How one real estate pro takes niche marketing to a whole new level

Demetrios Salpoglou

You think you've heard of niche marketing. Maybe you've read about it, or maybe you've tried to figure out how to incorporate it in your own business.

Demetrios Salpoglou takes niche to a whole new level.

This Boston-area real estate pro and owner of Boston Pads combines a background in tech with a deep knowledge of his market to create micromarketing that works. And in his enthusiasm and excitement for his city and his companies, you're sure to find inspiration to help target your own marketing plan.

It was my pleasure to talk with Salpoglou for a wide-ranging conversation that covered the tech boom of the go-go '90s, fishing and *The Godfather.*

What is the best advice you've ever received, and how does it inform your real estate company?

The best advice I received was from a friend who said, "Just because other people haven't been able to scale apartment rentals at a massive level doesn't mean you can't. Go big or go home."

I took it to heart. I had heard the expression "go big or go home" many times, but when it was attached to scalability and ability, there was magic in that statement that resonated with me.

Tell me about your background in the tech world. You've said that Windows 95 made you leave real estate and go into high tech. What was so special about that system?

Windows 95 had a significantly improved user interface and coupled with dial-up internet, it completely changed how marketing works and how the world would access information in a dramatic and permanent way.

When you came back to real estate after the dot-com bubble burst, what were your thoughts?

I felt like I fell asleep in the captain's chair driving the boat for five years. I felt like the industry was stuck in the fog in Chatham for half a decade.

Now, Boston Pads is the umbrella for your many niche URLs. How many URLs do you own?

We own hundreds of URLs. We currently have 86 active websites.

We can spin up websites for any company, in any major city, and give them great local domain names so [the company] can look like the local expert.

Domain names matter.

Why so many? How does that work?

People are tired of the big general sites. There is too much confusing, conflicting and outdated data on many major portals.

Quality and user experience suffer. Potential clients lose time and gain frustration. A new wave of consumers is doing much more refined and specific searches. That's where we come into play.

What are your favorite niches to work with?

There are many niches of real estate that are incredibly interesting and constantly evolving. It is a lot of fun to continue to build software and innovate your way beyond your competition.

We always focus on making systems efficient and saving agents and end users time and money.

If you focus on creating a more efficient solution, you add value. When you add value, people want to work with a winning team. We have had the best apartment leasing software and platform for well over a decade.

We continue to innovate at a rapid pace and probably faster than when we first started.

There is also the satisfaction and challenges of building properties. It is a great feeling knowing that you are building properties that are going to outlast you and be on the earth for a hundred years or longer.

Ground-up new construction, renovating, zoning and development of highest and best uses are something that inspire me to use the intellectual and strategic part of my brain.

Finally, there is a great feeling to [helping] personally develop real estate agents to their highest potential.

In my nearly 20 years of real estate, it has been awesome to watch and help train and build millionaires in our industry; many of them younger than myself.

The lessons that I teach them regarding sales, trust and work ethic resonate and are portable across many industries. It has been a wonderful journey to help create successful people and give back.

Overall, I am blessed to have so many great niches to work with and find new inspiration.

Do you have any advice for agents who would like to make rentals part of their plan?

Starting in rentals is fundamental to the long-term success of a real estate agent if they want to perform at the highest level in the Boston marketplace.

Boston is dominated by investment properties, and you have to understand rental comps and market timing for apartments to be truly helpful to your clients.

Make no mistake about it, this city performs a huge amount of rentals, and while selling condos gets press and the attention of the HGTV crowd, the greatest money is made in the buying and selling of investment grade buildings.

To closely understand the renting process and how it works is critical to an agent’s overall comprehension and execution of being the best real estate agent possible — there are no shortcuts in real estate.

I would highly suggest everyone start in apartment leasing for several years and learn product placement, pricing, design and layout styles that work, as well as vacancy rates and market timing.

This will help you both [in the] short and long term as you graduate from selling investment properties into becoming a landlord and generating positive cash flow.

What reality show is most like your life and why?

Wicked Tuna. Presentation and location are key fishing concepts. Sport fishing requires incredible attention to every detail in order to catch fish.

Marketing and fishing have a lot of incredible parallels. Fishermen who catch the most fish pay close attention to their bait. To catch the most fish, first you must find the fish, then offer them what they are looking for. Marketing works the same way.

In *The Godfather 2*, Fredo says a 'Hail Mary' every time he casts his line. Do you have any superstitions when you are fishing?

None. I believe in the maximization of time principle. Get there fast, get your lines out as quickly as possible, cover the most water, change your lures until you figure out what the fish want. It's not about what you want, it's about what the fish wants.

How can an agent who's been in the business a while change things up and take it to the next level?

Be the first in and last to leave the office. Just like fishing, lines in the water matter to produce results. You can't catch fish by sitting on the docks. Time is irreplaceable.

As an independent contractor you have to give yourself enough time to be successful.

I often don't enjoy getting up at 2:30 in the morning to meet the guys at the docks to go catch fish; but if the fish are biting in the morning, that's when you go.

By the same token, a real estate agent has to spend more time figuring out what works and dial in on patterns until they are successful.

The other key factor is to measure what you do each hour. Set hourly goals — say call 20 landlords per hour, leaving messages if they don't answer. In five hours you will have 100 calls.

Goals keep you from being distracted. Goals matter.

When someone asks how your day was, what do you base the answer on? What makes a good day or a bad day?

Every day is a great day. I appreciate life and the wonderful things it brings you.

An occasional bad day only makes me appreciate the good days even more.

For nearly 20 years I have remained consistent at getting up at 5 a.m., and I think it helps contribute to having a great day. Sleeping late is less fishing and work time.

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