



KICKIN' IT OLD SCHOOL

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SEE WISDOM IN CLASSIC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

In our connected, 24-hour world, leveraging social media, online networking, and the latest CRM tools, is critical to advancing your business and staying relevant. Yet, even the most diligent of professionals can get bogged down with the constant need to update databases, stay on top of social media, and manage the nuances of each transaction. As a result, some of the more traditional sales techniques are often pushed out or replaced with newer, more modern strategies. While it's important to adopt the latest techniques and sales tools, these should be seen as complimentary to, not in conflict with, more traditional or "old school" tactics and strategies.

Here are five fundamental techniques that should not be overlooked.

1. KNOCK KNOCK

There is nothing more powerful than face-to-face contact with the prospects you are trying to reach. The key to good door-knocking rests in your approach and what you have to bring to the table. My goal in door knocking is to always leave with a contact name and number, ideally the company's decision maker. Whether I know the name of the key decision maker beforehand (a good cloud-based CRM is very helpful here) or I uncover this information upon my arrival, I always try to speak with that person while I am there. Whether you get the opportunity to meet someone at that moment or not, it is important to offer leave behind materials. If done right, a door knock can be the beginning of a fruitful relationship.

2. WHO'S CALLING?

When meeting someone in person is not possible or if you simply need to keep the communication lines open, picking up the phone can be your in-road to establishing or strengthening relationships. Like door knocking, it is important that a phone call is less of a solicitation as it is a strategic contribution. Your prospect is likely to brush you off (or worse, hang up) if you lead with, "Are you looking to expand?" or "When is your lease up?" However, the same person is likely not too busy to hear about how their neighboring tenant just struck a deal that saved their company thousands of dollars in rent. Whether it's a cold call or a "check in" with a current client, make sure you have something to offer – a piece of information that may pique their interest and start the real estate conversation.

3. LOOK WHO'S HERE!

There's no doubt that there is probably some kind of professional networking event offered nearly every week. Of course, if we are doing what we want to be doing – making deals – then there is limited time for schmoozing at the latest real estate gathering. However, while you can't be at everything, carving out time to

attend a select few events can not only help in developing and affirming relationships, but can also help to uncover important market information. And while keeping yourself relevant among your peers is important, let's face it, the real opportunities are more likely to be uncovered at those events that your prospects attend. For example, because my firm focuses on companies that work with intermodal transportation, we are actively involved in the Intermodal Association of North America. It is at these events, as well as through the organization's LinkedIn and other social media outlets, where we can meet our prospects and clients to launch meaningful discussions about their business and real estate plans.

4. I'D LIKE TO THANK...

It may seem too traditional or mundane, but the thank you note is something that never goes out of style. If the standard hand written note is not your style, then rethink the standard and go with something a bit more bold or different. Whenever I connect with someone for the first time in person or on the phone I send a hand written thank you note. A bottle of wine or a good book are also good ways to say thank you.

5. SNAIL MAIL IS YOUR FRIEND

Who isn't feeling the strain of daily email management? How many e-mails are never even seen because they go straight to Junk? If you can relate to this, you can bet that the people you are marketing to via e-mail are in the same boat. Believe it or not, in our world of cyber communication, good ol' snail mail may be something that can set you apart. I've found that most clients want information on available properties. Ask your clients what they want to see from you and cater to their preferences.

Make no mistake, a robust website, blog page, and social media strategy are critical in creating your image and promoting your company's message. Your ability to stay on top of the most current sales and marketing trends will help you elevate existing client relationships and forge new ones. But don't forget what got us here. Striking a balance between "old school" and twenty-first century business development techniques is the key to winning clients now and sustaining those relationships for years to come.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



DANIEL SMOLENSKY, SIOR, Principal at The Modal Group, Chicago, Ill., has been working in commercial real estate since 1994. Dan is active with Independent Brokers Group (IBG) and Young Professionals (YP) and he is director at large for the Chicago SIOR Chapter. Dan has completed transactions in excess of \$200 million and 10 million square feet primarily in industrial properties and office projects.