

Auto-Marketing First-time Homebuyers

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As the refinance market starts to disappear, it's important to start working on extended marketing strategies that target specific demographics. First-time homebuyers present one of the most profitable, yet under-marketed opportunities for loan officers. Combined with one of my favorite magical technology tools, the auto-responder, I can provide first-class personal service and valuable information automatically – and cultivate streams of new and continuous customers.

Exactly What Is It?

You have probably been subject to an autoresponder already! E-mail autoresponders are set up to instantly and automatically respond to an e-mail inquiry or message. If you have ever ordered anything on-line and gotten an instant confirmation or “thank you” e-mail back, then you know what I'm referring to. The catch is, few people have realized how this technology can be twisted and used to effectively market to new homebuyers!

Initial Marketing Tactics

Through the use of conventional marketing methods, including advertising, postcards, flyers, first-time buyer meetings, etc., I encourage prospects to e-mail me or visit my website for a free report specifically designed for first-time homebuyers. This report contains valuable information regarding credit, income, cash requirements, program options and the home-buying process. Through the use of auto-responders, the report is delivered to them electronically within seconds.

Auto-responders are customized computer e-mail programs which are configured to capture the e-mail address and name, then personally address a message (and series of messages) that are sequentially scheduled for future delivery.

The initial message sent with the free report is introductory, warm, friendly and non-threatening (they will NOT have a salesperson call unless they specifically request), so the initial response rate is very high. It invites them to call if they have questions, if they would like a free personal consultation, or to visit my website to calculate some options and check out rates.

The key is in the follow-up system. Without doing anything more, I have a series of informational e-mails sent to these potential customers. These auto-responder e-mails contain answers to their most frequent questions, and provides additional reports and resources to get them familiar with the mortgage and home purchasing process – and with my exceptional level of customer service. Examples of sequential messages and the reports would include information such as my “The Seven Things Every First-time Homebuyer Should Know”, how to read and repair credit reports, what they really need to know about Good Faith Estimates, how to successfully budget for a new home, how and when to use a real estate agent, and several other key topics.

The series of messages (I use 7 individual messages) are spread out over a 6-8 week period, with additional follow-up options and links to invite them to obtain a pre-approval. I also personalize the messages with their name throughout the message. With the continuous personal communication and valuable information they receive, almost all serious shoppers eventually end up on my customer list. At the worst, they become educated consumers! The titles of my seven e-mail messages are:

1. Welcome (Susan)! – Getting Prepared For Homeownership
2. Susan, how much house can you afford?
3. Susan – here’s The REAL Story on Interest Rates
4. Susan, Have you checked your credit history?
5. Susan – Buying a home with little or no money
6. Susan, let’s look at financing options
7. Susan, how’s the search going?

These options cover vital information and answer many of the typical questions first-time homebuyers have. The messages and attached reports cover income, credit, costs, program options, working with Realtors or FSBO’s, and interest rate options. They get used to me being a helpful professional – not a pushy salesperson! For a complete copy of these autoresponder messages and my 7 specialized customer reports, [click here](#).

Other auto-responder strategies I have developed for new prospects have included as many as 12-15 messages spaced out over 12-18 months. They are used for customer inquiries on rates, loan programs (conv, FHA, VA, ARM’s, etc.), construction programs, HELOC’s and home equities, and even bankruptcies. Whatever the target, it’s important to structure the sequence over an extended period, and incorporate the messages and valuable information provided in a non-annoyance pattern where they not only welcome, but anticipate the e-mail.

It is important to remember NOT to use this form of marketing (or any type for that matter) to create SPAM! Spam is unsolicited e-mail sent to hundreds or thousands of unsuspecting consumers. You can buy e-mail lists of thousands of people (similar to direct marketing), and send messages blindly to potential customers – but don’t. Spamming people is not only unprofessional, rude and annoying, it is also becoming illegal in some states, and is the fastest way to get your e-mail privileges revoked quickly. Only respond to people that have requested information, or with whom you have developed a business relationship.

Make sure that you use an “opt-in” list instead. This type of list requires potential customers to specifically ask for e-mail information and offers. Opt-in lists can be purchased, but you should also create your own through your website and marketing materials. The best way to start an opt-in list is through the use of “pop-ups”, where a small screen comes up and allows the customer to input their name and e-mail address. Pop-ups can be set up to open when they first get to your website, or as they leave. I discuss more about pop-ups in the report available below.

Where To Go

To set this type of system up, you will need help from e-mail marketing specialists. I use a company called aWeber, and they can be found online at <http://www.aweber.com/?101599>. The costs are reasonable, and the investment is pennies based upon the results. On a monthly basis, the cost is about \$19.95 per month, or \$179 per year. For a report that contains a copy of the exact sequencing and content of the auto-responder messages that I use, [click here \(purchase info for report\)](#). For other tips and techniques for using technology to reach customers, [click here](#) to receive our free online newsletter.

While I have developed many scripts and timing sequences for different approaches, it is always important to remember that you need to continually test and evaluate the response rate. New customers entering the home-buying market need to be treated special, and educated as much as possible. Auto-responders not only allow me to do this “hands-free”, but also help me to create a more professional and recognizable image that makes them feel comfortable with me as their financial advisor.

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