Tools to Help You Succeed

New year, new game plan. It’s never too early (or late!) to start setting yourself up for future success with strategic goals for 2013. Maybe it’s increasing the number of leads you generate in a given month, expanding your team to include new agents, or setting and meeting increased sales and commission goals. You know what you want to achieve, now you just need to know how to do it.

Imagine you’re planning a trip that departs in just a few months. Of course, you’ve picked a destination—that’s the easy part. But what tools do you need to make your trip a reality? Of course, you can’t travel without a plane ticket, passport, packed luggage, and a great travel companion. These are all essential, must-haves for a successful vacation.

Consider your 2013 goals to be your travel destination, and the tools below are your travel essentials. You can’t have a successful trip without having all of them in place, and they each serve a specific, important purpose.

A great website

As you well know, with every year that passes, more and more potential clients are utilizing the Internet as their main method of collecting real estate information. Because of this fact, investing in technology is crucial to every agent’s success, and that starts with a great website. Consider your website your first impression with a new customer. Is it clean, straightforward, and easy to navigate? Are visitors finding the information they seek? Consider these important characteristics that every great real estate website should have:
Listings, listings, listings:
The number one reason most potential clients are visiting your site is to find home listings. Make it easy for them! Listings should be front and center on your site, and visitors shouldn’t have to jump through too many hoops to access the homes they’re looking for. A great website puts the entire MLS at potential buyers’ fingertips, and ensures that they’ll return to your site whenever they need more information.

Incentives for registration:
Of course, in order to acquire valuable information on your site’s visitors, you need to know who they are, via a registration process. The key to motivating leads to register for your site is two-fold: making it as simple as possible to do, and demonstrating the added benefits they’ll receive as a registered visitor. Only ask them for as much contact information as you truly need, keep the registration page short and sweet, and dangle a carrot—show them what you’ll offer them in exchange for their time and contact information: valuable neighborhood data, access to 360 virtual tours, or the ability to save listings for future use, for example. Make your registration page a window, not a wall.

No distracting content:
Don’t put content on your site that competes with your main value proposition—that you’re a valuable partner in a client’s home buying or selling process, and that you (and your website) are a one-stop shop for everything they may need along the way. Don’t distract visitors with advertising, social media widgets, or links to other companies. Don’t offer visitors easy ways to click away from your site—encourage them to stay.

More than just listings:
Yes, listings are the top reason that potential clients visit your site. But, as you well know, there’s more to finding your dream home than listings. Your site should offer visitors a wealth of information, including neighborhood data, school district information, current interest rates, market trends, and your expert advice. And, all of this content should live on YOUR site—don’t rely on external links, which only serve to route visitors away from your website. Bottom line: when potential clients have comprehensive information at their fingertips, they have no reason to look elsewhere!

A straightforward way to capture leads:
Your goal in capturing leads should be to ensure that every leads ends up visiting your website. But what do you do with these leads once they’ve arrived? It’s imperative that your website is connected to a back-end contact management system. A great contact management system provides you with valuable information about each and every lead that visits your site. We’ll talk more about this later on.

Targeted, centralized lead generation strategies

In order to create and maintain a steady stream of business, it’s important to find leads from many different sources. When you cast a wide net, you’re better equipped to identify the most qualified, active leads and start converting them into clients. In addition to traditional lead generation activities like print marketing, networking, referrals, and open houses, spend some time learning how to integrate technology in your lead generation efforts.

Here are just a few of the many successful lead generation strategies you can try:

Craigslist:
When you’re posting listings on Craigslist, consider these best practices. First, use an attention-grabbing headline. Examples include “Five must-see homes in Portland” or “Can’t decide between Del Mar and La Jolla?” Headlines like these are more engaging than the standard “3 bed, 2 bath home in Dallas.” Second, always show more than one home in each post. That way, if the first home doesn’t appeal to the viewer, you have other homes with which to pique their
interest. Finally, the body copy must always have a link back to your website. That way, potential leads who view your ad are taken to a place where you can continue the conversation with them.

Social media sites:
Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn can be great places to find new leads, while also keeping you top-of-mind with your existing leads and past clients. There are some simple things to do to ensure that your posts are engaging, interesting, and useful to your audience. First, always use a headline that draws people in. Social media users are constantly bombarded with information—make your post stand out. Next, remember that not every post needs to be a sales pitch. But, every post should demonstrate your expertise in real estate. In addition, every time you post, include links to specific pages on your website where leads can get more information. And finally, social media is meant to be interactive. Encourage dialogue with your followers. Ask open-ended questions and always respond to comments and re-tweets.

Paid lead generation:
It’s no secret that top-producing agents utilize paid lead generation sources as part of their overall strategy. There’s no reason you can’t do the same! These agents invest a certain amount of money per month with companies that offer lead generation services. Not only does this free up time for agents to work on other parts of the business, but paid leads can often be more qualified and consistent. Partnerships are available with companies that provide buyer leads, seller leads, and even exclusivity within your local market or ZIP code.

Online advertising:
Purchasing online advertising is a great way to help potential buyers and sellers find your website during their home search. With help from systems like Google AdWords, Yahoo! Search Marketing, or Microsoft AdCenter, you’ll identify keywords and short text ads that are relevant to your website, and then Google, Yahoo!, or Bing display links to your site when someone searches for these keywords. You’ll simply pay a flat perclick rate for each person who is routed to your site. Online advertising can be quick, easy, and very cost effective.

With the Internet at your fingertips, innovative new strategies for lead generation and marketing being developed every day, and a wealth of consumers online, the possibilities for success are endless. But don’t forget—regardless of the method you use, make sure that every lead is routed back to your website!

Successful lead generation takes time, effort, and practice. Nobody becomes an expert in all types of marketing overnight, so if you’re feeling overwhelmed or need help developing your skills, partner with a company that specializes in generating real estate leads and spend some time learning the ropes.

A streamlined contact management system

Have you seen a theme here? You always want to point leads back to your website. Regardless of how they got there, your website should always have fresh, relevant, and engaging content that demonstrates why you’re the best agent for the job. But there’s one more important component of your website that we’ve already mentioned briefly: a streamlined contact management system.

A great contact management system is so much more than just a database. A robust contact management system is seamlessly integrated into your consumer-facing website and provides you invaluable data about every single lead who registers on your site—the types of homes they’re looking for, other data that interests them, and the time of day they’re active in their real estate search.

When you utilize this kind of data, you’re able to tailor your first impression with each and every potential client, greatly increasing your chances of converting a lead into a client and eventually, into a sale.
A contact management system is like your own personal assistant. It helps you keep track of leads in every stage of the conversion process, can save you valuable time by automatically sending out drip campaigns to keep you in contact with each lead, and provides unparalleled access to the wants and needs of your future clients.

**Actionable goals**

Being successful takes action. It’s important to explore what it takes to be successful. Don’t just focus on the end result you’re hoping for; spend time thinking about what it’s going to take to get to that end result.

For example, instead of saying “I want to generate more leads this year,” give yourself actionable goals, like: “I’ll dedicate two hours of every work day to leads, including 30 minutes to generate new leads, 30 minutes to introduce myself to new leads, 30 minutes to re-engage with current leads, and 30 minutes to follow up on any new, 24-hour activity.”

In addition to setting aside specific time each day for your goals, create a weekly schedule that helps you stay on track with important tasks. For example, post to your social media sites on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and post new listings to Craigslist on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

Being disciplined, focused, and practical while setting actionable goals will go a long way towards helping you meet the large benchmarks you’ve set for yourself.

**Key points:**

- **A simple, straightforward website with listings on the home page is your #1 lead engagement tool.**

- **Diversify your lead generation efforts with online tools like Craigslist, Facebook, and online advertising.**

- **Let technology do the heavy lifting by investing in a streamlined contact management system that makes keeping in touch with leads quick and easy.**

- **Set quantifiable, action-oriented goals to motivate you in 2013.**