

Expand Your Influence

In today's world, having a sense of community is one of the greatest needs that is often left unfulfilled. People have a natural desire to feel connected and be part of a community. As a real estate professional, being familiar with local neighborhoods allows you to identify where your clients will enjoy living. Also, becoming involved in communities is a great way to deepen relationships and meet people who can be added to your database. Gaining knowledge of surrounding neighborhood characteristics and interacting with local residents will position you as the industry expert in the communities you serve.

A recent survey revealed quality of neighborhood as the most influential factor in home selection.* One of the best ways to start learning about a neighborhood is to spend time in it. Talk to the people you meet. Ask them what it's like to live and work there. Would they purchase their current home if they were given a second chance? What are their greatest concerns about the area? What do they like best about neighborhood life? Your presence and interest in the community shows people that you're there to help with all of their real estate needs.

*Source: 2009 National Association of REALTORS® Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers

Be the Catalyst for Your Community

Be Intentional: Research local communities, and identify the groups of people who could benefit from a market update or a valuable seminar, such as first-time home buyers or older adults preparing for retirement. Ask contacts from local businesses with whom you have relationships to participate as guest speakers at your events. Target your markets, provide value, interact and ask for referrals.

Prepare: Think about the results you would like to achieve from each interaction with clients and business owners. Determine what you can do to ensure that your objectives are met during these meetings. Be prepared to articulate the value of your services and how your commitment to working by referral benefits them.

Facilitate: You may not be the most social person, but remember that sales is a contact sport. People want to connect; many of your clients desire to get together, and business owners want to network to gain new prospects. Your efforts in reaching out to the community by organizing simple social events will be rewarded with referrals.



Don't Be a Secret Agent

The more involved you become in community activities, the more connections you will create with potential clients. Here are some tips for strengthening your business as you help others.

- Invite an A+ client to lunch. This will be a great opportunity for you to make personal contact with your best clients.
- Organize a client party to acknowledge your advocates and introduce them to one another for a fun event that will lead to more referrals.
- Host a house-warming party for one of your clients.
- Offer to write a real estate advice column in a local community newspaper.
- Plan a community picnic at a local park.
- Become a volunteer. To find opportunities, visit:
United States: www.serve.gov
Canada: www.volunteer.ca
- Sponsor a local sports team or become a coach.
- Host a booth at a neighborhood street fair.
- Partner with a local insurance agent to help homeowners evaluate their property insurance needs.
- Take part in neighborhood cleanup drives.
- Organize or sponsor a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) class for local residents.
- Contact local social service clubs to find out if they would benefit from a real-estate-related presentation.
- Host a community garage sale. Market the event by setting out signs and placing ads in newspapers. Use this opportunity to socialize with participants.

Building Social Capital

When community businesses and organizations are connected, everybody wins! A great place to start is the local Chamber of Commerce.



More information about Chambers of Commerce:

United States: www.uschamber.com
Canada: www.chamber.ca

Other great ways to deepen your relationships with local business owners:

Business Bites: Invite local business owners to breakfast, lunch or coffee. Get to know them and learn how they run their business. Let them know about your network of professionals and that you will be seeking opportunities to send them referrals. Share your business philosophy, what you look for in an ideal client and ask them to refer you to the people in their database.



Business to Business Mixers: Organize an event where local business owners can synergize. The results will be beneficial for everyone!

Try These Dialogues

Invitation to breakfast, coffee or lunch:

Clients:

Hi [Mary], it's [Joanne Durso]. I was just thinking about you the other day and wanted to know if you wanted to go grab a bite next week. [Monday] or [Friday] works for me.

Business owners:

Hi [Jim]. This is [Peter Buick]. I was just calling because I wanted to make sure you know how much I value our relationship. I want to build my business by working with great people like you, and I'd like to get together to discuss ways I might be a resource for your business and real estate needs.

Invitation to a business mixer:

Hi [Mike]. It's [Jack Arnold]. I'm calling to see if you'd be interested in coming to a business networking mixer I'm hosting in a few weeks. I know you are as committed to providing excellent service to your clients/customers as I am, and I'm also inviting other business owners who share this same mindset. We want to get to know each other and learn a bit about each other's businesses so that in the future we will feel confident referring clients to one another. How does that sound?