

You Can Attract New Agents With An Internet-Based Recruiting Strategy

By Kim Ades

Real estate agents are aging, and turnover is high. Companies everywhere are struggling to recruit new and younger agents, but the methods of old don't apply anymore. Read to learn how we must target this younger generation of recruits, the so-called "Me" generation.

The key to the younger generation is right there in their name. They aren't called the "Me" generation for nothing, and in order to effectively recruit them you need to focus on their needs. Fortunately this generation spends a lot of time surfing the Internet and that presents you with a tremendous opportunity to reach a more diverse and larger audience than was ever possible. Your opportunities for growth are as vast as the Internet itself, but in order to exploit them your company needs to create an online strategy that targets the "Me" generation, addresses their needs and speaks to them in a language they can understand and respond to. And it all starts with ...

1.) YOUR WEB SITE

When you ask most brokers, they'll tell you that recruiting is an equal, if not greater, contributor to the success of their business than buying and selling houses. Given the great priority placed on recruiting you'd expect that recruiting links and information would be a prominent component of these companies' Web sites. Sadly, most real estate Web sites primarily focus on buying and selling and give recruiting little or no space at all. If they do have a recruiting link it's usually very small and towards the bottom of the page or hidden many clicks away.

Your Web site is the most important recruiting tool you have at your disposal and, if recruiting is a priority for you, then you should make it a prominent part of your Web site, starting with the Home Page. Your Home Page should announce to the world that you are interested in recruiting. Use a combination of text and images to prominently display your recruiting message and invite interested parties to click on those links and discover what kind of career you can offer them. But don't limit these links to just your Home Page. Place them anywhere on your Web site where a potential recruit might be looking. That includes your Listing section, your Agent Profiles and your Contact pages.

Once a visitor clicks on your recruiting link, you need to take him or her to your Career page where you can deliver your recruiting message and tell the story of what it's like to work for you.

It is crucial that you have a lead capture mechanism on your Web site that appears frequently and is accessed easily by any one visiting your site. This system must offer something of value to recruits in order for them to share with you their personal contact information ...for example, a simulation-based realistic job preview that gives them a sense for what it's like to work in real estate, or a book on what it takes

to be successful in real estate, or registration for a career seminar, or an appointment with a career counselor. So, how do you position your company as the company to work for?

2.) POSITIONING: YOUR RECRUITING MESSAGE

Most brokers deliver the standard recruiting "pitch": "Work for us because we're the best, we have the most recognized name brand, the best marketing network, the best technology, and the most listings." The list goes on.

But when you're recruiting the "Me" generation you need to focus on what you can do for them. They are simply not interested in why you are great; they want to know what you will do to help them be great. You need to share with them how you will help them make the right career decision and determine if they fit into your company culture and, finally, how you will help them succeed if and when you hire them.

Your message should be inviting and welcoming and should include a personal message from the President that highlights his or her passionate commitment to the recruit's success. Once your message is complete and posted on your Web site the next step is to draw people in, and to do this you need to develop and implement an outreach strategy.

3.) OUTREACH STRATEGY

You need to be able to spread the word and get your recruiting message heard by as many people as possible, and there are a number of ways to do this. First, start off with your greatest untapped recruiting resource: your existing staff. Create a recruiting culture in your organization where you involve your managers and salespeople in the recruiting process and encourage them to bring people in. Teach them your positioning statement and let them pass this information along to their network of contacts. Don't forget to acknowledge their efforts with referral incentives and other such rewards.

Once you've established a recruiting culture within your organization you can start targeting other sources of recruits. Contact your local real estate school and establish a relationship with it. Offer to be a guest speaker or sponsor a scholarship. The key is to make the students aware of your company and your recruiting message so that, when they visit your Web site, they see the same consistent message. This will reinforce the message in the recruits' mind that you are serious about their success and will make you a more attractive company to them.

Hold career nights and seminars at your office where you outline the steps that you will take to help a recruit be successful. By inviting your top performers to mingle with potential recruits you can demonstrate how your company's culture breeds success.

Target specific groups, such as nurses and teachers. Customize your message so you appeal to their needs. Suggest a career change or mention how traditionally those professions have done well in real

estate. Offer them your help in exploring if a career in real estate is suited to them, and if you think they'd be right for it. This personalized and recruit-focused approach will draw them to your company because you're offering to answer their questions and address their concerns.

Don't forget to advertise, but remember recruits are looking for a career opportunity so your ad should reflect that. Scan the career pages of your local newspaper and see how large companies design their ads. A career in real estate can pay over \$100,000 a year, and the ad should reflect that in its message, size and design.

All your outreach strategies should incorporate your Web site and specifically your Career page as the focus. By using your Web site as a central hub you can send all your recruits to the same location and gather their contact information in a consistent manner. Once you gather your leads' contact information you need to find the ones you're interested in so you can contact them immediately.

4.) RESPONSIVENESS

For agents, it is critical to be responsive to their clients if they want to be successful; the same holds true for recruiting. Don't sit on those leads, because the longer you wait to contact them, the less credible your recruiting statement becomes. A quick response shows the recruits you're interested in them. Once you have them on the phone, use that time to qualify them. Find out if they're serious about a career in real estate and educate them on what to expect. Ask questions about their needs and expectations, and how you can help them along the way. Remember to be warm and inviting; the conversation has to revolve

around them and their needs, not around you. A good salesperson listens to the needs of his or her customers; a good recruiter does the same. If you're interested in recruiting a younger, more energetic sales team, then you need to go to where the "Me" generation hangs out. Build a Web site that's focused on recruiting and make sure your message is targeted to the needs of your recruits. Get out there and promote your recruiting message to the real estate schools and in your recruiting ads. And, finally, be responsive. Follow through on your recruiting leads, talk to them and find out what their needs are. Show them how you will help them achieve success, and in turn, your company will realize the same degree of success. . -Kim Ades



Kim Ades is President of Upward Motion Inc., home of the Real Estate Simulator. The Real Estate Simulator is a Web-based assessment tool that evaluates real estate selling skills, personality and IQ and is used by real estate companies to recruit, select and develop high-performing sales agents. She can be reached at 416-740-1333 ext. 24 or at kim@upwardmotion.com