



HAZARDOUS HABITS

Six Silent Roadblocks to Real Estate Success

With Connie Podesta & Julie Escobar

First, things first...there has NEVER been a more important time to **OUT-SMART, OUT-PERFORM & OUT-SHINE** the competition than right NOW. To succeed in this business you **MUST** differentiate yourself in smart and positive ways and ask yourself this question, “What about ME is so special & unique that people will want to know & do business with me instead of the competition?”

In a nod towards our real estate friends this month, I sat down with one of my all-time real estate writers and good friend Julie Escobar to talk about some of the hazardous habits agents need to kick to the curb in order to truly STAND OUT in today’s VERY competitive market.

[Here’s a sneak peek inside our conversation...](#)

Connie: Hi Julie – always fun chatting with you! If there is anyone who knows that now’s the time to STAND OUT and step up your game to win at real estate it’s you. You know normally, I would lead with a positive spin on an article – but you and I were talking about how funny it is that sometimes the eBooks or articles that capture the most attention have a “darker” tone to them. Isn’t that funny how we’ve all got a little of that “slow down at the scene of the accident” in us? Human nature is an interesting thing isn’t it?

Julie: It sure is Connie – but in all the years I’ve written for the real estate industry – it is those tough labeled, “fear factor” type titles that do tend to have brokers calling me announcing, “I just copied that and put in every agent’s mailbox!” So let’s take a page out of that book and talk today about some



habits that some sales associates are perpetuating that frankly – can be career KILLERS! (Of course – not any of YOUR readers I’m sure – but they may have someone in their OFFICE who could use a little nudge right?)

Connie: Absolutely – my readers are all on the top their game – but let’s give it to them straight anyway. They know I’m not a “beat around the bush” kind of gal! I think we need to focus on what is really feeling like an incredible (and necessary) trend in the industry today – and that’s a resurgence of agents putting service and customer value FIRST.

Julie: I feel that too Connie – the real estate world has some great leaders out there right now who are really driving that message and METHOD home – and showing agents how making a friend first will not only lead to a sale later – but a whole lot of referrals after that. Let’s look at the FIRST ROADBLOCK that comes to mind in terms of what agents are FAILING to do that could be costing them not just NOW customers – but lifetime ones as well.

Roadblock #1: Inaccessibility. One of the top customer complaints of all time is, “They never called me back.” In customer speak, that translates into, “They don’t care about me, and they don’t want (or deserve) my business.”

Consider these tips, and be sure you consistently:

- answer phone calls and emails within six hours, and always within 24 hours
- contact open house attendees within three days of the event
- use automated systems to keep up with web and direct mail inquiries
- make yourself available; do NOT launch a marketing campaign and then leave town, attend a four-day workshop or head for the beach

Julie: They’ll laugh at that last one Connie – but you and I have BOTH seen sales professionals do just that!

Connie: I know! You guys need to understand this...Ours is an “instant gratification” society. People don’t like to wait, so don’t make them! What’s number two Julie?

Julie: Ahhh---glad you asked!

Roadblock #2: Talking more than listening. I’m not sure who said it first (although I remember my mother sharing it a time or two), but this classic line really does put this point in perspective: “You were given two ears and one mouth in that proportion for a reason! Listen more than you talk.” Did your mom ever say that to you? Listening allows you to hear objections, get a real feel for the comfort and motivation level of your customers and effectively answer their questions and meet their needs. Listening attentively also makes the client feel important, connected and cared about. Another old friend of mine, Floyd Wickman used to always say, “They don’t care what you know until they know that you care.” He was right about that!

Connie: You're absolutely right – one of the first steps to showing VALUE to your customers is listening to them, really hearing them. Not only does that make them FEEL more important and cared for – if you're listening well – they almost ALWAYS give you clues as to what their buying or selling triggers really are. I also want to interject in here that sometimes salespeople engage in what I call “desperation talking” – and that's when you want so BADLY to convince someone to BUY or to SIGN or to LIST that you just KEEP talking and end up OVER-SELLING – or talking yourself (and the prospect) right out of doing what you want them to do. Learn to be quiet sometime, read people and even just ask them their preferences such as, “Do you want to look around the home and ask questions or get a feel for it on your own? Which do you prefer?”

Julie: You hit that nail on the head! Now, on to one of OUR favorite topics...

Connie: Indeed! That is...

Roadblock #3: Getting caught in a social media web: I'll be one of the first people to say it's time to stop thinking social media is a passing fad and prompt you to dive in to the huge online knowledge base that can teach you how to tweet, find friends and get linked! In fact, I'll tell you that it is a **MUST-HAVE** communication skill if you want to keep communicating with the younger generation. Social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are extraordinary tools to help you expand your reach with the ability to talk one to many – develop your niche, and bring value to your sphere of influence and prospects every day. You can touch many people at once; share your perspectives and network far faster and easier than we ever dreamed possible.

I will caution you though – do not get too caught up in the web. I can't tell you the countless sales professionals I've met who never learned to put boundaries on their time. Social networking, like anything, can be a time stealer if you're not using it properly. There is still no substitute for real, live, face-to-face or at least phone-to-phone contact with your clients and genuine prospecting time blocks. So if you're spending all your time tweeting about the weather or playing Mafia Wars and Farmville (you know who you are) – then start today to block out your power hour of prospecting, reaching out to your customer base and leave the playtime for your personal time.

Julie: You got that right Connie – and now on to one of my pet peeves!

Roadblock #4: Forgetting that manners matter. It might seem to some that as generations pass and our world becomes more and more chaotic, it's fine to let manners slide or common courtesies wane. For sales professionals at the top of the ladder, however, patience, civility and good old fashioned manners such as “please” and “thank you” as well as shaking hands, making eye contact, opening doors and being respectful are not just tools of the trade, they are marks of true character. The golden rule remains a life lesson that is truly “golden.” Top producers wouldn't even consider:

- keeping a client on hold

- talking on a cell phone in the presence of a customer unless negotiating on their behalf or handling a real emergency
- using profanity or any disrespectful language in front of a client

Connie: You're right Julie – and there's just no excuse for lack of manners anymore- not that there ever was. I think some of the ways we are using to communicate (texting, instant messaging, social media) are definitely changing people's ability to be effective communicators face-to-face. I'm an advocate for all of those communication tools – don't get me wrong – but as people and especially SALES people – you've got to master ALL forms of communication – and you're right – have GOOD MANNERS! (Geez – now we sound like their mothers!)

Julie: Hey I'm ok with that if it means they'll up the ante on the interpersonal skills and start behaving with more manners! Now, it's let's please talk about one of my favorite topics...

Roadblock #5: Negating niche marketing: While it's a great theory that we should be able to be all things to all people, it's a practice and a goal that could kill your ability to create any traction, not to mention the burn-out you'll inevitably feel. Finding your niche is not only a good business practice, it's just good common sense. Effectively building a niche that resonates with you allows you to build momentum faster, spend less, and have a lot more fun along the way.

Another really important benefit of niche marketing is that you not only get to work with the people you WANT to work with – but you get so proficient at it – that your confidence skyrockets. I know an agent who is the EXPIRED Queen! She OWNS that market in her area – and she absolutely CRUSHES it production-wise every month. Why? Because there is absolutely NOTHING anyone can throw at her that she can't respond to. There's no objection she hasn't heard, no topic on the subject she can't expand on. She's knows it better than the back of her hand and the end result is that she attracts more and more of that market every year. The lesson there is: Pick your passion. Who do YOU want to work with? Teachers, first time home buyers, doctors, lawyers, military personnel, chefs, business owners, horse ranchers, dog lovers, boaters, golfers, Harley riders, skiers – the list is endless. You are only limited by your imagination. Pick one and then OWN IT.

Connie: Love that! Great advice! Now, last but not least...

Roadblock #6: Knowing when to quit and knowing when to hang in. Sometimes “no” just means “not right now.” But sometimes it just means, “NO.” You've got to know the difference. You've got to be intuitive enough to pick up on voice and tone and body language. And for heaven's sake-don't be a real estate stalker. Pushy is pushy. Quit that--(you know who you are!)

And...too many agents (and people in general) give up too soon in other areas. They stop reaching out to customers because they're tired of sending “stuff.” The reality? Just when you feel like you are tired of marketing, that's when your prospects are just getting used to hearing from you! Sometimes when you feel like you've learned enough – you're right on the edge of learning something GREAT.

Remember, it's not about us, it's about them. Give your customers as much time, attention and patience and valuable knowledge as they need not only to be your customer right now, but also to be your customer for life. Every one that is, is worth tens of thousands to you over the course of your career. And learn, really learn when "no" means "not now" or "never." It's an intuition that will serve you well.

Tenacity is a powerful character trait – and a differentiator. Get in it for the long haul!

Julie: Oh you are SO right Connie! What most agents don't realize is that RARELY in a prospecting situation does a transaction happen after the first or second time – statistics show that it's almost ALWAYS after at least five contacts. What's sad – is most agents give up by the time they hit three (if they even do that much)! So you're right – go the distance! What's that quote by Wayne Dyer? "It's never crowded along the extra mile." Take that to heart.

Connie: Thanks Julie – these are ALL great reminders! You know, with changing times come changing challenges. It's important for agents to realize that extraordinary customer service, relationship marketing and perseverance are the what sets you apart – allows you to build that salable book of business – and oh yeah - will result in referrals for years to come. EXCEED expectations, go the extra mile and STAND OUT!

That's it for today gang! Julie and I are already putting our heads together for Part Two of this series where we're going to talk steering clear of the negative, business planning (I can hear you groaning from here), skill-building (one of my personal favorites) and more! Julie and I both wish you good listings, happy negotiating, REALISTIC sellers and qualified buyers! Talk to you soon!

Connie Podesta is a top-rated professional keynote speaker, executive career/life coach and ONE OF THE INDUSTRY'S LEADING EXPERTS in sales strategies, leadership development, relationships, and change. Using her talents as an author, board certified therapist, comedienne and TV/radio personality; Connie delivers customized high-energy presentations that creatively combine laugh-out-loud humor and compelling insight with real-world strategies and solutions.

To learn more about Connie and what she can do for your team visit her site www.conniepodesta.com or find her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ConnieSpeaks -- she's fun to follow!

Julie Escobar is syndicated columnist who's been in and around the real estate and speaking industries for more than 25 years. With a passion for helping sales professionals build their business, maintain their motivation and realize their goals, you'll find her always on the lookout for new solutions, strategies and techniques that can make jobs easier and life better. You can find Julie on Facebook at www.facebook.com/JulieEscobar.