

Spring is a great—if not a metaphorical—time of renewal. With a little prodding in last month's article, I encouraged those of you who weren't yet onboard with your business plan and marketing plan for '07 to get started before we got any further into the year. For those of you who religiously study, rework, follow, and revamp your plan, I'd like to offer my compliments. It's hard work, but very necessary for sustained success.

If you have already identified your target market, have your business systems and procedures in place, and have begun a campaign to capture market share, then great! Don't recreate the wheel. Don't doubt what's working for you. Just like in the stock market, know that consistency and a long-term approach is essential to the growth of your business. Follow, and yes, constantly reevaluate your plan, but give it *at least* 1-2 years. With that caveat in mind, if it's working for you, renew your conviction not your campaign.

For those of you who haven't started planning, don't have a clue, or for whatever your reason feel you really need to change your "look," message, campaign, etc., spring is a great time to shed the old and don the new. Who cares if it's cliché? If it's the excuse you need to get moving then grab it and run with it!

If you need a boost to get on the right track, following is a brief excerpt from an earlier *Principal Broker* article to get you started (full article available at: [http://www.principalbrokernorthwest.com/pdfs/PB\\_4-05.pdf](http://www.principalbrokernorthwest.com/pdfs/PB_4-05.pdf)).

**1. Mission—Know exactly what you have to offer!**

In order for your marketing to convey a clear, concise, and consistent message, you must first be clear yourself on what your mission is.

**2. Market—Know who your ideal clients are and how to reach them!**

Defining your ideal market is up to you. Do you want to specialize in your own (or some other) neighborhood? Do you want to focus on first-time or move up buyers? Do you want to service sellers exclusively? How about vacation homes, bank-owned properties, or high-end luxury homes? Define your market and you'll begin to see the demographics that make it up; this will point you to the most practical way of reaching your ideal client.

**3. Message—Must be clear enough to convey who you are and what you have to offer!**

Parlaying your mission in to a concise message targeted to your ideal market isn't easy. It may be useful to you (and your target audience) to begin with a slogan. For example, in our practice, my parents/partners and I chose to pool our personal contacts and market to those we knew personally. As such, we marketed ourselves as "The Beckers—Your Family of Real Estate Professionals." Our marketing pieces assumed a professional but personable tone that strove to speak from our family to theirs. What slogan or phrase summarizes you and your approach to your practice?

**4. Media—Defined as any vehicle used to convey your message to your market!**

But not all media are created equal. What medium will work for you will depend a great deal on the market you choose. For example, if you're focused on entry-level buyers, mailing to tenants in apartment complexes may be a good strategy; but it would be a stinker of an idea if you're trying to reach and impress luxury homeowners.

Now, all the best marketing in the world would be for naught if you don't also have the following two points down:

**5. Method—Knowing what to do, with whom, with what, when and how: i.e., being in control of your business!**

This means staying on top of your game—knowing how to market listings for sellers, finding properties for buyers, understanding the forms you use forward and backward, negotiating winning offers and working through to successful closings (with all the three trillion lil' steps in between). Notice that Method is number FIVE. You may be an excellent agent, but if you don't do steps 1-4 to market yourself, no one will know about it!

**6. Management—Operating your business in such a way that your clients are completely satisfied!**

Management is completely individual—it may mean a prescribed daily routine, a set of procedures and transaction checklists, or one or more assistants or professional specialists to assist you. Whatever system(s) you can devise that works for you, keeps you sane and assures your clients are so well serviced they'll scramble to tell others about you—is a good one!

As always, if this seems overwhelming ask for help, but keep trying! Before long you'll get the hang of it. In the meantime, *hang in there!*

Jo Becker, BA

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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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