



REAL ESTATE

RULES!

52 ways to achieve success in real estate

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The Rules

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RULE 1



Become a personality.

MY NAME IS Debbi DiMaggio.

I'm a real estate professional, author, and speaker. I'm also a devoted mother and wife.

I'm involved in philanthropy and charities. My role model is Lady Diana. She was a global ambassador for charitable causes, and a woman with her own sense of style who could rise above the constant drama in her life.

My business mission is to empower real estate agents to be the best they can be. I offer advice to agents on my website, blogs, through LinkedIn, and through speeches around the country.

This book is part of my business identity.

I've tried to create a personality that is unique. You should, too.

When you're selling real estate, you're selling yourself—your strengths, your reputation, your expertise, and your personality.

Your business identity is going to be different than mine. You have your own distinctive characteristics to promote.

You are in charge. Create your persona.

Be a star!

RULE 2

Exceed expectations.

MY MOTTO IS “Do whatever it takes to help your clients and sell their homes with ease and grace.” In my real estate practice, I try to live up to that pledge. Here are some of the things I’ve done for clients:



- Hauled personal items to the trash for the client who simply left it behind.
- Took a client’s donation items to the Salvation Army.
- Babysat a client’s child when the client went out of town for a long weekend.

- Hosted a client for one week at our home until their home was available to move into.

I'm not suggesting you have to do any of these items, and (if you're lucky) they may not come up as part of your transactions.

But whenever possible, try to exceed the expectations of your clients. I think it's the main reason I've achieved success in real estate, and I think it will work for you, too.

RULE 3



Put your name on the bottom line.

OSCAR GUERRERO WAS a salesman at a car dealership. A friend of mine went to Oscar to buy a car, but he checked the same car's prices at another dealership.

"Oscar," my friend said, "here's your offer for the car and here's the competing offer from another car company. The offers are for the same car and I'd like to use you, but you are \$300 more than your competitor. I'm sorry, but I'm going to use the competitor."

Oscar said, "You're missing the difference between the two offers. My name's on the bottom line of our contract. And that will make all the difference."

Oscar explained that if my friend ever needed service, he'd personally pick up the car and bring it back. If my friend had a problem with the car, he could call Oscar day or night, and Oscar would take

care of it. Sure, my friend would be paying a little more money, but wasn't it worth it?

Of course, my friend bought the car from Oscar.

Putting your name on the bottom line says that you are committing to your clients. In the real estate world, that means giving out your phone number so your client can reach you whenever it's necessary. It means quality marketing, open houses, and clear communication. It means working your hardest to achieve your client's goals.

Put your name on the bottom line when a client lists with you. Let clients know that *you* are part of the contract.

RULE 4



Channel your inner Tom Hanks.

JUSTIN BIEBER'S ANTICS may be fun to watch, but when clients are buying or selling a home, they want a real estate agent who's like Tom Hanks.

Everybody likes Tom Hanks. Who wouldn't want to do business with him? He seems like the nicest, most reputable guy in the world. He played the widowed dad every woman wanted to marry in *Sleepless in Seattle*, the clearheaded astronaut Jim Lovell in *Apollo 13*, and Sheriff Woody in *Toy Story*. He's today's version of Gary Cooper and Jimmy Stewart.

Be more like Tom Hanks!

Be polite. Even if a client is annoying, be on your best behavior. If need be, bite your tongue.

Be interested in your client. Spend time talking with your client about what he wants in a home, about the needs of his family, activities he enjoys, if schools are important, if he wants to be near amenities such as shops, boutiques, restaurants, and cultural centers. Get to know what's important to your client so you don't waste his time and yours looking at properties that aren't suitable.

Be upbeat. Never cast aspersions on other agents, homes, or neighborhoods. Let your client make up his or her own mind. Your job is to find the best home, not to run down people or places.

Be on time. I can't imagine that Tom Hanks keeps people waiting!

Act like Tom Hanks (I know, nobody can act like Tom Hanks). You won't win an Oscar, but you'll win the respect of others.

RULE 5

Trust other agents.

I TREAT OTHER agents with utmost respect, and expect other agents to trust me and treat me with that same respect in return. I like to think of all other agents as partners and colleagues, not as competitors.

Here's why: the most important factor in any real estate transaction is trust. I trust other agents to give me honest information. And I do the same with them. If there is a problem with a listing (a leaky roof, a title concern), I disclose it right away. When you know what you are dealing with it's a lot easier to resolve a tricky situation. When someone is hiding a defect, eventually you'll find out about it and that can lead to distrust, if not a lawsuit.



I am not naive. I know that some people are greedy and are not pleasant to work with. But I'm a firm believer in treating people with respect and trust until I find out that they are trying to deceive me. Then I react strongly and make sure the situation is fixed. If it happens again, I will try to avoid dealing with that particular agent again. Of course, that's not always easy if the agent has a property your client is interested in. But she will not receive any favors from me, and probably not from many others if her reputation precedes her. If you are known as a trustworthy agent, your colleagues in the real estate community will often choose to work with you instead of another agent who has a bad reputation.

Start with trust. You can build a great relationship that way.

RULE 6

Be careful what you say.

WORDS ARE POWERFUL. Words can hurt. Some words are a code violation. And as a real estate agent, you have to be especially careful that you don't inadvertently offend the buyer or seller, or incur a HUD violation.

When you are dealing with a home sale, even the most common words sometimes have connotations you want to avoid. So be careful!

For example, consider this list of words that can cause problems.



Walk. What? Why? Well, not everyone can walk. And while the term “walk-up” is not a Fair Housing violation, you’d be better off not using it.

Family room. Be careful. Everyone doesn’t have a family. What is or who makes up a family, exactly? Use “rumpus room” or “media room” instead.

Master bedroom. Can be taken as sexist. I know that most people are comfortable with this term. But would it hurt to say “primary bedroom” or “largest bedroom” as a substitute?

Safe, secure neighborhood. You probably don’t know if there has been a crime or problem on this street. Better avoid that phrase. Better yet, have your client check with the local police department.

His and hers. Try not to use gender-specific labels.

Each region of the country has its own potentially sensitive terms. Avoid the words that can hurt people in your community, particularly words that refer to the race or nationality of community members. Check the Fair Housing Act to be sure. Don’t speak or communicate in any way (such as texting or e-mailing) without considering if your words could have unintended consequences.

Google yourself!



THE FIRST THING a client or potential client will do to find out more information about you is to Google your name. If the first three hits are photos of you drinking at wild parties, clients may be reluctant to trust you with the sale of their precious home.

Google yourself. Find out what the Internet says about you.

Be careful about the images and messages you post on social media and what you send out in e-mails. Whatever privacy protections you choose, there is always the chance that one of your crazy pictures will make its way across the Internet.

Treat all your online correspondence as public. If the government isn't watching you, you can be sure that your friends and future clients are.

But on the flip side: In order to gain business and develop your branding, you need to be found online. Be sure your social media and websites provide accurate phone numbers and other contact information. Make sure you publicize your bio. If you want to stand out in the crowded real estate field, develop your online presence—not just real estate-related posts, but a bit about your real life and personality. If you are an avid tennis player or enjoy cooking or golf, share that with your audience. Clients like to bond with people. Allow them to bond with you!

So Google yourself. I'm sure your clients will be doing it, too!

RULE
8



Toot your own horn.

YOU KNOW YOU'RE good. So don't be shy about telling the world. Potential clients may not be aware of your accomplishments and ability to transact real estate.

Create your bio for your website, social media platforms, and print material. The bio should point out your strongest points, including real estate specialties and educational achievements (when appropriate). If you have lots of experience, include how long you've been in real estate. If you're a new agent, maybe you can talk about how well you know the local area. Be sure to mention the kinds of work you do to get the best results for your clients.

If you have achieved success as a real estate agent, be sure to tout it in your advertising. A phrase such as "Top 1% (or 5% or 10%) Real Estate Agent in the US" helps gain customer confidence.

Toot your own horn. Loudly. You don't have to be Donald Trump, but you need to get the word out.

RULE 9



Take some time off.

YOUR LIFE AS a real estate agent is often nonstop. You are running from appointment to appointment, and squeezing in floor duty. You are busy acquiring new listings and trying to sell the listings you already have. Everyone you meet is a client or potential client, as you are always on stage. Who knows where the next million-dollar lead will come from? And, of course, you have to squeeze out time every day to reach out to the world on social media.

Whew!

It seems as if you will never leave this treadmill. But you have to!

People are most productive when they give themselves a chance to refresh, reorganize and reboot.

Take time out each day to relax. It could be taking a walk around the block, doing a crossword puzzle, reading a novel, or even meditating—whatever gets you out of the daily hassles of being a real estate agent. Your mind needs a diversion from time to time. When you relax, you pave the way for a more energized you.

Take a day off every now and then. Life insurance salesman Sid Friedman was one of the most successful life insurance agents in the country. But every once in a while he would take a whole day off to play golf or listen to music or just watch TV. He said that the time off made him far more productive the rest of the week.

Take a long weekend every now and then throughout the year. We find even 24 hours away allows us to renew. Midweek is often the perfect time to escape before the hectic Sunday Open House schedule begins. Travel. Relax. Renew. See some new sights and gain a new perspective. Get someone to cover for you and don't even think about the work (if that's possible!). You'll come back refreshed, and your family life will benefit. Believe it or not, life at the office and your clients will go on without you. You need the time off so you can be a more productive agent.

Relax.

Refresh.

Repeat.

RULE 10



Act like you mean business.

BEING A REAL estate agent is very much like being an actor. If you don't like the limelight, you are in the wrong business.

Like a Broadway entertainer, you have to please a roomful of people. You are being watched and listened to constantly. How you greet and interact with potential buyers, sellers, looky-loos, and even neighbors will determine your success.

Relish the spotlight. Psyche yourself up when you are holding an open house or a private showing. This is your time to delight the audience. What you wear, how you talk, your enthusiasm, your honesty, your insights will all be judged by your audience. Be ready for the show.

There's no business like show business—except, maybe, the real estate business!

YOU GOTTA KNOW THE **Rules!**



Animation Rules!
by Steve Hickner



Customer Service Rules!
by Don Gallegos



Customer Experience Rules!
by Jeofrey Bean



Supermarket Rules!
by Harold C. Lloyd



Business Rules!
by Michael Sansolo



Retail Rules!
by Kevin Coupe

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