



# Connect!

REAL RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IDEAS



## Customers Who Trust You Make Every Transaction Easier

by CHAD RUEFFERT

*Like most professions, real estate agents spend a disproportionate amount of time helping a small percentage of “problem” customers.*



**P**roblem customers question your pricing or offer strategy, your neighborhood expertise, your recommendations for lenders. They search out conflicting information on the Internet and want you to justify every decision or piece of advice you offer. No matter the number of designations after your name or award logos on your business card, they simply don't trust you and that makes every aspect of the transaction more difficult and more time consuming.

It's no surprise consumers have a hard time trusting their real estate agent. The dollars involved in the transaction can force even normally level-headed humans into suspicious mode. Websites and articles abound on the subject of finding a “trustworthy” real estate professional (implying many are not)—including many from very well-known publications

and even Realtor.com. Real estate professionals are guilty of perpetuating the problem by bashing others in their industry to build their own brand name.

The simplest way to ensure you start your customer relationship with a sufficient level of trust is to work by referral. Every aspect of your business immediately becomes more trustworthy when your customer comes as the result of a referral. Media research company Nielsen's Trust In Advertising report shows that a “Recommendation from people I know” provides the absolute highest trust rating at 84%. That's 25 percentage points higher than any other form of advertising.

A referred customer, especially if they come from a past client, also has the opportunity, when nervous, to turn to a third party for confirmation. If you successfully solved a similar concern problem for their friend, they

can then trust you'll do the same for them.

And, perhaps most important, the customers that come to you via referral are generally pre-screened by your referral network. If your sphere of influence is made up of quality people, it's likely their extended network is as well, and they'll avoid wasting your time with potential customers they already know are difficult or non-committed.

Working by referral ensures you start with, and maintain, a higher level of trust with your customers. That trust will pay off in more comfortable, less time consuming and more profitable transactions.

*Chad Rueffert is the president of Braintree Marketing, Inc., a full-service marketing consultancy specializing in the real estate industry, and the creator of the From Your Friends Relationship Marketing Program.*

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