

## **Bridging the Technology Gap**

By Patti Brotherton

Many agents have come to me and asked why they need to really start using technology and where should they start. Most of these individuals are very successful and have a built-in clientele after years of giving great service. My answer is always the same, because your clients expect it of you. They don't believe me always, but most see the logic in this. Let me give you some ideas to get you started using technology to your advantage.

### Communication

Our clients today want to have lots and lots of information before they make a decision to either buy or sell and they want it fast. This is different from years past. Ask yourself, are you providing it? Do you email them information on all the properties that they will be seeing before they come into the office? Wouldn't it be great if they saved you time by qualifying the properties they would like to see? Yes! That is what you want them to do.

Do you send your clients updates on the marketplace quarterly by email? Can you provide them with a complete market analysis of their home every year? Of course. Do you? No matter which way the real estate market is going, up or down, you need to keep your clients informed. How do you feel about your stock broker right now? Has he kept you informed on what the market is really doing the last year? Or, has he quit communicating altogether? In order to do your job right, you need to keep your clients informed. Period.

When your client has listed with you, do you keep him informed weekly on what you are doing to market his property? If you created an email report of all the marketing activities you performed weekly and took two minutes to send it; wouldn't he be happy getting it? Yes. We don't communicate enough. The biggest complaint about real estate agents is that we put a sign up and then they don't hear from us until the listing needs to be extended or there's an offer. You can use technology to keep the seller informed.

When you have a sale pending and are working on getting all the requirements of the sale performed, the inspections, paperwork, etc. do you let the principal know every step of the way? You should. It takes much longer to communicate by telephone than to just send an email every time something happens with the file. Keep it short and simple and your client will think you are a real hero.

### Database

We have lots of names of people we meet every day. Where do we keep them? Use technology to help you with this. You can use a simple program such as Microsoft Excel

which is on most computers, or you can use Top Producer, or my favorite, Act!2000. It doesn't matter how you keep your names, but it does matter that you do. Don't be one of those agents that have lots of pieces of paper and index cards.

Categorize your database by buyers, sellers, past clients, farm, or whatever way you want. But, put them on your computer. It is so easy to update. It is very easy to print labels. It is so easy to keep track of the number of people you are working with. Just get in the habit of adding names each week. Once a week, take every piece of paper that you have written these names on and put them in your computer.

### Personal Web Site

You need a web site. There are many wonderful designers out there that make it easy to have one. Your clients expect it. Consumers want it. Get a site and put as many listings on it as you can. When your listings sell, keep those on your site as well. It's easy to learn how to add properties or make changes. If you would like a suggestion on a good web designer, just email me. You'll be amazed how easy all of this is and not all that expensive.

*The bottom line is that you need to use email, a database, and a personal web site. That is the minimum to have right now. You already know how to search for properties using the computer and do a CMA, why not take it a step further? The bridge is easy to cross. Take the first step and before you know it, you're across.*