



The Real Estate Agent's Guide to Referrals

One of my favorite quotes to meditate on is from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Self-Reliance* "It's not the destination, it's the journey." This idea is especially helpful when thinking about the customer experience and your role as an agent in the buying and selling process. **Customer loyalty, credibility, and referrals are built not just upon you delivering the desired results, but on how you made your clients feel along the way.**

Special touches are and important and a vital step as an agent. Being able to realize and customize special touches for each client shows how valuable they are to you and that you will tailor your service to their specific, no matter how small, needs. Email blasts and magnets are great for getting your name out there, but it is important to take that extra step to let clients know how much you value their business every step of the way.

Why are these special touches so important? I've already touched on the fact that it will reassure the client that you are aware of and accommodating their unique needs. Your clients have friends, co-workers, clients of their own who they talk to throughout the process. These people have their own network of individuals they interact with regularly. **One over-the-moon client who you dazzled has the potential to turn into dozens and even hundreds of valuable referrals.**

Here are other reasons that it's important to think outside the box and make current and potential clients feel special.

1. **You'll Be Able to Reach a Larger Audience** - Even though computers and mobile devices seem like a required part of our existence for most of us, there are still people who have limited access to modern technology, whether by choice or simply ability. In certain rural areas, high speed internet is limited or can be very expensive. Elderly property owners may not need technological advances for their lifestyle and choose to not keep up with the latest devices. A physical object they can hang on their refrigerator shows that you value them even though they may not be caught up in the latest technology has to offer. Many of these people want to utilize more modern selling or buying techniques, but need a guide who understands both sides, to show them the way. That's where you come in! Being able to connect to these people and make them feel valued can open up a whole market and provide business for many years to come.
2. **They'll Have Your Name at Their Fingertips** - A quick, hand-written, thank you note can easily be stuck on a refrigerator or used as a bookmark. People have all sorts of unique ways to hold on to information they need to refer to later. E-mails can be unsubscribed to or sorted into the spam folder and may get lost in the search bar shuffle, but having an item they can look at and jog their memory will be a more reliable reference. Put items in their possession to make sure that when they think about real estate, they think about you.
3. **Make Clients/Potential Clients Feel Special** -- I love receiving mail. There is something about opening your mailbox and seeing that someone thought about you or gave you a meaningful gift that can't be duplicated on a screen. We are an instant society, and while there are many advantages, knowing that someone thought out and took time to write and mail even the smallest note, is heartwarming and can put a smile on a client's face. It may not be much, but to a client, but it can say worlds about your

dedication to their real estate goals and that you are there to help them every step of the way.

You should let clients know that you intend to provide them a VIP experience from the very first interaction. Whether you meet them in-person or they sign up to be on your e-mail list there are ways that you should be able to make that initial connection. *Some of the best ways I have found are:*

- ★ **Learn Their Names:** In [*How to Win Friends and Influence People*](#), one of Carnegie's main tips is to get good at learning people's names when you are introduced. Many people are not naturally inclined to this, but it is a skill that you can practice and improve!

I find that if I naturally repeat the name in conversation 3-4 times, it is committed into my memory. This is from years of practice though, so it may take you a few more times. If you see them again in public, be sure to address them. They may not have needed your services when you initially met, but at the later run in, their situation may have changed. *Remembering their name shows you valued the initial meeting and is a solid first step towards gaining them as a client.*

- ★ **Learn Something Unique You Can Utilize Later:** Try to find out hobbies or interests that you can use as reference in conversation or potential special touches later on in the sales or purchase process. Do they have a college they cheer for in sports? What are their hobbies? *Make notes in your database of whatever useful information you can gather that you think would be helpful later on in the process.*

- ★ **Thank You Packet:** *Never underestimate the power of making someone smile.* Be easy to talk to and always ask leading questions that stimulate conversation to help learn about potential clients. After a particularly strong introduction, send a thank you note their way. Be sure it is personalized with their name and unique information about your encounter so it doesn't read like a generic mailer.

You should always provide information on all of your mailers, cards, door hangers, and fliers that reads that you are "not intending to solicit their business if they are already working with another real estate agent." And, if you find out for sure that they have another real estate agent, you should never try to contact them unless it's through that agent. Not only can you get in trouble for doing this, but it's an act of common courtesy that you'd expect other agents to extend to you. Seriously, don't be that agent.

Also, be wary of gifts and make sure to check with your broker to make sure that gifts are cleared before you give them. Under no circumstances should you ever give someone a gift to do something, or to persuade them to act of sale, because it can be seen as giving bribes.

Once a connection is made, how do you maintain and add on to those special experiences that make you stand out? *This is the time that matters the most.* People in your client's social circle are going to be asking about how the process is going and *you want your client to have nothing but rave reviews and be telling their friends they need to work with you.* Think outside the box, using the information in your database as a cheat sheet. Find lasting, purposeful ways to show your clients how much you value them. Flower arrangements and fruit baskets are fine, but they don't last and don't require much thought. **You must dazzle in a meaningful way.**

Now I don't mean over-the-top expensive. Discover heartfelt and well thought out ways to make clients realize you are aware of and care about their needs. Think about a memorable gift that you received from a significant other. It likely wasn't chocolates or roses, but something that you mentioned in passing that you wanted and that they remembered months later. Similarly, when our loved ones pass away, it's typically not the money they leave us that we hold on to but their most prized possessions that they passed down.

Here are a few ideas on how you can dazzle your clients, but feel free to get creative depending on their needs or wants:

- ★ **Gift Basket:** If I have a client moving a long distance, I send them a basket two or three days before moving day with travel sized bath products, sleep masks, cushy socks, etc. to help make them comfortable on their journey. If they have young kids, a basket with coloring books, crayons, small toys, help occupy young attentions while their parent(s) deal with the stresses of moving day. Do they have a pet? Send a basket with customized items for their pet and treats and toys.

- ★ **Art:** A great piece of art is a meaningful gift that lasts, and is one that people love, but often forget to get themselves. Locally made art is a fun way to welcome someone into a new city or side of town. Is your client is an older person moving out of a beloved family home? Commission a painting of their former property so they can remember it fondly. Think about your client and what they have expressed to you that they cherish and use those clues to give them something meaningful they can see and remember their experience with you by.

- ★ **Food/Drink:** Are you meeting your client to view a property? Ask them if you can bring them a coffee or tea. On signing day, bring a bottle of sparkling, non-alcoholic grape juice to toast the occasion and send them home with a box of gourmet chocolates or some other special occasion food you feel they would enjoy.

- ★ **Services:** The home buying/selling process can be incredibly stressful and clients can often forget the most basic of needs. If a parent seems overwhelmed, offer to arrange childcare so they can have some time to themselves. Make sure whomever you suggest is certified, qualified, and trusted. Even if the parent is home with them, just being able to make phone calls or answer emails without interruption is a huge stress reduction. Offer to arrange for a cleaning lady or yard service for the first week a client moves into a

new home so as they are unpacking and organizing, they have one less thing on their to do list.

★ **Books:** If your client loves to read, get them a book that you think they would enjoy. Find a fictional book written by an author local to where their home is or where they are moving from. A coffee table book with fauna and flora native to their area is another great idea. If they are moving to metropolitan areas they are unfamiliar with, I love [this series](#). It is full of great places and facts about the cities they cover and will help your client explore their new hometown. Include a short note in the front cover and a bookmark to make the package complete.

Even when a client is no longer using your services, it is important to remain cordial and current with them, and if they have real estate needs in the future, they will default to you because you are fresh in their minds. Keep notes in your database of purchase anniversary dates and celebrate them with past clients. Use [this anniversary gifts list](#) for ideas on what to send.

For example, year 1, paper, I like to send a vintage map of their neighborhood or a stationary set. Try to keep track of their family and make sure you adjust your cards and gifts as their family changes throughout the years. A strong social media presence is great for this! Send birthday cards and anniversary cards if they are married and congratulations for the happy occasions in their lives. Always be reminding them that you value them, even after the transaction is over.

Special touches and moments between you and your client must always be flexible and adaptable to their needs. Use my ideas as guidelines, but **always be thinking about what you can do that will be meaningful to your client that they will mention to others.** Utilize your database and be constantly making notes, even on the smallest of details.

Referrals, more than any expensive marketing, are the best way to build a loyal customer base and ensure steady growth and profitability throughout your career. Billboards, commercials, and fliers all cost money, but it costs you nothing for a satisfied client to tell their friends how ecstatic they are with your services. Seemingly small investments towards special touches easily turn a few satisfied customers into a teeming business.

[Cindy Bishop Worldwide](#) helps real estate agents gain insight in all aspects of growing a successful real estate business. From analyzing different personality types, using social media and blogging to build your business for the tech era, to how to resolve conflicts that may come up in the buying and selling process, I have insight from over 30 years in the real estate business and want to share them with you to help you build a successful career. From e-books to coaching, Cindy Bishop Worldwide offers a variety of ways to help you be on the cutting edge of the market and take your business to the next level.