

I suppose I've harped on (and hopefully helped you with) business plans, marketing campaigns, and collateral pieces enough over the past several articles. As I shift gears to talk more about technology the remainder of the year, let me use this month's article as an opportunity to bridge the two topics.

I propose to you that a Memory CD is an example of a perfect marriage between technology and marketing (in particular, marketing to past clients as discussed in the last article). In the last year or two of our practice, my parents/partners and I began to create what I called Memory CDs for our clients. We took pictures throughout the transaction—on home tours, at construction sites, at the signing table, etc.—then, within a few weeks of closing, I combined the pictures into an “electronic collage” noting particular milestones and burned it to CD.

At times it was time consuming and I have to admit it was easier and more frequently done for our buyers than our sellers, but I had had great ambitious of becoming more efficient and evolving it into a more refined piece. Think about the power of it though; what an incredible way for sellers to reminiscence over a home they've loved and now moved on from or for a buyer to remember the joys and struggles of buying their own home.

To create a Memory CD, I used Adobe Photoshop (very expensive; many other photo manipulation programs will likely suit you fine) to crop and size the pictures from our digital camera. I then used Adobe PageMaker to layout 5-10 pages of memory-making pictures with a little commentary here and there complete, of course, with our logo and contact information. Again, PageMaker is very expensive; you could do the same with MS Word, though it might be (scratch that, is guaranteed to be) very frustrating. MS Publisher will handle multiple images per page with greater ease than Word. (By-the-way, if you've tried using MS Word to layout flyers and brochures and experienced words and graphics mysteriously jumping all over the page, you're not alone. And it isn't you! The program wasn't made for design layout and trying to use it as such is possible, but may induce you to pull all your hair out before you're done! User beware...)

I then used Adobe Acrobat (the full version) to turn the pages of pictures into a PDF (portable document format) file. This would ensure that clients could open the file when they received the CD without concern for whether or not they had the software programs I used to create it. The full version of Acrobat is also expensive; for some alternative options read the May 2006 *Principal Broker* article entitled “Paperless Offices, Portable Drives, and PDFs” on pages 13-15 at http://www.principalbrokernorthwest.com/pdfs/PB_05-06.pdf.

The last step is to burn to CD. If you have the capability of burning a CD with your CD drive then you'll have software that came with it that makes the process of getting your lovely “electronic walk through memory lane” onto a CD. Note: many of us have DVD drives that will write DVDs as well. However, I'd assume that CD drives are still more common than DVDs and encourage you to stick with the lowest “common-denominator” to assure your clients will be able to read the disk you prepare for them. By the way, if you don't have a drive that will burn a new disk, they're fairly inexpensive at \$40-\$80 bucks at any local electronics or office store.

There were times we were included in housewarming parties and could deliver the CD to happy new homeowners in person with great fanfare. Other times, we simply mailed it with a handwritten note of congratulations and sincere thanks. Regardless of how it was delivered, the CDs were always well received. It's a project I encourage you to undertake if you're so inclined. If you would like to see a copy of one of the Memory CDs we made, email me at JoByEmail@yahoo.com and I'll reply with an abbreviated version.

For another project that similarly marries up marketing and technology skills, see the April 2006 *Principal Broker* article entitled “A Girl Can Dream” on pages 14-15 at

http://www.principalbrokernorthwest.com/pdfs/PB_04-06.pdf for a discussion of re-CMAs burned to CD and mailed to clients on their transaction anniversary.

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, *former*GRI

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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