



## 9 Ways to Increase Customer Satisfaction & Loyalty



Real estate has evolved over the last decade into a more web-based industry. The result of this transition is that consumers seeking to buy or sell a home now have more options than ever before. In turn, REALTORS® are experiencing the challenge of increased competition and, in some cases, less business.

Certainly with repeat business and referrals being the bread and butter for many REALTORS® – and undoubtedly essential to anyone in business – being able to satisfy clients becomes ever more important. Naturally, the more satisfied a client is, the more loyal that person will feel for years to come. It doesn't take expensive gifts to make a client happy either. This white paper outlines ideas for changing and improving your business practices.

Here are nine ways to help you increase your customer satisfaction and create client loyalty:

### 1 Respond quickly – or at least within a reasonable time frame.

The majority of people these days expect a response back from their inquiry within a reasonable time frame. Whether it be an email or phone call, a prospect or client, it's important to set up an effective communication system and make time out of your busy schedule to respond. It's critical to be available to your customers' schedules and not the other way around. At HomeGain we recommend agents respond ideally within five hours, and no longer than within 24 hours of receipt of the inquiry or lead. By doing so, you are proving that you care about them as a client and will take care of their needs. If you find yourself in a situation where you have not responded promptly, it still makes sense to respond with an apology for your tardiness.

"Time is of the essence when responding to a registration, a customer inquiry, or whatever piece of information they are offering you. Getting high conversion rates require speed and consistency," stated Eric Blackwell, Director of Technology for RE/MAX Properties East.

### 2 Ask how your clients would like to be responded to.

One way to increase customer satisfaction is to communicate with clients through their preferred method. For online consumers, email is the standard method. This allows them to maintain the anonymous status which is important to online consumers. Even when consumers provide a telephone number, they may be surprised when an agent contacts them by phone. If you decide to place a call, take into consideration that it is a more personal and perhaps invasive action. Prepare notes or a list of questions beforehand to ensure you cover all your points and maximize the time. By contacting people in their preferred method, you will most likely have a better chance of reaching them with that reasonable time frame, communicating effectively and achieving your goals.

"The difference between having a 2% conversion and a 5% conversion is all about 'touch'", said Mitch Ribak of Tropical Realty. "A phone call is your opportunity to shine. This is your chance to use that great personality you have developed over the years. If you have fun and they have fun, you have a great chance for a very long and rewarding relationship. Never forget that even though you met these potential customers, you have to build a trusting relationship that only comes over time and customer service. End every phone call with: "It was great talking to you today, when would you like me to call you back" or "It was great talking to you today, I'll call you back in two weeks to check on things". Either way, always let them know you will be calling them back."



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### 3 Create a positive website experience.

Once visitors land on your website or landing page, you have about 10 seconds to capture their attention. People will judge your site quickly and determine whether they'd like to give you the opportunity to earn their business and be their Realtor. With an attractive layout, some photos, your contact information clearly laid out on the home page, you're off to a good start. When you start providing additional information on your website about your market area, like neighborhoods, schools, other points of interest and home listings, you begin to increase the value of your site. You will give people a reason to come back and they'll tell others about it, too. A blog is an easy and effective tool to communicate with readers. There you can post market information, daily updates, and any opinions that may help educate visitors.

"Once a buyer sees an agent's site as a one-stop local information site, there is no need to go further," said Mike Farmer of Mike Farmer Realty.

### 4 Set expectations, right from the start.

It is an agent's job to inform consumers as to what to expect, not only for the transaction but also about current industry conditions and other factors that influence a home sale or purchase. There may often be a discrepancy between what home buyers and sellers think about real estate and about a Realtor – the pricing of homes, time frames, your commission, etc. Explain in detail what services you provide and what your seller is getting for their five-six percent commission. Mystery still surrounds this business since most agents have difficulty justifying the cost. By being up front with your clients and telling them what they need to hear versus what they want to hear, you will be able to avoid frustrations and set the tone of your relationship.

Linda Davis with RE/MAX Realty Group said, "It is usually a lot easier to tell a seller what they want to hear and then try to work on price reductions along the way. Unfortunately, in a declining market, this can be a serious misstep as the home seller finds himself 'chasing the market down'. In the end, the home will sell for less than the original market analysis."

### 5 Educate your clients.

Side by side with setting expectations, a common theme among HomeGain agents to working successfully in challenging markets is to educate clients and, as Heidi Mueller of Prudential California Realty says, to "better manage expectations of the home sellers and buyers." Having facts, documentation, news, blogs, etc. to provide to your clients will help them understand where you are coming from and validate your points. Print out white papers or articles and have them readily available for handing out to clients.

"Being an expert in your market is paramount to building trust and, in turn, clients – and it's your responsibility to understand and be able to convey the difference to help educate them," said Ryan Ward of Ryan Ward Realty.

### 6 Personalize and customize.

Everything you do once you connect with an Internet consumer should come across customized for the client. The Internet allows people flexibility and anonymity but once they reach out for information, they expect high quality customer service. Templates are an important tool to saving you time, but never forget to tailor several components to suit your client. People are becoming wiser and more Internet-savvy, so they'll be able to see



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right through a non-customized email or proposal of your services.

Due to the impersonal nature of the Internet, once you connect with a client online, you have an opportunity to put your “personal stamp” on everything. Get to know your clients and understand their requirements. Ask them to fill out a short questionnaire that you can reference about their preferred areas, their budget, their birthdays, future plans, etc. Setting up drip marketing emails will help you organize these kinds of reminders. Even the smallest of ways to show your clients that you are attentive to their specific needs helps build customer retention.



### 7 Establish a good team.

As the expert, your clients rely on you to make things happen smoothly and successfully. Knowing how processes work, establish a team of other players who will support each step of the transaction, meet deadlines and close as expected. A good team will also help with your speed of response because you will be able to delegate tasks. Especially in a down market where foreclosures and short sales are rampant, transactions are faced with even more rigorous processes and rules. You don't want to lose a deal – or a client – as a result of something minor like a late inspection.

“From lenders to inspectors, having a good team to work with that is readily available to answer questions when you need them is key to closing on time,” said Alisha Wade of Realty ONE Group.

### 8 Think from the customer's point of view

Buying or selling a home is an important and often emotional decision in a person's life. Consumers will generally select an agent whom they feel will take care of their needs best. Show that you are on their side, listen to their requirements and preferences and respond in a way that demonstrates or conveys that you consider them a close acquaintance or friend. Think from the customer's perspective. This simple rule applies to any marketing initiative. To arrive at your analysis of services, ask yourself some questions like:

- *Am I giving them what they are looking for?*
- *How will they perceive what I am presenting or providing them?*
- *Would I be happy if I were them?*
- *If I were a consumer, what would I want from an agent in terms of information, frequency of contact?*

Seeing things from the customer's perspective will help keep their experience a positive one.

### 9 Conduct surveys and track results.

Surveys can prove to be a valuable tool and source of information. You can set up surveys to go to clients in the beginning of a relationship after you first meet a client, in the middle of a longer term transaction period, and/or at the very end when the transaction is finalized. Find out what clients like or dislike about you and/or your offered services. Or why they didn't select you as their agent. Analyze their answers to find out what you can improve about your approaches and methodologies. Keep results so that down the road you can analyze



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metrics about how your business has evolved and have the ability to chart a course of action based on empirical knowledge, not just guess work. Statistics and data will help you make wiser decisions about your business.

For basic surveys and polls, try sites that offer them for free, like [PollyDaddy.com](http://PollyDaddy.com) or [SurveyMonkey.com](http://SurveyMonkey.com).

Consumers will select an agent by the level of attention and quality of customer service that they receive. By continuing to provide increased value to your clients, improving communications and conducting proactive approaches within your business practices, you will be able to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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