



SEVEN TIPS FOR MARKETING YOURSELF

Here's our crash course in the art of selling yourself, with seven tips to help you cope with the real estate market's new realities.

Assess Your Soft Skills

In 2004, two years of experience as an agent might have gotten you hired. No longer -- not when you are competing against hundreds of candidates with skills similar to yours. Candidates must now assess their soft skills. "This is about doing a little bit of soul-searching," Wilson says.

Ron Peterson, branch manager at a St. Louis office suggests agents ask themselves about core competencies, especially mentoring and team-building. "Intangibles are going to sell this individual," Peterson notes.

Develop an Elevator Pitch

The elevator pitch is a brief self-marketing statement to be delivered at job fairs, conferences or other networking events. The pitch should echo the summary of a resume, according to Wilson, focusing on four key points designed to attract employers' attention. The pitch should sound informal and unrehearsed. To practice, deliver it to your answering voice mail, Wilson advises.

Learn to Network

As any salesperson understands, who you know is essential to finding leads. Networking is about being able to connect from person to person to person, Wilson says. "It's about building a web of relationships, until you meet someone who's looking for what you do," he adds.

That means attending conferences, classes, broker open houses, realtor organization functions, and special networking events designed for real estate pros. Even civic organizations, such as arts groups and other nonprofits, can be useful. Plan lunches or after-work meetings with former colleagues and others.

"Try to be out there and make an effort to be known," says Wesley Jost, who has retooled his networking efforts after being laid off. "If you sit around and wait for something to happen, you're going to be disappointed."

Seek a Support Structure

In order to learn, or relearn, networking and interviewing skills, look to organizations offering workshops or classes, such as NOVA, a one-stop career-development organization.

Know Your Audience

Selling yourself effectively means learning everything you can about a company, from the time you write a cover letter to interview day. To get an inside track, you "need to have researched the prospect, be able to speak intelligently about them, and offer a skill set to solve their problems," says Barry Mills, national recruiting director for MATRIX Resources, a national staffing company.

Be a Closer

Mills suggests people use a traditional sales tactic for closing the sale. At the end of an interview, ask the interviewer, "Based on this interview, is there anything that would keep you from hiring me for this position?" As Mills notes, "It's very much a sales-type question." What's more, send a follow-up note to the individuals you've met at the company, thanking them for their time.

Practice Patience

Finally, don't be discouraged if landing that client takes weeks or months. "Practice patience each and every day," says Jost. "You won't be handed opportunities like you were a year ago." Put it this way: If you stop looking, you're out of the game. As any salesperson knows, perseverance is essential to closing the sale.

Good luck,

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