

*market leader*<sup>®</sup>

# Commission Cloning Handbook



How to Get More Business From  
Past and Current Clients

# Introduction

**Generating new leads isn't your only option for finding the clients who will help you hit your gross commission income goal.** If handled correctly, your existing client list can be a gold mine of new business. From prompting current clients to provide quality referrals to engaging with past clients until they're ready to transact again, yesterday's buyers and sellers can be turned into big commission checks tomorrow.

This handbook contains tips, best practices, and resources that will help you get more business from your past and current clients.

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A man and a woman are sitting at a table, looking at a laptop screen. The man is on the left, leaning in and pointing at the screen. The woman is on the right, looking at the screen with her hand on her chin. There is a cup of coffee on the table. The background is blurred, showing other people and indoor plants.

# 5 STEP

STRATEGY FOR GETTING

# QUALITY

# REFERRALS

Every agent knows that referrals from past clients are an excellent way to get new business. Yet surprisingly few agents have a robust strategy for getting quality referral leads from their clients. Simply adding something to the effect of “referrals appreciated” to your email signature and website will do little to actually generate them. We recommend following this proven five-step strategy when trying to drum up referrals.

Step 1:

## Identify Quality Referrals

To be worthy of the name, a quality referral should possess as many of these traits as possible:

- The referral should have respect for and confidence in the referrer’s judgment.
- The referrer is willing to introduce you to the referral on a favorable basis.
- The referrer understands what it is you do and your unique value proposition.
- The referral is financially qualified to begin shopping for a home, or has a home and an interest in selling it.



Step 2:

## Set Up the Conversation

To maximize the value you get out of referrals, set up the referral-requesting conversation with your past clients on a favorable basis. Before the conversation begins, do the following:

### Ensure your client is satisfied!

This is an essential prequalification before getting referrals. Of course, if your client is dissatisfied in some way, they might not actually tell you – unless you ask. If you skip this step and the client isn't happy, you'll never get a referral. If you prequalify by asking if they're satisfied with the services and value you provide, and they're not happy, you'll get a chance to correct that before you ask for a referral.

**If you're really good, people will want to help you by referring you to their friends and family. If they're happy, don't be shy about asking for referrals!**

### Ensure the referrer knows how you benefitted them

**It's important to talk about the benefits of your services, not the features.** You can have an ace back office, but it does no good to brag about that fact if the client doesn't understand all the benefits they got from it. Explain that because of your back office, the deal went smoothly, all the paperwork was done on time, and you had a lot of interest in the house all at once, causing buyers to bid against each other – resulting in a higher sale price. That's the conversation you want to have. Always look at things from your customer's perspective.

Here are a few phrases that will help past clients think about how you benefitted them:

- Hey, be honest: How did I do when helping you buy/sell your home?
- Did I meet or surpass your expectations?
- What went better than you expected?

Step 3:

## Ask Your Client for Help

Ask the client, flat out: “Hey, would you help me if you could?” There are a lot of ways to broach the question. Find one that sounds natural to you. At this point, you’re just asking a past client whom you know is satisfied and understands how they benefitted from working with you for help. Referrals haven’t even been mentioned yet.

Step 4:

## Open Your Client’s Mental File Cabinet

Sometimes when you ask for referrals, clients will reflexively put up a wall of resistance. So instead of asking for referrals, say something like this:

“Who do you know, who’s like you, who really should own a home instead of renting?”

You don't want the client to be overwhelmed by having to pick names out of the thousands of people they know. You want to narrow the field down quickly by helping the client open a mental file cabinet with just a few names in it.

This is a good question to ask couples in their early 30s who are buying a starter or first upgrade home because many of their peers will fit that description. Here are some examples of questions more applicable to older folks or wealthier people:

- "Who do you know who has a baby on the way, or just had one?"
- "Who do you know who is moving this year?"
- "Who do you know who may have inherited a house and would rather have the cash?"
- "Who do you know who is trying to sell a home by themselves and is having a hard time?"
- "Who do you know who recently retired?"

Adjust these questions based on your market, niche, and expertise, as well as your client's peer group. Just focus on getting names at this point.

Step 5:

## Narrow the List Down

Eventually, your client will run out of names. At this point, you can turn a simple list of names into quality referral leads. Here's a script to help you do this:

*"Of all these names, who are the two or three people who would benefit the most from working with me?"*

*Contact responds*

*"Great! Who should be the first one to call me?"*

Got that? Say “call me.” People don’t want salespeople calling their friends, and they’ll hit the brakes at this point if you’re not careful. “I’ll call them first,” they’ll say. You don’t want that, because then you can’t control the conversation. Instead, say the following:

*“Do you respect this person and their judgment? I try not to work with jerks!”*

*Contact responds*

*“Great! Can I take both of you out for a cup of coffee? Would you be willing to tell them how I helped you?”*

*Contact responds*

*“Excellent. Let’s give them a call and set it up!”*

At this point, chances are good you will have a quality referral lead to call.

**You will also have:**

1. A personal introduction from a satisfied client or contact
2. A face-to-face meeting that should last a good half hour
3. An excellent reason to talk about how you helped the referrer and may be able to help the referral, too

This is many times better than walking away with five people to call who don’t know you and therefore will be at least slightly reluctant to speak with you. And don’t forget – when you use this method, you will still have gotten those five people, anyway!





# Finding Seller Leads in Buyer Clients

Hoping to get more seller clients? Of course you are – every agent is. The old real estate maxims “if you list, you last” and “control the listings and you control the market” speak to just how valuable sellers are. But if you’re like most agents, actually getting more seller clients, or even simply finding seller leads, can be quite the challenging task.

You might be surprised to learn, then, that some of your best sources of new seller clients are your past buyer clients. Historically, people tend to live in their homes for [six to seven years](#) before moving. Keeping in contact with your past buyer clients by supplying them with relevant content and addressing their changing needs as homeowners will help you get repeat business when they decide it’s time to sell.

Your current buyer clients can also be a good source of new seller clients.

According to [NAR’s Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers](#), first-time home buyers accounted for just 35 percent of all buyers. This means a whopping 65 percent of all home buyers are also potential sellers, and the vast majority of those consumers will end up selling their old homes around the same time that they buy new ones. Even if you’re a new agent with relatively few leads, it’s possible you have some buyer leads currently in your contact database who will look to sell sometime soon.

# Reach Out to Past Clients Who Might Want to Downsize or Upsize

The young, recently-married couple who you helped buy a starter home several years ago may be on the verge of having children, and might therefore be interested in learning about how affordable it would be to upgrade to a home with more bedrooms in a quieter neighborhood. The Baby Boomer couple whose purchase of an expansive home for their large family that you facilitated years ago might now be considering moving to a smaller, more manageable home since their children have left the nest.

Past buyer clients like these will need a real estate agent to help sell their homes. Reach out to them with relevant content early enough in their home selling timelines and that could be you!

## Sample email to past buyer client:

*Hello [first name],*

*Hope life has been treating you well. If I remember correctly, your children are now college-aged. I imagine [street address of home you helped them buy] might be too spacious without having children in the home, so please let me know if you ever consider downsizing.*

*There are quite a few excellent smaller homes currently on the market in [their city]. Here are some listings in neighborhoods similar to yours that you might be interested in:  
[links to listings they might be interested in, based on what you recall about their home preferences]*

*Warmest regards,  
[your email signature]*

# Inform Buyer Clients About Housing Market Trends

The direction in which your local housing market is trending, either up or down, should influence when your buyer clients – past or present – decide to sell. Has superb job growth in your area created enough housing demand that sellers are almost guaranteed to have their homes be the subject of a bidding war? Have home values been creeping downward for months, indicating that homeowners considering selling should do so now in order to get the best sale price?

Housing market trends like these, accompanied by statistics that every prospective seller should care about, like year-over-year home value appreciation and the median age of housing inventory, can compel buyer clients to put their homes on the market sooner rather than later – with you as their agent!

## Sample email to past buyer client:

*Hello [first name],*

*Have you been keeping an eye on [client's community] home prices? They've jumped up X% in the last year alone, and local listings are staying on the market for an average of just X days.*

*I'm letting you know about these trends in the off chance you've been thinking about selling your home. This is about as good of a seller's market as you could ask for, although there's no guarantee the market will remain this hot for long.*

*If you want to learn more about [client's community] housing market trends, please view the report I've attached to this email. I'd be happy to provide a free home valuation if you're curious about how much yours could sell for.*

*Regards,  
[your email signature]*

# Offer Walkthroughs of the Home Selling Process

For those who don't work in the real estate industry, the home selling process can seem confusing and complicated. By sharing home selling guides, or even simple infographics like "[How to Sell a House, as Told by Memes](#)," you can make the home selling process less intimidating for your buyer clients and establish yourself as the type of expert agent they should work with when it comes time to sell. If you're looking for great content to use for nurturing leads, walkthroughs like these are an excellent choice!

## Sample email to current buyer client:

*Hi [first name],*

*Here are some new listings you might be interested in. Please let me know if you would like to schedule a showing for any of them.*

*[links to listings matching the buyer's search criteria]*

*On a different note, I've attached a short guide to this email that walks through the home-selling process. You mentioned that you're planning on selling your current home several months after we find you a new one, and this guide will give you an idea of what all will be involved with that process. I'm happy to answer any questions about selling homes that you may have.*

*Regards,  
[your email signature]*



# Use Technology to Get Repeat Business From Past Clients

Staying in contact with past clients is essential for getting repeat business. Even if you just email past clients holiday-themed well-wishes several times a year, staying in touch will help keep you top of mind with them – and thus ensure you’re the agent they reach out to when it’s time for them to buy or sell a home again.

When it comes to staying in contact with past clients, technology is your friend. Tools like contact relationship management systems, marketing automation tools, and even social media give agents the ability to generate repeat business to an extent the engagement tools of yesteryear can’t hold a candle to. Read on to learn why.



# Contact Relationship Management (CRM) Systems

Agents need a way to store their contacts' information. A couple of decades ago, Excel spreadsheets were the best technology available to agents for this purpose. Today, the contact relationship management (CRM) system is the contact information-storing tool that agents should be using.

Despite being used for similar things, spreadsheets and CRMs have about as much in common as dollar menu cheeseburgers and filet mignon – especially when it comes to generating repeat business. Here are features offered by CRMs, and not offered by their predecessors, that help agents get past clients to work with them again:

**Contact organization:** Your approach to engaging with past clients who were first-time buyers in their late 20s should be greatly different than the one used to engage with retiree sellers. With CRMs, you can easily organize your contacts into groups based on their specific characteristics and needs.

**Integration with marketing tools:** With the best CRMs, it's possible to send email and/or print marketing campaigns to individual or groups of contacts with as little effort as a few mouse clicks. From automatically sending real estate newsletters to your entire contact list to targeting a specific group of contacts with campaigns you've tailored to address their needs, the integration of CRMs with marketing tools makes engaging with past clients a much smaller burden.

**Reminders:** Over the course of the home buying and selling process, your clients will provide you with life events you can use as an excuse to get back in touch at a later date. The most obvious of these life events is the anniversary of their home purchase/sale. Others can include birthdays, wedding anniversaries, and the possibility of career changes or going back to school. With CRMs, it's possible to create alerts reminding you about those life events.

**Notes:** CRMs allow agents to store detailed notes about their contacts that they can reference later. This is extremely helpful when, for example, you're determining which previous clients might be ready to buy or sell again, or you're identifying specific needs or preferences to address when making such an inquiry. The cells in Excel spreadsheets don't allow for that level of detail.

## REAL ESTATE NEWS

### August 2017

#### No AC? No Problem: 5 Cooling Tips for Summertime

If air conditioning your home seems like a far-off dream, you're not alone. Each summer, thousands of Americans battle the heat in their homes, especially at night. Below are a few helpful tips to help you stay cool all summer, sans AC.



**Frosty bottle.** You've heard of a hot water bottle, right? Well these helpful toe warmers can also keep you cool during the summer. Stick the bottle in the freezer, and slide it between your sheets before bed.

**Make use of your bathroom fan.** Have a bathroom right off the bedroom? Turn on the overhead fan and leave the door open to let the fan pull the rising hot air out of your room as you sleep.

#### On Low Inventory: From Challenge Comes Opportunity

Low inventory is the foremost [issue](#) in the housing market right now. Buyers face relentless demand for a scarce supply of reasonably priced homes. In a recent survey by the National Association of Mortgage Professionals (NAMB), fifty-eight percent of mortgage professionals cited low inventory as the biggest hurdle for homebuyers today.



The inventory dilemma has even overshadowed concerns about mortgage lending standards. These standards, which some still view as too strict, have relaxed since the early, strong-armed days post-recession. In fact, according to a recent [survey](#) by Fannie Mae, more lenders have taken steps to open up access to credit since the start of 2017, and more plan to continue to do so in the future.

Coming up with enough money for a down payment has become less of a factor, according to the NAMB survey, but remains significantly tied to affordability.

Having an experienced real estate agent is more important than ever to help buyers and sellers navigate this intensely competitive market.

Undeniably, there are fewer homes on the market—but there are also many opportunities. How will you use today's environment to your advantage?

QUESTIONS? VISIT [{{marketingwebsite}}](#)

## Marketing Automation Tools

As mentioned above, it's vital to stay in contact with all of your past clients in order to stay top of mind with them. Marketing automation tools are what allow agents to accomplish this in an effective, time-efficient manner.

Basic marketing automation tools like MailChimp and Constant Contact are serviceable, but real estate-specific tools are infinitely preferable for every agent. This is because real estate-specific tools, like the marketing center included with [Market Leader Professional](#), offer numerous professionally-designed email and print marketing templates purpose-built for engaging with real estate consumers. Even better, the best of these marketing automation tools (including Market Leader Professional) integrate with CRM systems, allowing agents to quickly put their leads and past clients on marketing campaigns, either individually or in groups.

# Social Media

Many agents advocate using social media as a lead follow-up and conversion tool. For example, Facebook is a major component in the [million-dollar lead conversion plan](#) used by top-performing husband-and-wife team Tempe and Dan Perreira. But relatively few agents appreciate social media's potential as a tool for generating repeat business.

Think of your social media presence as you would a mailing list. By becoming your friend on Facebook or following you on Instagram, your leads and clients are opting to periodically receive updates from you. This gives you license to stay top of mind with them by sharing all manner of content, from generic social media updates (e.g., wishing your followers a happy Fourth of July) to real estate-specific content that relates to your business. In this way, social media is yet another medium available to agents for engaging with past clients.



Another major benefit of using social media for this purpose is that it allows you to peer into your past clients' lives to help you craft messaging tailored to them. For example, if you notice in your Facebook feed that a pair of former buyer clients recently experienced the birth of their first child, and you remember that the one-bedroom condo you helped them purchase likely won't be large enough to accommodate the additional family member, you can be reasonably confident that they'll appreciate your congratulatory message with an offer to help them find a new, more spacious home.

Adding your clients as friends on Facebook is a must, and following them on Twitter and Instagram is ideal if they belong to those social networks (hopefully they follow you back!). All three are ideal for the sharing of real estate-related information en masse with current, past, and prospective clients – from the latest local housing market news on Facebook to beautiful photos of newly-available listings on Instagram.

# Focus on Building Enduring Relationships With Current Clients

The first step to getting referrals and repeat business is leaving a highly-favorable impression on your clients both during and after the home buying and selling process. This can be accomplished by having a service-oriented approach throughout the transaction, and then following some post-transaction best practices to solidify and maintain their favorable impression of you. Keep reading to learn more.

## Have a Service-Oriented Approach

Many consumers view real estate agents as pushy salespeople, a misconception that survives thanks to the minority of agents who make it obvious from the get-go that their only interest is getting a commission check ASAP. Having such a sales-oriented approach to the transaction will ensure your clients won't want to work with you again, nor recommend you to their family and friends.

Instead, take a service-oriented approach with your clients. This entails demonstrating that your first priority is to make your clients feel like their needs are being taken care of by a professional who has their best interest at heart. Your clients' trust and appreciation will be earned by good service: honesty, timeliness, extensive communication, being a knowledgeable resource, and remembering and catering to their specific preferences and needs. Accomplishing this is the first and most important step in securing future referrals and repeat business.

Being service-oriented 100 percent of the time is admittedly difficult to do. But even in situations where your clients are hurting themselves by not listening to your expert advice, like when buyers insist on making lowball offers in a seller's market, do your best to accommodate their wishes (you work for them, after all). Then find ways to politely restate your advice in terms they will understand when the situation presents itself.

## Sales vs. Service-Oriented Approach

**DON'T**

**say this:**

"I'm the expert, so believe me when I say this is how much your home can sell for."

"Now that we've toured this listing, can I put in an offer for you?"

"Trust me, this is the best possible price you can get on this home."

"It's not important for you to understand the home buying/selling process, because it's my job to handle that."

"Better homes won't come on the market anytime soon, so I'd make an offer on one of these available listings."

**INSTEAD,**

**say this:**

"My professional advice is to price your home at this amount, but the decision is ultimately up to you."

"Should I schedule any more showings before you're ready to put in an offer?"

"Let me see if I can get the seller to budge on the price."

"Part of my job is to help you understand the home buying/selling process, so please don't hesitate to ask questions about it."

"There aren't any listings in your price range that fit your search criteria, so let's wait for some to get put up for sale."





## Follow Post-Transaction Best Practices

The oft-quoted adage “it’s the thought that counts” is undeniably true, and real estate agents are given excellent opportunities to put it into practice following the transaction. By giving closing gifts and throwing client appreciation events, agents demonstrate that they truly care about their clients – that they were ultimately interested in more than just a commission check. In this way, view these gestures of thanks as the finishing touches on the favorable impression you worked hard to build throughout the transaction.

Many agents balk at the expense and effort associated with closing gifts and client appreciation events. First of all, the fact that these things require at least a little bit of money and necessitate a modicum of effort is a large part of why they’re meaningful in the first place. Second, these gestures of thanks certainly don’t need to be significant drains on your time or finances. With a little creativity and thought, it’s possible to come up with meaningful and memorable gifts and events that are easy on your schedule and bank account.

Beyond giving closing gifts and holding client appreciation events, it’s important to remain top-of-mind with your clients by staying in contact with them. Otherwise, all the hard work you put into building relationships with them will go to waste. The technology section of this guide covers ways to maintain these relationships.

# Closing Gift Ideas

A welcome mat featuring the logo of the client's favorite sports team.

A basket of the client's favorite foods or beverages (e.g., chocolates or wine).

A practical household item (e.g., a knife set or microwave) that the client will regularly use, reminding them of you.

"Just moved" cards the client can use to notify family and friends of their new address.

A gift card to the best local restaurant serving a cuisine the client mentioned they enjoy.

Pay for a moving, cleaning, or organization service to facilitate the client's move.

## Client Appreciation Events

For fall and winter transactions, rent event space at a bar or restaurant to cheer on the local football team over food and drinks.

For spring and summer transactions, have a family-friendly field day with lawn sports like bocce and cornhole and warm-weather foods like watermelon and ice cream.

Organize a fun and memorable outing related to something your local market is known for, like whale watching or wine tasting.

Get a block of seats at a local sporting event and give out gear for the home team to the clients who attend.





# 30 DAY

## COMMISSION CLONING ACTION PLAN

This plan will help you implement the best practices discussed in this handbook over the course of a single month.

**DAY 1:**

Referral lead generation session #1. Generate 10 referral leads by following the instructions found in the “Five-Step Strategy for Getting Quality Referrals” section.

**DAY 3-6:**

Assess your technology strengths and weaknesses. Do you have a CRM and marketing automation tools? If yes, verify that they have the features you need to engage with your leads and past clients in an effective and time-efficient manner. If no, conduct research on which technology is right for you.

**DAY 8-9:**

Reach out to past clients who might be ready to buy or sell again. Be calculated here; there’s no point in contacting clients you have recently transacted with, or have made it clear they won’t be buying or selling again anytime soon.

**DAY 11-14:**

Evaluate the content at your disposal, and how you’ll use it. Do you have access to the real estate content – from housing market reports to educational articles for homeowners – that you need to successfully engage with past clients? If not, do you have the time and know-how to create this content, or the resources required to pay someone else (like a freelancer or outside company) to create it for you? Answer these questions, then develop a plan for how to acquire the real estate content you’re missing, and how and when you’ll use it.

**DAY 16:**

Referral lead generation session #2. Generate 10 more referral leads by following the instructions found in the “Five-Step Strategy for Getting Quality Referrals” section.

**DAY 18-20:** Plan out how to exemplify a service-oriented approach. Identify aspects of real estate customer service where you're deficient, and develop a plan for improving at them. Brainstorm ways to diplomatically handle bad client behavior and other situations where your focus on providing good service is tested. Think about how you can capitalize on exemplary customer service (e.g., how to get more referrals and positive reviews from appreciative clients).

**DAY 26-27:** Inquire about selling with buyer clients. Broach the subject of selling with current and recent buyer clients who were already homeowners. Try out several approaches to determine which offers and resources (e.g., free home valuations and guides to the home selling process) they respond most favorably to. Based on which approach works best, develop a plan for finding seller leads in this way with all future buyer clients who already own homes.

**DAY 22-24:** Develop a strategy for using social media to engage with past clients. What types of content will you share on which social networks, and how often will you post? In what situations will you individually engage with past clients, and how (e.g., will you post on their Facebook profile to congratulate them on life events)?

**DAY 29-30:** Brainstorm closing gifts and client appreciation events. Come up with a list of affordable and meaningful closing gifts you would like to give. If any of these gifts can be organized or ordered ahead of time, either in whole or in part, do so. (For example, "just moved" cards or wine from a popular local winery can be purchased in bulk in advance.) Then look into local venues, events, and activities suitable for future client appreciation events.





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