Focus Your Efforts: Drip Campaigns and Lead Follow-up Scripts

s a busy real estate professional, you keep your database loaded with leads from customer referrals, community events, and everything in between. Yet no matter what strategy you use, what you say when you contact a lead can make or break the transition from prospect to client. In a highly competitive market, making that conversion requires a strong focus that puts you ahead of the pack.

That's why every agent and broker needs a solid plan: the right methods and the right words, communicated at the right time, to get and keep attention from your leads. Through follow-up scripts and email drip campaigns, you can offer a flow of information to keep yourself top-of-mind with your contacts. And the time you spend up front will help you save time and earn business in the long run.

Begin With the Basics

Before you begin contacting your next batch of leads, take time to establish a standard process—one you might even want to document. Include hints and tips, notes and exceptions, and step-by-step procedures to follow. Most importantly:

Use a lead-gathering strategy to maximize information. You need more than just a name and email or phone number to determine what prospects will want to know. Are they first-time homebuyers or experienced owners? Do they have a move planned or are they just looking for now? Are they building their family or downsizing for an empty nest? It's also a good idea to make note of how they wish to be contacted to further customize your approach.



Employ a good database or customer rights management system. Customer rights management systems (CRMS) allow you to store, categorize, contact, and track your leads and clients. Over time, you can easily see which messages are most effective, which segments are most lucrative, and where best to focus your attention. Some CRM programs can help you plan, then distribute automated email drip campaigns based on a one-time setup.

Consider your business or team structure. If you're a solo agent with limited office help, your needs will be different from a multi-member team with marketing assistants. Consider scheduling times or days for each follow-up method, or assign team members based on their strengths (written communication vs. speaking in person or on the phone).

Email Drip Campaigns

Much more than just a catch-

phrase, email drip campaigns can be powerful tools in any agent's arsenal. One email may be easy to ignore, but an informational series will gather higher open rates and click-throughs, which are essential to converting that lead into a client.

Fortunately, a good CRM or email marketing application can make it easy to build a drip campaign. Segmenting and other settings allow you to choose which prospects receive which email, and when-all automated and customizable. Create different campaigns for homeowners and investors, or mid-market and luxury buyers; send weekly emails for "hot" prospects, or monthly for those with a longer timeline.

As for the emails themselves, personalization is key.

- Write brief, attention-grabbing text that pays special attention to their interests.
- Keep the content fresh and cur-

- rent, providing the knowledge they need to move forward.
- Provide recent testimonials from satisfied clients and business partners.
- Direct them to your website, blog, or social media for the most up-to-date news.

Follow-Up Scripts

Email is an invaluable tool for any business, but nothing can replace talking to your leads directly. Many prospects—especially those with an immediate need you can fill—appreciate the personal touch of a phone call or face-to-face visit. Follow-up scripts enhance these meetings by providing a framework, allowing you to speak comfortably as you keep your goals in mind.

Your CRM or database will still play a central role as you plan and prepare scripts. Well-designed reports can tell you who's beginning a home search or which company wants to exchange opportunities in a nearby area. You may even have details that will help you win them over, from a favorite local coffee spot to their dream neighborhood for their new home.

Once you have a call or visit list, create an easy-to-remember written script to apply to everyone. No matter who you're talking to, be sure to address the following:

- Place the focus on the person (and/or their company) and their most immediate real estate needs.
- Provide valuable information that will benefit them and their specific interests.
- · Offer your best customer service—provide suggestions or referrals to help guide their

Continued from front cover

important decisions.

Include a call to action that will guide them to contact you as soon as they're ready to begin their search, sell their property, or get assistance with the transaction process.

Read your script out loud several times before you begin using it; even better, commit it to memory. The more you repeat it, the more natural it will feel when you're talking to a prospect.

Then, assemble a person-byperson "cheat sheet"—on paper, on your laptop, or in your mobile device—to spark your memory during the meeting. Make notes of special requests or interests, and add in personal details as appropriate to show your interest in getting to know the person and their needs.

After a few meetings using your follow-up script as a guideline, it will be second nature, freeing you to engage without forgetting anything important.

Applying Focus to Converting Your Leads

Each real estate business whether you're an office of one or a team leader of 20—has its own

processes, management protocols, and individual needs. Yet good drip campaigns and lead follow-up scripts can be useful to all of them. Many management and CRM systems offer unique features that will help you design your outreach strategy and track your effectiveness.

CINC (previously Commissions Inc.): Their CRM offers a lead management dashboard, com-

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munication tools, multisource lead integration, automated workflows, and a mobile app. Custom drip campaigns, mass texting, bulk emails, and more provide all the options you need.

Contactually: This system serves brokers as well as agents, with tools to fit the needs of each. Agents get help to qualify and nurture leads, utilize relationships to grow referrals, and prioritize what's most important. Brokers can maximize CRM adoption rates, augment email workflows, and increase agent production.

Market Leader: This mobile-optimized solution helps generate leads and improve engagement, offering a complete CRM, marketing design center, and customizable IDX website. Options support individual agents and the team as a whole, with email tools, analytics, lead consolidation, and a mobile CRM.

Showing Your Clients Genuine Gratitude

ften, you may think of saying "thank you" as just another box to check on your to-do list. Yet homebuyer clients are more than a source of businessthey're the foundation of the entire residential real estate industry.

The art of showing gratitude can mean the difference between a warm handshake or a solid referral base for years to come. When you're ready to say thank you at the end of a transaction, the following ideas can make you and your business memorable in all the right ways.

Be pleasantly personal

You and your clients have learned a lot about each other during the transaction process. If you've been attentive and done your homework, you may know their favorite vacation spot, preferred wine, decorating style, hobbies and interests, and much more. Keep these in mind when choosing a post-closing gift; your personal

attention and memory for details could be a factor in future referrals.

Heartfelt, handwritten wishes

In the modern business atmosphere, communications are often more casual than they were in the past. Still, it's as important to be professional as it is to be warm and friendly.

Emails and pre-printed stationery might be sensible for a quick hello, but they just aren't sufficient for thanking people who have trusted you with helping them buy a home. A note or letter, written in your own hand, will be particularly meaningful when it arrives with a carefully-selected gift.

Give personalized home gifts

Your clients will be more than ready to make their new place truly feel like home. You can lend a hand when you order a custom décor gift (or a few, delivered at intervals throughout the year) with the residents' names. Options abound, from signage to kitchenware and wall art to photo frames, in every style and budget.

Hire a cleaning crew for move-in

Every client will want their new home neat as a pin, which can be a challenge for traditional and REO sales alike. Contact a maid or make-ready service to give your buyers the gift of a clean space, which they'll truly appreciate at the end of a hectic move.

Share something delicious

Move-in week is always chaotic, but new homeowners still need to eat. Have a family-sized meal delivered on day one, or give them a gift certificate for grocery delivery. You can also choose beautifully packed sweet and savory snack boxes, or even a food-of-the-month gift.

Use or promote their business or company

They put their trust in you to deliver a successful transaction-so returning the favor is a sensible way to say thanks. If your client has a business or works for a company whose services you can employ, consider utilizing them; you can also promote them through referrals or social media, if appropriate.

Give them a night out

Busy people who've just bought a home deserve a chance to relax, particularly when they're adjusting to a new city. Offer a gift of dinner and a movie, or tickets to a local event; help them find a trustworthy sitter for children or pets, if needed.

Support a beloved charity

You learn a great deal about clients during a transaction, including what causes inspire their passionate support. Consider a donation in their honor to a charity they find meaningful. It's a gesture that demonstrates care for the business relationship you've built togetherand a gift they won't soon forget.

Stay in Touch with the FORCE!





Hiring Nightmares and How to Avoid Them



dding new people to a real estate team can generate great excitement and anticipation. Whether it's a newly-created position to help with growing business, or a chance to add a fresh perspective, the opportunities are as great for the company as they are for candidates.

Unfortunately, there are risks inherent with any hiring, from regulatory considerations to applicants who can't offer what they promised in their interview. Hiring mistakes can cost the business large sums of money, create an inefficient environment, or even result in lengthy legal battles. Companies with human resources departments have an additional gatekeeper, but individuals and small teams may not have such an advantage.

It's up to hiring managers to anticipate candidate and new hire troubles, and to find ways to avoid a situation that could haunt you for years. But if your expertise is in real estate sales, marketing, or management, how do you protect yourself and your business? Consider these best practices whenever you're hiring someone new to keep your office running smoothly.

Talking the Talk

You asked plenty of questions, and the candidate you chose offered all the right answers. Yet just a few weeks in, you're seeing a negative attitude and other toxic tenden-

cies that you didn't anticipate. Or perhaps the bright, energetic face you hired has become somber, slow, and disengaged. What happened?

Sadly, even applicants who give their best during the interview sometimes have nothing to offer when it comes to tackling their duties. To combat this issue, find ways to strengthen your interview techniques.

- If it's your first time as an interviewer, or even if it's been a few years, do some research on better ways to approach job seekers in their interview. Numerous manager-advice websites can guide you through a list of recommended questions.
- Ask at least one question the applicant won't expect—possibly even something lighthearted (though still business-appropriate). Their surprise may elicit a more genuine response that will display their personality, and how they handle the unexpected.
- Give them a chance to surprise you, too. Ask for an anecdote about their most unusual prior job duty, their most unique solution to an issue, or how they handled a surprise "twist" in a transaction.

Beyond the Q&A

The new agent on your team is a superstar, with years of experience in a nearby city and a thorough knowledge of your state's requirements for handling REO transactions. In fact,

they came highly recommended by several professionals you know, with regional awards to boot.

But they don't seem to get along with their coworkers—all their interactions are stiff, even cold. When you ask one of your connections about this, you discover that the agent is used to a stricter, less casual environment than the one in your office. Their work is impeccable, but team morale seems to suffer day by day—not a disaster, but something you wish you'd anticipated.

While interviews are your number-one hiring tool, they should be more than just a simple Q&A session. Find opportunities to evaluate how a candidate will fit in to your team and company culture.

Engage candidates in genuine conversation, giving them the opportunity to feel comfortable as well as professional. This will help you gauge if their style is formal or relaxed, detail-oriented or bigpicture focused.

Ask them what they know about your company, and what they would like to know. If you mostly work solo or in a small team, tell them your goals and intentions, and how you would expect someone to support you.

Meet with your applicant more than once, and invite others to meet them, before you extend an offer. You'll have a chance to see more of their personality and evaluate how they will mesh with their colleagues and your corporate culture.

Background Checks

Your new broker has a resume overflowing with memberships and certifications, but they've been on the job for weeks without a hint of the dynamic professional they claim to be. Yesterday, your colleague got a call from a first-time homebuyer who was denied a loan based on inaccurate information an agent gave them. And just a few months ago, one of your partners' offices fired a closer who was involved in a wire transfer theft scheme.

To most of us, an employment application is the last place we'd think of lying. Yet to some applicants, dishonesty is the best policy for getting a job. That's why a background check is essential to protecting your business, whether you have one employee, or 10, or 100.

Running a background check inspects public and private records to verify employment and educational history, legal work status, criminal records, driving records, and (subject to some limitations or employer preferences) credit history, social media profiles, and medical records.

Larger companies may already have an agreement with a company that provides background check services, but if your business is small, you don't have to remain in the dark. Many reputable background check providers offer one-time or lower-volume services.

Remember that in most cases, you are simply verifying that the information the candidate provided is accurate.

Best Practices, Better Hires

Real estate is constantly changing and unpredictable—but hiring doesn't have to be. Choose more wisely by thoroughly looking at who your applicants are, what they can do, and if they can live up to their promise. You'll save time and money, avoid risks, and most importantly, build a team that's ready to succeed for years to come.



4 Opportunities to Grow Your Business in 2019

he start of a new year is the ideal time to take a deep breath, survey the horizon, and get to work on making it the best year yet in your business. Consider these ideas to help you get started—then add your own unique knowledge to create an annual plan that works for you and your team.

Think Affordability

The inventory shortage, combined with rising interest rates and falling wages, has created a lack of affordable homes for a broad range of income brackets. Learn your community-and your clients' needs-inside and out to help find the best prices within their means. Discover where to find the best intel and cultivate every resource, even those you've overlooked before.

REO-focused pros could be particularly suited to this area, with growing interest in shadow listings and online asset disposition for affordable choices. Opportunities abound for agents, brokers, and asset managers to build even stronger partnerships based on making the most of what your region has to offer.

Go Sustainable

After a heavy push to go green earlier in the 2000s, troubles in

the economy shifted attention to keeping global business afloat. Now, with alarming recent reports on climate change and natural disasters causing widespread loss, it's an ideal time to turn your attention back to sustainability.

Many clients and prospects want to know how they can reduce their impact and become less prone to disaster, so do your research. Learn which homes in your area already meet higher standards, and what options are available to refit and rehab those that don't. Be prepared to make suggestions that will fit smaller budgets as well as larger ones. Keep a list of the best and most wallet-friendly insurers, contractors, and energy providers to be a one-stop resource for the peace of mind every buyer deserves.

Set the Stage

If you're not already using a staging service, you may be missing out on selling opportunities. Research shows that staged propertiesthose where a specialized design professional has arranged for a stylish, yet lived-in look-sell within a fraction of the time unstaged ones

This option may seem counterintuitive in some cases, particularly REO listings in desirable areas.

Yet for the slower-to-move homes in your portfolio, staging may turn things around. Start by seeking out a certified professional, then put them to work before you shoot photos of a property. You might just impress a seller or investor, and put your team on track to receive more referrals and clients.

Look to the Past

Research continues to show that 75 percent or more of an agent's business comes from referrals—and there's no better source for referrals than satisfied past clients. If you don't already have one, create a plan for checking in with them. Remind them of their time working with you, and let them know that you want to offer friends and family the same great experience.

Equally as important, take the time to check in and find out what's new. Ask how they like their home and neighbors, what they enjoy about their neighborhood, or if family members have milestone events coming up. Refer them to contractors and service providers when they're looking to make improvements. Send greetings and gifts, when appropriate. The more helpful and memorable you are, the more likely your past clients will be to send business your way.

Celebrate the **New Year With** a Brand Update

The new year brings a chance to find fresh ways to stand out in the market, like those in the "Opportunities to Grow Your Business" article. A brand update lets clients and partners know that you and your team are offering more than business as usual—and helps bring you more attention where you need it most. Apply these ideas to dust off your image and celebrate the arrival of 2019 with a fresh brand outlook.

Be Consistent

You do your best to be a knowledgeable, reliable resource to your clients every day. Be certain that your brand clearly displays this, in look and feel as well as face-to-face. Your reliability will stand out with clients and prospects, reinforcing your brand and your business relationships. Once they know you as a dependable resource, they'll bring all their questions—and their business—to you and your team.

Choose a clean, simple logo, design, and fonts to go with well-edited text. Have a colleague or friend proofread to make sure you don't overlook misspellings or punctuation issues.

Clearly state your capabilities, specialties, and goals for working with clients in a way they'll understand. Highlight your accomplishments, but don't use too much industry jargon.

Use a similar biography or profile on every website where you're listed. Adapt your listing to the audience and their needs, but establish your offerings and deliver each time.

Be Memorable

Read enough self-authored profiles by agents and brokers, and you may begin to think they're filling in a template of adjectives, nouns, and verbs. Most of us are experts at sounding professional, but don't forget that it's just as important to be memorable.

Branding is as much about who you are as about how you conduct business. Highlight your style and personality in a way that complements your expertise and capabilities.

In some regions, a folksy, casual persona combined with detailed knowledge of the area makes the

most sense. Other cities may prefer razor-sharp wit and fast, precise answers. Know your market and your strengths, and use them to build your brand.

Do you have a signature color or symbol, a catchy tagline, or an interesting story behind your business name? Include those touches throughout your branding, which will help you stand out in clients' and contacts' minds.

Be Unique

In a market flooded with options and shortcuts, the most outstanding professionals will continue to see success when others are struggling. As you refresh your brand, find your unique attributes and highlight them to draw in new and repeat business.

Ask yourself what you offer that truly makes you stand out amongst your competition. Then, ask your satisfied clients—why did they choose you and your company? What's special about your services that would convince them to recommend you?

In a market flooded with options and shortcuts, the most outstanding professionals will continue to see success when others are struggling.

If you feel as if you're too generic, consider what you can do to add value. Think about becoming an expert in a specialized area of REO or general transactions. Learn every detail of a state or federal regulation that confuses homebuyers or sellers. Respond to every communication in two hours or less. Then, promote your feature as much as possible.

Whatever your focus, strive to do what you do better than anyone else. Above-and-beyond effort shows in your interactions and dealings with clients and partners, and will earn you the best branding of all—word of mouth and referrals.

New Members, New Faces

Each month, the FORCE features some of its new members in its newsletter. Here are some of the agents we've recently welcomed to our network:

Maria Zuniga Salzman Real Estate



Maria Zuniga became a Realtor in 2006 and is currently a broker associate in the Los

Angeles and Ventura County, California areas, where she specializes in luxury properties and valuations, and manages a team of 40 agents. Beginning in the 1990s, Zuniga worked as a real estate paralegal, servicing major financial institutions on judicial foreclosures, bankruptcies, and unlawful detainer—information she has put to use on the agent/broker side.

As a broker, Zuniga has sharpened her adjustment skills by completing hundreds of BPOs (broker price opinions). She also maintains a focus on the needs and interest of upmarket buyers and complements her REO business with serving as an agent for luxury clients.

Zuniga was 2010 Broker of the Year and 2010-2013 Top Leader at Carrington Real Estate Services; in 2012, she was named among the top 250 Latino real estate agents in the United States. She is a member of the National Association of REALTORS, California Association of REALTORS, National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals, and Asian Real Estate Association of America.

Maritsa Nunziata Madison Group Keller Williams



An agent and director of marketing located in Ridgewood, New Jersey,

Maritsa Nunziata earned her real estate license in 2005. Her extensive experience includes mortgage underwriting, home improvement contracting, property management,

and residential/commercial real estate sales.

Nunziata is part of the womanowned Madison Group, a specialized REO business now partnering with Keller Williams Village Square to help agents and investors earn the highest price as quickly as possible. She focuses on prioritizing the client experience through responsiveness, competence, and reliability in working with all parties. A graduate of Tufts University with a degree in psychology, Nunziata helps her team execute over 150 transactions per year.

Jennifer Dinser Latter & Blum Classic Homes & Properties, Inc.



Jennifer Dinser is a Realtor and REO manager serving Louisiana. Licensed since 2005, her

experience includes residential, commercial, and property management experience, with a certification as a Short Sale and Foreclosure Resource (SFR).

Dinser attended Burke Baker School of Real Estate and Appraising, studying mortgage origination and residential appraising. She is a member of the Hammond, Louisiana Chamber of Commerce and president of the Teacher-Parent Association at Trafton Academy.

Lisa Vargas Keller Williams



Lisa Vargas is a real estate agent with extensive knowledge in real estate marketing,

management, financing, title and closing, luxury properties, relocation, REO and short sales, serving the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area. Her business group, the

"Home Sweet Home Team," has participated in selling more than 22,000 homes, working closely with financing and title providers to ensure smooth closings.

As an AVP at Bank of America, Vargas was responsible for overseeing the management of the largest REO portfolio in the U.S. Her additional past experience includes human resources, organizational management, and property management, and she has earned a Six Sigma Green Belt certification. She holds a bachelor's degree from Southern Nazarene University and an MBA from Keller Graduate School of Management.

Brenda Allen Leaving A Legacy Realty LLC



Brenda Allen is a Tennessee-based real estate broker, licensed in her home state as well

as Mississippi and Arkansas. She specializes in residential real estate, partnering with local financial and community institutions to educate buyers, sellers, investors, and licensed professionals. Since 2002, Allen has facilitated more than \$115 milion in buyer and seller transactions for individuals, financial institutions, government agencies, and non-profit groups.

Allen attended Christian Brothers University, studying business management and marketing. Her previous experience includes marketing and management in the hospitality and service industries. Allen holds numerous designations and memberships, including the National Minority Supplier Development Council, NAR, Memphis Area Association of Realtors, Northwest Mississippi Association of Realtors, North Central Mississippi Board of Realtors, and many others.

THE 2019 FIVE STAR EVENTS LINEUP MARK YOUR CALENDAR



FEBRUARY 25, 2019

HAVANA NIGHTS

CUBA LIBRE RESTAURANT | ORLANDO, FI ORINA

THEFIVESTAR.COM/HAVANA-NIGHTS

Join hundreds of your fellow mortgage professionals at the industry's hottest party, featuring Caribbean-influenced cocktails, fine Cuban cuisine, live music, and premier networking opportunities.



MARCH 11-13, 2019

SINGLE-FAMILY RENTAL SUMMIT

THE GUEST HOUSE AT GRACELAND | MEMPHIS. TENNESSEE

SINGLEFAMILYRENTALSUMMIT.COM

Featuring informative sessions led by the market's top experts, the 2019 Single-Family Rental Summit will discuss the technologies, strategies, and intel needed to craft an effective SFR investment plan.



MARCH 13-14, 2019

FIVE STAR FINTECH SUMMIT

THE GUEST HOUSE AT GRACELAND | MEMPHIS. TENNESSEE

FIVESTARFINTECH.COM

Join us for the 2019 Five Star Fintech Summit, where attendees will have the opportunity to discuss the latest innovations in financial technology with leading subjectmatter experts from the tech and mortgage industries.



APRIL 23, 2019

FIVE STAR Government forum

THE NEWSEUM | WASHINGTON, D.C. FIVESTARGOVERNMENTEDRIIM COM

Leaders from mortgage servicing and the federal government will come together to participate in an open dialogue surrounding the mortgage industry's most pressing issues and challenges.

FORTHEFIVESTAR'S MANY EXCITING EVENTS COMING IN 2019.





LEGAL LEAGUE 100 SPRING SERVICER SUMMIT

THE ADOLPHUS HOTEL | DALLAS, TEXAS LEGALLEAGUEIOO.COM

The Legal League 100 Servicer Summit is where the nation's elite financial services law firms come together with servicing executives to discuss policies impacting professional legal services supporting the mortgage industry.

*Open only to Legal League members and mortgage servicing professionals.



MAY 8, 2019

FIVE STAR DIVERSITY SYMPOSIUM

THE ADOLPHUS HOTEL | DALLAS, TEXAS

The 2019 Five Star Diversity Symposium will serve as a platform for mortgage industry leaders to advance the diversity and inclusion dialogue and promote progressive business practices.



MAY 9, 2019

FIVE STAR NON-QM SUMMIT

THE ADOLPHUS HOTEL | DALLAS, TEXAS

The inaugural Five Star Non-QM Summit will host leading mortgage lending and servicing organizations for conversations surrounding the opportunities presented by non-QM lending.



∠ SEPTEMBER 23-25, 2019

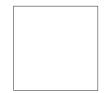
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The most significant event in mortgage servicing returns in 2019 for inspiring keynotes, industry-leading academic labs, and unparalleled business opportunities.



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REORedBook

The Ultimate Guide to Finding Qualified REO Agents and Brokers.

REORedBook.com is the mortgage industry's trusted directory of qualified residential REO agents and brokers, exclusively comprised of FORCE members. The FORCE's vetted agents—license, E&O insurance, and national background check—stand at the ready to address your business needs.



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