

Floor Day

If the agency you've chosen is typical, you'll have floor time. Some agents hate it and others love it. Try to love it, and use it well.

Hopefully you haven't chosen an agency where every inquiry goes to the listing agent. I personally think that's a terrible practice for two reasons. The first is that it cuts the "opportunity" of floor time in half. The only benefit the agent on duty will get is if a new client calls wanting to list a house. The second is that it is a disservice to the customers.

Think how you feel if you call up to inquire about something and the person on the other end of the line tells you that they can't tell you. You'll have to talk to Mary or Joe or Sally - and they aren't there. When that happens to me as a buyer I simply cross that one off the list and move on.

This then, is something you should ask before you choose an agency.

Let's assume that you've chosen a sensible agency dedicated to both customer service and equal opportunity for all agents.

Be prepared by knowing every listing in your office. I know, sounds daunting, but give it your best effort. You can ask the customer to hold while you retrieve the file, but it sounds better if you can make some comment about it first. Then say "That's not my listing so I haven't memorized all the details. Could you hold for just a moment while I get the file?" Most people will say yes.

After you've given the prospect enough information and listened to his or her voice inflections, you should have an idea if this is a house (or property) they should see. If it is, try to make an appointment. But while you're at it, ask them if they'd like to see some similar homes. Most people will say yes.

Whatever you do, do not discourage them from seeing the home they called on. If they said they want to be in a specific school district and this is in another, fine. Go ahead and suggest other houses. If they want to be in a specific location and this doesn't fit, also fine. Suggest other houses.

But if this house even "sort of" fits what they're saying, show it to them.

One reason is that this caller might not be an actual buyer at all. It could be someone the seller asked to call, just to see how his or her listing is being handled. Be careful.

If the caller says "No, that doesn't sound like it will work," do not, I repeat - do NOT - let them hang up yet. Begin a friendly conversation about their wants and needs,

and take notes the whole time you're talking. If they say something that triggers a spark about a different listing, suggest it.

If nothing else, ask their permission to stay in touch and let them know when something that fits their needs comes on the market. And then, for Pete's sake, DO IT. If your MLS offers the opportunity to plug their wants into the system so they get notice of new listings, offer to do that for them.

Follow up at least every couple of weeks. If there's nothing new, call or e-mail and let them know - just so they know you haven't forgotten. Let them know that here is an agent they can count on to keep them informed, so they don't have to search the newspaper listings each week to see what's new.

You'll not only gain a loyal customer, but referrals. Good agents are so scarce that your reputation will grow by leaps and bounds once people find out you're really on the ball and taking care of customers.

I harp a lot about service, because it will make you or break you as an agent. So I have to share an experience I had recently.

My son was looking for just the right place. He didn't have to settle for something he doesn't want because he spends most of his time on the road, living in his 5th wheel, and he's welcome here when he's in town.

He found an ad that looked interesting so I e-mailed the listing agent and told her that he might want to see it over the week-end, but wouldn't know if he was off work until the last minute. He's a power lineman and when the weather is nasty he sometimes works clear through the week-end.

Here's the response to my e-mail:

There are no tenants. Please make sure that inside doors are left open and all outside doors are closed. I'm sure you would leave it as you found it. Someone has went in and turned on breakers that were supposed to be off. My seller is steaming.

What do you think of that for salesmanship? Or grammar? Or missed opportunity?

So what should you do when you have a customer with money in the bank, a good job, excellent credit, and a desire to buy multiple properties? My guess would be to stay in touch!

If you can make some showing appointments on floor day, or if you get a lead on a house for sale, wonderful. But what if there's nothing going on?

Stay busy. Work on your farming letters, study the current listings, re-write flyers for your own listings, search for properties for current buyers, work on a CMA. Just don't waste the time playing computer games or making idle chatter with others in the office.

A note of caution regarding walk-ins and floor day calls:

One question you should always remember to ask any new prospect is this: "Are you currently working with an agent?"

If they are, and if you don't find out ahead of time, you could waste valuable time and money for nothing. When my son worked for me he learned this lesson the hard way.

A lady called inquiring about a certain listing. He told her about it and asked if she'd like to see it. She said yes, and that she'd like to see some similar properties. So, my son spent an entire day with her. They looked at numerous houses, he looked up additional information for her, he even discussed financing options. Of course he showed her everything in town that fit her parameters, not just his own listings.

Then - she asked if she could use his phone. Of course she could. We all heard the call and our jaws dropped. She was calling "her agent" to tell him what she'd seen. She was making an appointment with him to go over them and choose which she would purchase.

So, don't assume that you have a customer just because someone allows you to waste your entire day with them! Ask first.

Now, you could get hard-nosed about this. If you show the house and the customer buys it, you are legally entitled to the commission, no matter who writes the offer. However, you have to weigh the possible commission against the bad public relations. We never pursued such cases, but some brokers do.

One agent I worked with before I opened my own agency lost the bulk of her commission because the showing agent was also the listing agent and his broker gave her only a referral fee for writing the offer.

This was an unusual case, but worth mentioning. An elderly couple walked into an office in town and were shown a few homes. They liked one of the homes, but intensely disliked the agent who showed it to them. So they went to another agency and asked the floor person if they could write the offer - because they wanted nothing to do with the agent who had shown them the home.

The agent said yes, and wrote the offer, which was accepted. But then the other agent and the broker realized that she had never shown the home, and that one of them had, in fact, shown the home to these buyers. They believed that they were the "procuring cause" of the sale and they gave the other agent 20% of the selling side as a referral. Believe me, she wasn't happy!

You might say that all she had to do was write the offer. But if you've done a few transactions you know that the real work begins after the offer is accepted. She had plenty of work to do for that miserly 1/5 of the selling side.

Did this cause hard feelings between the agencies? Of course? Was there already animosity before this happened? Yep, there was. This merely served to intensify an uncomfortable situation. Because of the customer's feelings I believe this could have come out differently had it gone to court, but it would also have caused a ton of negative publicity, and our agency didn't want that.

Back to the listing leads: Do your best to get an appointment to see the house. This may be someone who is calling several agencies and will interview several agents. So do your homework well.

Begin by finding out if the house has been listed before. If so, print out what you can find in MLS and study it. See if the price has changed over time. Do a market analysis based on the MLS information and any notes you took while you were on the phone. (You DID take a lot of notes, right?)

If you can clearly see that the price is what kept the house from selling, you'll again have a tough choice to make. The sellers may be firm and unreasonable. But, they may also be ready to listen if they've been waiting a long time for a sale. Pick up all you can about their attitude while you're on the phone.

Now study the ad that the previous agent put in MLS. Can you improve on it? Usually you can - probably in your sleep. MLS ads are notoriously poor.

If the house isn't too far away, go take a picture. If it is too far away, then "steal" the MLS picture. Then use it to create a flyer that you'll take to the listing appointment. Be sure to use all the copywriting skills you're learning here to make it an eye-popping, benefit filled flyer!

Since you're new, you can't include an impressive track record in your listing presentation. But you can include your agency's track record. Be sure your broker has supplied you with any statistics that show your agency leads the pack.

Use average days on the market compared to the entire MLS. Use % of sale to list price. Use the number of units sold or the percentage sold to relocation buyers - any kind of statistics that show superiority.

More about floor time

If your office is typical, you will answer the phone on floor day. Or, a secretary will answer the phone and direct all inquiries to your desk. Hopefully your office will

have a policy stating what happens when you're already on the phone when a call comes in.

Will that call go to a backup person? Will the secretary take a name and number so you can return the call? Make sure the policy is clear or you'll have hard feelings about it later.

But don't get paranoid. I had an agent working for me once who was terrified that someone else would get a lead on her floor day. If she was already talking and someone else answered the phone, she was sure it was the hottest lead of the year and had just been stolen from her. If we happened to have a meeting in the back room on her day, she wouldn't come... she had to be out front in case someone walked in. The poor girl was so focused on never getting a customer that she never did! (Remember, you get what you think about most. Think about success, not failure!)

You should take care not to get into long involved conversations, however, and should NEVER use that day to call friends and chat. Be available when that call comes in. Answer the phone with a smile on your face and do your best to get an appointment from the call. If you can't do that, get a name and number so you can follow up. If you can, get a mailing address so you can send your personal brochure and a "Thank you for calling" note.

If a customer walks in, be sure to smile and get up to greet them right away. If you're on the phone you can still smile and wave - let them know you saw them and will be right there. Then get off the phone as fast as you can so you can help them.

Make them feel like their arrival is the highlight of your day - not an interruption.

If you go to work in a small office with busy agents you could find yourself alone. Those days are not fun, so try to handle them with a good sense of humor. I've been alone in the office with two walk-in customers and 3 phones ringing. It can be very nerve-wracking. But once I did have a customer pitch in and answer the phone for me when I was on a different line. She helped me and felt pretty proud of herself for it - that was a win/win situation!

What if no one calls or comes in on your day? That can happen, but your time will not be wasted if you just get in and use it. Resist the urge to shop on line or play a game! Instead, get to work on your prospecting, your research, a market analysis, or your next promotional plans. Remember: work while you're working.

There is always something that needs to be done. Doing it will lead to your success.

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