



# Marketing Yourself as a Winner

By ANN BROWN

More than likely, your franchise or brokerage has a marketing strategy, and you probably have a marketing plan for your sellers. But, what kind of marketing do you have in place for yourself?

The first issue to address in personal marketing is differentiation. We all know how competitive the real estate business is. If a consumer is looking for an agent, they only need to turn to the Internet to access thousands of REALTORS® who want their business. Let's look at the different steps you can take immediately to begin marketing yourself as a winner.

## Get a Logo

When you hear the names Ford or Coke, you immediately know what their logos look like and what their business is. Now, consider how few real estate colleagues have a unique logo.

Hire a design professional who can create an original logo for you. Your logo should incorporate your name and an image that tells a story about who you are and what you sell. If you are Internet savvy, perhaps use a computer mouse or laptop in your logo design. If you sell luxury homes, have your designer incorporate a picture of a high-end home.

Find a designer who will put together

three to five different ideas for you. Pick one you like and tweak it until you can look at it and instantly know the simple message you're trying to convey.

## Find Your Unique Message

"Like a good neighbor..." You know the rest, right?

Summing up your unique message in a short tagline is just as important as your logo; in fact, you should include both in your design. Ideally, your tagline should include about six words and definitely no more than 10. It should paint the image of who you are and what you can do for the client.

Your tagline should be original and memorable. "I want to be your REALTOR®" is neither. On the other hand, "Helping you move — one dream home at a time" is better and incorporates a warm, inviting feeling. Most people buy with their emotions, so if you can connect with people on a personal level, you're going to win their business.

## Re-shoot Your Photo Annually

I can't tell you how many times I did not recognize a REALTOR® in person after viewing her photo online or in print. If your professional photo is more than a year old, you should have it re-shot for several reasons. Even a slight change to your hairstyle can make your

photo appear out of date. How can you expect potential clients to connect with you on a personal level when you don't even look like the person in your picture?

Use the re-shoot as an opportunity to try something different than the standard shoulders-and-up headshot. Pose by a sold sign, sit in your office or stand in front of a gorgeous home.

Whatever you can do to be unique, do it. Or, if your photographer shoots you in front of a Hollywood-like blue screen, it is quick and easy to switch your background for different purposes.

More people will remember you if you don't look like everyone else. With your business photo, this is one time you don't want to blend in with the crowd.

## Differentiate Your Print Advertising

Now that you have your logo with a tagline and up-to-date photo, use them consistently in your print advertising, including property flyers, business cards, newspaper ads and Web site.

Whatever you can do to make your designs look different than everyone else's, do it. Put a unique border around the ad or add an extra color when you can. Red, in particular, is a powerful color. Even when used sparingly as an accent, it will "pop" in

the design and project power.

Be sure to include a link to your Web site, and make it easy to read. URLs are not case-sensitive, so capitalize important words in your Web address to avoid confusion or misspellings. SanFranciscoDreamHomes.com is a lot easier to read in print than sanfranciscodreamhomes.com.

Once you find a layout that works, stick with it. If you are consistent in your look, people will start to recognize you through your ads. Then, when the time comes to hire a real estate professional, they will remember you.

## Keep Your Site Up to Date

More than 70 percent of surveyed consumers go online to search for their next home and/or to find a real estate professional. First of all, if you don't have a Web site, get one. You will continue to lose business without one.

Second, this business is all about perception. You don't have to be the best REALTOR® or the top producer in your market, but with your Web site, you can look like you are.

Some simple steps to improve your Web site include:

- Consistency is key. Follow your established personal brand on your Web site.
- Update your site at least once a quarter. All listings and contact info should be kept up to date.
- Ensure that all words are spelled correctly. Misspellings make you appear less professional to your clients and prospects.
- Offer free reports and info to encourage repeat visitors.
- Provide a call to action for visitors: "Click here to e-mail me." Ideally, this should appear in the same spot on every page of the site.

Once you have your new logo/slogan created, make sure you use it on your Web site. Remember, you are trying to build a consistent feel throughout all your avenues of marketing, and the Web site will tie all of that together.

## Communicate with Your Voicemail

In a world where consumers are flooded with voicemails, remember this: no one will mind leaving you a voicemail if you promise to call them back that same day. No, I don't mean within 24 hours or within one business day. I mean that day.

Once in the habit of doing this, you'll find that it's easier than you think. Make sure to add this to your voicemail message too, so people know when to expect a call.

I change my voicemail every day to reflect the date and where I'll be that day. I also end with "please leave a message, and I will call you back before 5:00 tonight." Try doing this for two weeks; I guarantee it will change your business and set you apart from your competitors.

## Tie Your E-mail to Your Marketing

Finally, let's talk about outgoing e-mail. If you are able to add an e-mail signature, do it. Adding your logo in your e-mail is another opportunity to keep consistent with your marketing strategy. Make sure your signature has the following:

- Your name and title.
- Main business phone number.
- Link to your Web site.
- Logo, tagline and/or photo.

There's no need to add a dozen or more designations, five different phone numbers or a long paragraph of information. Keep it simple, professional and consistent with your overall marketing campaign.

Avoid using the auto-reply feature, if possible. Too many REALTORS® use the auto-reply on every e-mail with wording such as, "Thanks for your e-mail. I'll respond to you shortly." How impersonal is that?

If you get too many e-mails and can't respond to them quickly enough, outsource your e-mail management to someone who can do this for you.

Paying the few extra dollars to send out personal, quality e-mails will go a lot farther with clients and potential customers than a stark auto-reply.

Having a winning game plan is half the battle when formulating your marketing strategy, and you now have seven simple, yet important, steps to hit the ground running. The key is to be unique and consistent. You don't have to do everything at once, but do something.

Before the day ends today, pick one thing to start on and take action, even if it's making a phone call to a logo designer or taking five minutes to revise your e-mail signature. Don't wait – elevate your position as a winner today!



*Ann Brown is a WCR affiliate member and president of Virtual Admins Plus, a virtual assistant, marketing and*

*Web site design company. She can be reached toll free at 800-320-5159 or info@virtualadminsplus.com.*

## Finding *continued from page 23*

according to Blades. It requires "patience, planning, prodding and persistence."

"Each day is a new beginning, with many unexpected challenges that we learn to adapt to pleasantly as we go about maintaining and managing our professional and personal lives."

These REALTORS® have shown how they stay on top in changing markets — some after decades-long real estate careers — because of their attitudes, awareness and adaptations in their professional and personal plans for each day of their lives.



*WCR Illinois State Chapter President-elect Anita Zabielski, CRS, GRI, LTG, PMN, of Realty Executives Prestige in Arlington*

*Heights, IL, can be reached at 847-682-7068, anitazkey@earthlink.net or anitazkey.com.*