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**Virtual Marketing in a Tangible World**

**By André Bell**

**Virtual Marketing in a Tangible World**

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One of the greatest challenges facing business owners and managers is finding a way to cost-effectively communicate frequently and consistently with their target markets.

It is nearly impossible to remain profitable while employing enough people to maintain frequent contact with existing clients, let alone seek new clients.

And even for companies with deep pockets, hiring outside sales reps, trainers, and speakers to communicate monthly, weekly, and in some cases daily with all clients in the organization is just plain ludicrous.

The high cost of human-to-human contact makes it impractical to attempt to implement a steady stream of consistent communications with everyone.

A common solution is to regularly communicate with the company's 'ideal client' and neglect all others. It becomes a game of economics.

There is a better way.

A better solution for maintaining regular communication with your clients and prospects while at the same offering a valuable service is to adopt Internet eCourses and eSeminars in place of in-person courses and seminars.

Electronic seminars (eSeminars) are similar to real seminars or real courses that you attend at a local college or meeting facility.

Just like real courses you have a fixed term or time period in which to complete the course, and a fixed subject to discuss.

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For example let's say you sell automobiles and you want to maintain regular communications with your automobile buyers.

What you could do is conduct an electronic seminar every month which discusses a new facet of maintaining the vehicle or informs the course participant of new developments in the industry that may affect them and that they may be concerned with.

The purpose of the eCourse is not only to provide a valuable service by keeping your clients educated, but to insure that they remember you now and into the future when they are ready to buy again or refer business to you.

The more contact you maintain the less likely they are to forget you. The less contact you maintain the more likely they are to forget you :(

A side benefit to regular communications is that within your course you can refer to other products or services that you offer, provided the discussion remains within the theme of the electronic course.

If your course drops into hard selling or hucksterism then most people will drop out of your course or add your email address to their spam filters.

That's bad!

So keep the discussion centered on topics that are of real value to your course participants and they will remain with you for as long as the course continues.

These virtual seminars eliminate most, if not all, costs ordinarily associated with communicating with clients on a regular basis.

You can now afford to reach all clients, not only those considered to be ideal.

This is possible because your electronic messages will be available online 24 hours, seven days a week—without the need for any employees to maintain the contact.

Now don't get me wrong I'm not saying that the Internet can completely replace people, especially in areas where high personal contact is necessary. I'd forego a virtual handshake for a real one any day.

However the strength of the Internet is such that it can decrease the common costs associated with communicating to large numbers of people on a consistent and regular basis.

This is important because the more frequently you communicate with your target market the greater the chance of their remembering you, and the greater chance of their buying from you again in the future.

Even if they don't buy from you right away, communicating regularly helps maintain the relationship you worked so hard to build.

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You are able to eliminate losing your clients to your competitors as a result of letting even one person slip through the cracks.

To keep things simple communicate your electronic course or electronic seminar via email. Though MS outlook or other email client could do the trick, I don't recommend that.

The workload of conducting an eCourse with hundreds or thousands of clients via a normal email client would be tremendous. It could easily become a full-time job to send messages, subscribe members, unsubscribe members, avoid sending duplicate messages, and so on.

All this is completely unnecessary.

There are several stand-alone programs that are designed specifically for electronic courses. However I do not recommend any of them right now.

This is because you can simply accomplish exactly the same thing by using an inexpensive autoresponder instead of spending several hundred dollars on a customize software program.

Autoresponders are ideal for conducting eCourses because once the autoresponder is setup it requires no daily maintenance from you. Ever.

Software that you run on your computer requires you to start the software daily, import and export contact info of subscribers, process subscribe requests, process unsubscribe requests and other general daily maintenance tasks. Yuck!

A real drag, which is truly unnecessary.

Just keep in mind that you can load a series of sequential lessons or messages into your autoresponder, set the frequency of communication whether that be daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly and sit back and let your messages get communicated to your market.

Your autoresponder handles all the tedious tasks for you.

The beauty of this is that whether you are communicating with one person or one million, the daily workload to communicate with the course participants is exactly the same.

Zero.

Another way that you can implement eCourses or eSeminars is to tie your autoresponder messages in with multimedia formats like MP3 files, flash animation, and even live video.

You simply preload your autoresponder with instructions on where to access the next lesson, set it and forget it.

Each day, week, month, or quarter your course participants will receive instructions and you will

maintain regular communications with them. All on autopilot.

This is a win/win for everyone.

The choice to use email, flash, streaming audio or video is best decided upon your circumstances and your technical ability.

I strongly recommend keeping things simple. Stick to email autoresponders. However if you hate typing then instead of typing your course materials you can record the information with an audio recorder such as All Sound Recorder.

That way you communicate the same information with less typing involved. The downside is that all multimedia files will increase your monthly bandwidth far in excess of what will be accomplished through using just email.

So if monthly bandwidth is an issue stay away from multimedia. Especially if your web provider charges a premium.

Stick to simple email eCourses and you will be able to provide valuable information to your market and remain in touch with them, all while keeping your life as simple and stress-free as possible.

For free autoresponders that you can run from your own hosted domain check out

He offers both free and paid versions of his autoresponders. If you use AOL or a web host that prohibits custom CGI scripts your next best bet is to use one of the remotely hosted autoresponders such as provided by

and

Each of these solutions allows you to communicate as frequently as you wish and with very little administrative headache to all of your clients, not just those considered to be ideal.

And best of all this can be accomplished without the need to hire a full-time staff, even if your clients number into the hundreds of thousands.

André Bell is principal marketing consultant with André Bell Consulting Group. A free copy of his new book "101 Marketing Secrets Revealed" is available through his site at

### **Why Hire A Real Estate Virtual Assistant?**

**By Sarah Reiter**

You originally accepted the challenge of a real estate agent for many reasons. It may have been due to your love for meeting new people, or finding just the right house for the specific needs of a family. Then

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you discovered all the planning and paperwork involved in the process. There is marketing, contact management, client acquisition, client retention, design, along with many other administrative and development issues.

In a perfect world you could hire someone who would only come to work when you really needed them and they'd always know just what to do. They would never call in sick, take up space in your office, or bother you with insurance concerns.

### Welcome to a Perfect World

The idea of a virtual assistant may sound unique and perhaps even a bit futuristic, but a Real Estate Virtual Assistant can provide the perfect opportunity for you to do what you do best without the hassle of many undesirable elements of real estate sales including transaction coordination, marketing design work, client database management, data entry, lead follow-up, and lead generation.

A web-based virtual assistant can aid you in critical times, allowing you to more fully concentrate on what you enjoy most – serving your clients and selling property.

### Practical Reasoning

Virtual assistants never take up room in your office, they never call in sick, they aren't entitled to workman's compensation and best of all they take care of you in some very specific ways.

- Reduce administrative tasks
- Increase market awareness
- Handle design tasks
- Perform transaction tasks
- Free up time for agent
- Track and follow up with leads
- Stay in touch with past clients on agents behalf
- Perform direct mail marketing campaigns
- Configure and maintain contact database

You might already have a capable assistant in your office, but by learning more about the services of a Real Estate Virtual Assistant you might think twice about hiring a replacement when they leave.

### A Virtual Assistant – What Do They Do?

A virtual assistant will make your business their business for as long as you need them. They take care of all the details you know are needed, but hate doing. Ask yourself, who do you think would do a job better...someone who wishes they weren't doing it or someone that makes it their specialty?

A virtual assistant is someone who makes use of available technology to help you build and maintain your business.

### Change Can Be Good

We understand this idea may seem strange to the sensibilities of some, but as communication methods, technologies, and software have advanced so have opportunities for cost effective outsourcing that frees real estate agents to pursue more lucrative endeavors.

If you have a need for an assistant, but wonder about the cost effective nature of such a hire, consider the benefits of a virtual assistant providing both a viable short and long-term strategy as well as saving you time and money.

Sarah Reiter is president of Creative Agent Solutions, a virtual marketing company that specializes in

. Creative Agent Solutions is a member of the International Virtual Assistants

Association (IVAA), the Southeast Valley Regional Association of Realtors (SEVRAR) and Scottsdale Association of Realtors in Arizona (SAAR), as well as a Certified Virtual Assistant (CVA) with the Settlement Room.

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