

## **Capturing Buyers at your Open Houses**

By Patti Brotherton

A very good friend of mine, Jerry Primack, reminded me that to be outstanding you must stand out. How do you do that on a Sunday when it seems that everyone in your area is holding an open house? How are any buyers going to remember you? In short, how do you make yourself stand out in a crowd? It's easy, a little planning, a little marketing, and a little follow-up in the right way.

### ***The Planning***

Pick the right one. Always plan to hold open a property that you really like. It is very difficult to sell something you don't like.

Learn about all other properties for sale in the immediate neighborhood. You need to know more than the public, so study every property for sale and the ones that have recently sold. You should be well-versed on the area when you hold an open.

Have financing options available. You need to know whether the owner is going to carry paper; if the property qualifies for housing subsidies; if you can get in with 5% down. You need to have all the options in writing so that any prospective buyer can see what his or her monthly obligation will be as well as down payment required. Most lenders will prepare these for you.

Have flyers of other properties with you that are in the same price range in case the one you are holding open might not appeal to a buyer. You could immediately show others in another part of the city.

Don't dash off last minute! Know ahead of time so that you can get all your marketing out.

### ***The Marketing***

Create your own open house book of different areas in your city with price ranges and pictures of homes representative of those areas. Have school information in it as well as other helpful information such as shopping areas, demographics, etc. This is just your book for people to look at. You are not going to give it out. This is something that will make them linger at your open so that you can continue to build rapport.

Put a classified ad in the local paper inviting people to come to your open house. If you want to go fancy, put a display ad in with a picture of the property you are holding open.

Use at least 10 signs. Make sure your name is on all your signs. You want people to know whom they will be talking to by the time they arrive at the door. Using many signs is just free advertising and will also look like you "own" the neighborhood.

Send out invitations to all the surrounding neighbors (or at least 25). Write them on special stationery with matching envelopes (use flowers or some other design) so that they are all opened. You want to show the neighbors how you handle your listings in case they are thinking of selling.

Have a drawing at your open house that people must register for. You get more accurate phone numbers that way. You could give away 2 movie tickets, a flower arrangement, some candy, etc. Make it special. And, have the drawing the night of your open so that everyone knows that they will be called that night should they win.

Have handouts ready for any prospective buyer who comes to the open house. It should include, 1) a flyer of the property you are holding open, 2) a list of your other listings, 3) your resume, 4) a sheet of testimonials from past clients, and 5) a copy of your home page from your web site. Giving each person a package of information will help you stand out.

Invite the immediate neighbors in person when you arrive for the open house; the ones on each side of the property and across the street. You want them all to come and get to know you—they may sell in the future.

### ***The Follow-up***

Send a note the evening of your open house to each party that came to it. You want to drop these in the mail the very next day. Your note should say something about the property you were at and describe yourself briefly; e.g., “Thank you for stopping by my open house on Camelot Street. This is the home with the pretty blue shutters and white picket fence. I enjoyed meeting you. If you remember, I had a drawing for an herb basket at the property; Ms. Riney was the lucky winner. I will be in touch to see how I can help you. That’s what I do best. Patti Brotherton.” You want them to remember who you are so help them.

Deliver the drawing prize to whoever won it on Monday. You want to make a point of bringing it by in person. It will give you a chance to see where they live and again build some more rapport.

Call everyone who came to the open house by Tuesday at the latest. You want to again remind them where you met them and ask them if you could show them some property. The goal is to go for the appointment. If you didn’t get an appointment at the open house, then get it now.

Put their names in your database and start marketing to them monthly. Why not? It is so inexpensive, especially if you do it by email!

### ***The Results***

You will be having people talk about the professional way you hold an open house. You will be getting lots of names of people who will be buying or selling in the future. You just might sell the open house. And, you will be outstanding in the real estate community!