

In real estate, it pays to be connected.

As the largest investment many individuals will make in their lifetimes, it is clear that real estate plays an important role in the economy. Housing makes up a significant portion of a country's GDP, and it is also a major contributor to employment.

The sizeable impact that real estate has on the economy prevails both nationally and locally, presenting an unparalleled opportunity for you. Home sales provide a vehicle for referral activity, with a typical transaction involving more than 25 businesses. One of the most powerful assets a real estate professional can possess is a strong business network, created from building and strengthening relationships with these service

providers. This situates you to be at the center of referral exchanges among like-minded individuals, thereby dramatically increasing incoming leads as a result.

Steps for Success

1. Become aware that you have a business network.
2. Make a list of the businesses you refer.
3. Actively network in your marketplace.

Master these three steps to build a thriving Business Network.

Decide what you are looking for. Who are your ideal clients and which businesses have existing relationships with these clients? When you know what you're looking for, you can find it.

1. YOUR INTERNAL NETWORK

Start by examining your current relationships. Make a categorized list, and assign a grade of A+, A, B or C based on the quality of relationship you have with each.

- **BUSINESS OWNERS:** A referral from a business owner is the most valuable referral, not only because they generally refer a higher quality client, but they are also putting their reputation on the line by referring their clients to your services.
- **VENDORS:** There are many different services involved in a typical real estate transaction, from movers to appraisers and lawyers. To get started on your list, use the worksheet on the reverse side.
- **SOCIAL SPHERES:** Family and friends aren't the only social spheres of influence. Other examples include spiritual groups, bridge clubs and philanthropic organizations.

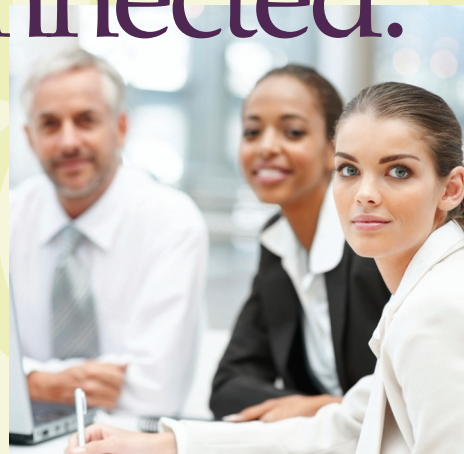
2. YOUR EXTERNAL NETWORK

Next, identify business owners who aren't currently part of your network but should be. One way to meet new professionals outside of your sphere of influence is to join a business networking group. These large, professionally organized networks connect business people from all lines of work who are proactive and receptive to forming new business-to-business relationships. Joining a community group is another great way to meet like-minded people and expand your business network. Examples include Toastmasters, Rotary clubs, Optimist clubs, chambers of commerce, etc.

3. YOUR REFERRAL NETWORK

Establish connections with real estate professionals who have different specialties or are located outside your geographic area. These relationships will enable you to increase your cash flow with investment opportunities as well as referral fees when you refer friends and family.

Maintain relationships with businesses both in and out of the real estate industry. Leverage your referral network by continually adding businesses to it and staying in contact in order to deepen each relationship. Reevaluate the businesses on your list often, and determine which you feel confident in referring. For new business contacts, request references to get feedback from past clients. Be selective; your endorsement of other businesses is a direct reflection of your professional reputation.



Marketplace Opportunities:

1. Networking events
2. Business mixers
3. Social gatherings
4. Seminars
5. Internet networks
6. Business lunches

Networking Tips

- Nurture the best business relationships you already have. To gain momentum, focus on them first.
- Be proactive. Get to know professionals outside of the industry to earn new business prospects.
- Show business owners that you are serious about helping them receive quality referrals. Be sure to inform them about who an ideal referral is for your business as well.
- Consider cross-endorsements to grow your client database and your business network at the same time.
- Follow up with business owners on the results of referrals you have given or received.
- Stay in contact with business owners through personal notes, phone calls and face-to-face contact.