

Alabama REALTOR[®]



Top Producers: Plans + Attitude = Success

Top Producers

GETTING TO THE TOP AND STAYING THERE. *Can I Do It Too?*

BY TINA GONZALEZ FONTE

There's a group of REALTORS® that are working diligently to make a decent living in this lousy market. It's kind of an elite club. Haven't they heard the bad news; don't they know that banks aren't lending and buyers aren't buying? Or maybe the better question would be – "What do they know that I don't know?" How do top producers get on top and stay there year after year no matter what the market conditions?

Top producers stay positive. They don't spend time standing around in the office talking about how bad things are. They have better things to do. Things they know will get them business.

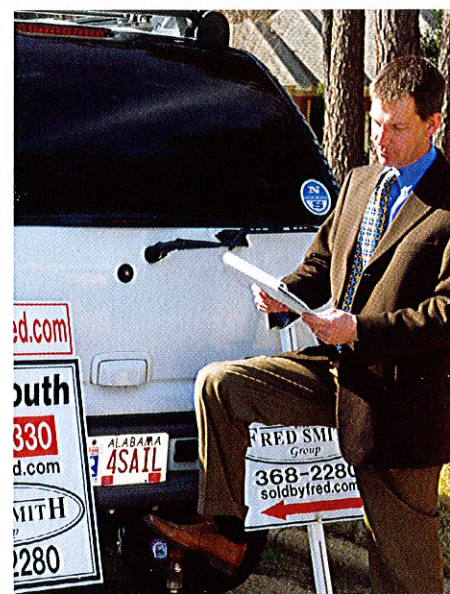
Katherine Lipscomb Smith, CRS, GRI, Associate Broker with First Realty in Auburn, Ala. has found some benefits in our new market. "I've found having some gaps in the day has given me the time to reorganize and put some new systems in place," said Smith. She added, "I've taken three CRS classes in the past few months and put new tools in my belt."

Top Producers stay away from bad news, they get the weather from the internet, read trade magazines and

books that elevate their spirit and stimulate their mind. It's no wonder they still get new clients in this market. Would you rather hire a professional who gives off an air of confidence or someone that is carrying the weight of the world economy on their shoulders? You are probably thinking – "but the experts say we haven't hit bottom yet; it's never been this bad; the sky is falling" Just try to open your mind to the possibility of finding something positive in your business and you will be surprised by how many things you will notice. Concentrate on the positive. Since when did low interest rates and low prices become bad news? Here's a little secret: There are still people out there buying and selling, moving up, moving out and moving into your area. You should be getting your market share of those sales. The top producers do.

OK, so staying positive will make you feel better, but what are the top producers actually doing to stay afloat in this market. They're doing much better than just staying afloat. They are thriving! So what do they know that you don't? Are you ready for this.....absolutely nothing!

Fred Smith of The Fred Smith Group at Realty South in Birmingham, Ala.



uses a plan that includes 32 things that can be done for little or no monetary cost like E-blasts or hand written notes. "We intend to be in the business for a long time and in order to do so we must focus on many different types of lead generation sources," said Smith.

Sounds pretty familiar, right? Well if you've been around for a few years and you've taken a few seminars on what to do in order to have a successful real estate business then you probably know all of this. So, why are they doing so well and you're struggling to make your monthly commitments? What is the missing link in your business? It isn't difficult,

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but it is the biggest repeated mistake we make.....no follow through. That's what sets most successful people apart from the rest. They have mastered the skill of following through. Not just on their plan but on every aspect of their business.

Ah! To follow through on a plan, you must actually HAVE A PLAN. We've all been told we need to write a business plan. We've intended to write one but we let the busy work of real estate get in the way. A business plan is just a formal statement of a set of business goals, the reasons why we believe we can obtain them, and the plan for reaching those goals. If you Google "how to write a business plan," you will get 32,000,000 suggestions. Forget them all for now. In order to actually follow through on creating a business plan you must keep it really simple. You cannot skip this step and it is not as painful as it sounds. As a matter of fact, it can be done very simply, even in 15 minutes. If you try it this very unconventional way you will quickly see the benefits and someday you may actually write



a more elaborate business plan that would make your momma proud.

Make a SIMPLAN – a simple plan. Once you discover this tool, you can use it for any type of planning. How many times have you thought about writing a business plan and not actually done it? For many, there is so much to do that you can't visualize getting it done and you become overwhelmed. "Carpe Diem" - seize the moment - and use this opportunity to take control. You can start doing the one thing that all top producers and successful people everywhere do. You can follow through on creating a business plan using SIMPLAN.

Throw out everything you have ever learned about the process of writing a business plan and sit down and do the following three things right now:

1) DESIGN THE GOAL – Establish your goal, in this case, how much income you need this year.

Toss out the complicated formulas and just estimate what you need to live on for the rest of the year both professionally and personally. Consider that the difference between NEED and WANT may be what has prevented you from actually achieving your goals. Setting goals is the catalyst. Writing them down is the visual accountability.

Goal Setting

How do you set successful goals? Start with these 5 tips. Setting the right goals is the difference between success and failure. Realistic, well-planned goals keep you concentrating on what's important. They can help keep you motivated. But not all goals are helpful. Watch out for unrealistic and lofty goals. Unrealistic goals may be the reason you feel you aren't getting anywhere. They become too difficult, if not impossible, to meet. And if your goals are beyond reach, you're more likely to feel frustrated and discour-



aged and leave your well intended plans by the wayside. Try this:

1) Be realistic. Think about the goals you may have and prioritize them based on the time you want to obtain them. For example: a six figure income by summer may not be realistic but – closing two transactions each month is. Focus on the process – closing transactions - rather than the outcome – the income. Make sure that your goals are realistic, specific and measurable.

2) Think short term and long term. Short term goals keep you engaged on a daily basis, but long term goals motivate you over the long haul. Your short-term goals (for example, making 30 contacts every day) can become stepping stones to reaching long-term goals (building a client base of 1500). Short term goals can be measured and adjusted in an effort to stay on course.

3) Plan for roadblocks. Identifying potential setbacks and brainstorming specific strategies to overcome them can help you stay on track; not get discouraged when they happen and stay motivated to work through them. Roadblocks are a natural part of any business. If you plan for them they won't take you by surprise and slow down your progress.

4) Evaluate your progress. Review your goals each week. Were you able
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“Top Producers build on their strengths and work to eliminate their weaknesses.”

to successfully meet your goals last week? Think about what worked and what didn't. Keep notes, charts, graphs or whatever you need to assess your progress at a glance. You will see trends and patterns emerge in what works and what doesn't.

5) Reassess and adjust your goals as needed. Be willing to change your goals as you progress. You might find that you need to adjust your goals in order to complete your to-do lists. Maybe you just need to change a short term goal into a long term one. Adjust anything you need to in order to reach your goals this week. If you started with small, obtainable goals you may be ready to take on larger challenges that you will be able to meet now because of your new found work ethic.

You must believe you can actually achieve the goal, and see it regularly so you don't forget, in order to stay motivated and to follow through. See that wasn't hard.

2) DEFINE THE REASON - Write



down the reason you want to obtain your goals.

This step is very important because from time to time all successful businesses reflect on the reasons they are in business. Define what it is you do and learn to do it better than anyone else. Don't miss the point here. Your reasons can include things like "I love helping people find homes," "buyers and sellers need my services" and "my family plans on growing in the next few years." The idea being that you can look at this statement and it will clearly remind you why you are working so hard. Your reasons need to help motivate you into action.

3) REFINE THE ACTION – What will you specifically do that will get you your goal. Start small but be realistic.

Daily Actions

For instance, three things to do every-day that will start to generate valuable information that will help produce sales could be:

1. Call your past clients and tell them you are still in the business;
2. Send a follow up handwritten note;
3. Send an E-mail with positive industry info.

"It's been crucial for me to have a daily plan and try to stick to it," Julie Ivy White of LAH Real Estate, Inc. said. "This business is very unpredictable, one phone call can change everything!"

Weekly Actions

Don't be afraid to venture beyond your comfort zone. Three examples of things to do every week could be:

1. Attend a local association meeting. Cindy Cauthen of Prudential Ballard Realty, Millbrook Ala. said, "I attend quarterly MAAR luncheons and I am on three different MLS/MAAR committees."
2. Pass out flyers with positive real estate news in your community.
3. Write a blog on positive things happening in the market in your area.



Kent Brenner of Realty South, Lake Martin Office and Jackson's Gap, Ala. said, "The consumers are confused, losing confidence, money and losing their home values. They are not interested in "fluff." They are interested in real facts, real knowledge and real results."

You don't have to do any mathematical calculations here to determine how much time you need to spend on each task, just resolve yourself to do everything in your power to complete your list. That doesn't mean going non stop at the price of working yourself into a hospital room or forsaking family time or fitness time, but it does mean that you are willing to spend many of your waking hours completing the steps it will take to get you to the income you need. When you have achieved this kind of work ethic you will see your goal number becoming a closer reality and not such an abstract object in the distance.

Remember, it is important to allow time for "review" somewhere in your plan. Quarterly is good, monthly is better, but at the very least you must review your plan annually.

Betty Cannon and Cheryl Ashurst of RE/MAX of Montgomery, Ala. said, "We track where our business comes from and spend our advertising dollars there. In the past we reviewed our

business plan quarterly, in the present we review it monthly.”

“I have at least four different business plans. I obviously believe in plans. I review often and revise as needed. Great ideas usually need a new plan!,” said Julie Martin, CRB, e-PRO, Broker/REALTOR® of Port City Realty, Mobile, Ala.

Remember you are writing a SIMPLAN structured to get you to do what those top producers do – follow through. With this plan you’ll learn the basics of business planning so you can start seeing results right away. Results measured by your ability to follow through because it’s not too complicated.

Congratulations! Just by writing your SIMPLAN you actually followed through on something. Now by continuing to follow through you’re on your way to developing new behaviors that will help turn your actions into habits.

Top Producers build on their strengths and work to eliminate their weaknesses. As your confidence



grows, you will learn new skills that will help propel you to new levels in your business. The ultimate reward will be yours. You will accomplish great things in both your business and personal life if you continue to practice your new follow through skills. The habits you develop will make it natural for you to follow through on anything just like a Top Producer.

Tina Gonzalez Fonte is a REALTOR® and business development coach.

A special thanks to our “models” for this story’s photographs. They were good sports, took direction well and helped us out by offering us their time.

The top producers are pictured above in this order (left to right): Rusty Wilkinson, Fred Smith, Cheryl Ashurst, Betty Cannon, Taylor Jernigan, Pat Robinson, Joseph Long, Michael Musselwhite, Kent Brenner, Katherine Lipscomb Smith, Julie Ivy White and James Reese.

REALTORS® Get Right Tools, Right Now

WASHINGTON, March 03, 2009

To help REALTORS® meet their clients’ needs and succeed in today’s economic climate, the National Association of REALTORS® is offering its roster of business-building resources to members for free or at significantly reduced costs through the association’s new “Right Tools, Right Now” initiative.

“NAR is the most trusted resource for real estate information, and we want to ensure that REALTORS® have easy ac-



cess to these powerful resources in today’s market,” said NAR President Charles McMillan, a broker with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in Dallas-Fort Worth. “Every NAR division is contributing to this initiative so that REALTORS® can better service their clients and enhance their business.”

More than 300 resources are being offered through “Right Tools, Right Now.” REALTORS® can take advantage of education and online training opportunities, access NAR publications and

research, attend conventions and events, and obtain technology services for free or at a discount. Local and state associations and boards also have access to resources and materials through the initiative.

Among the many useful tools available to REALTORS® at no cost are eProduct versions of the 2007 and 2008 NAR Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers and the 2007 Profile of Buyer’s Home Feature Preferences, as well as valuable information on short sales, foreclosures, business tips and marketing.

For more information on the products, publications, services and enhancements available through the “Right Tools, Right Now” initiative, visit www.REALTOR.org/RightTools.