

On Becoming an e-Agent—Not Necessarily High Tech, but Highly Important? Part 28

By Jo Becker, BA

This month I wanted to step back and remind you of what is, perhaps, one of your most important resources as an agent. This is not (necessarily) a high tech tool, but a practical, every ready resource: Your broker.

Now, if you're a sole-practitioner or you are the managing or principal broker, then you are your own best resource—you and your cadre of administrators, lawyers, accountants, and industry peers. But if you're an individual agent or team of agents working under a principal broker and in the name of a larger brokerage firm, don't forget or overlook this powerful resource.

First of all, principals have a minimum of three years of sales experience and additional training beyond that of the brokers they oversee. Many have been around the bend and back again—they've weathered the storm in this industry through thick and thin. Many others have played an active role in the industry by setting trends, managing change, steering trade associations and affiliated organizations like OREF and MLS. Several principals participate in brokers' forums—avenues for company leaders to share industry insights, express concerns and work together to thwart risks that affect you in your business, and lobby for positive change in the industry.

What's more, when it comes to self-promotion—just like transaction documents—your broker is your first line of defense. S/he is not only there to protect you and the company by overseeing all transaction documents, but state law mandates that your managing broker will review *all marketing materials*. State law, and often company policy, dictates that items must be turned in for review within so many days (in the case of transaction documents) or before use (in the case of marketing materials).

I'm going to assume that you're up-to-speed on the legal requirements of turning in your transactional paperwork. But what marketing materials need to be reviewed? Well, the best answer would come directly from your own managing broker, but suffice it to say that in general, anytime you're putting your name out there as a real estate professional, you're doing it as a representative of your firm and as such, your broker has a right and duty to review your materials. This is true for business cards, property flyers, presentation books, personal promotional flyers and feature sheets, brochures, newsletters, postcards, electronic media including electronic newsletters as well as your email signature line, your website, advertisements, and the list goes on...

The following excerpt may surprise some in the industry, but it comes directly from the Oregon Real Estate agency's site (www.rea.state.or.us):

"Advertising includes all forms of promotion and solicitation and any means of communication for any purpose related to professional real estate activity and must be under the direct supervision of the real estate broker or branch office manager and include the name or registered business name of the broker." [OAR 863-015-125]

Any of the marketing ideas we discuss in this column that inspire you to create your own materials, or anytime you hire someone else to do it for you, you need to get your broker's review of the finished product.

The managing and principal brokers I've worked with have proven to be awesome sources of information and supportive feedback. Get to know your broker—talk with him/her regularly and be sure you're both within the law when it comes to your marketing materials. If nothing else, s/he might point out an embarrassing typo—like the time I listed "roomy panty" as an amenity on a flyer for a property my parents/partners and I had just listed. Of course, the house had a roomy *pantry*—but the office sure got a kick out of it! Needless to say, I put a sack over my head and went home to correct the typo and reprint the flyers immediately.

If all of this seems too overwhelming, ask for help, but keep trying! Before long you will get the hang of it. In the meantime, *hang it there!*

Jo Becker has eight years of licensed real estate experience. As a former broker, she knows how important, and sometimes scary, technology and self-promotion can be. Jo has provided personalized one-on-one marketing consultation and computer software training to the industry since 2002.

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