



YOUR NEW YEAR'S

# LEAD GENERATION PLAN

TIM & JULIE HARRIS

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# Your New Year's Lead-Generation Plan

By Tim & Julie Harris

Do you ever look at an impressive house that just hit the market, see the listing agent and think, "How did that agent get this listing?" Chances are, the agent didn't purchase that lead; the agent already knew the seller somehow.

That's because that agent has an effective lead generation strategy, which is the most powerful tool in any successful agent's arsenal, whether you just got your real estate license yesterday, or you're a grizzled real estate industry veteran.

Many agents make the mistake of assuming that lead generation means *buying* leads. It's true that buying leads is one way to generate leads, but there are many other, more effective ways to do that. Cultivating steady referrals and repeat business requires a detailed, structured plan — and it's not enough to formulate a plan. You must also put that plan into *action*.

## **Our plan and guide include the following:**

- An explanation of the different "spokes" on the "wheel of lead generation," and advice on the spoke you should focus on most (which may surprise you!)
- The true intention behind lead generation (Hint: It's not prospecting!)
- A step-by-step, month-to-month plan of action
- A list of Dos and Don'ts to ensure success

## **The "spokes" on the "wheel of lead generation"**

Your business is built much like a wheel: As it travels down the road, all of its components work together to help the wheel reach its destination. If there are any weaknesses in the wheel's structure, it may have trouble getting to where it needs to go, or fail to reach its destination altogether.

Think of lead generation as a wheel with several spokes, each representing a different method of generating business. There are many different ways to produce leads, and the methods you use may vary according to your market's particular needs. Some of the most common methods of lead generation are phone calls, email, direct mail campaigns, open houses and sponsoring community events, to name a few.

Each of these lead generation methods have positive and negative qualities. For example, buying leads may be easy and convenient, but this method renders you dependent on outside parties, instead of in control of your own destiny. About 10 years ago, social media was hailed as "the

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next big thing,” and everyone was entranced by it. But as time went on, social networking became oversaturated as too many people were doing it, yet not paying very close attention to it.

Every agent's wheel should be comprised of a healthy mix of different spokes — and we recommend that every agent's wheel have at least seven different spokes — but we believe the most important spoke in your arsenal is tapping into your Centers of Influence (COIs) and past clients.

**Recipe for the secret sauce of lead generation: COIs, past clients, acts of kindness and phone calls**

It may surprise you, with all of the technology we now have available to help run our businesses, that your most important lead generation source is your COI network, or individuals who may be in a position to refer business to you, and your past clients, who are listed on the settlement statements in your contracts. These are the people who already know and already appreciate you, and will remember you as you find ways to continue being of service to them in some way.

Many agents make the mistake of assuming that the intent behind lead generation is prospecting — not so. The true intent of lead generation is actually summed up in one question: “How can I be of service to others?”

Sometimes, when you have direct contact with someone, all kinds of fears may pop into your head: “What if they reject me? What if they don't like me or what I have to offer? What if my contact annoys them?”

All of these thoughts are ego-based thoughts, not real thoughts. Your mind creates obstacles that don't really exist. You can get wrapped up in all the “what-ifs,” but there is a way to refrain from falling into that trap: By reframing your thought process to focus on performing acts of kindness for others.

In focusing on ways to help these individuals, showing your gratitude to them and offering to assist them in some way, you will not only become a trusted advisor — and their go-agent when they need one — but you'll be excited about finding unique opportunities to connect with them.

There are many ways to get face time with your COIs and past clients, but it may surprise you to learn that picking up the phone and contacting them is the new “secret sauce” to generating leads.

The top-producing agents who are killing it in today's real estate market are the ones who are picking up the phone — probably because no one else is picking up the phone these days. Those of you who never really adopted or embraced the concept of over-the-phone contact will be left out in the cold if you do not accept the fact that electronic communication is passé, and take advantage of that!

There are many ways to make your phone communication with COIs and past clients easier. Client relationship management (CRM) systems like Mojo Sells can organize your database into

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specific, easy-to-use folders that allow you to tweak your database. Mojo Sells also features an auto-dialer that will call your contacts at the push of a button.

You can enhance your use of CRMs by integrating them with websites like contactually.com, which links to social networks and pulls in recent information from your contact's personal accounts, giving you reasons to touch base and potential small-talk fodder.

And if all else fails, remember the acronym "FORD," which stands for "Family, Occupation, Recreation, Dreams." This memory-jogging script can frame your conversation and make it easier for you to communicate with someone in a natural, conversational manner.

**TIP:** Take the total number of people in your database and divide by 20, or the number of work days in a typical month. The resulting number will tell you how many people you should call per day in order to make contact with every person on your list at least once a month. If you have a larger database, divide by 40 to talk to people every 60 days, or divide by 60 days to talk to them once per quarter. You need to calculate how many calls is reasonable for you based on your schedule and time commitments — but as a general rule, calling fewer than five people per day is not enough. If you are not contacting everyone on your list at least once per month, you could be missing out on important business opportunities.

### **Don't be a one-spoke wonder: One agent's lead-generation cautionary tale**

Imagine your lead-generation wheel is traveling down a road. If that wheel only has one spoke and hits one of the smallest pebbles in the road, the wheel's lack of structural integrity will cause it to collapse. Likewise, if you have only one source of business, you also have no structural integrity in terms of your ability to generate new business and leads.

About 10 years ago, one of the nation's top real estate agents called us for coaching after experiencing what she called "60 days of hell." This agent's business was built solely using over-the-phone prospecting. Unfortunately, she came down with a bad bout of laryngitis, and couldn't speak for a week — that's a week of her not being able to make phone calls, her primary source of generating leads. Even after battling her illness, she found her voice was only about 75-percent mended. She was basically out of business for the better part of two months.

"I will never make the mistake again of being a one-spoke wonder," the agent said.

A one-spoke wonder is an agent who focuses on only one source of business. Be sure to use several different spokes on your lead generation wheel so that, for example, when it comes time for you to take a vacation, you aren't completely out of business when it comes to lead generation.

### **A note about the other spokes**

By emphasizing the value of tapping into your COIs and past clients and making phone calls, we do not mean that it's OK to ignore other spokes on the lead generation wheel. Don't assume that

social media is oversaturated and decide not to use it at all, for example. Figure out what works for you, in your market, and tailor your use of other spokes accordingly.

There are plenty of tools available that enhance your use of other spokes, as well. For example, if you regularly email your database, use HappyGrasshopper.com to automate this process. If you like the creative possibilities presented by video, use a service like BombBomb to build short, topical videos that remind your contacts that it's important to hire a professional agent like you. The video can be personal in nature, where you mention something specific about a contact's family, kids or pets, or answer general questions about the real estate market and trends.

When using any of these tools, get creative! Shoot a 15-second video of yourself standing in front of the community Christmas tree and use it as an opportunity to wish your contacts a happy holiday season.

It's important to accept that something that worked well for you 20 years ago may not work as well for you now. Don't frustrate yourself by trying to make those methods work if they are not as successful as they have been in the past; be willing to experiment and change things up as your business grows and evolves.

And above all, always analyze how well each of these methods is working for your business. Track metrics and trends, and use that to guide your future efforts.

**TIP:** No matter what method you use, if you are contacting these people regularly, a minimum of 10 percent of them should be buying and selling with you. That means if you have 100 people on your list, you should have 10 deals a year from that group of people, or approximately one deal per month. And those deals should grow as you grow your database: If you build your list to 500 people, you can generate 50 deals per year.

### Your 12-month lead generation calendar

Using these various communication resources, you can advertise and invite your COIs and past clients to events that provide opportunities to be of service and make meaningful contact with your database, or use these ideas as the theme of your communication. Whether you decide to plan events on a monthly, quarterly or other schedule, formulating a plan and sticking to it will make you accountable and ensure the event's success.

This monthly calendar is intended to provide you with a starting point to get you out of planning mode and into action mode. Don't limit yourself to these ideas, but consider this a basic plan to get your marketing juices flowing! Whenever possible, incorporate the goods and services offered by COIs in your database to make your relationships with them that much stronger.

MONTH	EVENT/THEME	NOTES
January	Host Happy New Year Party; Remind people to winterize their homes and make recommendations for service	Many agents are sitting this month out because it's a seasonally slow month. Their laziness is your gain! Claim

	<p>providers;          Email a list of New Year's resolutions;          Offer people a free comparative market analysis report they can use anytime this year</p>	<p>the business they are leaving on the table.</p>
February	<p>It's tax reassessment time. Do you know how to challenge your tax bill?</p>	<p>Use Facebook, BombBomb, HappyGrasshopper, etc., to send messages offering current comps and your state's guide for disputing property taxes over assessments.</p>
March	<p>"Buy or Sell with Me, Adopt a Pet for Free" event</p>	<p>Host an event where you agree to cover pet adoption fees for owners. Partnering with a local pet store, humane society or animal shelter, as they usually have promotional programs and materials ready to use.</p>
April	<p>Tax prep time</p>	<p>Address "five main concerns people have at tax time," or discuss potential real estate investment opportunities with wannabe flippers and landlords.</p>
May	<p>Paper-and-pancakes shredding event</p>	<p>Offer document shredding service to help people with their spring cleaning, and breakfast (Tip: Hiring food trucks reduces your costs!).</p>
June	<p>Red Cross Bloodmobile</p>	<p>Host a blood drive with your local Red Cross chapter. Red Cross employs full-time telemarketers to promote these events, exposing you to a new audience.</p>
July	<p>Independence Day celebrations</p>	<p>Participate in a 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade, concert or other event in your neighborhood or surrounding area;          Hold a special Veteran's Promotion to share expertise</p>

		about loan programs that benefit veterans.
August	Open House Fest: Hold a "tour" of all of your listings on the same weekend. Have participants enter raffle drawings for restaurant gift certificates and other items. Call these contacts that same evening to let them know if they won or lost.	This is a big fourth-quarter booster at a time where some agents may be on vacation or getting their kids back to school.
September-October	Pumpkin Fest: Buy pumpkins from a wholesaler and sell them to the community, donating the proceeds to a charity.	This could be a very large and popular event, so be sure to plan well.
November	Host local food drive to benefit a local charity; Express special gratitude to your top-25 past clients COIs by dropping by their home with a special gift (preferably purchased from someone in your database).	A food drive brings people directly into your office!
December	Host a Toys for Tots drive; Wrapping Paper Project: Purchase inexpensive wrapping paper and gift tags. Print a small message saying, "Friends don't let friends get wrapped up with the wrong agent! Who do you know that could use my help buying or selling real estate?" You can also say, "Stick with me" on your gift tag stickers. Tie your business card, your messages, and a sheet of gift tag stickers to your wrapping paper by punching a hole in the packaging and use the ribbon to tie it all together.	Sponsor your local police or fire department's toy drive to take advantage of their preplanned marketing

### Dos and Don'ts



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DO make your personal manta in life to be of service to others. Feel excited and proud to be a real estate agent who has the opportunity to make meaningful and valuable contributions to your community. Remember, real estate agents are not takers — the best agents are givers. Be a leader among other real estate agents in your area. When you are out in your community helping others, you are setting the bar for other agents to follow.

DON'T make the mistake of putting most of your lead-generation efforts into one or two spokes of your personal lead generation wheel. If you only have one source of business, and that source suffers some kind of breakdown, you have lost your main source of generating leads. At the same time, however, don't neglect the other spokes, or other lead-generation methods, even if they don't produce the same return on investment as others. Using at least seven spokes will protect the stability and integrity of your lead-generation wheel.

DO get out of planning mode and into implementation mode. Having the best intentions means nothing if you cannot get out of the planning stage and into the acting stage. Formulate a plan and stick to it!

DON'T rely too much on electronic communication. Not only is this a very passive way of connecting with people, but your contacts are being inundated with electronic communication from all kinds of sources every day. How can you be sure your electronic communication is seen or heard above all the other noise?

DO take advantage of services that offer database setup, auto-dialer and social media integration services to make contacting your COIs and past clients easier.

DO call people in your database regularly — ideally, once per month over the phone — and treat it as an opportunity to extend some form of kindness. If you are in regular contact with your COIs and past clients, and consistently offer them something of value, they will be excited to hear from you and it will be easier to get them on the phone in the future.

DO analyze how well each lead generation method is working for your business. Track metrics and trends, use what works and either drop or adapt what doesn't work.

DON'T fall victim to psychological fears. Don't let your mind create communication obstacles that do not exist. Reframe your thinking from “what happens if the client rejects me?” to “How can I be of service to this person?”

DO remember the “FORD” acronym — Family, Occupation, Recreation, Dreams — to help frame conversations with your contacts.

DON'T fall victim to traditionally slow real estate periods, such as summer vacation, back-to-school or end-of-the-year holiday seasons. While your competitors are operating at half-time hours, you should be ramping up your efforts to pick up their slack.

DO try to plan and schedule events where your COIs and past clients come to you. For example, if you hold a Thanksgiving food drive for a local food pantry or charity, your contacts will be



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visiting your office in order to drop off food cans. There is nothing better than having people in your sphere come to you!

DO partner with local organizations to sponsor events they may already be planning to increase your exposure and take advantage of their prearranged marketing efforts.

DO, as much as possible, purchase services and goods from the COIs in your business to solidify those relationships.

DO follow up with attendees or participants of your events. Thank everyone who attended, donated, visited or participated, and be sure to mention your next event.