

## FOLLOW UP STRATEGY

We want to set realistic expectations for working with online referrals. The average time from when one of our referrals registers on 55places.com or Neighborhoods.com to when they sign a contract is an about 5-6 months. This is why it is extremely important to not only call our referrals very quickly after they register, but to also stay in touch with them over time to ensure you are the agent who helps them buy their next home.

Great agents are always focused on progressing towards a sale. If you meet with a customer and they are not ready to put in an offer or sign a contract, then before your appointment ends make sure to schedule the next phone call or meeting before you go your separate ways.

You will need an effective Follow Up strategy between the time you first make contact with the customer and when she agrees to that first appointment, visits the area, or signs a contract.

### UNDERSTAND WHY YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW UP

Effective Follow Up will allow you to successfully bridge the gap between a customer's first visit to the area or community and the actual sale. Some customers will not sign a contract the first day you show them communities and homes. Therefore, you need to have a plan for following up with your customers to help them move forward.

Your success working with buyers is dependent on your Follow Up strategy. Without a consistent follow up plan, customers will fall through the cracks. Once you let them slip through your fingers, competing realtors will be more than willing to pick up where you left off and close the deal.

- You must distinguish yourself at every point of interaction, including your persistence and approach to Follow Up.
- Too often, a salesperson assumes a customer is not going to make a commitment. As a result, the salesperson doesn't put forth enough effort during the first visit to close sale.

### Your Follow Up Communicates the Quality of You

The customer buys *you* before she buys anything else. You are a Real Estate Professional, and you must communicate that professionalism to your customer. Part of demonstrating your professionalism is your approach to Follow Up. Through effective Follow Up, you will continue to build credibility with the customer, and the customer will continue to gain confidence in you.

### Continues to Build the Relationship and Emotional Involvement

You have already put considerable effort into building rapport and establishing a relationship with your customer. You need to build on your investment in that relationship to continue to move the customer forward toward the purchase. But relationships do not build themselves!

Just remember the old saying: Out of sight, out of mind. What does this mean for you? Once the customer is out of your sight, you are out of the customer's mind. Follow Up keeps you in front of your customer and keeps the customer emotionally involved. Remember, emotional involvement is critical.

## **Creates Urgency**

We have determined that the average active adult buyer registers for information 4 months prior to buying a home. They often begin researching earlier than most real estate buyers, but that does not mean they are not serious. This means their real estate agent needs to be diligent about staying in touch and highly encouraging them to come and visit the community to see all that it has to offer. Urgency must be continually created. Don't let any opportunity pass you by!

## **KNOW WHEN TO START THE FOLLOW UP PROCESS**

You need to establish a reason to Follow Up and commit to a specific appointment with your customer. You must also learn to recognize when to shift gears from information gathering to Follow Up.

- By laying the foundation for Follow Up during your customer's visit, you will ensure that you obtain enough detailed information to effectively tailor your Follow Up to the customer's specific needs and wants.

Two key factors are essential to successful Follow Up:

- **Make sure you have a specific reason to follow up**
- **Your goal with every call is to set an appointment**

## **A Reason to Follow Up**

You need a reason to Follow Up, a reason to bridge the gap from this visit to your next contact. Set up your next meeting or next contact while you are still talking with the customer. You want to not only justify your Follow Up with the customer, but also give her a reason to look forward to your next contact.

## **A Set Appointment**

You must secure the next appointment with your customer before you end the conversation or end the current appointment. Setting the next appointment (and the next one after that, etc.) is what continues to move the sales process forward. Setting the next appointment accomplishes two key goals:

- **Commitment:** By gaining commitment from your customer to make an appointment, you are also gaining additional Commitment for the sale.
- **Urgency:** You are a busy Real Estate Sales Professional. Specific appointments communicate that message to your customer. You do not want to communicate to your customers that you are "always there" or that they can just "visit anytime."

## **IMPLEMENT YOUR FOLLOW UP – YOU MUST HAVE A SYSTEM**

Your Follow Up system requires you to have sufficient information, efficient organization, and effective execution of your Follow Up procedure. You must learn to consistently implement this system with each of your customers to maximize your sales success.

If you don't have a system to Follow Up with all customers, some of them are bound to slip through the cracks. If they slip through the cracks, you will lose a potential sale, and losing a sale

because you did not effectively implement your Follow Up is 100% avoidable!

### **There are three key factors to effective Follow Up:**

- Information
- Organization
- Execution

#### **Information**

Getting and maintaining information on your customers is essential to effective Follow Up. You will need to tailor your Follow Up with each and every customer so he feels:

- He is important
- You understand his needs and wants
- You are motivated to help him get what he wants

#### **Organization**

You must be organized. Period. Organization is a prerequisite for a systematic approach to Follow Up. You must organize all the information relevant to your customer, including:

- Detailed customer information, such as their reason for wanting to move and why it will improve their life
- Time frames
- Appointments
- Follow Up communications (both timing and content)

#### **Execution**

You have your information, and your information is organized. Now you must implement your Follow Up. Talking with a customer on the phone is more difficult than working with a customer in person. If you are meeting the customer in person, it's easier to continue to gain commitment and increase the customer's involvement because you have all avenues of communication at your disposal.

55% of communication is body language, and 35% of communication is tone and other nonverbal parts of speech (e.g., pauses, sighs, etc.). The actual words you use only comprise 10% of communication. That means during your phone conversations with your customer you have to maximize the effect of your nonverbal parts of speech and spoken communication to make up for the lack of body language.

Your voice is now responsible for virtually all of your communication with your customer. Your voice must reflect your personality, build confidence, and convey competence to continue to engage and build trust with your customer.

When working with a customer over the phone, focus on the following aspects of your delivery to maximize the interaction:

- **Smile.** Even though the other person cannot see you, smiling while you are talking will energize your voice and will help communicate your positive attitude and enthusiasm to your customer.
- **Stand Up.** Standing and walking around will energize your entire body. You can breathe more easily when you stand, and you are more alert. So get that blood circulating and pump your energy through the phone to your customer!
- **Pace Yourself.** Now that you are not standing face-to-face with your customer, your rate of speech becomes even more important. Even if people do not understand exactly what you have said when they are with you face-to-face, they can still pick up on contextual cues and hand gestures that help "fill in the gaps." You do not have the luxury of any of those cues on the phone. So, while you don't want to talk too quickly, you also do not want to talk too slowly. If you speak too slowly, you will fail to communicate your enthusiasm, and your customer will become bored or frustrated. Your best approach is to practice speaking at a steady, moderate pace and to clearly enunciate your words.
- **Voice Variation.** You never want to sound monotone when you speak to customers, but you must be especially careful to vary your intonation on the phone. Pitch should change appropriately throughout the conversation. Just imagine the person is actually standing in front of you while you are talking on the phone, and speak as though you were having a face-to-face conversation.
- **Listen.** You need to fine-tune your listening skills even more when you are on the phone. Limit both external and internal distractions, whether it's noise from the office or personal concerns running through your head.

Respond to your customer with questions and other verbal indications that you are listening, such as "Yes," "Uh-huh," etc. You should even nod your head in response to what the customer says. The customer may not be able to see you, but your body language will feed your voice and, therefore, your communication will be more effective.

## A Consistent Follow Up Process

The average time from when someone registers on 55places.com or Neighborhoods.com to when they sign a contract is about 5-6 months. Some people buy much faster, and some take longer. Your success and longevity with 55places.com or Neighborhoods.com (and in real estate in general) is dependent on your follow-up process.

Here is our recommended follow-up strategy to use until you connect with a new lead.

**Day 1:** Call, text, and send a personal email to each person ASAP. Speed matters!

- The most important factor when it comes to internet leads is calling them ASAP. Call within minutes every time you can. The first to contact, gets the contract! Personalize your conversation (or voice message) with each person regarding their requests for information, but do not leave detailed answers to their questions on their voicemail or in the email you send. You want customers to have a reason to call you back, which is why you don't want to answer all of their questions before you speak with them. In your voicemail, thank the customer for contacting you...remember they first reached out to *you*, so you should never feel apprehensive about calling them.
- Personalize the email you send each person by including something specific that they mentioned when they registered or called in.
- There are some people that won't pick up their phone or listen to the voicemail message if they don't recognize the caller's phone number. So, after you leave a voice message, send them a brief text message letting them know that you just left them a message, and that you look forward to connecting with them soon.
- DO NOT set up customers on an MLS Drip prior to connecting with them. Remember, we show the homes listed for sale in each community on the website, so in most cases they have already seen what's available.

**Day 2:** Call the customer again. If you leave a message, share info about your area and try to get them excited enough to call back. After this second call:

**Day 3:** Send the customer a video email or video text.

- You may want to have a pre-recorded video showing the community and amenities.

**Day 5:** Call and email the customer again and share something interesting with them regarding your community, weather, area, amenities, etc. Remind them that you specialize in your area, and you have been trying to get in touch with them regarding their request for information.

**Day 8:** Send another text message. Keep it simple. Ask if there is a good time to connect about the home or community they reached out to you about.

**Day 12:** Call again. Remember to remain upbeat and positive on your call.

**Day 15:** Email the customer one more time and let them know how many homes are for sale in the community they mentioned interest in. Let them know that you will not be contacting them anymore, but you are available if they have questions or would like to visit your communities.

## **FOLLOW UP FREQUENCY**

The key to Follow Up at this point is that you must pursue, but you can't pursue too much. It's a balance. Sound familiar? Throughout the training we have talked about balance. A balance between talking and listening, leading and following, creating urgency and reducing pressure. It's a flow. It's a dance. It's a balance. And Follow Up continues to require that balance.

You must pursue, but you can't pursue too much. What does that mean? You want to stay in your customer's conscious awareness, but you don't want to appear desperate or pushy. Remember, you need to sell from a position of strength.

To know how often to contact your customer, you must have a system. You may have several hundred or several thousand customers at any given time. You cannot (and should not!) spend the same amount of time with each and every one of them. To manage your time you must prioritize your Leads. In other words, you must rank your prospects.

Rank should be based on the purchasing timeframe of the customer. You will then need to apply these terms to the Ranks in the following manner:

- **“Hot” customer:** customer purchase time is less than 3 months. Weekly follow up is recommended.
- **“Warm” customer:** customer purchase timeframe is 3-6 months. A mixture of short-term and long-term follow up is recommended every 2-4 weeks.
- **“Cold” customer:** customer purchase timeframe is 6-12 months, probably longer. Long term follow up and nurturing is recommended every 4-8 weeks.

Remember, you need to consistently apply these status updates and rankings across all your customers to establish an effective system for Follow Up. This ranking then determines how aggressively you will pursue each of your customers. Rank is based on purchasing timeframe.

## **Managing Your List of Customers**

As changes with your customers occur, your customers should move through the customer status updates and rankings as they come closer to a purchase decision. As a result, you must continuously re-qualify your customers in terms of their Rank so you alter your level of pursuit accordingly.

## **Lead Nurturing**

Lead nurturing requires a variety of follow up. Some examples are below:

- ✓ Phone Calls
- ✓ Personal Emails
- ✓ Text Messages
- ✓ Photo Messages
- ✓ Video Email
- ✓ Handwritten Notes
- ✓ Email Newsletter