

Your personal habits...

Your personal habits aren't part of your marketing plan, per se. But they are definitely part of your marketing. The impression you make has everything to do with your success in real estate.

This could be a touchy subject, but you do need to be aware of how they affect other people. Some of them could cause you to lose customers.

Smoking, for instance. I smoke, so this is not a rant by a non-smoker against the "evil ones." But even as a smoker, I am offended when someone has just finished a smoke and then breathes in my face. Whew! Stink!

You may want to refrain from smoking in the vehicle you'll use to show property. If nothing else, smoke only with the windows open and keep a can of odor killer next to you. Spray the vehicle each time you exit. Or, invest in one of the new ionizers that plug into the cigarette lighter socket. For most customers, that will suffice. However, if you have a customer who is allergic to smoke, advise them to follow you in their own vehicle.

The same goes for pet hair. My dogs ride with me, so when I had a customer who said they were allergic to dogs, I told them to follow me. Your intent is to sell real estate - not to make someone sick!

Next is perfume. Be careful of perfume, perfumed body wash, and after shave. For most people an overdose of perfume is merely an annoyance, but for others it is cause to be ill.

I myself developed an allergy a few years ago, so if someone comes near me who has "taken a bath in a perfume bottle," I develop an instant headache. We had one title company representative and a few customers who would send me out the door just by walking in.

The worst part of that is that I grew to dislike those people. It was an unreasonable feeling, but I felt like they just didn't care about me if they were willing to give me a headache. Never mind that most of them didn't know I had an allergy.

Remember that many people are allergic.

- Use your perfume sparingly, if at all.
- Don't subject them to smoke
- Don't subject them to pet hair and dander

Some folks also get headaches from air conditioning, so be sure to ask passengers in your car if they're comfortable. Some would prefer not to experience air conditioning because being too cold makes them miserable - others develop sinus headaches.

The same goes for your heater. I prefer to be toasty warm when I'm driving - but my husband rolls down the window even when its 40 degrees out. Ask your customers. (And no, I don't mean you should make yourself miserable, but you can attempt to tone down your own penchant for cold or heat in order for your customers to be comfortable.)

Other personal habits that can cause you to lose customers involve eating - and chewing gum. Many people don't like to listen to other people chewing - and really don't like watching gum or other food go 'round in their mouths. Don't chew gum when you're with customers unless you can do it quietly, with your mouth shut.

You may be called upon to eat with your customers. But don't eat in front of them. And never, ever, eat while you're talking to them on the phone. The sound is disgusting and many of them simply will never call you back.

But agents aren't the only ones who do such rude things. Once I agreed to write an offer for another agent who had to leave for a showing. That was fine - I knew she'd do me a favor in return some day. But I didn't bargain for the customer.

He showed up with a box of crunchy granola cereal and a carton of soy milk - and a bowl and spoon. He apologized for not having had time to eat his breakfast. (It was 11 a.m.) And then he proceeded to crunch and slurp his way through the entire offer writing process. I told that agent she owed me about a half a dozen favors to make up for my having to sit through that!

While that man annoyed me greatly, other odd customers are just entertaining. I had one once who came in to see me, took his shoes off, and stretched out on the couch next to my desk. He put his hands behind his head and proceeded to carry on the conversation from a prone position. Another time he showed up in his stocking feet because his feet had gotten too hot in his shoes.

He was a good customer and I helped him purchase a couple of houses over the years.

Clothing

It should go without saying that an agent needs to dress appropriately. And that will vary depending on where you are. If you're showing waterfront homes it might be appropriate to wear shorts. If you're showing million dollar mansions you probably need to dress in expensive (or expensive-looking) business clothes.

If you live in a rural area where you might find yourself crawling through barb wire fences, jeans are in order. A good blazer makes any outfit look more professional, so invest in one or more. Then tailor your dress to what you're selling and where.

Just make sure you're clean and neat - and that your attire doesn't draw attention to itself. You want people to pay attention to you and what you're telling them / showing

them... not to your clothes, or to your hairstyle, and definitely not to your makeup. Leave the heavy eye shadow at home until you're going out for the evening. You don't want people forgetting your name and referring to you as "that agent with the bright blue eye shadow."

And, leave the evening dress at home until then too. I will never forget meeting a real estate agent dressed in a pink satin cocktail dress. She looked completely out of place at 10 in the morning in an office full of ladies wearing wool blazers and slacks or modest skirts!

Of course, I've also seen agents out showing homes in sweat pants - and I don't know which looks worse. Both are inappropriate in a business environment.

Be remembered for your intelligence and your friendly manner - NOT for how you look.

Any suggestions?

Did I miss anything? Are there personal habits you've been annoyed by that should be included here? If so, just drop me a note and I'll add them to the list.

Thanks,

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