The Home Staging Resource’s

First Fifty Marketing Things List

When Starting a Home Staging Business

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First 50 Marketing Things List -- Overview

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HSR's Marketing Strategy and Competitive Difference

At HSR, we have a long-term stake in your success as a Professional Home Stager and Redesigner. We don’t want to sell you a quick training and never see you again. We want to develop a relationship with by helping you to reach your business goals.

We work very hard to help you reach your goals by not only offering gorgeous, branded, marketing materials and websites but by teaching you advanced marketing techniques that we promise our competitors are not doing.

We hate cold calling and focus on teaching you creative and dynamic ways to market yourself, so that you are found – not doing the finding. When a prospect contacts you, it gives you so much more credibility and control over the conversation, as opposed to you cold calling into a prospect.

As many of you know, my previous life before staging was an international speaker, corporate trainer and published author on Internet sourcing, research and marketing. Fortune 500 corporations would pay me thousands of dollars to train their employees on how to use the Internet to source, market and contact prospects. When I turned to staging, I realized very quickly that there was nothing out there that taught home stagers how to use the Internet in order to develop key client relationships. Make no mistake; the Internet will be critical to your marketing success!

Your primary target market is all over the Internet. Yet, if you look at HSR’s biggest competitor, not even 30% of their graduates have a website or Internet presence! I was alarmed to see that even though people paid thousands for training, they still weren’t able to get their businesses off the ground. Why? They may have had tremendous decorating and staging talent but lacked
the business tools, knowledge and marketing know-how to build their business. It became very apparent to me that there was a huge need for my expertise in this industry.

You can’t train someone on natural decorating talent, but you can train them on how to employ successful business and marketing principles to build their business. In the next section of marketing ideas, tricks and tips, you’ll find several ways to easily market your business in the style and area that fits your business best. We’ve broken down your marketing plan into five steps in our Members Area, so that your action steps will be very clear for your business. You’ll notice that many times your marketing approach is one in which you give valuable information in exchange for someone’s time. This is called “permission marketing” because it develops rapport building and relationship building rather than a “hard sell.”

Our goal for you is that you develop a handful of real estate agent partnerships that use you on all of their listings and pay you directly as part of their marketing budget. Our whole training is focused in that direction because we don’t want you to be spending your valuable time marketing yourself a year from now!
Although you will be tempted to just jump right in and get going. There are a few things you should address so you don't set yourself up to fail. Just as a good business plan is critical to consider before starting your business, so is a strong marketing plan. Take it step by step and build a good foundation that will serve your business for years to come.

1. Develop a strategic and focused marketing plan based on your strengths.

As you read through this 50-point list, have a notebook handy and start strategically plotting your marketing plan. This list will give you tons of ideas and may seem a bit overwhelming if you're not always taking into consideration your circumstances and needs. Remember in the last section where you mapped out your strengths and weaknesses? Create a marketing plan that is based on your strengths.

You know what methods you will be most successful with. Some people will have a knack for speaking and training, so giving presentations to real estate offices and associations will be the route they will go. Others are great at knocking on doors and networking. Be true to yourself, yet step out of any fears you may have. Fear is an obstacle that all entrepreneurs must face. Courage is moving forward despite the fear. The key is to recognize your fear and have the courage to step out and overcome it.

I don't go into cold calling a lot in this marketing guide because I feel like that is a fairly obvious way to sell. I'm not looking for obvious and predictable ways to market my business. Are you? On the next page you’ll find my example Marketing Plan that is also in the Members Area of the website. Notice it is stair-stepped because you’ll find that it is difficult to get to the next level without completing the one before it.
The Home Staging Resource 5 Step Marketing Plan

1. Market Research and Foundation
   - Define Your Plan & Research Competitors
   - Identify Target Markets
   - Discover Niche
   - Set up Contact Management System
   - Join and take an active part in ASHSR

2. Professional Representation
   - Representation Overview
   - Portfolio - See Picture Tips
   - Create Marketing Materials
   - Deliverables to clients - Tailor your forms
   - Home Staging Shows to showcase Portfolio

3. Credibility Connecting - "Being Found"
   - Credibility Connecting Overview
   - Google and Business Mapping
   - HSR Directory Partners & Other Directories
   - Associations, Articles Writing & Blogging
   - Social Networking

4. Intentional Marketing
   - Intentional Marketing Overview
   - Identifying Heavy Hitters
   - Wave Marketing
   - Realtor Presentations
   - Local Advertising & Direct Mail

5. Capitalizing on a Job Well Done!
   - Capitalizing Overview
   - Public Relations
   - Agent Caravans
   - Referrals & Testimonials
   - Email Campaigns
   - Creating Signage
2. **Stay focused.**

   Do the research first. Get it on paper. Then think in terms of action. An ounce of research will save you a pound of wasted time in the future. We give you A LOT of options in the first two weeks for your business but are VERY SPECIFIC in Week 3 when we put it all together for you, so make sure you go to Week 3.

   **Tip:** Take your time going through all HSR offers in terms of marketing. Focus on going through this process with us, so you don't waste time reinventing the wheel or working on marketing efforts that don't work. In Week Two of the Members Area, we've listed everything under the sun, so that you can refer back to new and improved ways of marketing your business.

Once you are finished with the training, have your marketing materials and website ready, *then* you can plan your week and make activity goals for each day. In the beginning you should spend over 90% of your time promoting yourself, not getting bogged down with minute details and decorating books.

If you are focused on your primary goal of creating real estate agent relationships, then think in terms of what will get you there. Once you develop those partnerships, the 90% marketing figure will reduce to 30%. But it will always be critical to your success as a business. So formulate your plan, make action goals and never stop marketing!

3. **Always think business building.**

   Wherever you are and whatever you do, look for ways to build your business and network. Successful entrepreneurs never stop looking for opportunities. They have given up the 8-5 and want their "baby" to grow.

   That doesn't mean you bore every person you meet with a liturgy of details.

   - Have a quick informational pitch and give people your business card.
   - Write a personal note on the back or give a discount on the back.
   - Always get a business card so that you can send them helpful information.

   If you have a variety of services, then anyone is a potential client.

4. **Organize your contacts and leads.**

   Develop an organized method of keeping track of your contacts and making notes. It can be as simple as using Excel to capture their name, phone, email, address and comments, so you can do a quick mail merge and send them an email newsletter or Christmas cards. Capturing the email and keeping in contact will be the most critical data to have. IContact (www.icontact.com) and Constant Contact
ACT or Goldmine software packages are for those who love sales contact management bells and whistles. Stick with what makes you most comfortable.

**Website:** Search for contact management tools and software.
- From the Member Home Page, click on **Week Two.**
- Click on **Contact Management.**

5. **Identify your competition**

In the home staging industry, there are several forms of competition. The obvious one is the **home stager** who is direct competition. Luckily, there are not too many of these. The **Interior Redesigner** or **One-Day Decorator** who also offers home staging as one of their many services, but whose focus is not home staging, is another competitor. The **real estate agent** who stages their homes by themselves makes them an indirect competitor. This agent is also a possible client who at least “gets it.”

99% of all home staging is done by the home seller themselves who might have read one of the many “how to” books available. **Home sellers** who try, usually unsuccessfully to stage their own homes are your greatest competition. They are reason professional home staging is so important and successful.

**Tip:** Most homeowners cannot objectively view the home they have lived in for more than a year. If they can’t view it objectively, they cannot stage successfully.

- Recognize that the home seller thinks they can do the staging on their own because they have falsely been told they should in the “how to” books.
- Be the expert you are and use lots of visuals.
- Give them lots of information. They will be astounded at the difference a professional home stager can make!

**Tip:** Use HSR as a tool. Have the sellers develop "buyers' eyes" by going through our **12 Rules of Home Staging** or ten-minute **Anatomy of a Staging Day** presentation which emphasizes the importance of using an objective expert. **Both can be accessed from the Members Area, under HSR Library and then Videos.**

Most people do not have a knack for interior transformations and need hand holding in this regard. If a talented artist tells someone how to paint, do you think the finished product would be as good as the artists? **No!** If a gourmet chef gives a novice a recipe, do you think the meal would taste as good? **No!** What comes easy to you as a professional home stager **does not** come easy to most people. Even those homeowners
who have the knack still have a hard time being objective about their home much less understanding what buyers are truly looking for.

6. **Research the competition.**

Know who and where your direct competition is. Focus on your local area. Look them up in the Yellow Pages and on the Internet.

- Go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and search for "home staging AND your city".
- Research their website.
- What products and services do they offer at what prices?
- Do they focus on a niche market?
- Is staging secondary on their list of services or do they focus mainly on interior decoration?
- Write all of them down and make notes on what you liked about them and didn’t like about their initial approach.

**Website:** Search for Google Page One.
- From the Member Home Page, click on **Week Two**.
- Click on **Google Page One**.

As you research your competitors, you will be better equipped to create your own strategy and niche. You will also notice that your HSR-provided website and marketing materials are significantly more professional looking than most of your competition. This will go a long way in making up your potential client’s mind when deciding who to choose.

**Tip:** Another great tool for researching competition is using the [www.Alexa.com](http://www.Alexa.com) toolbar. This toolbar you how much website traffic a website is getting. It also provides the owner’s contact information and associated links.

- Click on the **Alexa Toolbar** button on the left side of the page to download this valuable tool for free!
7. Identify and profile your target markets.

Knowing your customer is the first step to successful sales. Get a good feel for who your customer is (target markets.) What do they want? What motivates them to purchase what you have to offer?

Website: Search for Target Markets
- From the Member Home Page, click on Week Two.
- Click on Your Target Markets for a great list and direct links as to where to find them.

Staging is a tricky business because the ultimate customer is the home seller. However, the potential for repeat business or what I like to call your “A” Target Market is with the real estate agent. So you actually have two main customers to please. Great service and transformations can either double your publicity for great value or poor value depending on the job you do.

Understanding that these are the core customers to whom you want to market allows you to break down each individual’s needs and formulate a plan. Once you have plans in place for where to reach these two markets, you need to have a clear understanding of what it is they want and what benefits them!

Their “wants” are not necessarily the same. The home seller wants to sell their home stress free, for top dollar and quickly. The real estate agent also wants those things. But it may not be worth the risk of losing a hard-earned listing to an insulting home stager. Other agents may not want to hold up the listing with cosmetic changes and repairs. Make no mistake; real estate agents want more listings and ways to differentiate themselves from other agents. That is the core of their business.

How are you going to offer them this? As a staging partner, you need to address this need in your products and services so that real estate agents can garnish more listings and then give more business to you.

Now that you have identified your two primary target markets, we’ll talk further in this guide about profiling and marketing specifically to them. Go online for other markets!

Tip: Other target markets to consider that have the ability to give you repeat business are mortgage brokers, new home builders, relocation companies and retirement communities.

The next page is a visual of the online Target Market Section in the Members Area. You will want to go directly there and click on the each link to find sources for each market!
## Staging "A" Level Target Markets

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<td>• Open Houses - Or search local paper under Real Estate</td>
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<td>• List of Top 2000 Companies in US by Area - Search your area and identify large corporations that are relocating employees.</td>
<td>• Yellow Page Directories</td>
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8. Consider a niche market.

Note: According to the Small Business Town Network, a niche market is defined as “the area of a target market where a company or product is particularly strong. This specialization often results in super high quality by the specialist company and elimination of competition because of the uniqueness.”

After studying your direct competition and various target markets for your industry, you should be able to identify niches you could exploit. While simply being in the home staging industry is niche enough, you could further identify yourself with a large neighborhood or track home development where you can become the expert in staging.

- You could specialize in a certain style of home staging like coastal homes or city lofts and develop an inventory befitting that style.
- You can be the vacant home staging expert and have extensive inventory.

You get the picture. By separating yourself from the rest of the pack, you are offering something no one else has. By targeting your business to a few select markets, you protect yourself not just from the competition, but also from the changes in the economy. Also, once you know who your market is, it’s much easier to target them in your marketing efforts without spending a ton of money.

9. Questions you should continually ask yourself while defining your niche.

Finding your own niche is a matter of putting a new spin on what you already do. Ask yourself:

- How can I differentiate my business from others?
- How can I create a perception that my client market simply cannot live without me?
- What do I have to offer that adds extra value?
- Who do I want my customers to be and what are their needs?
- Is this a large enough market?

10. Develop your one-minute pitch.

What do you say when someone asks you what you do? Is your pitch benefit-rich or boring?

Now that you’ve identified and profiled your target markets, you should have a quick practiced pitch that is interesting, unique, clear and focused on the questioner. If a friend asks you what you do, you can either say:

- "I'm a home stager." or
"I specialize in helping people make their homes comfortable, organized and beautiful places to live by using what they already have to transform their home either for themselves or to get top dollar in the resell."

Which phrase would peak your friend’s interest more? Would you use that same phrase if you were talking with a real estate agent? No! For a real estate agent you might say:

- “My expertise is partnering with Realtors like yourself, by offering home staging and preparation services to their clients in order to obtain more listings, market the listings better, sell the homes faster and for more money.”

Now, walk through all of your target markets, list the benefits they receive by your services and create your one-minute-pitch addressing those benefits.

**Website:** Review the Your Quick Pitches handout.
- From the Member Area, click on Week One.
- Click on Staging Business Forms.
- Under Home Staging Forms and Marketing Letters, click on Your Quick Pitches.

**HSR Planning Checklist**

**HSR Planning Checklist:**
- Complete items # 45 - 49 of your HSR Planning Checklist.
11. Your business image or make a great impression.

It's been said before, but this is one maxim that bears repeating: you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

We teach our clients this. Professional home stagers should consider this maxim for themselves. My personal pet peeve is going to unattractive web sites of professional home stagers -- or worse, home staging training providers -- where many times this is the client's first impression! If you can't make your website appealing to the eye, then how can you expect a client to believe you are capable of making their home appealing?

The same goes for your personal image, business cards, marketing materials etc. We are in an industry of "taste." If you recognize general poor taste in something that reflects on me, you will translate that to the work I do -- especially in our industry!

Don't turn off your customers. Make it an opportunity to let your taste shine! In addition to the beautiful, professional image HSR has helped create for you, consider the way you greet clients or your personal style of dress. Do you dress according to the standards of our industry? The real estate industry is a sharply dressed group as a whole. This may seem unfair, but consider a moment how closely people identify themselves with life’s smallest details. Allow your clients to identify with you and play the part. For goodness sake, I wouldn't go to a hairdresser who has a terrible haircut, would you?
12. **Extend your professionalism into a code of ethics.**

Now that the argument has been made for image and first impressions, let's talk about true professionalism and your image. Treat these suggestions as a habit of behavior for you.

- Always proofread or have someone else proof your work -- especially marketing materials and correspondence.
- Always be pleasant and helpful when answering the phone.
- Always be on time and do not park in their driveway.
- If you're in the middle of a consultation, *don’t answer your phone*. Your time is on their dime. Respect it.
- Always return phone and email messages promptly.
- Always show appreciation for what is given to you. We'll talk more about this later.
- Position yourself for success by giving referrals when you can't handle a job. Use those as a networking opportunity with fellow home stagers. People will respect your honesty and consideration.
- Offer more than your service delivers and exceed expectations.
- Offer a guarantee to unsatisfied customers.
- Never disparage the competition and in fact work with them to educate the public. There's plenty of business out there for all of us.

13. **Importance of Branding**

We have talked about the importance of beautiful and professional marketing materials as an extension of your image and first impression. Let's talk about another useful purpose to the "brand" you have created and its importance to your business.

A secondary but just as critical message we have created is of consistency and unification by using a “hero photo” throughout your materials. All of your materials match and are cohesive. As you grow and expand your relationships, your consistent brand will become more recognizable in your area and industry.

**Important:**

HSR makes it very clear in our Terms (http://www.homestagingresource.com/terms.asp) that our photos are exclusive property of HSR and are not to be copied, taken or used without our express permission. This allows us to control and manage the template brands, so that you won't find it elsewhere. We took all of those photos of staged homes on a simple digital camera just as you would your after photos. We require that your Portfolio photos be your own work.
14. **Marketing materials to get you started and reflect your image.**

HSR has created a set of marketing materials that you can pick and choose from depending on your personality, color preference and style. Each set is a bit different and has its own look and feel. Periodically, we will be adding new choices as well as changing out those that have been over-used nationwide.

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**Note:** As a common courtesy, please check the HSR directory for your local area and choose a different marketing style than others in your area. This will help to ensure you will not run into a competitor with the same materials.

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Of course, HSR always has your style on hand to reorder your marketing materials at regular cost. A great benefit to having a nationwide resource is volume pricing. We can offer those savings to you as a member. Our goal is to get you up and running quickly and that is the purpose for the *Marketing Solutions Package*.

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**Tip:** Many veteran home stagers will tell you that creating their own marketing materials from scratch took far too much time in the beginning. Our materials are beautiful, but have their limitations. Down the road, you may want to spend the big bucks and hire a company to create your personalized marketing package.

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This gets us to your business cards and letterhead. These are invaluable marketing tools because they offer a tangible feel and reminder that clients can hold onto. They also serve to refer clients to more information -- your web site.

Giving them away generously, business cards allow you to constantly be in the business building mode.

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**Tips:**

- Make it a goal when you attend functions to collect and give away at least five business cards.
- During any meeting or appointment, have business cards ready to hand to the individuals during introductions. This is a standard business practice and shows your professionalism.
- Print your sell sheets, proposals and Action Plan cover sheets on your letterhead. Do not print your entire Action Plans on your letterhead unless you plan on purchasing bulk.

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All of the marketing sheets in your portfolio should certainly be on letterhead. When people get information on plain paper, it shows that they are not worth the extra few cents of letterhead to you. Use your best judgment and remember we have volume pricing for your letterhead in our *Member Area* that we invite you to order and save.

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**Website:** To order additional marketing materials:

- From the Member Area, click on *Member Store*.
- Click on *Marketing Refills*.

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15. **The importance of marketing postcards**

Your postcards are semi-generic, so you can use them for multiple purposes and target markets. They are glossy, double sided, full color and will represent you well. They are ideal for quick mailings to new home sellers in your area as well as real estate agents. They give the benefits of home staging statistically and should generate enough curiosity for the recipient to pick up the phone and call for a consultation.

You may also want to use postcards to mail out and advertise a new home you have just staged to agents and local home sellers and invite them to the open house. It is easy to simply write a note on the back and quickly mail them to prospects.

The postcards are also good for matting and framing and displaying at your staged homes. Have a nice postcard holder set up at the entrance of the home you have staged, especially on real estate agent caravan days, so that other home sellers and agents can see your work first hand. We’ve designed the post cards to be easily mailed to all new listings in your area.

**Tip:** You can go to [www.prudentialproperties.com](http://www.prudentialproperties.com) or [www.ziprealty.com](http://www.ziprealty.com), register for a saved search, and request that they auto-email you all the new listing addresses in the zip codes you specify. Every day, when you check your email, you can quickly write the new addresses on the post cards and pop them in the mail. This has worked well for some members while for others not as successfully.

Try everything and do what works for you and your area!

16. **Matching brochures and thank you cards**

Brochures can become outdated quickly. Therefore, they can be a waste of valuable dollars if you use them to place your services and pricing on.

HSR has professionally created valuable, informational brochures that will educate your prospects and match your brand. They are very useful to give to your real estate agent partners as handouts to home sellers, or leave on the front desk of real estate offices.

**Website:** To order brochures and thank you cards:
- From the Member Area, click on Member Store.
- Click on Brochures & Thank You Cards.

17. **The importance of your website**

In this day and age, every viable business worth their salt should have a website to represent them -- especially in the real estate industry! A website is a window into your business. Since most of us work out of our homes, it's a lucky thing we have them!

To help you get up and running right away, we provide one for you in our Marketing Solutions Package. We think it’s critical to your image, marketing plan and we want you to look great! We save you the cost of building and hosting one for yourself as well as the marketing cost of becoming well trafficked, which on its own can cost thousands of
dollars. We also build your site so that it offers content and represents you well. The benefits of our website design to you are enormous.

**Note:** You will complete your website content and submit it to HSR in Week Three once you’ve read through all the training.

- Your site is designed to create curiosity and interest, so that your viewer will pick up the phone and call you.
- Your contact information is on every page in order to make it very easy for them to contact you.
- The specific locations mentioned on the top of your page assist with search engine optimizing your site so that when a home seller in your area searches for home staging and you area, they will find you.
- We spend quite a bit of time and money driving traffic to the HSR website. This allows our members to benefit from that traffic by being listed in our Directory.

**Tip:** We have members that have been contacted from real estate agents the very next day after signing up for our HSR Certification Program!

**Website:** Familiarize yourself with the *Credibility Connecting* section of the *Week Two* website. This section will provide web locations for you to list your website so that you can be found in home staging directories across the ‘Net.

- From the Member Area, click on *Week Two*.

*Please respect our time and keep the training costs low, by proofreading your web form and being certain of your content before sending it to our Webmaster.*

- We copy and paste the content you submit. If you see typos in your finished website, it’s because you put them there. *We do not* edit or review your work.
- We keep track of your web changes and allow four changes per year:
  - Proof the site when it’s published.
  - We do keep track of these changes, so be certain of your work ahead of time.
  - Search engines like pages that are not regularly altered. Web changes/updates can take up to two weeks to make. *Please do not* email us about them!

We place getting websites up as first priority since we want you to have a presence right away. After you’ve reached your four changes, additional costs will incur in order to keep our package costs low. If you choose to renew your membership after a year, you’ll receive another four changes over the next year to your account.
Important: HSR takes the extra time and expense of submitting your website to over 200 search engines after it has been published, so that web search users can find you.

- It can take up to 10 weeks for search engines to even recognize your site, much less come to the top of your local searches.
- It is not HSR’s responsibility to drive traffic to your site
- Please do not ask us why your site is not at the top of a search. This takes time, and has a lot to do with your ability to link other websites to yours.

We’ll talk about linking and sponsoring searches later in this guide and EXTENSIVELY in the Week Two Members Area.

18. Your professional portfolio from a marketing perspective

We spent quite a bit of time in the Week One First 50 Things To Do on building a professional, well-represented portfolio to display and use at your consultations. The reason is because we want you to “wow” your clients, develop their trust in your abilities and, therefore, purchase your services. Without a professional and organized portfolio this would be very difficult to do.

Take your time putting it together and make sure all of your sell sheets are on letterhead and available to hand out if needed.


Get 25% off photo books at Snapfish by entering in coupon code BHGJAN at checkout

19. Using “Home Staging Shows” in your email campaigns

Go to http://www.homestagingshows.com to sign up and for complete details of this fabulous program, just for professional home stagers! You will love this software because it is so easy to use, and can be used in so many different capacities to build your business, promote your current business and create valuable, true partnerships with real estate agents in your area.

Website: To create a Home Staging Show:

- From the Member Area, click on Week Two.
- Click on Creating Photo Shows.
Why market to real estate agents? It's much easier to sell to a current customer than a new customer. Home sellers are almost always new customers. They sell a house every five years or so. Real estate agents sell homes every month, so they have the best chance at either becoming a customer or referring you business.

Either way, it is critical to always treat agents like a customer. Your marketing should focus on this target market and your goal should be to develop strategic partnerships with a handful of real estate agents in your area.

How do you do this? Research, plan, execute and persevere. When you’re just getting started, it’s tough getting that first client who will trust you enough to go into their listing and handle their clients with discretion. Trust is a primary factor to what we do. Acquiring that first job is tricky. But, if you properly market yourself and get that first job done well, it’s all downhill from there.

You’re fortunate to be in a referral-based, word-of-mouth industry. You stage a home and real estate agents (your prospects) will be walking through it regularly. What a wonderful thing to create a product that your potential clients automatically will be able to view! Once they see the wonderful work you do, then word will spread of your talents. Getting over the hump is the tough part, but once done, you’ll find your business snowballing!

Make sure you are found. Every salesperson knows that when someone calls in, they have a 80% better chance of turning that call into a sale then calling out cold. HSR wants you to found, so you’re not relying on cold calling out. We have several ways you can do that, so it’s important to take the time now, and get listed and linked. Review the following items to find out how to go that.
20. Sponsor your local search engine search on Google and Yahoo.

Over 80% of Internet searchers are using one of these two search engines. Now that we have a gorgeous website up that represents you well, we want you to use it to gain clients who are looking for you. This kind of marketing account works while you sleep!

**Website:** Search for Google Page One and “Mapping Your Business”.
- From the Member Home Page, click on **Week Two**.
- Click on **Google Page One** and **Mapping Your Business** for more information.

Will a home seller in your area simply type in “home staging” to find a home stager in their area? *No!* They will type “home staging san diego” or “san diego home stager” or “home stager san diego.” Get the picture?

- To keep your costs low, make sure you sponsor specific search words for your area like the ones above.
- List every way you can imagine that your clients will search. Google will also help you with this.
- These specific location search terms are only 20 cents per click. This is much easier on the budget.

**Website: To set up a program on Google:**
- Go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).
- Click on Advertising Programs.
- Google will walk you through the sponsoring process. Once you have an account you can make very easy changes to it.

**Note:** Remember, HSR sponsors the expensive general searches, so clients will click on us and find you anyway! HSR does not sponsor location specific searches because we do not want to compete with you and raise the bid.

Go to Yahoo and do the same thing.

Play with your account and test it out as well. HSR pays $2.00 a click and gets over 200 visitors a day from this alone. This is important because we are in the education business and hope to feed you leads throughout the year by driving your clients to the HSR directory. The HSR Directory is in order of expiration date, so new sign-ups AND veteran renewals are at the top. This is the most fair and consistent way of listing your businesses. You can always renew early to insure you’re towards the top.
21. **Make sure you're listed in the HSR, ASHSR and other Internet directories.**

This is the easiest way to get exposure so don't pass it up! The Home Staging Resource spends quite a bit of money and resources driving traffic from your clients (real estate agents and home sellers) to our site. Make sure you like how you are listed accurately in both directories.

**Website:** To update your HSR Directory listing:
- Go to the Member Area.
- Click on Edit Profile.
- Update your information.
- Click Save Information.

**Tips:**
- We have an ongoing list of valuable places for you to connect your business!
- Go to Week Two in the Members Area and click on:
  - HSR Directory Partners
  - AND
  - Directory Connect

22. **Join and get involved in your local realtor association.**

To be successful in business, you must go and get networked where your clients are. What better place than your local realtor association to network with successful agents?

**Website:** To find your local realtor association website:
- Go to Week Two in the Members Area
- Click on Association Connect
- You'll also want to read my “Five Ways to Make Your Membership Matter”

**Note:** We'll discuss this some more in the Week Two Live Webinar training as well.

Do you see any home staging affiliates listed? It always amazes me that with all the home staging businesses out there, few are getting connected online. That's why HSR shows you where you can connect easily to give your business the boost it needs. In a recent Week Two Live Webinar, we looked up the Houston Association of Realtors and not one home stager was listed in their directory!

We highly suggest you join as an Affiliate member.
23. **Identify key players and do more.**

What if the most successful real estate agent in your area used you to stage all of their listings? You would be busy full time! Wouldn't it be worth more of your time and energy to focus your marketing efforts on these folks?

Research the successful realtors in your area by driving around and taking note of the "For Sale Signs", searching the Internet, or going to the real estate agent’s offices and looking at their listings.

**Website:** To find Heavy Hitters in your area:
- Go to Week Two in the Members Area
- Click on **Identifying Heavy Hitters**

Build a target list of key players and begin a specific marketing campaign to them. These quality leads should *not* be sent a simple post card and never touched again!

- The big players usually have teams of people they work with.
- It’s a good idea to start by emailing them with information and a link to our 10-minute *Anatomy of a Staging Day* video ([http://www.homestagingresource.com/pubstagingday.html](http://www.homestagingresource.com/pubstagingday.html)) or our Amazing Transformations Video ([http://www.homestagingresource.com/homesellershow.html](http://www.homestagingresource.com/homesellershow.html)).
24. **Focus on benefits, client value and listing generation.**

We talked about this when you created your one-minute pitch to each target market. Now, let’s talk about your real estate agent target market.

The real estate industry is extremely competitive. The all important listing is critical to a real estate agents revenue and success. They will not do anything to jeopardize this relationship; including bringing in a professional home stager who might offend the sellers or slow down the sales process by recommending time-consuming improvements.

Understand this and focus on how you will handle their clients gently and increase their listings. You will do this by offering an **Action Plan** to the home sellers who list with
them. The real estate agent who paid for the half-day of staging in our Anatomy of a Staging Day video received two additional listings because she let people who came to the Open House know that as part of her listing package, she pays for a professional home stager. All the people needed to do was look around at the gorgeously staged home to know that this agent offered more than the average agent.

Another way to partner with agents is to help to market the homes that you stage by offering to do targeted mailings to local real estate agents and home sellers in the area.

**Tip:** A genuine partnership is one where each partner benefits by the other’s assistance. Focus on how you can benefit the agent’s business. Make your partnerships convenient and easy for a real estate agent to implement and offer. If you do, they will forever be a partner.

25. **Build your target list.**

We talked about this a bit already, but it’s critical to stay organized and classify your hot leads, warm leads and cold leads.

Spend most of your time on the hot leads, which should be the bigger real estate agents in your area, and you won’t find yourself spinning your wheels as much.

Know who the heavy hitters are, which office they work out of, what is their niche market. Yours should be similar. Know when their weekly meetings are and what associations or groups they participate in. Their circles of influence should be yours as well.

**Website:** Use a Wave Marketing System:
- Go to Week Two in the Members Area
- Click on Wave Marketing

Your warm leads should be those real estate agents new to the industry, gung ho, adaptable and looking for a niche in which to competitively differentiate themselves. The agent we mentioned in the Anatomy of a Staging Day video was just such an agent. She was new and was willing to try something different to differentiate herself from the crowd. You can imagine her excitement when she received the two additional listings during the Open House. She turned a $350 dollar marketing investment into thousands in return!

**Tip:** Remember, your goal is to partner with a handful of real estate agents by offering them something of value that will assist them to either obtain more listings or market the listings they have. This will allow them to sell faster and at a higher price. Home staging is simple economics. Home stagers improve upon a product thus raising the demand and price for the home.
26. **Schedule office visits.**

When starting out, plan on visiting at least one real estate agent’s office a week with a basket of goodies, such as gourmet coffee, cookies, or candy.

- Bring lots of business cards and before-and-after pictures.
- Meet the owner or office manager and ask if you could give a presentation at the next agent meeting.

**Website:** Search for Realtor Offices Visits:
- Go to Week Two in the Members Area
- Click on **Realtor Office Presentations**

- Ask if you could post up some good before-and-after pictures of the benefits of professional home staging on the office bulletin board. These will usually always get people’s attention and don't cost much.

Whatever the purpose of your visit, do not demand their attention without giving something of value for it. This shows respect and courtesy, which is an extension of how you will treat their clients. Remember, face-to-face goes a long way!

27. **Use your postcards as advertisements.**

Your postcards are a beautiful reflection of you and have your company and call to action on the front, so they will serve you well as advertisements.

Mat and frame your postcards and leave at the front desk of the office along with a stack of business cards.

Mat and frame your post cards for homes that you’ve staged.

Remember, agents are coming in and out of the homes you stage. You want them to know you were the home stager responsible. If the agent does not want people to know the home has been staged, educate them on the fact that when buyers see that the agent employed or partnered with a professional to transform the home, it is a huge feather in their cap and will result in more listings.

When an agent uses a professional home stager, it adds instant credibility to what they do. Similar to when an agent has a painter they bring in for paint fixes, bringing in an expert stager it gives them clout. Do you think the agent would appear credible if they were to paint the homes themselves instead of outsourcing to an expert? It should not be expected that a busy agent should also spend hours and have the knowledge of home redesign and organization to do this themselves for their clients.

**Website:** Search for Buildasign
- Go to Week Two in the Members Area
- Click on **Step Five Overview**
28. **Offer training.**

You’ll see a lot of pure redesigners do this to obtain business because they don’t have a target market they can easily reach otherwise. It’s still a good idea since you can reach your redesign and staging clientele by exercising and offering your expertise in the form of training classes to real estate agents offices or your community for a nominal cost. This will give you exposure as well as build trust.

For real estate offices, we suggest you have a professional PowerPoint presentation like those you’ve seen in our On-Demand web trainings. We have two examples online in the Members Area, as well as other easy ways to present to a real estate office on the fly.

**Website:** Search for Realtor Offices Visits:
- Go to Week Two in the Members Area
- Click on **Realtor Office Presentations**

Start by introducing yourself, talk about the benefits of staging using a lot of before-and-after pictures. Give them information they can use such as the *Picture Tips, Top Ten Reasons to Stage, Top Dollar Guide* and *Staging Statistics* handouts.

**Website:** To download these handouts:
- From the Member Area, click on **Week One.**
- Under Staging Business Forms, go to the **Home Staging Forms section.**
- Scroll down and click on title of the handout you want.

Next, tell them a bit about how you work. Show an example *Action Plan.*

**Important: Never** hand out a blank HSR Action Plan or email an HSR Action Plan. Use it as a display only. This Action Plan should be reserved only for your realtor partners.

Describe your services and pricing. End the session by asking for questions. Hand out a feedback form.

**Tip:** Gather all of their business cards in a bowl and have a drawing. Give away a free consultation to an active listing for the whole office to view once the home is completed. Now you have all of their contact information and email addresses.
29. **Write articles and publish them. (See the online section, “Article Connect”)**

This gets back to giving a little to get a lot. Websites, publications and even local real estate agent newsletters are always looking for interesting content for their readers. By writing articles you not only solidify yourself as an expert in your field, you promote yourself while building lasting relationships with the media outlets.

Look for real estate agent newsletters in your area. Call them to ask if you can be a content partner. Offer to assist with postal costs. Focus on real estate agents in your niche as well as title companies, mortgage companies and local inspectors some of which offer a newsletter to their local markets.

These newsletter partnerships could be the start of a long and profitable business partnership. Don't over look them in your overall marketing plan.

*Website:* Search for Article Writing Tips and see my Top Five Tips and Places to Post online.
- Go to Week Two in the Members Area
- Click on **Article Connect**

*TIP:* Don't forget to send your articles to Home Staging Resource. If it's chosen you will be featured on one of our newsletters.

I'll never forget writing my first article for my new business in 1997 and all the BUZZ it brought my business and me personally! The Internet allows you to have a voice but it must be compelling enough to be heard over MANY other voices. Here are the pros and cons of article writing:

**PRO** - May Establish You As An Expert In Your Industry - Depending on how well you incorporate my Five Tips below, article writing may help to build credibility to you and your business. In the home staging industry, credibility is KEY since your business is ultimately based on your design talent and art.

**PRO** - Is a Free Way to Advertise In the BEST Way - Who looks at ads anymore? I don't read ads but I would read an article and IF it was well written, the article would serve as an Ad for the writer. That's why articles are better then ads because they establish credibility without selling...PLEASE don't sell in your articles because that wouldn't be interesting.

**PRO** - The Articles Works While You Sleep for Many Years - The great thing about online print vs. paper print is that it circulates for many years bringing traffic to your website and business that you never even knew existed. I still have many articles circulating from over 10 years ago online!

**PRO and CON** - Article Writing is Good for People in Large Cities Not Small Towns - Since Article Writing is "Next Steps" in Marketing, it serves those whose online audience is in metropolitan areas and large.

**CON** - It Takes Time! - Articles should be thoughtfully done, so they take time to write

**CON** - MUST Be Well Written - If writing isn't your strength...forgeddaboutit!
30. **Create a blog and have a voice. (See the online section, “Blog Connect”)**

Many of our members are already connected with Active Rain. Active Rain offers a profile page and allows you to create a blog for you to write your thoughts in. A blog is your own reality show, where you are the superstar and contributor. If you write interesting, relatable things, people will show interest and comment.

If you’re not ready to start your own reality show, consider commenting on other people’s blogs. Make your comments interesting and valuable.

[Website: Search for Blog Tips:
  - Go to Week Two in the Members Area
  - Click on Blog Connect](#)

In our Social Networking section in the Members Area, there is an informational video that shows ways to connect your blog to your social networks automatically.

Some of the more popular blogs you can take part in for our market are:

- [360Digest](#)
- [ActiveRain Member Blog](#)
- [Bigger Pockets](#)
- [BloodHoundBlog](#)
- [BlueRoofBlog](#)
- [grow-a-brain](#)
- [Mike's Corner](#)
- [Rain City Guide](#)
- [Real Estate Tomato](#)
- [RealtyBlogging](#)
- [RealtyThoughts](#)
- [RSS Pieces](#)
- [Sellsius](#)
- [The Future of Real Estate Marketing](#)
- [The Real Estate Bloggers](#)
- [Transparent Real Estate](#)
- [Zillow Blog](#)
31. Build a referral program for real estate agents. (See online section, “Referrals & Testimonials”)

Experts say that customer referrals and word-of-mouth are about ten times more effective than other marketing. Building referral programs for real estate agents and other associated industries is critical. Translating that to dollars and cents means that every dollar you spend enhancing your referral programs is worth about ten dollars in other marketing ventures.

It's important to ask yourself these questions when creating a referral program:

- Why should a real estate agent refer you business?
- What's in it for them?

You'll get a better response for your referral program if you include an incentive, such as a free consultation or a gift, for referring a fellow real estate agent to you.

**Tips:**
- Advertise your referral program in your real estate agent presentations and consultations.
- Make it consistent, rewarding and specific.
- Ask every agent you do business with for names of other agents you think would benefit from your services.
- Make sure to let them know you will not badger these folks but that you rely on referrals as the source of your business.
- Don't forget to show your appreciation.

**Website:** Search for Referrals and Testimonials:
- Go to Week Two in the Members Area
- Click on “Referrals and Testimonials”

32. Send targeted emails to real estate agents about specific listings. (In the Guide to Successful Consultations, we talked about how to research real estate agents in your area. Another way to market yourself is to email the agent about a specific listing and offering your services as an alternative to lowering the price.

**Website:** To review sample realtor emails:
- From the Member Area, click on Week One.
- Under Staging Business Forms, go to the Home Staging Forms section.
- Under Marketing Letters, click on Realtor Email.
Make sure you include a link to your website where they can print out the Top Dollar Guide and Staging Statistics handouts to help them educate their sellers on the benefits of home staging. Include the link to our 10-minute Anatomy of a Staging Day video or Amazing Transformations Video that they can pass along to the home seller in order to give them an idea of the dramatic changes that can occur in a single staging day.

By offering tools to do their job better, you are forging a relationship that is focused on your client’s success.

Tip: When you begin your marketing campaign, your goal should be to email 25+ agents every week. Call within two days to follow up.

Website: Learn more about Wave Marketing and Contact Management.
- From the Member Home Page, click on Week Two.
- Click on Wave Marketing Section or Contact Management.

This kind of consistent, personal marketing activity always leads to success. Sales is a numbers game. Very few stagers are actually calling to follow-up on their informational emails.

33. Offer a free proposal-style consultation.

What’s so terrible about offering a free consultation to successful real estate agents in your area in order to build confidence and trust? If you follow our Guide to Successful Consultations and up sell your services using the consultation this could be an excellent springboard to other revenue from the home sellers. At the very least, this is a chance for the real estate agent to get a taste of how you work and use you again.

When you're just starting out this an excellent approach -- especially if it's targeted to the heavy hitters in your area and designed to gather referrals and build future business.

Getting exposure to build a portfolio and network is critical to starting out and getting over the hump. If you work with the hottest agent on a project and are able to name-drop to other agents, that is worth something.

Remember, we don’t want you to go in cold. When you’ve worked with one agent in an office (even if it was free), it is easy to contact all of the other agents and name drop who you’ve already worked with.
34. Market your partnership success.

After you work with a real estate agent, do some serious bragging by sending some of your before-and-after pictures to everyone in their office or local home sellers in their area. Good PR involves memorializing what you did and putting it into a story that people will find interesting.

**Tip:** Before-and-after pictures are always interesting. Home Staging Shows in **Week Two** allows you to easily handle your photos, upload them onto the [http://www.homestagingshows.com](http://www.homestagingshows.com) server and send as slide show link with music and text to all of the agents in your area.

**Note:** Make sure watch their wonderful tutorials on this at their website.

Once you create a home staging show, make sure you include the link in your email wave marketing campaign!

Keep in touch and follow up with the agent to see when the home sold and what the response was. A success story is worth its weight in gold. It can be used to pitch to your local media who is hungry for good story ideas and visuals.

**Tip:** At Home Staging Resource we love to brag about our stagers. Send us your home staging show and we can add it to our Staging Video page on the front of our site, and may even be featured in our newsletter!

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**HSR Planning Checklist**

**HSR Planning Checklist:**

Complete items # 50 - 58 of your HSR Planning Checklist.
35. **Send targeted mailings to new listings.**

Make direct mail an active part of your daily schedule. This is very easy to do. There are many real estate agent websites, such as [www.prudentialproperties.com](http://www.prudentialproperties.com), that will automatically email you new listings in your area, including its address.

**Note:** We show you a couple of examples in the *Week Two Live Webinar*.

Take advantage of this by sending every new home listing in your area a marketing postcard. Every morning, check your email for the new listings. Quickly hand write the addresses onto your postcards and mail them out.

By incorporating marketing as a regular part of your day, you are marketing yourself easily and efficiently. Amber in California sent ten cards and got three calls immediately. You never know when something will work for you in your area, so it's good to try everything at first.

**Website:** Learn more about Credibility Connecting.
- From the Member Area, click on **Week Two**.

36. **Canvas the neighborhood.**

It is in your benefit and best interest for your neighbors to get a good price for their home. Offering your services at a discount may be a great place to start your marketing campaign.
Do a neighborhood walk, introduce yourself and give them a post-card with a note on it. Bring an example Action Plan to show those neighbors who have the time to view it or, better yet, leave an information packet and ask if you can come and pick it up the same time tomorrow.

Whatever your strategy, don't forget to use your neighbors as a great source of business.

37. Network with friends, family and a business networking group.

Never underestimate the value of your current relationships! Most multi-level marketing companies have people write down 100 people they know when first starting a business. Why? Because you already have a sphere of influence and by getting the word out about what you are doing -- or better yet, build a referral plan to those folks.

You will be amazed at the business that comes your way since this is referral business and the strongest kind of leads.

- Email your pitch and before-and-after Home Staging Show link to brag about your business.
- Ask them if they know anyone interested in one-day redesign or home staging.
- Ask them to forward that email to those people they think would be interested in your services.

Remember -- always be in the business-building mode, but don't be self-centered and obnoxious about it.

**Tip:** Another great resource for networking is local networking groups. The Business Networking International group at [http://www.bni.com](http://www.bni.com) was single handedly responsible for Lisa Green of UV Home Staging's business success.

38. Target “For Sale by Owner” sellers.

This is a great avenue for business, since the “For Sale by Owner” folks are bottom line oriented. They will usually fit your Do It Yourself profile. Your Action Plans and printable Do It Yourself guides are an easy sell to these people. They are willing to do the work to get top dollar for their home. They just need the expertise and direction.

HSR has partnered with a couple FSBO websites, so make sure to go to Week Two to connect your business in their directories by clicking on HSR Directory Partners!

Did you know that [www.forsalebyowner.com](http://www.forsalebyowner.com) and [www.owners.com](http://www.owners.com) website are some of the most trafficked real estate websites on the Internet? While you shouldn't email people from these sites, this is another easy way to use your postcards to send them a direct mail piece.
Tips:

- Go to Google and enter “for sale by owner” and your local area and see what local MLS sites come up for your area.
- To find sellers’ contact information, you can also go to:
  - http://www.forsalebyowner.com
  - http://www.fsboadvertisingservice.com/fsbo.htm
- For those of you who have your real estate license, this is a great way to build rapport with “For Sale By Owners” in a non-threatening manner. Once the relationship is developed, it’s easy to let them know you are also available to handle their listings if need be.
- Brad in Florida sent his postcards and received three staging jobs from a house flipper within the week!

39. Exhibit at a local home show.

Who goes to those home shows? People who are looking to improve their environment and have some extra money do. Is that your redesign target market? Absolutely!

Many times people who are planning on selling their home but know they need to do some improvements are there as well. You can capitalize on both markets by having a simple booth (if cost allows).

Tip: Combine your marketing efforts through ASHSR by going in on a booth with another member home stager.

HSR Planning Checklist

HSR Planning Checklist:
Complete items # 59 - 64 of your HSR Planning Checklist.
40. Establish mutual partnerships with alternative real estate agencies.

HSR is doing this for you in our HSR Directory Partners section of the Members Area home page by introducing you as the “Stager of Choice” for a website or office. Go to local “Help U Sell”-type offices and offer your consultation at a discount to their customers or an Action Plan for a flat rate.

**Tip:** Remember, the people who usually go the “Help U Sell” route are “Do It Yourselvers.” Targeting your process to that market will give you more success.

**Note:** In Week Three, you will learn about the DIY Manual. It is perfect for these people and you will want to leave an example of one completely filled out with the Help U Sell office as a sales tool possibly.

41. Build valuable business partnerships and referrals.

There are a wide variety of affiliate partnerships you can develop. We recommend nurturing those relationships as best as possible. If you offer vacant home staging, you can make a lucrative agreement with the furniture rental companies. They appreciate your referral business.

There are several types of referring agreements you can make, such as simple reciprocal referrals (you send people my way, I'll send them your way), affiliate
agreements where you get commissions from every client you send a vendor’s way and vice versa or by project managing much like a general contractor.

**Tip:** Don’t fall into the trap of taking training from someone who says you can make lots of money from these “affiliates”, because they don’t. When you’re just starting out, the only affiliate that can be lucrative is the furniture rental company who gives you a bonus and ProFlooring Company in our Members Discount area where you can resell their flooring. You’ll learn more about that in a little while in the *Vacant Home Staging Guide*

There is no easy way to track your referrals to other vendors except by the honor system. If you find you are referring a lot of business to a local home inspector who has agreed to give you $10 per inspection and have not received any commissions from him, find a new one. Home inspectors, moving companies, mortgage brokers, relocation people, property management groups, painters, flooring companies, handy men and landscapers are just a few examples of vendors you can make these kinds of agreements with.

For simple networking purposes, it’s good to get yourself out there and get to know these folks. Again -- this is a small industry that is all about word-of-mouth. Once you’ve become more established in a partnership, you may want to consider paying the vendor directly while you charge a surcharge to the client for your project management costs.

42. **Generate publicity.**

Professional home stagers are in a unique position to offer interesting content and photos simply by bragging about the work they have done. Media writers are always looking for good ideas and visuals to write about. Put the two together, and you have publicity.

- Write a column for your local newssheet with before-and-after photos. Sometimes they’ll even give you ad space for free when you do this!
- Send notices of newly staged homes to the real estate section of your paper.
- Treat the media with respect. Think of them as your prospective clients and that your story idea is the item they’ve been waiting for.
- Learn about the media outlet before you contact them and frame your story idea around their customer’s needs and interests.
- Request media kits from the publications you are targeting to get demographics and editorial calendar. For example, if they are doing a magazine on no-cost home improvements, you want to be listed as a redesigner.
- Do your research. Put together interesting content. Be patient.
Here is a quick rundown of how to get good public relations:

- **Research exactly who to contact.** – Every publication will have the author’s name and contact information. Build your local media list by finding out who the editor of the real estate section in your paper is or who does the writing. Do this for your local magazines and real estate publications.

  Website: We provide an online media list by state in the Members Area!
  - From the Member Area, click on **Week Two**.
  - Click on **Public Relations**

- **Cultivate the art of a good email.** – I know you’re probably not fond of the idea of picking up the phone and pitching your idea, so don’t. Craft a short email news story with a link to your Kodak album that will interest their readers. Include your quotes and any other people’s that would have interest to the story, for example, “This was the best money I’ve ever spent to market a home!” said Jane, a Coldwell real estate agent. Make sure the **subject line of the email pertains to what they would be interested in**, e.g., “Unique Home Selling Story”.

  Website: We provide an online media list by state in the Members Area!
  - From the Member Area, click on **Week Two**.
  - Click on **Public Relations**

- **Cultivate the art of a press release.** – You can also include a press release on the bottom or in the body of the email.

- **Be professional.** – Watch what you send and don’t be too pushy. If they like it, they’ll use it. Make sure you send success stories, special interest stories and lots of photo links to keep it interesting.

43. **Place an ad in your local paper.**

Courtney Brooks out of North Carolina placed a simple 20-word ad in the service section of her local newspaper everyday for one month. The ad cost her $48.00 and netted her two projects -- a redesign and a home stage!

If you live in New York City, that ad would not have been worth it, but otherwise call your local paper. They will work with you to find the correct placement at the right price. Remember, all marketing you do in the beginning is an experiment to find what works in your area. So measure your success and have fun!

**HSR Planning Checklist**
HSR Planning Checklist:
Complete items # 65 - 68 of your HSR Planning Checklist.
44. **Newsletters, event emails and mailings**

There are so many fun ideas to put yourself in front of your clients just make sure you are giving something of value in exchange for their attention.

- Consider sending a newsletter if you love to write. Feature your before-and-after pictures and staging statistics.
- Put together a monthly calendar of local events with your company name and number and send it to prospects compliments of your company. This is a valuable resource for your clients and it will hopefully post up all month.
- Capitalize on your staged homes by emailing and inviting real estate agents from your target list to open house events or theme parties. Make sure you provide them with the home staging show or Kodak link of your before-and-after transformations.
- Create specialty newsletters and mailings geared toward each particular target market and affiliates as well.

**Tip:** IContact ([www.icontact.com](http://www.icontact.com)) and Constant Contact ([http://www.constantcontact.com](http://www.constantcontact.com)) are easy, inexpensive resources for you to use. You may even decide to use them as your contact management system.

45. **Leave postcards and business cards at houses you’ve just staged.**

We mentioned this before, but it is really critical for people to put a name with the work they are viewing. It also benefits the real estate agent as one who goes above and
beyond for their listings. Agents will all tell you that given the myriad of homes on the market today, they are only taking their buyers to homes they know look good.

**Tip:** Do what Charles in Sacramento does with quite a bit of success. “One thing that I do that would be a good tip for HSR stagers is I set up a quality display board in every home I stage with business cards and brochures. I buy the nice looking 8 ½” x 11” acrylic display boards with a business card holder attached. I simply print out a sign on letterhead saying that I’ve staged the home, insert business cards, postcards and brochures on a wonderful tray that works great as a part of the staging. It has yielded some good results so far at really no cost.”

You can get a yard sign, but it looks a bit tacky and might make the home sellers uncomfortable. Simple postcards left at the entrance next to a nice bouquet of flowers would be ideal and your clients should not be uncomfortable with this, especially if the bouquet comes from you.

46. **Offer a signature item that makes your work recognizable.**

The Real Estate industry is a small one, so having a signature gift that you give to real estate agents and home sellers for their business can also be used as a marketing tool. Be creative. A potted orchid, scented candle centerpiece or particular flower may represent you well.

Buy supplies in bulk and show some creative flair by making a handful of gifts.

**Tip:** Michael’s and IKEA are great places to source these kinds of creative "thank you" gifts cheaply and beautifully.

When real estate agents tour homes that have this centerpiece or bouquet on display, they will more than likely think of you. That is marketing at its core.

Don’t forget, the best reason to give a signature item is to show appreciation for the business you receive. That attitude will be central to your success in business in general.

47. **Up-sell your services and offer move in staging.**

Move-in staging or interior redesign services should be an easy sell to satisfied home staging clients. Once they see the transformations in their old house, they will surely be interested in those same transformations or at least a guideline for their new house.

Most people make big purchasing decisions on home furnishings when they move into their new home. What better way to assist them in getting the most for their money by offering to work with them and decorating their new home? You could offer them a discount on this service.
48. Ask for a Wine and Redesign Party and transform their home.

This can be a very creative way to build your interior redesign business and to get additional business from existing clients and friends. Much like the Tupperware parties of the past, this is a fun way to show your talent, hand-out information and obtain further business

- Ask a friend to be a hostess and invite friends to their house so you can redecorate some of the rooms over wine and cheese.
- The hostess gets free decorating.
- The friends get free decorating tips, can fill out your Redesign Lifestyle Questionnaire, find their personal Style from our Home Styles Module photos and will see your work first hand. Very likely they will want to purchase some of your products (e.g., Action Plans) and services.
- Better yet, offer this to a real estate agent and have them host a party for real estate agent friends to see first-hand the benefits of staging.

49. Implement a customer appreciation process.

It always pays to sit back and take stock of how you’re running your business. The first thing to focus on should be how well you treat your customers and potential clients. Make sure you have a start-to-finish process in place that puts the customer first and remembers the small details of customer service. It’s also a good idea to track this process in your customer database.

- Make follow-up phone calls before and after your client’s open houses.
- Send thank-you cards for referrals and testimonials.
- Send a card to mark a special occasion.
- Send a congratulations card on the sale of their home. You can throw in a discount for a Staging to Live or a redesign consultation.

As a small business you have the advantage because you can respond quickly and personally to customer inquiries. Always put yourself in the customer’s shoes and react quickly to their concerns and questions.

**Tip:** A service guarantee is great way to assure a client will be taken care of and will get their money’s worth. Consider this in your portfolio and presentation. Honor the guarantee and keep in mind it’s very rarely called upon.

**HSR Planning Checklist**

**HSR Planning Checklist:**
Complete items # 68 – 72 of your HSR Planning Checklist.
Now that you're brimming with marketing and sales ideas, it's time to put your plan into motion. Remember that initially 90% of your time should be focused on sales and marketing. When you get over the hump, 90% of your time will be home staging.

50. Define your marketing objectives in terms of money.
   - How many home seller postcards will you send before an inquiry?
   - How many inquiries will you make before a purchase?
   - What is the ratio of consultations to other services? In other words, how many consultations result in further services?

   All of these ratios should be considered and improved upon along the way. Define your actions in dollar amounts.

   If you make ten sales calls to real estate agents and get one $200 consultation per ten calls, then that is the dollar amount for that activity. Once you can start placing dollars to actions you will be in a better position to consider which actions to prioritize over others. You will also be able to set realistic financial goals. If every four $200 consultations result in $1000 of additional services and you have a goal of making $4000 in a month, you will need to get consultations a month to achieve your financial goals.

51. Set realistic marketing goals and objectives.

   Focus on activity every day. Using the above proposition, in order to make $4000 in a month, you will need to do ten consultations. In order to get ten consultations from real estate agent sales calls alone, you will need to make 100 sales calls in a month. (Every ten sales calls results in one consultation, ten calls X ten consultations = 100 calls).
The great thing about the staging business is the opportunity for repeat business from real estate agents. This is exactly why they should be your primary target market. If you have a real estate agent who offers your consultations to all of their listings and they have three listings a month, then you have decreased your sales calls by 30.

**Tip:** Be realistic with your activity goals. Everything takes longer than you think!

### 52. Consider additional revenue streams.

We've talked about this throughout this guide in terms of affiliates and additional products and services, but it really deserves its own item on the *First 50 Marketing List*. You should constantly be thinking of other ways you can meet your existing customers' needs, whether it's redesign, vacant homes, shopping, packing or an organizing service. By taking care of the needs of current clients, you have to do that much less marketing for future clients.

**HSR Planning Checklist**

**HSR Planning Checklist:**
Complete item #73 of your *HSR Planning Checklist*.