

NEW ENGLAND EDITION

TOP AGENT

MAGAZINE

5 TIPS TO
GET NEW
CLIENTS

ADDING
VALUE TO
LISTINGS

& the Advantage of
Identifying Neighborhood
Amenities

MODERN EMAIL
ETIQUETTE
FOR TODAY'S
AGENTS

Small Yard?
Big Statement:
How to Make the Most
Out of Micro Outdoor Spaces

COVER STORY

JULIA
WHITE

FEATURED AGENT

INDRA HARRIS



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JULIA WHITE



INDRA HARRIS

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Adding Value to Listings & the Advantage of Identifying Neighborhood Amenities

Everyone knows the famous real estate phrase: *location, location, location*. In fact, it is hard to underestimate the pivotal role that a region can play when it comes to determining a home's value. In today's competitive market, the littlest things can truly add up—especially when it comes to neighborhood amenities. While most savvy agents know the figures regarding school

district ranking and local property taxes, have you ever considered the under-the-radar amenities that drive buyers and bidding wars? To derive the highest value from a listed home, you need to paint a complete picture of the area in which you're selling. With that guiding principle in mind, let's consider a few modern amenities and how they add drastically to your bottom line.

Walking a fifteen-minute radius of the area or performing a deep-dive into customer review sites or food blogs can help you identify hidden gems or local favorites.

A little can go a long way: restaurants, coffee shops, and entertainment

Everyone has a favorite take-out spot, coffee shop, or neighborhood watering hole. Identifying the key players in an area—such as restaurants, nightlife, and entertainment hotspots—will create a livable picture that prospective buyers can latch onto. Walking a fifteen-minute radius of the area or performing a deep-dive into customer review sites or food blogs can help you identify hidden gems or local favorites. While a cute coffee shop down the street may seem like a bonus instead of a foundational amenity, you never know what kind of homebuyer you might net if you include the cozy characteristics that make a house a home.

From here to there: public transportation and commuter access

While this rule may not apply to all properties, considering access to public transportation is a major draw for today's buyers. Especially amidst the more eco-conscious Millennial segment eager to buy within city limits—knowing public transportation access points and schedules can add serious value to listed properties. Also, think outside the box: do nearby thoroughfares boast dedicated bike lanes? Are there plans to expand rail lines to the area in the future? Deliver a confident picture of the area's public transportation access and prospective buyers will trust your expertise.

Know thy history: creating a narrative of the neighborhood

As humans, we're drawn to narratives. Sales pitches and marketing campaigns hinge on an alluring storyline. That's why understanding a neighborhood's history can frame and contextualize a property to great effect. After all, buyers aren't just drawn to sturdy foundations and bedroom counts; they like to imagine their lives unfolding inside those four walls. Get a sense of the area's historical timeline, architectural style, noteworthy community members, and the like. Conveying this intriguing information to buyers helps them connect more personally with a property, while understanding the holistic picture of their potential new home.

While it is always good to cover the basics of school districts and property values, it is even more useful to expand your knowledge base and bring a warm, human element to locational knowledge. Not only will you appeal to a younger demographic of homebuyers who values this strategic information, but you will also broaden your understanding of your service area at large. Think of it this way: a neighborhood is far more than a collection of homes on a block. A neighborhood is about atmosphere, access, and a sense of community. If you authentically appeal to this guiding truth, and buyers will surely rise to the occasion.



Reconsider Referral-Only When Planning for the Future

A 100% referral rate is a testament of client happiness. But even a 30% referral rate is proof of client satisfaction. It's all relative, say some agents. One number pays tribute to past success, which is certainly a story worth telling. But the other might better predict the future. Many agents plan for the idea that

working only on referral may not be sufficient during slower times of the year, in a down market, or when an agent needs to expanding into a new sector.

Unless you are clairvoyant enough to flawlessly predict every market change or every

Many agents plan for the idea that working only on referral may not be sufficient during slower times of the year, in a down market, or when an agent needs to expanding into a new sector.

life change that your clients and referral partners may experience, it's wise to maintain an active marketing presence. The reasons vary, however, depending on the goals and trajectory of each individual's business.

If long-term success, a growing team, a legacy or expansion into new areas are not priorities, then working a sphere of influence may be enough for some agents, especially those who may be in the industry mostly for the love of the business. But for a majority of agents, no matter how much they love their work, their real estate and mortgage businesses are careers, first and foremost.

Let's start with the team-builders and mentors. Agents and brokers who are building teams are wise to invest in business marketing, advertising and community outreach. Ty Hutchins, who owns and operates Ty & Company Real Estate in Colorado's Front Range, says that, while she could personally live off referrals alone, her goal is to build up her agents. "I do the marketing piece for my team, so I can help them succeed," she says. That marketing includes running commercials on TV and in movies theatres, as well as lead generation that identifies potential buyers, sellers and

investors between the Colorado Springs and Denver markets. Her team's goal, she adds, is to promote their reputation of being honest, hardworking professionals with the reach of a major brand but the personalized approach of a boutique.

Then there are the growers. Khrista Jarvis and Nicole Jung of The Khrista Jarvis Team in the San Francisco Bay Area, are on a considerable growth track. "We're the #1 team in our area and the top team in Compass Real Estate nationally," explains Khrista. While high marks for service on behalf of their clients have led them to these heights, they know that they must continue to evolve and market their brand. "We do a good deal of social media marketing for our listings and for our business," she says. Their names, therefore, are frequently linked to sentiments of trust, dependability and market knowledge, both in their marketing and in their reviews.

Next, there are those who weathered the worst of times. Susan Roche entered real estate sales in 2003, following several years of property management in North Carolina. The key to her sustained triumphs through major market swings lies in her long-range planning. "If the market starts to dip or fall,

I have safety nets in place,” says Susan Roche, team leader of Simply Real Estate, based in Charlotte. “When it’s a seller’s market, I still plan for a buyer’s market and when it’s a buyer’s market I plan for a seller’s market..” In other words, no matter how comfortable her existing work may feel, she networks consistently. She also employs a full-time marketing director who leads several projects including ongoing research, events and social media exposure in addition to listings marketing. By staying ahead of market changes, Susan knows she can unfailingly represent her clients’ best interests while still maintaining a safety net for her business.

Even professionals with more than three decades’ experience and deep referral networks know the importance of business

marketing. Cathy Richards, co-owner with Nancy Dalaska of Epic-Wasatch Homes in Park City, UT, entered real estate in 1987 and still draws at least a fifth of her business from lead generation, social media marketing and community outreach. Her business partner, Nancy, adds that real estate is about much more than their own business. “We love collaborating and brainstorming with other agents to help them prosper,” says Nancy. “We believe the healthier the market, the better we all are.”

Regardless of market conditions, even the best reputation can’t guarantee long-term success. To sustain and grow, it’s wise to feed your business by increasing exposure, remaining flexible and maintaining systems for customer service, networking, research, marketing and lead-generation.



TOP AGENT

MAGAZINE

JULIA
WHITE





As an independent agent at Complete Real Estate in Newington, Top Agent Julia White mainly serves Hartford County, but also covers the entire state of Connecticut and is licensed in Florida.

Julia White began her real estate career four years ago, but her connection to the industry goes back further than that. “I got into real estate because I was inspired by my uncle who is a real estate developer in the Colchester area,” Julia recalls. “During my last years of college, I would help out on his project sites, and I gained a lot of real estate knowledge that way. Immediately after I graduated college, I got licensed and dove right in!” The rest is history, and Julia has made a name for herself helping her clients achieve their real estate goals.

As an independent agent at Complete Real Estate in Newington, Julia mainly serves Hartford County, but also covers the entire state of Connecticut and is licensed in Florida. She does a strong referral business, which speaks to the trust and confidence she inspires. “A majority of my business is



referral-based,” she says. “I’m grateful to be a part of my clients’ journey, and I stay in touch with them beyond the closing. The internet has also played a large role, and social media allows me to connect with people more than ever before. I like to take full advantage of

accessing my sphere, which allows me to get a lot of referrals.”

Her deep familiarity with her market sets Julia apart. “One of the reasons my clients choose me is because of my local knowledge of the



"I've been in Connecticut my whole life, so I have extensive knowledge of the marketplace. Along with my marketing plan and pricing strategy, it allows me to exceed my clients' expectations."

area," she explains. "I've been in Connecticut my whole life, so I have extensive knowledge of the marketplace. Along with my marketing plan and pricing strategy, it allows me to exceed my clients' expectations."

When it comes to marketing, Julia takes a diversified approach to ensure optimum

exposure. "It's important to have a strong online presence," Julia says. "As technology advances, most buyers begin their home searches online, and it's important to me that all my listings stand out among the crowd. All of my listings have the best high-resolution photography, lighting, videography, and more so that a property is showcased in the



best light possible.” Julia’s online emphasis is also balanced with more traditional methods such as open houses and postcards.

Community involvement is important to Julia, and she attends local events whenever she can. She shows up at all of the Realtor® networking events locally, and is a

member of the Greater Hartford Association of Realtors® as well as the National Association of Realtors®. Julia likes to give back by donating to the local food bank at the holidays. When she is not working or giving back, Julia enjoys spending time with her friends, family, and pets, as well as yoga and traveling.



In the future, Julia says. “I plan to grow and expand, while continuing to maintain a high level of quality for my clients. I would like to maybe one day have a team of my own of young, ambitious agents.” Above all, Julia says, it’s about the clients. “I like being able to

assist people along their journeys. There comes a point in everybody’s life when they need a home, so it’s great to be a part of that. It’s a really meaningful thing to be helping people find the place where they’re going to start families and grow the rest of their lives.”

To find out more about Julia White, contact her by phone at 860-338-0729, or by email at juliawhiterealtor@gmail.com. You can find her online at HomesByJulia.net.



Small Yard? Big Statement:

How to Make the Most Out of Micro Outdoor Spaces

When house-hunters compile their lists of must-have home items, a dreamy backyard space is often near the top. After all, who doesn't want an outdoor oasis of their very own? From summer barbecues to open space for your dog to frolic—everyone has their own aspirations when it comes to creating the perfect backyard paradise. But as homebuyers seek properties deeper within city limits, and Millennials opt for properties with

urban amenities and access, home-connected outdoor spaces are becoming a bit smaller in stature. Of course, size isn't everything when it comes to outdoor space. Even balconies, rear patios, and ultra-tiny yards can provide homebuyers with the outdoor reprieve they crave—even on a smaller scale. For a few ideas that can help you envision all the possibilities of a micro outdoor space, read on for inspiration.

Think vertically.

When space is at a premium, think *up* instead of *out*. In other words, make the most of small spaces by capitalizing on your backyard, balcony, or patio's overhead height. Mood-setting string lights, hanging pocket or wall gardens, floating shelves, and modern overhead hangings can create a sense of privacy and luxury without cluttering the square footage on the ground.



Upgrade the look of structural components.

Not in love with your patio pavers? Don't have the sweetest view off your balcony? Whatever your small backyard living space gripe may be, there's always a solution if you go back to the basics. Consider the structural components of your outdoor space that you aren't in love with and there's likely an affordable, eye-pleasing solution. For instance, plenty of home goods

retailers make a variety of punchy or luxe outdoor rugs that can disguise stained or lackluster outdoor flooring. Power-washing is another great solution for old grime and dirt that's an eyesore. Don't have a great view? Planting ivy on bare walls, installing adjustable mood lighting, or hanging planters can create a more inviting ambiance.



Soothing sounds set the mood.

While there may not be room for a swimming pool or pond in a micro yard or balcony, you can still bring the calming presence of water to your outdoor oasis. Fountains run the gamut in sizing and price, making this amenity an easy acquisition. What's more, a running fountain not only adds a soothing sound to your space, but it also helps drown out noise from the street or the neighbors—making your space entirely your own and stress-free.

Don't compromise on your culinary dreams.

If you love to entertain in outdoor spaces or relish the chance to man the grill—small outdoor spaces don't have to trip you up. Grill options (both propane and charcoal) come in a range of sizes, many of which can be outfitted securely to balcony posts or be tucked away and out of sight when out of use. Consider nesting tables or those with a removable leaf to adjust your seating and dining options depending on company.

Another trick? A small, oscillating fan can keep air flow moving in a small space during grill season—and can be easily affixed to walls or posts, as well.

Don't let yourself or clients be discouraged by spaces with more limited square footage in outdoor areas. Furniture and design trends have already begun shifting toward providing better small-space options, and at the end of the day, a backyard space is all about providing an area for relaxation. With a few well-placed, strategic choices, you can still have it all.





5 Tips to Get New Clients

If you've been in the industry for a while, you've probably built up a healthy percentage of repeat and referral business. Although it can be tempting to just maintain those relationships rather than generating new business, there's something to be said for staying on top of

your game by never resting on your laurels. Actively pursuing new clients is not only a way to generate more business, but depending on how you do it, it could even lead to a profitable new niche. Here are just a few ways to build up your new client base.

1 Become a referral partner with industry peers

Everyone from mortgage lenders, to financial planners, to insurance agents, can be potentially lucrative referral partners for a Realtor®. You may already have great relationships with some that just need to be more formalized. But, you don't just want to partner with anyone, make sure these are people you also feel completely comfortable referring your clients to - people who share your values and work ethic.

Another avenue to consider is divorce attorneys – yes, you heard that correctly. Helping people go through this difficult period actually requires a very specific skill set. You need to be able to handle the legal aspects, as well as the emotional ones. There are numerous training courses you can take if you decide to take this route, which could end up being a lucrative and much-needed specialty.

2 Cold Call Expired and FSBO Listings

This is a route a lot of agents take when they are just starting out, that usually leads to great success. You probably haven't cold called since you started out, and this is a great skill to build up again. It will not only sharpen your sales skills, but could generate a lot more business.

People with For Sale By Owners (FSBOs) and expired listings, are usually very motivated to sell. This is a great chance for you to really hone in on why they need to hire you. Do you offer innovative marketing plans? Access to a large sphere of influence? Expired listing clients are looking for ways to sell a property that seems impossible to move. With FSBOs, you need to show them how you can get them more money in their pocket, even



with paying you a commission. Pursuing both will really engage your mind to think outside of the box, which will not only get you more business, but make you better at what you do.

3 Partner up with a Relocation Company

This is another niche market that you can really capitalize on if you want to pursue a new specialty. But, it is a specialty, so getting educated on the process will help you generate the business you want. It's a complicated area of real estate, you'll often

times be helping to facilitate dual transactions, as you try and secure a property at the same time you are helping your relocation client sell their previous home. This specialty is becoming an in-demand skill in areas that have major corporate headquarters.

4 Become a Builder's Realtor® of choice

This can be a real score for any Realtor®. The competition might be fierce to land a client like this, but there are numerous ways to make yourself stand out from the rest. Gain certifications and become knowledgeable about the construction process. Be well-versed on what trendy materials, features, and finishes will add value to a property.

Get the builder on board with you by offering to take just a segment of the subdivision then wow them with your marketing skills. Take on properties they haven't been able to sell. You can even offer to throw an open



house for them. This is another way to show them the level of service they can expect from you. These clients might be harder to land, but the payoff will be enormous.

5 Create a Website that Offers Real Value to Potential Clients

Perhaps the most useful way of getting contact information for people looking to sell is by adding a home valuation feature to your website. When people are first considering selling their home, finding out how much

it is worth is one of the first questions they want answered. By becoming a resource to potential clients (and current clients!), you just might be the first person that comes to mind when they're actually looking to sell.

TOP AGENT MAGAZINE

INDRA HARRIS

For 14 years, Indra Harris worked as a mental health worker with a private practice, using her education to help people in her community – she attended Smith College and Springfield College, and earned two Master’s Degrees, one in Industrial Psychology and one in Counseling Psychology. 8 years ago, she got her real estate license to buy some personal investment properties, not knowing that it would open up an avenue for her to enrich her community in an entirely different way. After getting her license, she started to get friends and family contacting her to get help with buying and selling homes, and she realized she could turn the situation into a career. Almost two years ago, she took the plunge into full-time Realtorship, and has been hard at work building her impressive career in Western Massachusetts.

So far, nearly all of Indra’s business has come through repeat clients and referrals. As a person who genuinely cares about the well-being of others, she has had no trouble building a constituency around her brand of hands-on direction, and her willingness to educate clients and guide them through the process makes her a desirable candidate for serving less experienced home buyers. “I really enjoy helping people - it’s something I’ve focused on doing my entire life,” Indra says. “Many of my clients become my friends, and I love developing organic, mutually beneficial relationships with them.”



When it comes to interacting with clients professionally, Indra emphasizes transparency in the way she delivers information, keeping clients updated and setting expectations as events in the transaction unfold. She is consistently honest with her clients, a quality that is extremely helpful when navigating the tricky world of real estate. “I want my clients to feel prepared during the transaction, so I keep communication a high priority throughout the process,” Indra says. Her guidance makes her a valuable asset when buying or selling a home, and clients come to love her style of personalized service. So far this year, Indra has closed several million dollars in total sales volume, and looks forward to pushing her production numbers even further in the years to come.

Indra spends a lot of her free time going on adventures with her two kids – she also enjoys relaxing and reading a good book. As a trilingual agent in Italian, Spanish, and English, she is heavily involved in her community, and works with many Hispanic clients. She is involved with several charitable organizations locally. For the future of her business, Indra hopes to continue growing both as a Realtor® and investor, and spreading the word about her new career. If you’re looking for an agent in Massachusetts who truly cares about her clients, get in touch with Indra Harris today!

You can contact Indra at (413) 314-8883 or indra.eliterealty@gmail.com.



Modern Email Etiquette for Today's Agents

In today's tech-forward culture, consumers are constantly inundated with promotional emails, alerts, invites, and social media blasts. As a real estate agent or a loan officer, how do you stand apart from the noise? What's more, how do you stay relevant in a digital landscape that's constantly changing?

For starters, there are a few timeless techniques you can apply to up your skillset when it comes email and digital communication: asking questions that

inspire conversation, politeness, and following up regularly—to name a few. Likewise, there are surely new tricks you can add to your arsenal to stay ahead of the curve. Let's outline a few ways you can refine and update your email etiquette to compete in today's virtual marketplace.

Make your subject line count

Too often, we labor over the content of our emails without giving much thought to subject lines.

Though email is no longer a new-fangled invention, there are certainly ways you can modernize its use and take advantage of its ubiquity.

However, these little headlines can go a long way in luring the consumer to open your email and ultimately click through to your website in search for your services. An enticing subject line should be short and sweet, ideally less than fifty characters. You might also include the name of the recipient, and be up front (though concise) about the subject matter of your message. Remember: the first thing a client will see is your name and subject line—be sure to make this prime real estate shine.

Think mobile

Research tells us that 79% of Americans check their phones within fifteen minutes of waking up. In fact, much of modern day correspondence occurs by smartphone. Accordingly, you'll want to account for email readability on a mobile phone. For instance, incorporating paragraph breaks for each new thought allows information to be parceled out in a palatable way for readers utilizing small screens. Also, any sort of graphic flair or links within your email should be shortened and streamlined for mobile consumption. Send yourself an email every now and again and access it from your phone—you'll be able to double-check that all the elements of your emails are working well on a mobile platform.

Incorporate email tools

There are excellent tools out there to enhance your email experience. With just a quick download,

you can add spellcheck, a URL address shortening feature, or a delay option that holds emails for thirty seconds before they're sent. Think about the possibilities! Haven't you sent an email without including the attachment you intended, or realizing you sent correspondence to the wrong client? If that's the case, a delay feature can help you save face and build in a window for error—just in case. Regardless of which tools speak to your email habits, there are plenty of add-ons out there that can revamp your digital correspondence style.

Use email to maximize your online presence

These days, there are plenty of ways to communicate—email, text, phone, apps, and social media. When you interact through email, consider it an opportunity to invite your client to follow you elsewhere online. Ensure that your email signature includes unobtrusive, streamlined links to your social media accounts, professional website, or review page. This will build in an opportunity for clients to engage with your brand, and you may even add an online follower for the long term.

Though email is no longer a new-fangled invention, there are certainly ways you can modernize its use and take advantage of its ubiquity. Keep these approaches in mind as you reenergize your email technique and fortify your communication in the digital era.

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