

On Becoming an e-Agent— Take a Lesson from Mother Nature Part 33

By Jo Becker, BA

Summer is here! Pondering the seasons recently made me wonder if there wasn't a lesson to be taken from the consistency and certainty of the seasons.

True as the seasons, your marketing efforts must be consistent—both in tone or message and in terms of frequency and redundancy—in order to be successful. Many advertising experts say people must hear a message eleven times before they remember it. So calling a FSBO once, or sending an annual greeting, or starting and stopping fad advertising programs won't get you where you want to be.

Think of yourself as a season—pick your favorite season and let the inspiration of nature's wisdom wash over you. Notice that I didn't say, 'take a lesson from the *weather*.' Living in the Northwest, the words "weather" and "consistency" are bona fide antonyms. I remember reading that only 4%-5% of Realtors® nationally have a long-term program for keeping in contact with clients or reaching prospective clients. Some estimate that 75% of all business comes from referrals and word of mouth—if you aren't keeping in constant contact with your target audience you can't possibly expect to see a spike in your sales!

I've seen dozens if not hundreds of agents who seem to espouse a weather-like approach to marketing. They start a direct mail campaign by writing an introductory letter announcing that they'll be in touch again soon and then never send another. They send calendars, or magnets, or Christmas cards and don't do anything the other eleven months of the year. They subscribe to email services and newsletter services and buy software packages. The problem is they either don't use them or don't integrate them so they all have the same, familiar look and tone that will make the pieces easily recognizable to their target audience.

If it takes eleven times for folks to get your message and remember you, you can see that a monthly campaign of contact is a minimal recommendation. Whether you choose direct mail, newsletters, email contact, advertisements in publications and newspapers, or door hangers, etc., frequency and consistency are key. Frankly, they're more important than creativity. Don't feel that you have to recreate the wheel; use a standard format and marketing medium and use the same verbiage or ideas on a rotating basis.

Stick-to-it-ness is essential as well. You should plan and budget for a one- to two-year campaign. If your target audience consists of people who already know and trust you and/or you contact them more than once a month you may see results sooner. If you're farming a new area or advertising broadly in newspapers and the like, it may take longer.

One more tidbit: self-promote by being of service. Prove your worth by example. Don't just tout your credentials and accomplishments, provide information that consumers want. They'll respect and remember it!

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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