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Seven ideas for 2007

Wow what a ride 2006 was! As homebuilders and new home salespeople our bellies are full of humble pie. The new home market in 2006 reminded us all that we have plenty of improvement opportunities ahead of us. If there is one thing I hope you took away from 2006, I hope everyone realizes that our previous rate of sales and income levels were not so much based on how terrific we were as salespeople and builders, but rather, how terrific a seller's market we were in.

Ask yourself this question, 'if I could do it all over again, what would I change?' As a professional sales trainer, consultant and salesperson, here is my list of seven ideas I hope you incorporate for 2007:

Idea #1- Develop a Marketing Plan. Your marketing plan should encompass the following items:

1. **Identify your target market-** Who are you trying to sell to? What do they need and want in their homes? Where do they live and how much will they spend?
2. **Corporate marketing strategy-** What will you do to drive walk-in traffic? One third of your sales should be from walk-in traffic.
3. **Realtor Outreach Program-** What will you do to increase your co-op sales? Another 1/3 - 1/2 of your sales should be Realtor generated.



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4. **Referral Program-** What will you do to increase referrals from your past customers, hot prospects and sphere of influence? Approximately 33% of your sales should originate from this program.
5. **Competition Analysis-** What are the builders down the street and more importantly, the used homes down the street selling for? What are they doing better than you? What are you doing better than they are?
6. **Media Schedule and Budget-** When, where and how will you promote your homes and neighborhoods? The schedule should be set monthly and be spread out over the entire year. Your budget should coincide with your projected absorption for each neighborhood and be realistic in your sales goals.

Idea #2- Get serious about market research. Your market research does not stop with your marketing plan. Salespeople should be shopping the competition at least monthly. You must shop your top three builders and developments monthly and document your findings. Report this back to the builder and adjust your offering based on what is selling. Don't forget used homes. In most of our submarkets, 75% - 85% of all sales are used homes.

Idea #3- Obtain your Certified New Home Sales Professional (CSP) designation. The National Association of Home Builders offers the CSP designation for sales professionals. This course will walk you through all the areas of the new home sales process today's salesperson must not only know, but master. Check www.batc.org for local offerings.



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Idea #4- Embark on a personal development program. How often do you hear, “I need to work smarter, not harder?” Yes, we all must work smarter but how can we work smarter if we don’t educate ourselves (continuing education classes don’t count!)? Personally, you can develop yourself on a daily basis through books, audio programs and seminars. Two great resources for books and CD’s are www.builderbooks.com or www.amazon.com.

Idea #5- Script it! Top new home sales professionals know exactly what the sales process is and exactly what they need to say and not say to customers. These scripts are not canned. Rather, they are memorized and internalized for certain selling situations. After an all pro has internalized these scripts, they personalize them and they come out to the customer as natural conversation. Some of the areas that must be scripted:

1. **Greeting**
2. **Discovery**
3. **Presentation** (community, neighborhood and builder)
4. **Demonstration** (community, neighborhood, homesite and model(s))
5. **Objections** (know your top 10 and how you will minimize them!)
6. **Closing techniques** (At least 5 but preferably 10)

Idea #6- Write out your business goals (and better yet your personal ones too). You should have no more than 3-5 goals that include unit sales, income, customer satisfaction and total volume. Each goal, however, must have measurable tasks assigned to it. Review your goals daily and update them



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weekly. Be specific in your tasks and always have a deadline for when they need to be completed.

Idea #7- Embrace change! Let's face it; we can't sell the way we used to. If you made it though 2006 not making many changes, 2007 is your year. Today, we must reinvent ourselves or make it easy on yourself and leave the business. A favorite quote of mine is, "people won't change until the pain of staying the same overcomes the fear of change." Some areas to focus on:

1. **Discipline.** We go through life living with the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. Only you can make a conscious decision to do what others won't.
2. **The way you sell.** With the amount of inventory in the market, closing the sale on the first visit will be very difficult. You need a great contact management program with an aggressive follow-up system for each lead you generate. Learn scripts and practice your presentation on co-workers so when you meet those few buyers, they won't get away.
3. **Change you product offerings.** Now is the time to design new plans and build them when old models sell. Increase the value of your to-be-built homes by including more features that many builders and customers consider options.

Remember the definition of insanity, "Doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results." We made it through the last 8 of 9 years not by being good, but by showing up. Change is the number one fear we all



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face. I encourage you to take charge of your future by implementing the
changes you need to make, **today**.



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