

THE PLAYBOOK: REACHING OUT TO PAST CLIENTS

[HOME AGENTS](#)

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In real estate, the closing of a sale may complete the transaction, but a good agent knows that doesn't represent the end of the client relationship. [As many as 82% of all real estate transactions come from referrals and repeat business.](#) That means you should think of everyone you've done business with, or even just met in the course of your business, as your [sphere of influence](#).

[Jeffrey Goodman](#), a New York City-based real estate salesperson with Brown Harris Stevens, concurs. Goodman has a background in marketing and is thus an expert on networking and applying those principles to his business (though he doesn't consider himself a networking "master"—"A master means I've reached the top of a hill. I know a lot, but there's always room to grow," he says.)

"A network is more about maintaining and increasing the value of the social capital you've already developed and not just making new connections," says Goodman.

But whenever you want to reach out to someone you haven't spoken to in a while, if a little voice in your head says the conversation might be awkward or if you feel you might be imposing on an old client by calling out of the blue or even that you risk turning them off from recommending future business to you, there are several ways to overcome these common phobias.

Here are some tips for silencing that disparaging inner voice, building a network of clients old and new, and creating a thriving real estate business in the process.

Build a good relationship from the beginning

Let's not put the cart before the horse. The most essential part of building your network is demonstrating why you're a valuable contact. That means giving your clients the best possible homebuying or -selling experience.

[Tony Mattar](#), a REALTOR® with Compass' Chicago Crib Team, says: "The nice thing about our industry is that we're able to rely on the work we've already done to make connections."

But if you want to take advantage of this, then you have to make yourself into someone your clients want to hear from.

Mattar does this by setting standards for communication throughout the sales process.

"I'll say, 'This is how we're going to support you, and what we need from you is open and honest communication. We need that feedback from our clients.' That typically leads to a conversation of what their expectations are, how they like to be communicated with, how quickly they expect a response and also setting those boundaries for our team because we don't want to work 24/7."

Keeping in regular contact

The best way to build any relationship is to demonstrate a consistent interest in the other party. This will also ease a lot of the awkwardness of checking in; it's much easier to reconnect with someone if you last spoke to them a few weeks ago versus two years ago.

[Dana Green](#), CEO of the Dana Green Team in Lafayette, California, lists some questions agents should ask themselves once the transaction is over: "Are you going to be friends? Are you going to meet for coffee? Are you going to connect over something you both like? And after the first month, it's just consistency."

As for how to turn these relationships into business assets, Green explains: "We ask all our clients to become our friends on social media and also our eyes and ears in the community. Anytime see a moving truck, ."

But there's no one right answer here. Mattar shares the method he and his team uses for keeping up with their networks: "We have a comprehensive, year-long marketing plan that goes to our whole sphere of influence, so that includes past clients, current clients, our friends and families, even people we know who may not be clients. That is based on the 33-touch principle."

Goodman, true to his Trailblazer designation in our 2023 Newsmakers list, describes some of the most innovative "stay-in-touch" strategies. For one, whenever he gets a new high-quality listing, he sends out an email about it.

"To the seller, it looks like I'm emailing the s*** out of it," he says. "But to my network, it's saying, 'Look at all the great resources and collateral I have,' and people in my network will write back, 'Oh, that's such a great property.'"

Other 'trailblazing' methods Goodman uses are his walking tours, where he and members of his sphere see the sights of New York neighborhoods before convening at a bar or restaurant of his choosing. Goodman holds eight tours a year; the average turnout ranges from 60-80 minutes, with attendees ranging from REALTORS® to real estate attorneys to Goodman's past clients.

"What people have told me they love about my tours is that they are community oriented. Most walking tours, you show up, maybe you strike up a conversation with someone, then it ends. With mine, we have the reception afterward, and that keeps people engaged on a social level."

Fighting fear of rejection

So, what do you do if you *have* let a former client relationship go silent, and that voice in your head is sounding off? Mattar says overcoming this is contingent on acknowledgement of it and, in turn, a change of mindset.

"The fear of rejection is omnipresent in everyone's brain whether you're a salesperson or not: 'They're going to wonder why I'm reaching out.' I try to coach my team on a mindset: people want to be thought of and reached out to. Think about putting yourself in that person's shoes. If someone you haven't seen in a couple years reaches out, that makes you feel warm and fuzzy."

And if you do get a rejection (or a dozen of them), take it on the nose. "With direct mail, if you send out a direct mailer and pay for print and postage, and you get a 2% open rate, that's excellent," says Goodman. "Three percent is like a grand slam. One way to look at it is that 97% of people are throwing it away. But ask, "What am I getting from my investment?"

Goodman has even found a way to turn rejected invites for his walking tours into an asset:

"I wonder if I get a bigger benefit in my sphere of influence from people who don't even come on the walking tours. When I send out invitations and they hit me back, 'Oh, sorry, I can't make it,' it gives me a chance to interact with them by email—and they're *going* to open that email."

Be personal

The easiest way for a client conversation to go south or end prematurely is if they suspect you're just hounding them for more business. That's why when talking to past clients, display interest in them—the conversation topics will flow easier, and they'll be more receptive, too, Matter notes.

He describes an incident where he reached out to a past client and demonstrated how he valued them and their insights:

“They bought in 2019, so we hadn't had a personal conversation in a while. I called them and asked, ‘I happened to be showing homes in your neighborhood the other day, and I need a list of recommendations: what are your favorite restaurants in the area?’ Then she mentioned they had a second kid, which I didn't know, and that they're outgrowing their space. I almost guarantee within six months they're going to be calling me about moving from their condo into a single-family home.”

You can even combine mass marketing *and* a personal touch. In their direct mail campaigns, Mattar and the Chicago Crib team will include everything from scratch-off tickets to holiday-themed cards.

Putting the ‘social’ in social media

[Frederika “Kiki” Rutten](#), a Miami Beach, Florida, real estate agent with ONE Sotheby's International Realty, believes social media is a game changer for professionals to stay in touch with clients.

“I'm a Gen Zer, and most of my clients are millennials, so this makes easier,” she says. “I personally stray away from being basic on Instagram and post informative market updates or statistics that are attractive to my client. This entices them to continue to reach out and ask me questions about real estate and the market.”

Social media can also be a tool for direct interactions. Mattar says if he hasn't spoken with a client in a while, he'll use social media to “sleuth out information” about their recent life. This eliminates the problem of not knowing what to say to someone you haven't kept up with.

Key Takeaways:

- A personal touch goes a long way.
- Turn your sphere of influence into a community.
- If you get 99 rejections and one positive response, that's still a win.
- Staying in touch can be anything from meeting for coffee to liking a client's Instagram post.