Are your client relationships impervious to technology?

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There has been a lot of chatter over the past few weeks about Zillow Instant Offers and lawsuits related to automated valuation models (AVMs).

Much of this conversation is interesting and productive, but some of it sounds a bit like whining to me.

Redefining real relationships

“Real estate sales is a relationship-based business.”

Most real estate agents claim this as their mantra, yet few of them run their business in a way that reflects this belief. If you build your business on relationships but are still scared by tools like Opendoor and Zillow, it’s time to talk about the dynamics of those relationships.

First, how are you looking at the relationships you have with your clients?

Are you looking at them through your eyes or through the eyes of your clients?

Be honest here. If, to you, a relationship consists of nothing more than staying in touch using phone calls, emails and postcards, you don’t have a relationship-based business at all, and that’s why new technologies scare you.

You must have the right intentions — you’ve got to *care* — if you want your communications to be seen as something more than thinly veiled advertisements and self-promotions. Sure, you might stay top-of-mind, but where’s the real value? Where’s the genuine concern?

Do you call your clients on their birthday because you sincerely wish to brighten their day? Or do you think of birthdays as just another excuse to promote yourself? If it’s the former, then bravo — you’re building a relationship-based business.

You don’t have to be best friends with your clients, but you need to care about *them*, not just the real estate they buy or sell.

Social media for relationship building

This topic relates to similar complaints within the industry surrounding social media.

Relationships are strengthened through value-added conversations and content via *any* and *all* communication methods. Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, for example, are social networking platforms that connect people around the globe every second.

Think differently about how these platforms should be used. For example, I recently had lunch with a prospect who asked for my Snapcode instead of my business card because connecting on Snapchat would be easier.

Similarly, Facebook Messenger might be an easier way to communicate with some prospects.

Just think about how social media not only works for you, but benefits your clients as well.

Be a proactive, trusted adviser

It’s about the clients, not us.

Only a small percentage of real estate professionals understand this, which is why the people that make up that small percentage are truly loved and appreciated by their clients.

Many agents are under-performing, but it’s not entirely their fault. Consumers are turning their attention elsewhere because of the complacency of multiple listing services (MLSs), real estate brokerages and the National Association of Realtors (NAR). This is why companies like Zillow and others exist; and while we’ve been paying attention to ourselves, Zillow was listening to the consumer and developing the experience they were craving.

The great news is that proactive, trusted real estate advisers with strong relationships will never lose business to technology. In fact, they will use technology to enhance the customer experience within their business.

New tools and platforms can certainly speed up processes, but they cannot express empathy. While some agents worry about these changes, the proactive, trusted advisers are connecting, and caring and selling real estate.

Care your ass off

There is a sure way to win in this industry, but it requires hard work and a tremendous amount of self-awareness. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are your intentions in the right place?
- Do your clients matter more than the transaction?
- Are you using every tool available to help your clients succeed?

If you care your ass off, the new technologies of the world won't be able to touch you.

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