

A PROVEN COMMUNITY MARKETING SYSTEM
FOR NEW REAL ESTATE AGENTS

BECOME THE REAL ESTATE TALK OF THE TOWN

How New Agents Can Build a Business,
a Reputation, and a Future Through
COMMUNITY MARKETING

STRONG
TOWNS.
STRONG
FUTURES

BUILD
RELATIONSHIPS.
EARN REFERRALS.
BUILD A LEGACY.




REAL ESTATE
TOWN ADVOCATE

I LIVE HERE.
I WORK HERE.
I'M HERE FOR YOU.

LARRY VECCHIO

Broker/Owner, VRI Homes

Founder of HomesIn.com

BECOME THE REAL ESTATE TALK OF THE TOWN

*How New Agents Can Build a Business, a Reputation,
and a Future Through Community Marketing*

Larry Vecchio

Broker/Owner, VRI Homes

12 Offices | 150+ Agents | Powered by HomesIn.com

BECOME THE REAL ESTATE TALK OF THE TOWN

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BECOME THE REAL ESTATE TALK OF THE TOWN

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VRI Homes | HomesIn.com

A Note to the New Agent

This book is for the new real estate agent who has a license but still needs a business.

Real estate companies can give you technology, training, an MLS, a CRM and a commission plan. Those things matter. But none of them answer the question that keeps a new agent awake at night: Where is my business going to come from?

My answer is simple: start with a plan, focus on a community, build relationships and give the plan enough time to work.

The system described in this book grew from more than four decades in the real estate and mortgage industries and from one belief that has never changed: **the best lead is a referral.**

HomesIn.com was created to help agents build those referrals by becoming useful, visible and connected in the communities they serve.

You do not need to become the most famous real estate agent in America. You need to become known, trusted and remembered by the right people in your town.

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Introduction

I Started at 18

I started in the real estate and mortgage business when I was 18 years old, right out of high school.

I was not selling houses. I was delivering closing documents for a mortgage company. But that job gave me something valuable: a chance to see the business from the inside.

After about a year, the company asked whether I wanted to become a loan officer. Back then there was no separate mortgage license like there is today, and they encouraged me to get a real estate license because it would help me learn the business.

I did. A couple of years later, I went for my broker's license. At the time, mortgage experience could count toward the requirements, so I became a real estate broker and opened a real estate company even though I had never personally sold a home.

My original reason for opening the company was to generate more mortgage business. Instead, real estate became a major part of my life's work.

Over the years our company was part of the Better Homes franchise system, and for roughly the last 20 years we have operated as an independent brokerage. Today I am Broker/Owner of VRI Homes, with 12 offices and more than 150 agents, powered by HomesIn.com.

The most important lesson from that journey is not the number of offices or agents. It is what I learned about helping agents become successful.

A license does not give you a business. A plan does.

Chapter 1

Why Most New Agents Struggle

Getting Licensed Is Only the Beginning

Real estate school prepares you to pass an examination. It does not automatically teach you how to create a steady stream of buyers, sellers and referrals.

Many companies are very good at recruiting. Recruiting agents and developing agents, however, are two different things. I would rather ask how many agents we helped build a business than how many licenses we added to a roster.

The Two Biggest Problems

After decades in the business, I believe most new agents fail for two basic reasons: **they do not have a plan, or they do not give the plan enough time to work.**

New agents often jump from cold calling to purchased leads to social media to postcards to a different brokerage. They keep restarting before anything has enough time to compound.

Young Agents Have an Advantage Today

When I entered the business, being young was a disadvantage. There were very few young people in real estate, and I had to prove I belonged.

Today, young agents can have an advantage. They are often comfortable with video, smartphones, social media, digital advertising and new technology. But technology without a business plan is just activity.

The goal is not to do more things. The goal is to do the right things consistently.

BECOME THE REAL ESTATE TALK OF THE TOWN

Chapter 2

I Became a Broker Before I Ever Sold a Home

An Unusual Path

Becoming a broker before I had personally sold a home forced me to look at the business differently. I was not building a company around my personal sales production. I was learning how the different pieces of real estate, mortgages, marketing and agents fit together.

Consumers Choose People

Over the years I experienced both franchise and independent brokerage models. Branding has value, but one lesson remained consistent: **most consumers ultimately choose an agent.**

They choose someone they trust, someone they know, someone who understands the area or someone another person recommends.

Give the Agent a Plan

That is why a brokerage should do more than provide a place to hang a license. A new agent needs answers: Where will you work? Who will you meet? Why will people remember you? How will you build a database? Where will referrals come from?

Those questions eventually led to the philosophy behind HomesIn.com: give an agent a community, a platform and a repeatable system for building relationships.

The Agent Still Has to Work It

No brokerage, website or lead program can make an agent successful without effort. The agent has to meet people, follow up and stay consistent.

Community marketing is especially dependent on time. You cannot promote three businesses, make five posts and decide the system does not work. Reputation is built through repetition.

Chapter 3

Become the Real Estate Town Advocate

People Care About Their Town

I learned early that consumers care more about their town than they care about any real estate company. They care about schools, restaurants, property taxes, businesses, events, development, home values and their neighbors.

That creates an opportunity for an agent. Instead of making all of your marketing about yourself, make the community the center of the marketing.

Build a Local Real Estate Destination

The foundation of the Town Advocate system is a community website connected to the MLS. Think of it as a local real estate destination - almost a local Zillow - combined with community information and opportunities to promote local businesses.

Consumers can search homes, while the site also creates room for restaurants, contractors, lenders, attorneys, insurance professionals, doctors, salons and other local businesses.

Build Social Media Around the Town

People do not necessarily want to follow a page filled only with JUST LISTED and JUST SOLD posts. They may follow a page that tells them what is happening in their community.

Feature a new restaurant. Promote an event. Highlight a business. Explain the housing market. Mix real estate into content people already care about.

Create the Town Local Guide

The Town Local Guide gives residents and people moving into the area useful community information and local business resources. It can be downloaded from the website, distributed at open houses and mailed to new neighbors.

New residents are establishing relationships with contractors, restaurants, doctors, insurance professionals and many other services. The Town Advocate can help make those introductions.

Town Video, Market Updates and Direct Mail

A town video tells the community's story. Market updates explain what is happening with local home values and inventory. Postcards and other mailers keep the Town Advocate visible offline.

Local businesses can sponsor appropriate community mailings, creating joint marketing opportunities that benefit the business, the agent and the resident.

Generate Traffic

A website needs traffic. Google pay-per-click and social media advertising can bring consumers into the community platform. Direct mail, videos, businesses and social content can all point back to the same hub.

Community website + MLS search + local businesses + social media + Local Guide + new-neighbor marketing + town video + market updates + direct mail + digital advertising = community recognition and referral opportunities.

Chapter 4

The Town Advocate Action Plan

Step 1: Prepare Your Professional Profiles

Before introducing yourself throughout town, make sure your professional profiles are accurate, complete and consistent. Review your MLS profile, Zillow, Realtor.com, Homes.com, Google Business Profile and LinkedIn.

Use a professional photo, correct contact information, a clear biography and consistent positioning around the community you serve.

Step 2: Research the Town

Build a database of as many local businesses as possible. Do not limit yourself to businesses traditionally associated with real estate. Restaurants, salons, gyms, doctors, daycare centers, auto businesses, professional services and home-service companies are all part of the local economy.

Step 3: Promote Before You Ask

Create exposure for local businesses on the town website and begin promoting them through social media.

Then, when you meet the owner, you are not walking in asking for a referral. You can say: **We have been promoting your business. I would like to show you what we are doing.**

Step 4: Build the Local Guide and Town Video

Create the Town Local Guide and make it available online and offline. Produce a town video that highlights the lifestyle, neighborhoods, businesses and real estate market.

Step 5: Meet the Businesses

Show owners their business on the website and social pages. Ask about their story and how you can help promote them. Invite them to participate in networking events, podcasts, community features and joint postcard marketing.

Step 6: Become the Connector

Some agents have built networking groups from these relationships. That moves the agent from participant to connector - the person bringing local businesses together.

Step 7: Use the Guide Everywhere

Make the Local Guide available at open houses, community events and participating businesses. Mail it to new neighbors every month.

Consistency is the key. The goal is not one immediate lead. The goal is a position in the community.

The First 90 Days

Days 1-30: prepare profiles, research the town, build the business database and establish the town's online presence.

Days 31-60: promote businesses, create the Local Guide and town video, publish community content and begin traffic generation.

Days 61-90: meet businesses, develop networking and podcast opportunities, distribute the guide, welcome new neighbors and keep building the database.

Then repeat. The first 90 days are the beginning, not the finish line.

Chapter 5

Stop Chasing Leads. Build Referrals.

There Is No Perfect Lead System

I have been in this business long enough to believe there will never be a lead system that makes every agent happy.

Give agents internet leads and they will tell you the buyer did not answer, the seller was not ready, the number was wrong, the person was already working with someone or the lead was months away from doing anything.

That is the nature of leads.

The Best Lead Is a Referral

A referral begins with something a cold lead usually does not have: trust.

When someone says, 'Call this agent. They will take care of you,' the relationship begins differently.

The best lead is a referral. If referrals are the best leads, agents need a referral-generation system, not just another lead-generation system.

HomesIn.com as a Referral System

HomesIn.com is more than a collection of local websites. The website, MLS search, Local Guide, business promotion, social media, videos, market updates, open houses, new-neighbor

mailings, networking, podcasts, postcards and digital advertising all have one larger purpose: create relationships.

Give Before You Ask

Help promote a business. Invite an owner onto a podcast. Make an introduction. Support an event. Send customers their way. Then stay in touch.

Over time, you want the business owner to hear that someone needs a real estate agent and immediately think of you.

Do Not Rent Your Entire Business

When you stop paying for most purchased lead sources, the leads stop. Community relationships, your database and your reputation can continue growing.

Digital advertising can support the system, but it should feed an asset you are building rather than become the entire business.

Chapter 6

The Multiple Website Service

You Have Heard of the MLS

You have heard of the **Multiple Listing Service**. We call our **strategy the Multiple Website Service**.

Not every consumer searches for real estate the same way. One wants waterfront. Another wants historic homes. Another wants a horse farm, adult community, foreclosure, luxury property, rental, vacation home or new construction.

Specialized Consumer Destinations

Our network includes specialized concepts such as HistoricHomesInYourTown.com, WaterfrontHomesInYourTown.com, RentalsInYourTown.com, USHorseFarms.com, AdultHomesUS.com, VacationHomesInYourTown.com, HomesOfDistinction.com, HomesInForeclosure.com, BetterHomes.com, 1stImpressionHomes.com, NewHomesInYourTown.com and HomesInTheUS.com.

These sites are designed around different consumer interests and search behavior. They do not replace HomesIn.com; they add another layer to the marketing network.

Think Like the Consumer

Consumers search by location, but they also search by property type and lifestyle. Digital marketing should meet consumers where their interest begins.

HomesIn.com can answer, 'Where do you want to live?' The Multiple Website Service can help answer, 'What kind of property are you looking for?'

More Relevant Exposure

A property may fit several categories. A luxury waterfront historic home has more than one story to tell.

The objective is not to make exaggerated promises about exposure. It is to identify relevant audiences and create additional targeted marketing opportunities where appropriate.

An Agent Marketing Advantage

Almost every agent can say they will put a listing in the MLS and on the internet. A Multiple Website Service gives the agent a broader conversation about targeted distribution, specialty audiences and the community platform.

Chapter 7

From Community Recognition to Real Estate Business

Start With the Relationship

Every new agent eventually asks: how does all of this turn into closings?

The answer is that we do not start with the transaction. We start with the relationship.

Timing Matters

The restaurant owner you promote today may introduce you to a seller next year. A new neighbor receiving your guide may call when a family member wants to move nearby. A homeowner reading your market update may eventually request a home-value conversation.

You do not always know where the next transaction will come from. That is why you build the network.

Your Database Is Your Business

Every meaningful Town Advocate relationship should become part of an organized database: businesses, homeowners, new neighbors, open-house visitors, buyers, sellers, past clients, community leaders and referral partners.

Give People Reasons to Hear From You

Community marketing gives you useful reasons to stay in touch without constantly asking whether someone is ready to buy or sell.

Share the Local Guide, a market update, an event, a business feature, a town video, a new-home opportunity or a networking invitation.

Become the Automatic Recommendation

The long-term goal is simple. When someone says, 'We are thinking about selling. Do you know a good agent?' you want the answer to be your name.

That is when community recognition has become real estate business.

Chapter 8

Your Database Is a Long-Term Asset

Think Beyond the Next Commission

Most agents spend their careers thinking about the next closing. I want agents to ask a larger question: **What are you building?**

A commission pays you for a transaction. A database, referral network, brand, community position and repeatable system may create value for years.

Every Closing Should Add to the Business

After a closing, do not ask only how much you earned. Ask what you added to the business.

A satisfied client may later become a seller, buy again, refer family, introduce coworkers or connect you with a neighbor.

The Power of Compounding

Relationships built over ten or twenty years can produce opportunities that no new lead source can instantly duplicate.

The work you did yesterday can create business tomorrow - but only if you maintain the relationship.

Build for a Future Transition

Someday you may mentor a younger agent, build a team, transition relationships to another professional or involve family in the business.

What can legally or practically be transferred depends on brokerage agreements, licensing rules, contracts, privacy

obligations and applicable law. The principle is to build an organized business rather than a random collection of contacts.

Start on Day One

The best time to build a long-term asset is not five years before retirement. It is when you begin.

Your next closing pays you today. Your database can help build your future.

Chapter 9

You Need More Than a Place to Hang Your License

Ask the Right Question

New agents often begin by asking, 'What is the commission split?' Commission matters, but 100 percent of nothing is still nothing.

The more important question is: **How is this brokerage going to help me build a business?**

Recruiting Is Not Development

A brokerage can celebrate agent count, but a license on the roster is not the same as a successful agent.

Development means helping an agent identify a market, create a plan, learn the business, build referrals and stay accountable to consistent activity.

Technology Should Support Relationships

CRMs, websites, AI, automated marketing, transaction systems and lead platforms can all be useful. Their purpose should be to make agents more productive and better able to serve people.

Technology should support the relationship, not replace it.

Agents Should Not Have to Do Everything

Agents are often expected to sell, prospect, design marketing, create content, manage transactions, update databases and handle paperwork all at once.

A strong brokerage should create systems and support that let agents spend more time on the work that requires judgment, service and relationships.

The VRI Homes Philosophy

As Broker/Owner of VRI Homes, with 12 offices and more than 150 agents powered by HomesIn.com, I believe our success depends on helping our agents build successful businesses.

Give agents a plan, tools, technology, support and a community marketing system - then help them stay with the plan long enough for it to work.

Chapter 10

AI Will Change Real Estate - But It Won't Replace Relationships

Information Is No Longer the Advantage

Consumers can see listings, photos, property data and neighborhood information from a phone. AI will make information even easier to access.

The agent's value is increasingly not simply knowing information, but explaining what it means.

Use AI as an Assistant

AI can help agents create community content, video scripts, market explanations, email campaigns, business spotlights, follow-up communication and marketing ideas.

That can be a major advantage, especially for newer agents comfortable with technology.

Do Not Become a Digital Secret Agent

An agent can spend all day behind a computer creating content and still have nobody in town know them.

Promote a business online, then meet the owner. Create the Local Guide, then distribute it. Build the town website, then attend the event. Use technology to open doors, then walk through them.

Trust Becomes More Valuable

As more communication becomes automated, genuine relationships may become more valuable.

Technology platforms and algorithms will change. Your database, reputation, local business relationships, past clients and referral network can remain.

Technology + Community + Relationships

The future agent should combine technology for efficiency, community for relevance and relationships for trust.

Do not compete with AI at what AI does best. Use it, then spend the time you save meeting people, listening, helping and connecting.

Chapter 11

Your Reputation Is Your Brand

What Do People Say When You Are Not There?

Agents spend time on logos, colors and slogans. Those things have a place, but your most important brand is your reputation.

When your name comes up and you are not in the room, what do people say about you?

Your Online Presence Should Reinforce the Referral

When someone hears your name, they may search you online before calling. Your Google Business Profile, real estate portals, LinkedIn, brokerage profile, HomesIn.com presence and social media should be accurate and professional.

Reviews Are Digital Word of Mouth

Ask satisfied clients for honest reviews when appropriate. Over time, reviews can reinforce the personal referrals that drive a relationship-based business.

Be Known for More Than Listings

If everything you publish says JUST LISTED, JUST SOLD and OPEN HOUSE, the community knows only that you sell real estate.

Promote businesses, events, organizations, new neighbors and useful market information. Become known as someone who supports and understands the town.

Protect the Name

Do what you say you will do. Communicate when there is a problem. Do not promise what you cannot deliver. Treat people professionally even when a transaction becomes difficult.

Your name follows you throughout your career. Protect it.

Chapter 12

Don't Just Have a Real Estate Career - Build a Legacy

The Business Will Keep Changing

When I started at 18, there was no Google, social media, smartphone or artificial intelligence. The tools changed dramatically. The importance of trust did not.

People still do business with people, and people still refer professionals they know and trust.

Do Not Try to Be Everybody's Agent

Start with a town. If the town is too large, start with a neighborhood. Learn it. Promote it. Support it. Build relationships inside it.

You do not need millions of followers. You need the right people in the right community to know, trust and remember you.

Stop Chasing. Start Building.

Agents can spend their careers chasing leads, algorithms, platforms and the next marketing promise.

Build relationships. Build a database. Build a reputation. Build a referral network. Build a community presence. Build digital assets. Build a business.

Your First Year Is the Foundation

Do not compare your first year with someone else's twentieth. Year Two should build on Year One, and Year Three should build on both.

If you work the right plan consistently, you should not have to start from zero every January.

Your Turn

If you are new, start now. If you have been in the business for years but keep starting over, change direction. If you have been successful but built only personal production, begin organizing the relationships and systems around it.

Pick your community. Prepare your profiles. Research the businesses. Build your town presence. Create the Local Guide. Promote the community. Meet the owners. Welcome new neighbors. Build your network. Build your database. Build your reputation.

Don't be a secret agent. Don't just chase leads - build referrals. Don't just sell homes - build relationships. Don't just work in your town - become part of your town.

Become the Real Estate Talk of the Town.

30-Day Town Advocate Challenge

Days 1-5: Build Your Foundation

Complete and align your MLS, Zillow, Realtor.com, Homes.com, Google Business Profile and LinkedIn profiles. Choose the town or neighborhood you intend to represent.

Days 6-10: Map the Community

Research local businesses, organizations, community resources, events and key contacts. Begin building your local database.

Days 11-15: Start Giving Exposure

Add or prepare business features for the town platform and begin promoting local businesses through town-focused social media.

Days 16-20: Create Local Assets

Develop the first version of your Town Local Guide and outline or record your town video. Prepare a simple local market update.

Days 21-25: Get Out of the Office

Meet local business owners. Show them what you are doing to promote the community. Ask about their business before talking about yours.

Days 26-30: Connect the Pieces

Invite businesses to networking, podcast or joint-marketing opportunities. Put the Local Guide into your open-house plan. Prepare your monthly new-neighbor mailing. Review every new relationship and add it to your database.

At the end of 30 days, do not ask only, "How many closings did I get?" Ask: How many relationships did I create? How many people now know what I do? How many businesses did I help? How much stronger is my community position than it was 30 days ago?

Then do it again. Community recognition is built through consistency.

About the Author

Larry Vecchio is the Broker/Owner of VRI Homes, an independent real estate brokerage with 12 offices and more than 150 real estate agents, powered by HomesIn.com.

With more than 45 years of experience in the real estate and mortgage industries, Larry has built his career around a central belief: successful agents need more than a real estate license - they need a plan.

Through HomesIn.com, he developed a community marketing approach designed to help agents become the Real Estate Town Advocate in their local market by combining hyper-local real estate websites, MLS home search, local business promotion, social media, Local Guides, new-neighbor marketing, town videos, market updates, direct mail, networking and digital advertising.

His philosophy is simple: **The best lead is a referral. Don't just work in your town. Become part of your town. Become the Real Estate Talk of the Town.**

THEY DON'T NEED ANOTHER AGENT. THEY NEED YOU.

NOT AS A SALESPERSON. AS THE REAL ESTATE TOWN ADVOCATE.

This book gives new agents a proven roadmap to stand out, get known, and build a referral-based business that grows year after year.



INSIDE YOU'LL DISCOVER:



Why referrals are the best leads—
and how to get more of them



How to become the go-to agent
in your town



The power of local content, Local Guides,
and business spotlights



How to use HomesIn.com and the
Multiple Website Service to create
more opportunities



How technology and AI can help you
work smarter, not replace relationships



How your reputation becomes your
most valuable brand



And how to build a business—and
a legacy—that lasts



LARRY VECCHIO

Broker/Owner of VRI Homes with 12 offices and 150+ agents, and Founder of HomesIn.com. Larry began his real estate journey at 18 years old as a closing document messenger and has spent more than four decades helping agents build successful careers and better communities.



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