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Make Print Marketing Part of Your Strategy

With email marketing materials that can be sent with the click of a button, lightning-fast social media tools, and the myriad of other ways to generate leads online, is print marketing a thing of the past? Absolutely not! Although print marketing is undoubtedly more expensive than digital campaigns, it should still be a part of your overall lead generation strategy.

“A lot of people in real estate ask, ‘what’s the best way to generate leads?’” says Scott Irvin, a REALTOR® with RE/MAX in Bucks County, Pa. “There’s not really one way. You’ve got to hit every different avenue available to you in order to be successful.”

Scott practices what he preaches. Since becoming a Market Leader customer in August of 2012, he’s used the Market Leader’s Marketing Center to put together an arsenal of print marketing pieces that he employs to reach potential clients as part of his overall marketing strategy. His creations include ‘just listed’ and ‘just sold’ postcards, a door hanger for expired listings, a monthly newsletter full of local area statistics, tips for buyers and sellers, and listing spotlights that he produces independently.

There are three key best practices for creating successful print campaigns.
1. Testing your marketing messages

Print marketing costs money, and for that reason alone, it’s important to start by doing small print runs to test your messaging. Based on the response rate you receive, you’ll know what’s working and what’s not. That way, you can allocate the bulk of your marketing budget to the messaging that’s most effective, giving you the most bang for your buck.

“I do a lot of testing to see what works,” says Scott. “Whatever is working is what I’m going to continue on with and fine-tune.”

2. Maintaining consistency and patience

Second, consistency and patience are key. Sending a prospect one single postcard is rarely enough to convert them into a client.

“The key is communicating over the course of six months, or maybe even longer,” says Scott. “For example, I got a lead from Market Leader back in September of 2012 and it just now turned into $20,000 in commission, between the new home the buyer purchased and selling their old house. It took eight months to develop the relationship. You’ve got to reach out and touch with consistency.”

3. Using a clear, concise call to action

Another important strategy is knowing what potential clients are looking for and providing a powerful call-to-action. For example, the number one thing that buyers are looking for is access to listings and sellers are always in search of the value of their current home as well as recent comps for their neighborhood. Your print marketing pieces should always speak to these needs.

Calls to action should always be clear and concise and direct potential clients to your website. Getting them to your website is important, as you’ll be able to collect more information about their wants, needs, and potential timeline for buying or selling.

Print marketing can be an effective strategy, even for agents working with limited marketing budgets. “Yes, print marketing is an investment,” admits Scott. “But, it’s another way of getting yourself in front of prospective clients. I would suggest that, at the very least, everyone do at least ‘just listed’ and ‘just sold’ postcards. They’re a must for everyone.”
How Not to Fail at Print Marketing

Print marketing has been around for ages, and while that’s given real estate agents plenty of time to become experts, many are still making big-time mistakes.

Market Leader asked real estate agents and bloggers on its partner site ActiveRain for their experiences and tips about what makes for great—and not-so-great—print marketing campaigns. We compiled their expertise and feedback into a list of seven print marketing pitfalls to be sure to avoid.

1. Unclear Messaging

You have a lot to offer a potential client, but agents often try to include too much information in one short marketing piece, making it confusing, cluttered, and overwhelming. Instead of throwing a lot of disjointed information at leads and seeing what sticks, focus on one main theme and relate that theme to what consumers in your area might be looking for: local neighborhood information, home values, interest rates, or market trends, for example. And, highlight the value you can provide—what sets you apart from other agents? Also remember that your print pieces serve as your first impression, so professionalism is key. Always have someone proofread your campaigns for spelling, grammar, and clarity before printing.

2. Missing or Confusing Call to Action

It’s important to let consumers know what you’d like them to do next. It’s great that once they’ve read your piece they know a little more about your business, but providing a clear call to action is the only way to get the lead conversion process started. And, while it’s important to include your phone number and email address, always give consumers a reason to visit your website. If you can get leads onto your website, it will benefit you both: they’ll be able to see home listings, learn more about you, and request more information, and you’ll be able to start capturing valuable data about their needs.
3. Poor Design

Don’t settle for an amateur, homemade look in your print marketing campaigns—you need to stand out! Simple, eye-catching design; clear, colorful photography; and printing on high-quality paper can make all the difference. If you can’t afford the services of a graphic designer, use high quality templates; the Market Leader system has thousands of them included.

4. Infrequent or Sporadic Mailings

Many agents make the mistake of assuming that a one-time mailer is all they need to generate leads. In print marketing, consistency is key, as is repetition. It may take multiple impressions for a consumer to start recognizing your name, picture, tagline, and logo.

Commit to a long-term marketing strategy to convert these leads. Sound like a lot of work? A contact management system paired with a campaign tool, like the one Market Leader offers, can do the heavy lifting for you. Simply design your pieces, choose an audience, and schedule multiple deployment dates. Set it and forget it!

5. Overlooking Segmentation

Agents are often so eager to get campaigns out the door that they don’t take the time to consider their audience. Do you really want to send the same message to first-time homebuyers, potential sellers, empty nesters, investment buyers, and condo owners?

Get more bang for your marketing buck and increase your chances of connecting with qualified, relevant leads by sending specifically targeted messages. For each consumer group, anticipate and speak to their needs while showing how you can add value.

6. Being Resistant to Change

Once you’ve found a layout you like and messaging you’ve given your stamp of approval on, it can be tempting to sit back and keep sending out the same campaigns over and over.
But, the beauty of marketing is the ability to constantly develop and evolve your strategy as you discover what does and does not work.

Although it might take a bit of extra time, try your best to keep statistics on which campaigns are yielding the highest ROI, and which are wasting your time and money. That way, with every new batch of postcards, door hangers, or brochures you print, you’re getting the most for your effort.

7. Avoiding Print Marketing Completely!

There’s no doubt that digital marketing materials are more cost effective and quicker to produce than printed pieces. Because of that, a lot of agents have abandoned print marketing completely. But, that means that consumers are getting a lot less mail than they used to, and your pieces could stand out with far less competition. And, by diversifying your marketing campaigns and using a wide variety of media, you’re more likely to fill your pipeline with leads. Set yourself apart with high quality, impactful pieces!

By avoiding these seven common print marketing no-no’s, you’ll ensure that you’re sending effective, interesting, and worthwhile campaigns that will help you grow your business.
Are Real Estate Postcards Still Worth Sending?

With advanced technology and new and speedier ways of marketing, are real estate postcards still relevant? Are they worth the postage it costs to send them out? Do people even look at them?

Do Postcards Work?

They work for Franklin, Mass. agent Barbara Todaro. In fact, she knows without a doubt that when she does a mailing, business will flow in. She has good reason to be confident. Back in 2011, for instance, Todaro took a listing in a subdivision in her farm. That day she mailed 200 just listed postcards to all the residents in the community. From that one mailing she gained six new listings.

"Along with just listed postcards, we will also mail future postcards that reflect a pending sale and a closed transaction," Todaro says on ActiveRain. The pending cards are something a lot of agents don’t consider, and they should. “This gets the neighbors talking to the homeowner and, hopefully, I get a referral out of it,” Todaro said.

She gives a lot of credit to the integration of her postcards with her other marketing efforts, most specifically, her blog, which contains over 2,000 blog posts. “Before we are called to give a listing presentation, the homeowners have read my posts and know exactly what we do for marketing,” Todaro continues.

Todaro begs to differ with agents who eschew postcard campaigns as an “old-timer” method of lead generation: “Never eliminate a method because it’s basic. Those are sometimes the best methods. Everyone reads their mail and not everyone goes online,” she says.
Costs of a Postcard Campaign

The Mailing List

The first thing you need when considering a postcard campaign is a mailing list. There are a number of places to get these. Many agents use the MLS. The U.S. Postal Service rolled out a program called “Every Door Direct Mail,” or EDDM for short. Instead of printing out an address list from the MLS, the Postal Service allows you to map out your target area according to address, right there on the website.

Since Todaro now uses targeted marketing, she prefers AccuData. She sends them the parameters for her latest campaign and they send her a count and a price for a database matching her specifics. Regarding cost, Todaro said, “I don’t even know what I pay, but it’s in the hundreds, not the thousands.” AccuData updates each of her purchased databases once a year.

The Postcards

There are lots of companies that offer stock marketing postcard designs to the real estate professional. Some, such as Market Leader and Sharper Agent, offer added goodies, like an integrated contact management/marketing platform. Many of the major players in the postcard marketing arena, offers the ability to send the project directly to one of their outside print vendors or directly to your office printer. Of course, both companies have a menu of options, and prices vary according to your needs.

Postage

Aside from the cards’ creation, postage is the next biggest outlay of marketing funds. If you don’t take advantage of bulk mail rates or the break in price offered by the U.S. Postal Service’s EDDM program, a standard postcard costs 32 cents to mail.

Setting up the postcard campaign is the costliest part of the project. From there, if it’s done right, the campaign can pretty much run on autopilot and you’ll be able to watch the leads to roll in.
How to Use Direct Mail to Get Seller Leads

Let’s just call it what it is: Snail mail, a term invented to differentiate postal mail from electronic mail. Snail mail, obviously, is slower. It’s more expensive, as well. OK, it’s “old school” too. If it works as well or better than email, however, it may just be worth it to incorporate a direct mail campaign into your business marketing plan.

Does it Work?

Think back to a time, if there is one, when you responded to a direct mail piece. Why did you respond? Most likely the piece was laser-focused and targeted to some aspect of your life. It might have been a postcard from a car dealership offering a maintenance special for the owner of a Nissan Sentra with over 125,000 miles, and you just happened to own that very car, with that many miles.

The answer, then, to the question of whether or not direct mail works is: “It depends.” It depends on what you are mailing to homeowners and whether it targets a need that they have.

Consider the various types of homeowners when determining what type of content you want to use in your direct mail campaign:

- Probate owners.
- Absentee owners.
- FSBOs.
- Expired and withdrawn listings.
- Owner-occupied.

To target the needs of a specific type of seller requires that the content you send is relevant to their situation. In other words, what you send to probate executors or
administrators should be vastly different from what you’ll send to FSBOs. Yes, they both need to sell a home, but their reasons for selling are most likely vastly different.

**Remember:** The most successful direct mail campaigns address homeowners’ problems and needs, as well as how you can solve their problems.

Let’s take a look at one way to craft a direct mail campaign to boost your listing inventory.

**Getting Started**

The most important aspect of planning a direct mail campaign is to determine who you’ll target. As mentioned above, each of the types of sellers requires a different approach, so even if you plan on including all of them in your campaign, you’ll need to start with just one.

Let’s assume you’ve decided to go after expired listings. Make a list of the problems and needs of this seller pool. Since they were at one time motivated to sell their homes, what most likely happened to them to make them want to take their homes off the market? Why did the listing expire, and why didn’t they try again?

**The price was too high for the current market** – Has the market changed? Can the seller now get more for the house in the current market?

**The agent didn’t market the listing** – Being listed in the MLS and having a sign in the yard are the bare minimum an agent can do to market their listings; shame on agents who don’t go the extra mile for their clients. It’s easy to be complacent in a seller’s market, but a buyer’s market requires agents to use every marketing tool they have at their disposal. You understand this, and the prospect should know that.

**They’re tired and discouraged** – These are the folks that might be encouraged by market changes, such as a decrease in the average days on the market in their area.

**The house has problems** – If the problems are cosmetic, throw in some complementary home staging as an enticement.

**What to Mail**

While your campaign can and should contain a variety of media, that first contact is the most important. Should you send a letter or a postcard?
Ask other marketers which works better and you'll get different answers. Many agents swear by full-color postcards that grab the recipient’s attention, while others prefer a more personal letter.

If you opt for the letter format, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- **Mention, upfront, their problem.** Remember the car dealership mentioned previously: The marketing department understood that the owner of a Nissan Sentra with over 125,000 miles on the odometer is most likely concerned with maintenance. What are some of the problems FSBOs face? Are absentee owners curious about the local real estate market and how their investment is doing? Choose something relevant to get their attention.

- Let them know, without being pushy, **that there’s a solution to the problem and you can provide it.**

- **Provide a call to action and your contact information.** Entice them with a “no obligation” offer if they call you within a certain time frame. This can be a free market analysis, a probate report, or any other content that is relevant to the homeowner.

**Follow Up**

“The worst number in any business is one,” according to marketing guru, lecturer and author Dan Kennedy. One product, one customer, one type of marketing and one direct mail piece all get you nowhere. Yet, so many agents send one letter, postcard or other direct-mail piece and call it a campaign.

Remember, the money is in the follow up. Keep reading to find out how to become a master of the follow up.

**Automation, Baby**

While marketing is one of the most important aspects of a successful small business, as a real estate agent your time is better spent networking and pounding the pavement. This is why having an automated marketing campaign is a must.

Look for software that is powerful yet easy to use and a system that allows you to combine campaigns – such as **integrating your drip email campaign with your direct mail campaign.** Market Leader studies show that this combination increases response rates by up to 20 percent. These are called multichannel marketing campaigns, and they definitely give you more bang for your buck.

The direct mail of today isn’t the old school stuff of yesterday. It has evolved, becoming more targeted, personalized, and effective than ever before.
Real Estate Newsletter Marketing Tips

If you are writing a weekly or monthly real estate newsletter because your competition has one, then you’re doing it for the wrong reasons. Newsletters should support your overall marketing campaign. If you don’t have a clear strategy, you’re wasting money and effort by creating newsletters.

According to Dustin Russell, Manager of Acquisition Marketing at Market Leader, “Newsletters vary by industry, but for real estate professionals, they need to focus their newsletter on the consumer. Many real estate professionals make the mistake of talking about themselves too much, ‘I just sold this house’ or ‘Why I’m the number one agent in x city.’ It’s important for agents to gear their newsletters toward the consumer.”

Market

Before you come up with a strategy for your newsletter, think about its target market. Who are you trying to stay in contact with? Who are you trying to sell homes to? Are they retirees, first-time homebuyers or people purchasing property as investments? Don’t believe that you are trying to sell homes to everyone. If you build a strategy for “everyone,” you won’t be able to focus your marketing campaigns.

Budget

Look at your budget for a newsletter. First, figure out if you want a print or e-mail newsletter. Print newsletters are expensive, and it’s hard to determine if anyone has read one unless they contact you. But they also have a physical presence that wins them respect from the reader (provided they are well-designed and written, of course). Likewise, print newsletters have staying power (think about how many you collect in a month). They can be easily passed on, left in waiting rooms or given out.
E-mail newsletters are popular because they are less expensive, but they are also less formal. People respond less favorably and distrust e-mail newsletters that look like spam or appear to be poorly designed. According to Robert L. Weiner Consulting, only 11 percent of people actually read e-mail newsletters and 57 percent skim their newsletters.

To decide between making an email or print newsletter, take a look at your budget and think about your target market. If your target market consists of retirees and you can afford to print, think about going with a printed newsletter – it will have better a chance of getting into the hands of your target market. For those who are marketing to first-time homebuyers and are on a small budget, consider choosing e-mail newsletters. People in the first-time homebuyer category are generally accustomed to getting their information online or through their e-mail.

**Content**

You need to write copy that engages the reader. So what should you put into your newsletter? Write about topics that are interesting to you or that your target market will find informative. You are trying to connect with your target market through your newsletter, and there is nothing that will lose that connection faster than if it is boring.

Russell gives some pertinent tips about creating a content toolbox to use for your newsletter:

- Customize the newsletter for each prospect. If you know where the prospect is searching, talk about interesting things happening in that area – new shopping centers opening up, schools that performed well on state exams, local bars and restaurants with great reviews, etc. If you have too many prospects to manage something like this, focus on your top five and create content customized for them.
- Update prospects with trends in interest rates, home values, and neighborhood stats.
- Position yourself as the local expert. Write a blog post with your expert opinion on a trending topic in real estate and link to it in your newsletter.
- Add something fun. Express your personality, but in a professional manner – funny cartoons, games, puzzles and articles may be just the thing you need to connect with a new lead.

Personalizing your newsletter will make it stand out from the crowd regardless of whether it is printed or e-mailed. A clear strategy for your newsletter raises your chances of making and maintaining important contacts.
Print Marketing
Best Practice:
Always Have a Compelling Message

Print marketing has a lot of competition. Not just from the more affordable online advertising options out there, but from everything else that shows up in your future client’s mailbox the same day as your campaign.

If you’re going to spend precious time and marketing dollars on print marketing campaigns, there are a few key points you should always remember about them. The first—and arguably most important—is simple: always have a compelling message. A strong, clear, and engaging message can mean the difference between your piece catching the eye of future clients and taking a trip to the recycling bin. Next time you create a print marketing campaign, consider these five best practices for ensuring you have a compelling message.

1. Stick with one main topic.

Target a specific type of consumer with a specific message. Don’t waste your time sending out generic mailers. Always remember to speak to a targeted audience and anticipate their real estate needs. Some ideas include providing lists of recent foreclosures, offering local neighborhood information, placing door hangers targeting renters, offering to estimate home values, or sending “just listed” and “just sold” postcards.

Denver real estate agent and ActiveRain blogger Joan Cox says, “I often send a ‘just sold’ postcard. We are still enjoying a serious seller’s
market and could use more listings. I choose a popular and highly desired neighborhood that I have sold homes in and create a call-to-action that would make a seller want to pick up the phone and hire me to list and sell their home!”

Sam Miller with RE/MAX Stars Realty agrees. “Remember that to be successful with print marketing, you need a compelling and consistent message,” he says. “Know your market and create a message that is specific to that market, instead of just blasting out marketing noise.”

2. Keep it simple.

Don’t overload your design with too much text or too much information. Simple, clean, and clever works wonders.

“My postcards are simple, jumbo in size, and to the point,” says Crofton, Md. based agent Beth McCloy, who created a postcard with a picture of a frog and the caption, ‘Ready for a new pad?’ “In addition to the size, quality, and simple nature of the marketing, they made me smile the first time I saw them,” she says.

Agent and ActiveRain blogger Barbara Todaro notes that it’s crucial to create a postcard “that will catch the recipient’s attention long enough to read it and think about it or save it. The postcard cannot be cluttered with words; it must be easy to read...There must be one call-to-action and a powerful message.”

3. Demonstrate your value.

“Prospects are all tuned into station ‘WIFM’ (what’s in it for me), so your mailings have to include something of value to them,” says real estate copywriter Marte Cliff.

Instead of making your print marketing piece shine a spotlight on you, focus on what you can do for them—your future clients.

Additionally, show that you value past clients by sending occasional handwritten notes on special occasions. It's a great way to keep yourself front of mind and make them feel valued and appreciated.

“I send anniversary cards out to clients on the anniversary of their home sale,” says Barbara-Jo Roberts Berberi, a Fla. real estate agent. “They are always handwritten and I always get a response back. In this day and age, when most things come on the computer, that handwritten note seems to go a long way!”
4. Proofread!

Any time you target leads outside your sphere of influence, it’s your chance to make a great first impression. That’s why it’s crucial that there are no grammatical errors, misspellings, or other oversights in your print pieces. Not only do these types of errors cost you money to fix, they also give a bad first impression to leads, who may think you’re unprofessional, inexperienced, or lacking attention to detail.

Every time you finish creating a new campaign, but before you click “print,” read over every inch of your piece slowly and carefully. Then, ask a colleague or friend to do the same.

5. Think outside the box.

There’s more to print marketing than just postcards, flyers, and door hangers. Agents who have found the most success in print marketing are getting creative with the types of pieces they’re sending, allowing them to stand out in their future clients’ mailboxes.

Kathy Schowe with California Lifestyle Realty creates featured property business cards when she lands a great new listing. “Each card is double-sided with two of the best photos of the home,” she explains. “I include my contact information, my website, a link to the listing information, and—of course—the address. Sellers are more than happy to pass them out.”

“I tend to spend my money on things that people keep for a certain time,” says Tammy Lankford, a real estate agent based in Lake Sinclair, Ga. “I do refrigerator calendars annually, and sports schedules. I also do printed waterproof maps people can keep on their boat, with my phone number for waterfront properties.”

Like Kathy and Tammy, spend some time thinking outside the box and come up with a useful, clever print marketing piece that’s ideal for your local area and the clients you hope to serve.

With an uncluttered message crafted for a specific, targeted audience, a clear value proposition, an eye for detail, and a flair for the creative, you’ll ensure that the print marketing campaigns you’ve worked hard to create are money well spent.
Print Marketing

Best Practice:

Send Consistent Mailings

The importance of having a diverse marketing strategy is well known in the world of real estate. The most successful agents reach potential clients via lead capture websites, through email marketing, by starting conversations on social media, and with well-timed print campaigns.

Because you’re so busy juggling all of your marketing campaigns, it’s tempting to let something slide, and it’s often print marketing that gets overlooked. It’s easy to see how this happens—print marketing is more expensive and it takes time and focus to write, design, and print great campaigns. That’s why many agents end up only sending sporadic, one-off print pieces.

But, letting print marketing slide is a big mistake. It can be a powerful lead generation and engagement tool, but only if it’s done consistently.

“There’s no way that a mailing campaign can work if you only do it once in a while,” say Long Island, N. Y.-based agents Larry and Sheila Agranoff. “Direct mail cannot pay off unless it’s continually worked on: consistency, consistency, consistency!”

Like Larry and Sheila, today’s most successful agents have discovered the importance of consistency in print marketing. Consider the top five reasons why you should do the same:

1. Increase your name recognition.

Across many industries, advertisers know that frequency is directly tied to brand recognition. That’s why you see the same commercial on every channel, or the same billboard all over town. Real estate is no different. You can’t expect a consumer to remember your name, face, brokerage name, logo, or website after only seeing it once, especially when your piece is competing with everything else they receive in their mail every day.

“Readers will seldom retain the name of a business or agency if it is a single item,” notes Ed Silva, an agent with RE/MAX Professionals in Waterbury, Conn. “It takes three to four repetitions before the mind makes the connection.”
A series of well-timed postcards, flyers, “just listed” or “just sold” announcements, and door hangers can help a potential client start to develop some familiarity with your brand over time, paving the way for easier future communications.

2. Stand out from the competition.

When the bulk of local agents are only mailing print campaigns infrequently, standing out is easy. Simply commit to a regular schedule of strategic mailings and you’ll be top of mind with the buyers and sellers in the neighborhood or demographic group you’re targeting.

Franklin, Mass.-based agent and ActiveRain blogger Barbara Todaro puts it simply: “I use print consistently to ‘shake the tree’ and make my phone ring. Other agents in my community use direct mail sporadically and their presence is overpowered by my consistency.”

3. Get your money’s worth.

Since you’re already spending money developing, printing, and mailing your print campaigns, you should do it right, with a goal, schedule, audience, and message in mind.

“If you mail one time and quit because you didn’t see any results, you have wasted your money,” says Rick Snow, broker/owner of First Choice Realty in El Paso, Texas. “People need to see your message multiple times…each year you continue to farm [an] area should result in increased market share. This takes some time, but if you stick with it, it will pay off.”

4. Reach consumers at the right time.

Another thing that communicating with leads on a regular basis does for you is it gives you a better shot at reaching a potential client at just the right time—when they’re thinking about taking the first step toward buying or selling.

“People will receive your mailings but they won’t call you unless they need you,” says Snow. “Stay in their field of vision and when they need real estate help, they will call the name they’ve been seeing consistently.”

5. It’s easier than ever.

Many agents shy away from print marketing because they just don’t have enough time to put the campaigns together and ensure that they get out the door in a timely manner. But, with Market Leader’s Marketing Center, it’s faster, easier, and more affordable than you’d
think to create high-quality print pieces. The Marketing Center offers thousands of professionally designed, visually appealing campaigns, from flyers and postcards to thank you cards and newsletter templates, all of which can be customized from your computer in just minutes. And, with “set it and forget it” technology, you can schedule future campaigns with the click of a button.

Grow your brand, outshine the competition, make your marketing dollars work for you, and engage your future clients at the perfect time with print pieces.
Print Marketing
Best Practice:
Target Your Audience

There are hundreds, thousands, or maybe more leads mulling around your city or town waiting for the right agent to come along and help them buy or sell a home. With so many real estate agents competing for their business, you’ll want to reach those leads as soon as possible.

But, in your haste to create and send these pieces out, don’t overlook one critical piece of the equation: just who are you sending your campaigns to? Taking the time to select the right audience for a particular campaign goes a long way toward generating qualified leads and helping you get the best return on your marketing investment.

Agent Sam Miller from RE/MAX Stars Realty in Howard, Ohio puts it simply. “Know your market and create a message that is specific to that market, instead of just blasting out marketing noise.”

The next time you create a print campaign (or any lead generation effort!) take the time to target your audience and be strategic about what you’re sending to whom.

When McLean, Va.-based agent Misstie Pollard decided to invest in print marketing, she didn’t receive a single lead off her first campaign. “I believe it didn’t work because I didn’t have a targeted audience. Real estate is about connections and relationships. I had to find out who I was relating to and why,” she says.

Not sure how to get started? Here are five things to know about targeting your audience.

1. Identify potential audiences.

Take a few minutes and jot down all the audiences you can think of. Start with demographic groups, like first-time homebuyers, move-up buyers/sellers, empty nesters, multi-generational families, and retirees. Next, think about your local area. Are you an expert in a specific neighborhood, subdivision, or school district? Also, identify buyers and sellers interested in particular types of homes, like single-family, condos, new construction,
vacation homes, or investment properties. Of these groups, where do you think you can have the most impact? Where do you do your best work?

2. Develop your customer list.

Take the time to work within your database and move existing leads into specific campaigns, based on where they fit in your list of target audiences. Once you've done that, you may want to supplement your database with a purchased list.

This technology is built into the Market Leader system in the Marketing Center. Simply enter a ZIP code or address and choose the selections that match your audience.

3. Speak to their wants and needs.

The most effective marketing campaigns anticipate a specific audience’s wants and needs and speaks to how they can be satisfied. Once you’ve chosen an audience for a piece, try to put yourself in their shoes. Do they want to know the value of their home? Information about a specific neighborhood? Access to listings? Don’t clutter your campaign with too much information—discover what they want and give it to them!

Richie Allan Naggar of Riverside, Calif.’s Ran Right Realty goes a step further and makes sure that, in addition to the message, the voice and tone are appropriate. “Who is the target?” he asks. “Think this one through. Does [your message] invite or frighten? Is it humble or boastful? Does it ask or demand?”

4. Set yourself apart.

While the majority of your messaging should focus on speaking to your audience’s wants and needs, don’t forget to tell them why you specifically are the right agent to help them. Perhaps you’ve sold more homes in their neighborhood than any other local agent. Maybe you’re an expert in relocation. Whatever it may be, demonstrate what sets you apart from every other agent that might be pursuing them.

5. Evolve your strategy.

Once you find out what’s working, use what you’ve learned and apply it to new and different audiences.

“I started sending out niche postcards to specific subdivisions looking for prospects,” says Anita Clark, an agent with Coldwell Banker in Warner Robins, Ga. “Then, as my business began to flourish, I added in ‘just listed’ and ‘just sold’ postcards that targeted particular communities.”

When you take the time to hone in on a specific audience, speak to exactly what they’re looking for, and show why you’re the best choice for them, you’re sure to get the most out of your print marketing budget.