickly. They listen. They respond professionally to what they hear. They do their homework. All very basic, yet vital, tasks. With all the bells and whistles out there these days, it's easy to lose site of the fundamentals. Don't do it.

Hold the basics near and dear and you will have laid the foundation for a stellar real estate career.

I'll leave you with a question: What's been proven to be the most effective way to convert leads to appointments? The answer...a simple phone call. A human voice, talking to another human voice.

So take a few minutes now and examine closely how you're managing leads. Are you meeting your business objectives? If not, start implementing these ideas to stop future business from slipping away.

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