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Who's your real sales team?

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Most real estate professionals know a thing or two about the value of referrals. They also know about the value of focused, dedicated networking - the key to a steady stream of lucrative referrals and new clients. Connecting sellers and buyers (brokering) of major investments like real estate is a more complicated process than selling products and services directly to a single customer. The real estate broker/salesperson serves more than one constituent to complete a successful sale, thus elevating the importance of her reputation and trust.

Great networkers understand that people will more readily listen to your value proposition when other people talk about you. What your clients say about you is more believable than what you say about yourself because it's proof of your value rather than just good salesmanship.

The How and Why of BNI

People in BNI (Business Networking International) groups understand the concept of developing a team of "salespeople" completely outside their own organization. While the requirements for continuous membership in a BNI group are comparably rigorous, the structured discipline works for the members who embrace it. Almost every BNI group has a real estate professional who thrives as a member. Only one representative of any business category is allowed in a group so it eliminates internal competition. Every other member of the group is expected, actually required, to provide a steady stream of qualified business referrals to other members of the group.

In essence, you enlist a team of 15, 25, maybe 50 or more individual "salespeople" who are expected to help you find new customers. In return, you promise to do the same for other members. What's really interesting about BNI is that the people who provide the most leads for others almost always garner the most new business from the group. It may sound counterintuitive but it works!

Spewing your sales pitch on people will usually annoy them. When they're in the real estate market and ready to talk to an agent, will you be top-of-mind? Now, if a friend of theirs eagerly recommends you and your agency, then the deal is yours if you take good care of the client. There's no sales pressure.

Pick them and stick with them!

There are myriad excellent networking groups out there for Realtors: Chambers of commerce, non-profit boards, civic clubs and many local private networking groups. BNI is just one option that some real estate agents find to be effective. Choose the organizations in your market that make sense for your business networking activity and then do one thing early and often: participate!

Show up at meetings. Listen more than talk (you'll have ample opportunities to promote your business). Seek to help the mortgage broker, the contractor, the lawyer, the accountant, the web developer, the insurance agent, the fitness club owner, the chiropractor and other professionals in your groups. Doing so will enlist obligatory support on your behalf from a whole team of "salespeople" who can actually state clearly your value proposition because you took the time to

develop a good relationship with them.

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