

*Best Practices for Accelerating your*  
**REAL ESTATE BUSINESS IN 2015**



LONG LIVE HAPPY HOMES®



**20%**

of Agents

Perform



**80%**

of real estate  
business

It is common knowledge that 20% of agents do 80% of real estate business. Successful agents know that working toward the 80% can be overwhelming. The following guide provides critical information to help you put together an easy-to-follow, actionable plan that will get results.

The following nine steps have been gleaned from best practices in time management, marketing and real estate. The goal of accelerating your business requires that you access all three areas of expertise. Think of time management, marketing and real estate as the three legs of a sturdy stool that you need to reach your goals. Take any one of them away, and you will most certainly fall short.

#### HERE'S WHAT WE KNOW TO BE TRUE:

42%

of all new buyers come from a referral

74%

of clients will give you a referral if you simply stay in touch

60%

of buyers Googled their future agent

74%

of sellers used social media to find their agent

93%

of social media traffic comes from Facebook

Now the question becomes what to do with that information. It would most certainly be a mistake to spend 74% of your time on social media. The power of social media to accelerate your real estate business needs to be harnessed by a well-rounded marketing plan that is managed by a well-rounded (read healthy, happy and knowledgeable) real estate agent who provides excellent customer service.

It is helpful to follow these steps in the order they are presented. The time management skills you learn in the first three steps make all the other steps possible. Get ready to accelerate your business!

**Step One:** Set Your Course

**Step Two:** Establish Milestones and Key Activities

**Step Three:** Block Your Time

**Step Four:** Commit to Lead Generation

**Step Five:** Provide Excellent Customer Service

**Step Six:** Actively Generate Referrals

**Step Seven:** Develop a Well-Rounded Marketing Plan

**Step Eight:** Maximize Social Media

**Step Nine:** Be Great At What You Do

## Step One: Set Your Course

Imagine you are planning a road trip to San Francisco. You need to get there by a certain date. So you jump in the car and start driving with no map, no milestones and absolutely no idea how long it will take you to get there. Sounds ridiculous, right?

Yet all too often, this is what business people do. They set goals and maybe even go so far as to identify strategies and tactics for achieving those goals. But this is usually where the planning stops and everything is left to chance. What needs to happen next is setting milestones and key activities to ensure you arrive at your destination on time.

## Step Two: Establish Milestones and Key Activities

Let's say you want to increase your sales by 12% over the next 12 months. A good milestone would be achieving a 1% increase in sales for each month. By setting this milestone, you turn a big goal into something more manageable, but most importantly, this allows you to track your progress.

Next, identify where your sales have come from and the key activities that generated them. Let's say that nurturing referrals and networking events are two key activities that are most likely to increase your sales. Now determine how much time you need to spend on a weekly basis doing these very important, key activities. Notice how an annual goal just became a doable weekly action. To illustrate further, here is another example everyone can relate to:



### ESTABLISH GOALS

**Goal:** Lose 10 pounds in 5 weeks

**Milestone:** Lose 2 pounds per week

**Key Activities:** Get to the gym 3 times a week, eliminate sugar and alcohol from your diet

## Step Three: Block Your Time

You wouldn't spend money without knowing how much is in your bank account, yet we often do this with our time. Blocking your time isn't as rigid as it sounds. In fact, time blocks are easy to move around, responding to the unexpected things that come up. By working with time blocks, you will make better-informed decisions about how to spend your time.



By setting milestones, you turn a big goal into something more manageable, but most importantly, this allows you to track your progress.

### Step Three: Block Your Time Cont.

Use a free online tool such as Google Calendar, or a paper day planner if you prefer.



#### THE KEY

is to block out the important and non-negotiable things in your calendar first.

The key is to block out the important and non-negotiable things in your calendar first, at least one week in advance, more if possible. Block out your key activities first, but also the time it takes you to get to the gym and any other personal commitments that are important to you. Now as things crop up, you can shift your time blocks around without losing sight of your weekly key activities.

### Step Four: Commit to Lead Generation



At least one hour of every day needs to be devoted to lead generation. Generate a list of key activities that will produce leads, and then mix it up to keep things interesting. Calling through your database at least once a quarter is important, but doing it all at once feels like drudgery.

### HERE ARE A FEW OTHER IDEAS:

**Call on expired listings.** If you don't, someone else will. You may be able to make a difference for someone where another real estate agent could not. Every contact you make is an opportunity to make a positive impression and help someone.

**Promote your open house the old-fashioned way.** Walk around the neighborhood, knocking on doors and handing out flyers to the hundreds of homes in the area. It's a great way to meet new people. They may very well have friends or acquaintances looking to move in to the neighborhood.

#### Follow-up with "Just Sold" flyers.

This will establish you as the expert in the neighborhood.

### LEAD GENERATION EXERCISES

### Step Five: Provide Excellent Customer Service

It is obvious that excellent customer service is important to closing a transaction. But keep in mind that it is also essential to developing new business. In fact, the best source of new business is the client you are working with right now. If your clients are happy with you, they will likely refer you to friends and family. The number one source of business for real estate professionals is referrals from past clients. Approximately 42% of all new buyers come from a referral, but chances are you can increase that number if you actively seek them.

## Step Six: Actively Generate Referrals

You can hope for referrals to happen, or you can ask for the referral and ensure they do. The best time to ask is when you've succeeded in meeting your client's needs. The best way to ask is in the context of sincere gratitude for their business. Let them know that you rely on their referrals, and describe for them who can benefit the most from your services, whether it's first-time buyers or empty nesters looking to downsize.

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**74% OF CLIENTS** *will give you a*  
**REFERRAL** *if you simply stay in touch.*

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It is estimated that 74% of clients will give you a referral if you simply stay in touch. It might take months or years for your client to send you a referral, but they will do so if you stay top-of-mind by staying in touch. Schedule periodic touch points throughout the year. Holidays present an opportunity to send a personal note. This can be supplemented by periodic emails that provide valuable information: an update on home values for their neighborhood, or relevant news on mortgages and interest rates.

Other ideas include hosting social gatherings for past clients and other sources of referrals in your community. Encourage your guests to bring friends to expand your influence. As your network and book of business grows, you'll need a system for managing your contacts. Most successful real estate agents use a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) program for tracking touch points and referrals. Be sure to send a handwritten note thanking your clients for their referral along with a meaningful token of your appreciation.

## TOP 3 CRM SYSTEMS

FOR REAL ESTATE AGENTS

Maximizer 9 for Real Estate

LeadCommander

Seminars & Systems

## Step Seven: Develop a Well-Rounded Marketing Plan

While it's true that the Internet has changed everything, it is also true that a well-rounded marketing plan contains a mix of media channels and tactics. This means that newspaper ads and flyers are still important, but your goal with everything should be driving your target customers to your website.

**60% of buyers GOOGLED their future agent.**

Here's what we know: 60% of buyers Googled their future agent. If you put yourself in your client's shoes, you would most likely do the same, if not more. Most clients will go to the agent's website, check their LinkedIn profile, and ask the people they know about the agent. A particularly careful person might go to The Association of Real Estate License Law Officials to get the agent's license number before going on the state's licensing division website to see if any complaints have been filed. This is the power of the Internet, and most of your clients will use it to do their homework on big decisions like buying or selling a home.

## Step Seven: Develop a Well-Rounded Marketing Plan Cont.

This brings us to one of the fundamental truths about marketing: you need to understand your customer's mindset if you want to be successful in reaching them. What good are radio ads if your client doesn't listen to radio? It's helpful to create a buyer persona for each of the different types of clients you serve: Young Executive, Busy Stay-at-Home Mom, Empty Nester, etc.

To create a buyer persona, imagine a fictional character that represents your typical customer or prospect. "Humanize" this character by bringing them to life with rich details. Here is an example of a buyer persona for a Married Working Mom.

### PERSONA EXAMPLE: WORKING MOM



**Age Range:** 35-40

**Key Responsibilities:** maintain full-time job, pay bills, help kids with homework, oversee family calendar

**Major Concerns:** building savings

**Key Stressors/Pain Points:** not enough time in the day, week, month

**Key Purchase Drivers:** don't want to be "house poor"

**Places Most Likely to Find Information:** Internet

**Days/Times Most Likely to Consume Content:** evenings after the kids are in bed

**Role in Purchase Process for Family:** heavy influencer

Now that you have a couple of buyer personas created, it's time to decide where to spend your marketing dollars. It's critical to make sure that your media channels are connecting with the way your customers live. This is called behavioral segmentation. Put yourself in your customers' shoes and think about what you can say to them that would benefit them most. This will capture their attention as opposed to simply trying to sell them something.

## Step Eight: Maximize Social Media



**74% of sellers used social media to find their agent.**

**93% of social media traffic comes from Facebook.**



Here are the facts: 74% of sellers used social media to find their agent, and 93% of social media traffic comes from Facebook. So yes, you need a Facebook page that is dedicated to your business. Keep this separate from the one you intend to use for your friends and family. Think of your Facebook page as how you would present yourself at a networking event: professional, personable, and interesting.

So what kind of content do you want on your Facebook page? The majority of your content should be real estate related, but to keep things interesting, post items that relate to your buyers' personas.

## Step Eight: Maximize Social Media Cont.

A Working Mom might appreciate some helpful timesaving tips, or a link to the latest craze in Bento Lunch Boxes for her kids. Be judicious and pick things that genuinely interest you so that you have something to say about them when you share them. Let your personality and interests shine, just as you would at a community event.

### SAMPLE POST



“Trying to save time in your mornings? Use Bento Boxes to easily pack your kid’s lunch. Check them out! [laptoplunches.com](http://laptoplunches.com)”

Be sure to “friend” your sphere of influence and ask them to “share” your posts of new listings with people who might be interested. When you share real estate information, pose a question to your followers that will get them engaged with your post. Ask them if they agree with the information and to share their perspectives. Be sure to include photos of your listings in the photo carousel that appears at the top of your Facebook page.

Finally, keep your “text only” posts to a minimum, as research shows that people are attracted to visuals. You’ll want to post early in the morning for best exposure, and consider installing the Social Connections App from Realtor.com that allows you to share real-time marketing data on your Facebook page.



## Step Nine: Be Great At What You Do

**NURTURE YOUR PASSION.** Without passion for your business, greatness is likely to elude you. It’s important to keep your passion for the business alive. Too much work and no play can undermine your passion and reduce your productivity. It’s important to take time for yourself to “sharpen your saw” so-to-speak. Be sure to block some time out for yourself to recreate and rejuvenate on a daily basis, even if it’s just a short walk around the block at lunchtime.

### PRACTICE EMPATHY AND BE AUTHENTIC.

Great customer service begins with you putting yourself in your client’s position, regardless of how right or wrong they may be. Be a great listener. Try to anticipate their needs and manage their expectations before they even arise. Communicate your genuine desire to help them get what they want, but more importantly, show them with your actions that you mean business. Let them know what you are doing on their behalf and what has transpired since you last touched base with them.

**BE RESPONSIVE AND KNOWLEDGEABLE.** The most successful real estate agents return phone calls, texts and emails at lightning speed, even if only to say that they will get back to them with information. Be sure to mirror your client’s communication style: if the client prefers email, use email to respond rather than texting or calling. Of course, getting your client accurate and reliable information is paramount to earning their trust.



## Conclusion

Achieving the goal of accelerating your business in 2015 becomes manageable when you have a solid roadmap for getting there. Think of time management as the high-performance vehicle that is going to take you where you want to go. Break your annual goal down into manageable milestones that can be achieved by acting on weekly key activities. Use your time management skills to make sure your key activities are never compromised.

Closely watch trends in marketing, but adhere to the fundamentals of a well-rounded marketing plan that have withstood the test of time. Take the time to identify buyer personas for your clients and make sure your marketing plan is in sync with their behavioral patterns. This will tell you how to reach them when they are most receptive, and what to say to them to captivate their interest.

Finally, focus on being great at what you do. The best source of new business is the client you are serving right now. Listen with empathy to their wants, needs and desires. Be proactive in anticipating their needs and managing their expectations. Communicate the things that they cannot see that you are doing on their behalf. Then with gratitude for their business, ask them for the referral. Always stay in touch with your clients so that you remain top-of-mind for being great at what you do.



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2-10 Home Buyers Warranty® (2-10 HBW) has covered over 5.5 million new and pre-owned homes, and has a network of more than 10,000 authorized, independent service contractors. They partner with thousands of the nation's finest real estate professionals, home builders and service contractors who consider their coverage the industry's most comprehensive structural and systems and appliances protection available.

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