

GOING THE DISTANCE WITH

S@LES LEADS

For more effective follow-up with long-term prospects, email is the tool of choice—if you use it properly

By Mike Lyon, Contributing Editor



How do you handle a prospect when nothing happens after 45 days? After 90 days? Do you just chalk it up to someone who wasn't really serious? Sales motivator Nicki Joy got it right. She says, "Follow-up is your first customer-service test."

NEWSLETTERS ARE GOOD, BUT THEY'RE NOT ENOUGH

A recent voicemail that was forwarded to me is worth sharing. The customer was returning a call to a new-home salesperson and said, "I wanted to give you a call to say thanks for that message. ... Quite honestly, we were juggling between [Builder With Awesome Follow-Up] and [Other Builder], and the customer service I have received from you completely changed our minds and made us focus strictly on you. ... We really do appreciate the hard work you have put in so far."

Let that soak in for a second. This call was prompted by consistent and persistent email follow-up. It changed the game for this prospect—changed their perception and the builder's outcome. Then ask yourself, "Which builder are we?"

Here's another question that needs an answer: "Do we give up too quickly?"

We need to come to terms with the fact that 60 percent or more of our leads provide only an email address. We would love to get a phone number, but for a variety of reasons, many prospects just aren't ready to give that out. In our business, most sales and marketing teams default to email newsletters for long-term follow-up and call it sufficient. This may sound harsh, but using email newsletters with the objective of cultivating a lead is no big deal. It's average follow-up at best. I would suggest a different approach; something with more layers.

5 STEPS TO BETTER ENGAGEMENT

There are many reasons why a homebuyer chooses not to buy, but if you give up your personal follow-up too easily, you've essentially wasted the time you've already spent in nurturing

the lead. Email does work when done right. You can leverage its positive impact to keep nurturing the prospect for as long as it takes to make the sale or be certain it's not going to happen. Follow these five steps to use email follow-up to increase long-term engagement with prospects.

1. Keep it personal. Create a portfolio of email messages that are personalized enough that they don't sound like a form letter. Use messaging like, "I wanted to reach out and check in with you on your new-home search. How is it going? I'm here if you want to explore your options, including a few new ones."

So many other new-home sales professionals have given up on their prospects that you may be the only one who stays in touch, which means you will be the standout—especially when you send "human" emails.

2. Sharpen your aim. Improve your targeting: What is the status of the lead? Have they responded to previous communication? Is it someone you've met with face to face?

Target your message based on past history. Segment the list by your ratings and email those groups. You don't have to email one by one, but you also don't want to send the wrong type of email message just because you didn't pay attention to the status.

3. Harness the power of video. There's no rule that says email must be limited to a written message. There's power in video. Services such as BombBomb.com make sending a video email easy. It doesn't have to be a big production; a simple message is great. Think of it like voicemail, but with your face. You'll cut through all the clutter. What's more, video emails have been proven to increase response rates. (When was the last time you received a video email?)

Keep it short and friendly. "Hi Amy! It's Mike with Awesome Follow-Up Builder. I wanted to check in with you. How is your home search going? Is there any question I can answer for you? Just shoot me a quick reply to this email or call

me at 505.555.5555. Hope you're doing well, Amy, and I look forward to hearing from you."

The power is in the delivery method. Video goes a long way.

4. Ask for an opinion. A brief email survey is a valuable tool and allows recipients to provide feedback. The goal is to spark interaction that will keep them connected with you. Keep it short and simple. Ask four or five quick questions—no more—such as, "Was our website helpful in your home search?" "How would you rate our follow-up and communication?" and (here's the big one) "Are you still in the market for a new home?" Many buyers will be happy to offer their opinion on a quick survey, even when they don't respond to other communication. You can also offer the added incentive of a small prize, such as a gift card.

5. Bring in a heavy hitter. Recent email marketing trends with start-ups and big-name corporations include a "personal" note from the company's leader, CEO, founder, or president. The presence of the head honcho in your email marketing shows that you cared enough to bring in the top brass. While we all know that the executive didn't write or send the email, it still has an impact on the recipient. If you're worried that your high-level person is going to get inundated with calls and email as a result, set up a separate email account and phone number that's directed to someone who can respond and forward, if needed.

The successful new-home salesperson doesn't give up easily, but instead leverages all the tools that are available. If you set up a system for email follow-up with long-term prospects using these five methods, you'll ensure that no lead is left behind. **PB**

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