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Six essential indispensable strategies to build an unbeatable real estate brand - by Stacey Cohen

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Shown (from left) are: Michele Kleier, Sabrina Kleier-Morgenstern, Samantha Kleier-Forbes, and Ian Kleier

Successful realtors understand the power of personal branding. Whether you're a real estate broker, agent, Fortune 500 CEO or boutique agency owner, it's more important than ever to present a compelling and consistent message that resonates with your target audience. Effectively communicating your personal brand and "why choose me?" is paramount to long-term growth. Here are six indispensable strategies for making that happen:

1. **Define Your Brand:** What makes you remarkable? The first step toward answering this question is conducting a self-audit to identify your purpose, strengths, values and passion. In a fiercely competitive real estate environment, it's essential to crystallize your competitive advantage. Some real estate professionals differentiate themselves through their individual achievements (e.g., deal volume) while others boast added value (e.g., JD, MBA, mortgage industry background). Pinpoint phrases that best describe your expertise: Condo expert, data guru, "green" specialist, interior designer. Also, identify words that best describe your personality: Driven, persistent, honest. And in order to gain a 360-degree view, it's equally important to understand how business colleagues and friends perceive you. For a sterling example of a strong personal brand, look to Michele Kleier, president and chairman of premier Manhattan-based real estate brokerage firm Kleier Residential, star of HGTV's "Selling New York" and author of book Hot Property. Kleier's brand is simple, but powerful: "Family, relationships and trust." Kleier's husband Ian and daughters Samantha Kleier-Forbes and Sabrina Kleier-Morgenstern work alongside her. "My top passion and value is family," Kleier said. "The warm, family culture that we've established at Kleier Residential has enabled us to build our brand in the most competitive real estate market in the world. Our brokers are considered family and are an integral part of success."

2. **Understand Your Audience:** Define your target audience –and arm yourself with intelligence about what drives them to take action. Determine who you're talking to: Consider age, gender, personality and profession. Then, identify your clients' pain points: How can you solve their needs better than your competitors? What is their preferred channel of communication? Answering each of these

questions thoroughly is imperative.

3. Know Your Competition: In order to stand out, gather intelligence on who you're up against. Then, be better than them. One key question to answer in this process: What niches are not being exploited within your local market? Once you figure it out, you're ready to put your stake in the ground.

4. Bring Your Brand to Life, Consistently: Once you've crafted a compelling brand, it's time to make some noise. The array of channels is seemingly endless: Websites, blogs, social media, print collateral, open house signs, ads, email blasts. Consistent messaging and visuals that reinforce your brand are non-negotiable, no matter the channel. To build a consistent and compelling image, share positive client testimonials, achievements, success stories, content (curated and self-published), professional speaking and earned media opportunities. It's important to not only showcase current listings, but also properties you've successfully closed. How often should you share? A good rule of thumb is to post once a day, five days a week. If time is scarce, it's fine to focus on just one social media channel. And always ensure you adhere to their brand standards and policies.

5. Develop Content That's Relevant (and Platform-Appropriate): Good is not enough—you need to create remarkable content to capture your audience. Content is more than words, make use of striking visuals to engage readers. And before hitting the “post” button, take a step back and ensure your post is relevant and relatable. Take into account the recipient's mindset: What's in it for me? Whether you develop articles, blog posts or videos, make certain the content is shareable, engaging and actionable. Humor drives further interaction when used appropriately. And don't forget the “wow!” headline.

6. It's All About Relationships: At the end of the day, purchasers and sellers often make decisions based on their relationship with the individual realtor, not the business entity. For this reason, it's important to engage in both online and offline communities. Be transparent: Should you receive a negative post or review, address it in a professional and timely fashion. Both prospective and existing clients will appreciate your honesty. Also, invest in networking and actively join committees and organizations (both professional and community). Give before you get, and say “thank you” often.

“It's not about making the deal –it's about the future relationship, not selling in the moment,” Kleier said. “If an apartment isn't right, we move on until we find the right fit, no matter how long it takes.”

Real estate mogul and Shark Tank celebrity Barbara Corcoran is known for having built the most powerful real estate brand in NYC—and her success is predicated on developing and owning a trustworthy brand. According to Barbara, “Your brand makes your customers trust you before you deserve the trust.”

Here's to perfecting your personal brand. And remember: It requires routine maintenance and monitoring to ensure your message is heard loud and clear.

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