THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO
REAL ESTATE MARKETING
For Real Estate Professionals

What's Inside:
- Creative real estate marketing ideas that work
- How to make print marketing work for you
- Marketing tactics that will get you more leads
- Ways to automate your efforts and save time
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Creative Real Estate Agent Marketing

What are You Afraid Of?

The residential real estate professional’s sole job is to market – either a home to potential purchasers, or a buyer to a homeowner. Isn’t it amazing, then, that there is almost a complete lack of creativity when it comes to how the typical real estate professional markets his or her own business?

The typical real estate agent starts their career with a box of business cards and a pat on the head from a broker who tells them to bounce down the street and make money. Granted, those first few years are tough. There’s little money and no training on how to run a business, so most agents fall into a trap of just doing what everyone else does.

The fear of alienating even one prospect keeps most real estate agents glued into a vanilla marketing plan that bears little, if any, difference to most of the other agents’ in town. The thought of stepping out into the spotlight is frightening – so much so that most agents are content to sit in the shadows.

Be Bold

Ken DeLeon knows what it takes to stand out from the crowd. The Wall Street Journal crowned him the number one agent in the country – out of one million agents – in 2011. DeLeon didn’t get there by being a wallflower, by blending in with the mass of other Silicon Valley real estate professionals.
In DeLeon’s city there are 700 agents clamoring to list and sell 400 to 500 houses. “I realized that since I wanted to be distinct, I needed to do something bold.” And bold he was. He took out a two-page ad in the local paper, dressed up as the Village People, and sang S-O-L-D to the tune of “Y-M-C-A.”

“I became so distinctive and memorable that people started calling,” DeLeon continues. This boldness led to him selling 12 percent of all available homes in his area.

DeLeon also provides potential clients massive, 200-page neighborhood guides, packed with market statistics. He holds what are arguably the best open houses in Northern California – fully catered affairs that include the services of a barista.

Overall, luxury homeowners in Silicon Valley know they’ll get an expert marketing plan for their homes, from an agent who doesn’t hesitate to spend the money required to attract the right buyers.

**Be Quietly Effective**

Don’t have an outrageous bone in your body? You might be surprised at what you can do to distinguish yourself from the other agents in your area – simple things, free things – that the majority of other agents just don’t do.

While you don’t have to dress up like a disco character, you do need to be willing to think differently or, as Emerson said, “Turn your eyes upside down, by looking at the landscape through your legs.”

Look around. Find a real estate task that you can perform better than everyone else in your area, and become amazing at it. For instance, other agents hold open houses – make yours more memorable. Some agents return phone calls, but you might make it a point to return them within an hour of receiving them and let everyone know that you do. Kick your broker’s opens into high gear to slow down agents as they tour a hard-to-sell listing.

While these seem tame, if done consistently, they’ll work as word-of-mouth marketing. Trust me – few agents return phone calls within an hour.

**Make it a point to connect with prospects in a way that is convenient and meaningful to them, not you. Then do it consistently.**

**The Top Producer**

We call the top agent “the listing pig” because of the sheer volume of listings she carried and all billboards, bus backs and shopping carts she appeared on. This is the agent whose
name comes to mind first when someone thinks of real estate in your town. This is the agent who has successfully branded herself as the area expert and leader.

How did this happen? Typically, this agent is a veteran who has been serving your town for a long time – someone like Martin Levy, who works in the beautiful Sonoma County wine country, north of San Francisco.

Levy knew when he got his license that he’d need to stand out from all the other agents in town if he hoped to be successful. He toyed with a number of different marketing ideas and finally decided to do a mass mailing. With limited funds, it seemed to him to be the best use of his money. With his wife’s approval, he maxed out their sole credit card to pay for his initial marketing push. The mailing, of course, brought in enough clients to pay for itself several times over, and Levy has never looked back.

Flash forward 35 years. His face is splashed on local billboards and his name is a household word. He averages 135 transactions a year. During the tail end of the recession, however – from 2009 to 2011 – that number increased to 222 per year. Levy has produced $1.6 billion dollars during his entire real estate career.

What’s so creative about a direct mail campaign?

The point isn’t the creativity of the campaign Levy chose, it’s the fact that he began thinking creatively right out of the gate.

He knew he needed to do something to get his name in front of consumers – something to make him stand out from all the other agents in Sonoma County. Not only did he understand this marketing fundamental, he wasn’t afraid to spend the money it took to do it, even down to his family’s last penny.

Don’t Be Average

Zen Habits’ Leo Babauta distills the traits of most successful people down to one: “the willingness to challenge mainstream ideas.” He goes on to explain that to be successful requires the ability to not only question what others do, but the courage to try new ideas, different ideas.

When you’re brave enough to stand out from the masses, eschewing the safe route, you avoid being average. Instead, you innovate, pioneer, discover and invent the real estate business of your dreams.
Quick! Name the number one marketing strategy among real estate agents. If you guessed anything having to do with past client follow-up, give yourself an attaboy, or girl. **We all know that warm calls are the easiest to make, so, naturally, following up with former clients to ensure a steady stream of referrals is preferable to other marketing tactics.**

What methods do real estate agents use to drum up business? Do they go after the typical cheap and easy marketing tactics, or will they be bold and step away from the pack? Do they stick with the old and tired or adopt the new and unique?

If a well-known real estate website is to be believed, the universe of real estate agents is populated with tight-fisted cheapskates who think “the cheaper the better” when it comes to marketing. Even though open houses really aren’t good lead generators, when compared to other methods, they were found to be the most popular in a recent survey of 500 agents.

If you agree that one must spend money to make money, then you will also agree that this adage is never more important than it is when it comes to marketing your business. Let’s take a look at some marketing methods that are gaining ground with real estate professionals.

### Video

Video has been around for a while. We have all seen the cheesy “meet the agent” videos and the nothing-more-than-slide-shows-set-to-music videos. Creative use of video, however, is a concept that is just starting to take off as more and more agents begin to feel comfortable stepping away from the herd.

**Agents incorporate video marketing in several ways:**

**Agent Branding Videos**

Many real estate agents’ branding videos are just about as compelling as the “About Me” page on their websites. Like all marketing strategies, some get it, some don’t.
Los Angeles real estate professional Spencer Krull is a man who gets it. Krull decided that the best way to stand out from the masses of other agents was through the use of humor, in particular, a series of self-effacing funny videos. Check out his “Notepad Guarantee” video.

While a video series, when done well, compels visitors to return to your site to find out what whacky thing you’ve put together lately, the stand-alone video can be just as effective at branding yourself. Manhattan Beach, California agent Greg Geilman’s “meet the agent” video is a perfect example of how just one video can set you apart from everyone else.

He explains that, aside from his “meet-the-agent” video, he hosts additional videos on his website. These feature not only his listings, but testimonials from former clients as well. All these videos combined help the viewer get to know Geilman in a non-threatening, non-salesy manner. Check out his “Meet-the-Agent” video.

Notice, too, that both agents understand the importance of high production value in their videos. Like every element in your marketing campaign, whether you are branding your sense of humor or your down-to-basics method of doing business, videos should be polished to perfection.

Listing Videos

Marketing in real estate is a two-pronged endeavor: marketing your business and marketing your client’s listings.

The listing video has evolved over the past few years to where, in some cases, it rivals some of Madison Avenue’s most clever offerings.

Take, for example, Beverly Hills agent Eric Lavey’s presentation for a listing he took in the Hollywood Hills. In a video that is very much Wall Street meets Hollywood, Lavey’s production sells the lifestyle to sell the home. Check out his Listings video.

While the aforementioned video is amazing – maybe even expected for the luxury agent’s listings – a lot of agents don’t have a huge marketing budget. Many agents find that they can get the job done with just a handheld video camera.
Content Marketing

We know what you’re thinking: “Wait a minute, you guys. Aren’t videos considered content?” They sure are, but to talk exclusively about videos at the expense of text is to do a disservice to the idea of an overarching marketing plan.

Most of the agents we spoke with like the idea of content marketing – mainly because it doesn’t bust their marketing budget and even the most resource-challenged agent can use it.

What, exactly, is content marketing? According to Content Marketing Institute founder, Joe Pulizzi, content marketing is “a marketing process to attract and retain customers by consistently creating and curating content in order to change or enhance a consumer behavior.”

In other words, consistently adding content to your website that is relevant to your clients is good for your business. Think of it as selling without being salesy – selling by educating.

“Relevant” is the key word here. Dale Carnegie, in “How to Win Friends and Influence People,” tells a story about how much he loves strawberries and cream. When he goes fishing, however, he doesn’t bait the hook with strawberries because, although he prefers the snack, he knows the fish want worms or crickets. To get what he wanted (the fish) he took the time to find out what the fish wanted and gave it to them.

Carnegie also reminded us that “All things being equal, people do business with people they know, like and trust.” Content marketing, if done properly, helps build relationships, which, in turn, helps prospective clients get to know you, like you and trust you.

Mobile Marketing

Mobile computing is on fire right now, and we don’t see the flames being doused anytime soon. It’s important to assess your website’s ability to support mobile access and make the necessary changes if it doesn’t. For starters, check out how your website looks on a mobile device at TestMySiteNow.com.

If your site passed the test, congratulations – you just saved some money and a whole lot of time.

If it didn’t, you may want to consider bringing it up to date. One of the least expensive ways of doing this is by transitioning to a responsive website theme, which supports all devices.
But don’t just take our word for it – both Google and Bing now recommend responsive web design for use with mobile devices.

Why do we think it’s an important marketing tool for the real estate professional? Consider the following: **Twenty-four percent of consumers who conduct “local” searches are highly tech-savvy users who own multiple mobile devices.** This group accounts for 50 percent of all local searches, according to an immr Local Search Study conducted in October 2012.

The study also finds that searches from mobile devices and tablets are increasing toward the PC volume levels.

**Location-Based Real Estate Marketing**

Now that your website supports mobile access, it’s time to get more creative in how you market your real estate business to mobile users to capture this incredible opportunity. This is where location-based marketing comes in.

Corcoran Group Real Estate in New York is one of the pioneers in real estate location-based marketing. They call it “untethering their agents.” It all started with the Corcoran Group iPhone app that offers interactive floor plans for all properties, the ability to share property listings either via text message or email and a function that notifies the user of open houses that meet their criteria, as they’re scheduled.

They’ve also included a unique “Get Out Nearby” function that lists fun and interesting things to do near their listings, and the ability to directly connect with Foursquare.

How is it working for them? “The company has approximately 60,000 iPhone users that interact with the app seven to eight times longer than on their desktop site,” according to Lauren Johnson with Mobile Marketer.

There are a number of ways to connect with mobile-savvy buyers and sellers and a number of companies smart enough to create products to help the real estate professional do so. Linkbuildr’s Ryan Clark is raving about what Foursquare can do for the real estate professional. **He suggests that you integrate your open house check-ins through an app on your website.** “Imagine updating your clients in real time via Foursquare that your open house is well, open for business. This also gets shot off directly to your Facebook page as well as Twitter.”
Face it, a sign rider is a lot like a tweet – there’s only so many characters that will fit on it. In lieu of the flyer box (that the neighborhood kids typically invade) consider putting Quick Response (QR) on your signage. This gives the potential homebuyer instant access to all of the listing’s information. The bonus for the agent is that it’s easy to track who is scanning your QR codes. You’ll find a lot of the old-time sign companies, like Oakley Signs, offering the service, as well as some new players. You can also slap the codes on other marketing materials, such as flyers and postcards.

**Niche Marketing**

Many agents are finding it increasingly more difficult to compete with the mass of agents who try to be everything to everyone. Choosing a niche also known as a target market and laser-focusing all of your marketing efforts to that niche group can be a lucrative marketing tactic.

Steve Israel, owner/broker of Buyer’s Edge in Bethesda, Md., takes the niche market a couple of steps further: Not only does Buyer’s Edge deal exclusively with buyers, they specialize in the condo market. Wait – Israel’s niche is even more concentrated – buyers of condos in downtown Washington, D.C.

Israel didn’t cut his traditional real estate practice loose in favor of the downtown condo niche; he made it an additional part of it. “We found a large part of our business is first-time homebuyers. We also know that the condo market is a very vibrant part of the local market and that it lends itself well to being a niche,” Israel said. “We built a website full of so much detailed information about the different buildings that it required building an extensive database as well. It was time consuming and expensive, but, since we began a concentrated marketing effort for it last year, we’ve had good response,” Israel concludes.

Niche marketing works well if you’re in a large market packed with generalists. It takes you from being a teeny fish in a huge pond to being somewhat larger in a significantly smaller pond.

**Specializing in a real estate niche also helps you focus your agent branding efforts.** Life in the real estate world is much easier when you know who your prospective client is, where to find them, and how to appeal to that client.
If niche marketing is for you, here are two tips to get you started:

- If the thought of changing all the other parts of your business to focus on one part of the market is frightening, do it gradually. While Israel has no plans to focus his entire business on downtown condos, his method may work for you. Start slowly and, as you build up the expertise in your chosen market, you’ll feel more comfortable letting everything else fall away.

- Choose a niche that you are familiar with or interested in. Former military types may want to specialize in veterans. Equestrians might be drawn to ranches or horse property. If nobody is specializing in high-rise condos in your city, there’s an excellent, well-defined niche for you to pursue. A niche market can be based on property-type (such as condos or mobile homes), types of clients (like the aforementioned veterans or seniors), or location (beachfront homes, golf course homes or homes in a specific subdivision).

**E-Books**

An offer of a free e-book on an agent’s website certainly isn’t a new marketing tactic, but look for it to gain importance as the need to establish yourself as the expert becomes ever more vital.

A prominent Minnesota agent commissioned a freelance writer who specializes in real estate to ghostwrite and compile his e-book, which he swears by.

“We worked closely on the collaboration,” he said. “She nailed it. The book sounds like I wrote it – even my wife was amazed at how she captured my voice,” he continues.

By listing himself as the author, “The book enforces my brand as a short sale expert, while at the same time offering valuable information to those thinking of going through the short sale process. It isn’t “salesy,” at all. It’s straightforward, good, solid information. I get a lot of requests for it.”
Al Ferraguti, owner/broker of Southhampton, Pa.'s Tri-County Realty uses his e-books not to promote himself as the expert but to educate the firm’s buying clients. He purchased two ready-made e-books several years ago (one for buyers and one for sellers).

There’s no author name on them, which is fine with Ferraguti. “We spend a lot of time educating buyers with seminars and other events, so the e-book is just another way to offer information and to teach – especially first-time buyers. The books are packed with good information.”

Although he can’t say for sure that any deals are directly attributable to his website offer of a free e-book, he does know that the demand for them is good. “We get email addresses, and any time you can do that it’s a good thing. We follow up with the people monthly.” Like everything else in this business, Ferraguti feels that if you decide to offer a free e-book, plan on spending some time marketing it as well.

E-books come in many forms, the most popular of which is as a PDF. A PDF is easy to read and consumers can usually print the file. You can also publish your e-book to integrate with your mobile marketing campaign (you have one of those, right?). Although iBooks will read PDF files, most agents convert them to the iBook format. Several companies offer tools to assist you with this, such as Calibre, which is every agent’s favorite price: free!

E-Book Content

If you have a blog, and you’ve been publishing posts for some time, you may have enough pre-written content to fill a book. Separate your posts into categories, compile a table of contents and you’ve got yourself an e-book.

Another option is to hire a ghostwriter. If you plan on using the book to help reinforce your brand, this might be your best bet. You have several options when it comes to ghostwriters:

- Hire a cheap writer and then an editor to fix their mistakes.
- Hire a professional real estate ghostwriter. This is more expensive than the above option, but you won’t need an editor, nor will you have to walk the writer through sometimes complicated real estate information.
- Write it yourself and hire an editor to clean it up.
E-Book Topics

The book topics you can offer come right from a seller’s or buyer’s list of frequently asked questions. These topics include:

- Lease options.
- Short sales.
- Foreclosures.
- Buying.
- Selling.
- Mortgage process.
- Staging and curb appeal.
- First-time homebuyer tips for success.
- “The Secrets” to anything, from getting the most money to negotiating the best deal.

The successful real estate agent is the one who eschews ineffective yet comfortable marketing strategies and begins to think in new ways.
Marketing Through Education

What if all of your clients knew exactly what to expect during the real estate transaction? Imagine how comfortable they would be, how less likely they would be to freak out over the smallest bump in the road. Taking the time to educate your clients takes this premise and makes it a reality.

Even better is to educate your prospects before they become clients. We all know that a prospect can be anyone, anywhere, so reaching out to the broadest possible audience in your efforts to educate makes sense.

Let’s take a look at some of the ways agents across the country are educating prospects in their efforts to create savvy clients.

Seminars

Homebuyer seminars are hardly innovative – agents and lenders have been organizing them for decades. The agents’ motives typically revolve around lead generation, and that’s OK. But the educational aspect of the seminars shouldn’t be ignored.

Agent Deb Tomaro holds buyer seminars in Bloomington, Ind. Sure, the events help pull in prospects, but once converted, these people turn into the best kind of clients.

“They know what to expect, they know the process, so I’m not having to micromanage them,” Tomaro explains. “They are able to keep things in perspective, they understand the big picture, and they know what they’re doing.”

The most important step when considering holding seminars is to determine your audience. This should be easy if you practice in a real estate niche.
If you are a generalist, consider some of these audiences:

- First-time homebuyers.
- Vacation property buyers.
- Government loan programs featuring low or no down payment.
- Senior buyers.
- Immigrant buyers.
- Mobile-home buyers.
- New-home buyers.
- Veterans.
- Horse property buyers.

The toughest part of the process is the planning, but the Real Estate Buyer’s Agent Council of the National Association of Realtors® has a handy [online pamphlet](#) that walks agents through each step.

**Radio Show**

Less than 1 percent of real estate agents use radio and television in their marketing campaigns, according to Matt Wagner, founder of Radio and Television Experts.

Of the two, radio is by far the preferred medium if you plan on buying advertising or hosting your own real estate show. The main advantage of radio over television is cost – radio is far less expensive.

Now, we aren’t talking so-called radio shows or podcasts online. Instead, we’re talking Marconi’s radio, conventional broadcast radio stations with four call letters and a designated frequency – that kind of radio.

For the purposes of educating prospects, you’ll need more than a 30 second spot. The back and forth of a call-in talk show is ideal for educating prospects.

How much will this cost? It depends on the size of the market, the station’s ratings and the time of day you choose. Stations in New York City and Los Angeles charge far more for advertising than those in Grand Forks, N.D. and Casper, Wyo.
Thankfully, real estate talk shows typically occur on weekends, when air time is the least expensive. If you live in a small enough market, and a station is in need of content, you may even end up with free air-time. But that would be the exception, not the rule.

Otherwise, many agents pound the pavement, or the telephone, to drum up sponsors for the shows, in exchange for mentions on the air. Good sponsorship prospects are title companies, home inspectors and lenders.

Of course, there are ad agencies, radio airtime brokers and others organizations that will actually do all the groundwork for you, for a fee.

**Teach Through Print**

Although the eulogy has yet to be written, newspapers are expected to take their last gasps by 2016, according to USC’s Annenberg Center for the Digital Future. They predict that only the very largest and smallest papers will survive.

Like real estate, however, print journalism is quite local. While many real estate consumers rely on the Internet for real estate listings and information, in some towns, it’s the local newspaper that is still the go-to source.

Robin Shapiro, broker-owner of Robin Shapiro Realty in Rockaway Park, N.Y., finds great success with her hometown paper, The Wave. Before it was put online “people would actually cross over the bridge to buy it,” she said.

If that sounds like the paper in your town, **it may just be the place to offer your services as their real estate advice columnist**. Call the editor and make the pitch. Even if you don’t fancy yourself a writer, you can hire an inexpensive freelance editor to go over your copy before sending it on to the paper.

If you enjoy writing, and you’re good at it, consider writing an e-book and offering it free on your website.


“Short sales are one of the most confusing real estate transactions for the general public,” he explains. “I’m finding that the prospects I convert from my e-book are far better informed and prepared for the short sale process than others,” he concludes.
Yes, writing an e-book is time consuming. Formatting it is also a time suck. That’s why many agents hire ghostwriters to write their books. Depending on its length, hiring a ghostwriter to write an e-book can be less expensive than you might think.

**Blogging**

Blogging helps you educate prospects on a range of real estate issues. It’s a great way to let them know about current market trends so they know what to expect when they decide to enter the market.

Examples of blog topics that help educate prospects include:

**Financing** - This is a confusing topic for real estate consumers. Make it easy for them to understand.

**Buying distressed properties** - The pros and cons of this process and what they should watch out for.

**Common real estate terms and what they mean** - Go through your listing or purchase agreement and you’ll find a plethora of jargon that befuddles the average consumer. What’s a “contingency”? What is “arm’s length”?

**Closing** - Aside from financing, the closing process is probably the most mysterious part of the real estate transaction for consumers. Demystify it by explaining what happens, who will be there, and what paperwork they’ll be confronted with.

While there are many ways to educate your clients, why not choose a method that reaches a broad range of people and combines lead generation with education? Blogs, printed materials, seminars and radio shows allow the average agent to do this.
Make Print Marketing Part of Your Strategy

With email marketing that can be sent with the click of a button, lightning-fast social media tools, and the myriad other ways to generate leads online, is print marketing a thing of the past? Not so fast. Although print marketing is undoubtedly more expensive than digital campaigns, it should still be 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, Pennsylvania. “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 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 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.

And, your call-to-action should always be clear and concise and direct potential clients to your website, where 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.”
For Sale Yard Signs

Breathing New Life into an Old Friend

When one considers how much business we get from that thing sticking in the front lawn of our listings, it’s amazing how we take them for granted. One phone call and the sign is installed to our specifications. Another one and it’s taken down and stored. Most agents never touch their signs unless it’s to re-attach a wind-blown rider.

However, like most aspects of the real estate industry, real estate yard signage is changing.

Real Estate Signs Today

Fifty-three percent of today’s homebuyers list “yard signs” as the method they use to find a home, according to the National Association of Realtors®.

So, while signs remain valuable as a way to grab people’s attention, today’s agents are expecting their yard signs to multi-task.

Some agents use QR codes on their signs, according to Pratt. The way most agents use QR codes, however, renders them ineffective as a lead capture system, and are nothing more than “virtual flyer boxes,” according to Pratt.

Brochure Boxes and Riders

Are brochure boxes a thing of the past? From the neighbors complaining about flyers cluttering up the neighborhood, and neighborhood kids pilfering them, to the seemingly never-ending job of keeping the boxes full, many agents stopped using the boxes on their signs when QR codes began to get popular. Most of the agents we spoke with say that, unless their client specifically requests a box, they don’t use them.

The lowly sign rider, however, is figuring prominently in agent branding efforts. Canadian agent Jake Palmer, in fact, has a fan club of sorts – folks who drive by his listings on a regular basis to find out what wacky rider he decided to use that week. Some of his most popular include “Not Haunted,” “Indoor Plumbing” and “Love Shack, Baby.”
Back when the housing market began to nosedive and price reductions were becoming the norm, Knoxville, Tenn. broker Bill McSpadden’s “Reduced” sign rider showed not only the industry’s frustration, but served as a warning to low-ballers. In smaller print, below the word Reduced, it said “but not stupid or desperate.”

Riders are also great gadgets on which to advertise your website URL or the property’s website. Social media riders, especially those that contain the agent’s Facebook address, are popular right now, according to Pratt.

If you’re thinking of modifying your marketing campaign in 2013 and need a method that is inexpensive and effective, consider changing the way you use your real estate signage. If you’ve made the switch and are using your signs in innovative ways, we’d love to learn more.
Why Top Agents Use Real Estate Marketing Software

A recently-released book for real estate agents – with a catchy title promising to teach the latest and greatest marketing techniques – mentions the word “software” a grand total of ONE time. For $30, the book suggests that agents use an Excel spreadsheet to keep track of their clients.

Twenty-first century marketing requires more power than a year’s supply of index cards or an Excel spreadsheet can handle. Thankfully, there are a ton of companies out there producing software solutions for the 21st century real estate professional.

**What Successful Agents Understand**

The key to success as a real estate agent lies in securing a steady stream of leads and then having the discipline and the tools to follow up on them.

The primary two sources of business are past clients and referrals, according to a January 2012 survey performed by ActiveRain. This means that remaining engaged with past clients, and others in your sphere who may refer your services to someone else, should be an agent’s top priority. Sadly, for many agents it isn’t.

ActiveRain found that agents spend more money on online lead generation than on real estate marketing software that will help them with the critical business of following up. This is shocking because chasing after new business at the expense of cultivating relationships with those who already know, like, and trust you is akin to making cold calls in lieu of warm calls.

According to the real estate social network’s survey, agents spend up to $155 a month on lead generation, while fewer than half of the agents they surveyed spend $53 a month on email and print marketing software.
Now, this is the average agent. When the results are broken down according to income, the results are astounding. **Top producing agents** – those who make more than $100,000 a year – spend five to 10 times more than lower-producing agents on real estate marketing software. Perhaps they know something the rest of us don’t?

**What to Look for in Agent Marketing Software**

Managing even the smallest of pipelines requires a system to ensure that not one person falls out of it. A set-and-forget system not only keeps your past clients and current prospects firmly in the pipeline, but also saves time because it isn’t labor intensive.

Some agents require all the bells and whistles in their marketing software while others are only looking for a basic solution. Let’s take a look at some of what’s on the market.

- **Fully integrated customer relationship management platforms** that offer automated drip marketing systems that include both online and offline communications. This means agents can use this software to reach clients with both postcards and emails with a single campaign.

- **Software that includes customizable templates**, which allow agents to design, create, and manage marketing campaigns. Some software packages include a monthly newsletter to send to clients as well as an email marketing platform.

- **A Web-based contact management and marketing system.** Agents who use these appreciate their wireless synchronization feature, which allows the agent to wirelessly connect with the software via an iPhone, BlackBerry, Android or Windows Mobile device.

Of course, the above features represent a very small corner of the agent marketing software solutions market. It’s important to know exactly what you need your marketing software to do before shopping for it.

Think about this: 87 percent of buyers and 84 percent of sellers surveyed say that they will work with their real estate agent again and refer the agent to others, according to the National Association of Realtors®. Of course, these consumers will only refer you if you keep in touch with them. If you don’t, they’ll forget about you and you’ll lose a potential client.