

It's Not That Hard to Do an Excellent Job Marketing One's Listings

I continue to be surprised at how few agents do a thorough and excellent job of marketing their listings. Although their failure to do so gives me a competitive advantage, and although I'd like you to think I have non-reproducible skills, I'm going to share those skills and practices right now for my competitors to read and learn from.

I have covered some of these practices in previous columns.

1) Enter the listing in the MLS yourself — or at least proof read it! Fill out all the fields, not just the mandatory ones, to give buyers as complete a description as possible. Fields that are commonly left blank are room measurements and the breakdown of square footage by floor. Also, location by floor of the master bedroom, family room and study.

2) Take pictures yourself and upload them to the MLS immediately. The MLS will shoot an exterior photo a few days later, if

you don't want to shoot your own pictures, but you want pictures on the MLS while it's a "new" listing.

If you don't own a digital camera, I recommend the Kodak V570 dual lens camera because it can take ultra-wide angle pictures (great for interior locations) and can "stitch" up to three pictures to create panoramic shots.

3) Shoot your own virtual tour. I subscribe to VisualTour.com, which I consider the very best virtual tour hosting service. For a mere \$29.95 per month, I can create and upload (from my own pictures) as many virtual tours as I want. This is not only faster than using a virtual tour provider who sends out a photographer to take the pictures — it's also a lot less expensive.

4) Subscribe to "Showcase" service on Realtor.com. All MLS listings are uploaded free to this website owned by the Na-

tional Association of Realtors (NAR), but you have to pay a flat annual fee to further enhance your listings with headlines, scrolling text, up to 5,000 characters of free text description, five extra pictures, and free linking of your virtual tour (otherwise costing \$19.95 per tour). Your name, picture and contact info appears next to Showcase listings. Without it, you and your company are not identified at all. Also, with showcasing, you can enter your open house details. A typical Realtor who had 4 to 10 listings on Realtor.com over the previous 12 months pays a flat \$385 to be able to "showcase" unlimited listings for the next 12 months. **Important:** After you subscribe, don't forget to *use* all the features that you paid for!

5) Get a personal website, or make full use of the website provided by your company. I like the "templated" website from Advanced Access, because it can be customized in far more ways than I'll ever take advantage of. Most of all, I like the full-featured listing pages which I can link to #6...

6) Buy website addresses for each listing and advertise them. I used www.GoDaddy.com to purchase these URLs for only \$9.20 each. Then I forward the URLs to the individual listing pages on my Advanced Access website. The #1 way of advertising these URLs is on a "sign rider" — that little sign that "rides" or hangs from the "For Sale" sign in front of the listing. I buy blank riders from RMD Signs and buy two decals with the URLs on them from Signs by Tomorrow at 12180 W. Alameda Parkway.

7) Create attractive color flyers for each listing and keep them stocked on the "For Sale" sign. To me, owning a color laser printer is a must. It's so much cheaper and faster than an ink-jet printer and you're not changing

ink cartridges as often. At www.hp.com you can buy a Color Laser Jet 1600 for \$255 including toner cartridges good for your first 1,000 pages! What's stopping you?

8) Learn and master a desktop publishing program. On Windows, you'll want to learn **Publisher** (part of MS Office Professional), and, on the Mac, **Pages** (part of iWork). There is a free introductory Publisher class being taught at SMDRA on Friday, Mar. 16th, 9 to noon. Details: 303-797-3700. The Apple Store in Cherry Creek offers free classes in iWork.

Of course, proper pricing, staging, signage, and so much more go into successfully marketing a house, but if you add those to the list above, you can really succeed — and better serve your sellers.

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