

What to Do When You're New in Real Estate

by Tom Hopkins

- ✓ Have a professional photo taken. This will appear on everything you put your name to except, of course, legal documents that are part of the listing or sale of properties.
- ✓ Get a cell phone. You have to have a number where people can reach you when you're out and about. Be sure to subscribe to voice mail services. Make it a habit to listen to all of your messages—from clients and to yourself—at the very least twice each day.
- ✓ Record an effective, powerful outgoing voice mail message. "This is Mary Jones. Thank you for calling. I'm serving the needs of another client at the moment. However, your call is important to me. Please leave a message and I will return your call as soon as possible." Try a few different versions of the message until you come up with one that both suits your personality and gets the job done.
- ✓ Get access to a computer and some good contact management software, such as ACT!, Goldmine or Top Producer.
- ✓ If you don't already have a computer or easy access to one, consider investing in one. If making this initial investment isn't in your budget, talk with your broker about what might be available in the office for your use.
- ✓ Select a time management device such as a daily planner, PDA (Personal Data Assistant), or time planning software for your laptop or other computer.
- ✓ Get an email address. Check it at minimum twice daily. Less than 6% of real estate agents with email addresses do this. You'll set yourself apart as a dedicated professional by responding to all inquiries within 12 hours or less.
- ✓ Get access to the Internet. Become familiar with the many resources it has for real estate agents including training, industry news, information from public records, lead generation, and so on. Most importantly, become very familiar with your company's web site. Make sure your personal contact information, including your email and cell phone number is on it.
- ✓ Get familiar with Mapquest.com. It can provide you with driving directions to any location. As a back-up, keep a copy of your local street guide in your car. Don't risk your reputation on not being able to find a property.
- ✓ Have magnetic signs made for your car. Put them on whenever you're out driving around town. Don't be afraid to be creative with your signs, unless your office dictates a standard style.
- ✓ Purchase or gain access to a digital camera. You'll use this both in self-promotion—getting pictures of yourself at events you sponsor—and in promoting the homes you will list.
- ✓ Have your business cards printed. When you receive them, take 10 minutes to hand write the words, "Thank You" on as many cards as you can. As you hand them out, say "You might notice that I wrote 'thank you' on my card. I'm thanking you in advance for, hopefully, the opportunity to someday serve your real estate needs." This is a great way to break the ice with new contacts.
- ✓ Mail out simple flyers or post cards announcing your new career and telling people how to contact you.
- ✓ Call a short list of key people—ones with a fairly large network of friends, relatives and acquaintances—and offer your services to them or others they know. Offer to give them a free market analysis of their property as a way of thanking them in advance for keeping you in mind. This demonstrates to them that you have the ability and resources to handle the real estate business.