

Case Study 1: STANDING OUT IN A CROWDED MARKETPLACE

THE CHALLENGE

How can a small business create and sustain a commanding presence in a marketplace crowded with players?

Our client, a Washington, D.C. real estate agent working with one of the region's largest brokers, competes with thousands of agents for sales listings and buyers. He had worked in the field for just two years when he came to us for help. The timing of his entry into the market was such that he could take advantage of the city's extraordinary real estate boom. But he didn't have the number—or quality—of relationships that many of his competitors did. Moreover, he realized that the hot market wouldn't last forever and he wanted to be prepared for tougher times.

WHAT WE DID

In a series of collaborative fact-finding sessions, we worked with our client to identify the number of individuals currently within his sphere of influence. Then, we categorized his relationships with these individuals in terms of their capacity to produce sales leads. Simultaneously, we performed an audit of our client's current activities in order to strengthen old relationships and promote new ones. We measured the frequency with which our client communicated with members of his target audience, assessed the branding opportunities available to him, and encouraged him to delegate most administrative responsibilities so that he could devote his time to developing relationships with clients.

OUTPUT

We taught our client to stop leaving relationship-building to chance. We formalized a process through which each of the hundreds of people whose names were in his palm pilot had contact from him on a regular basis—through personal notes, phone calls and emails, and through mass media like direct mail. We also identified and planned opportunities through which our client could make new contacts. We strengthened his logo, his print ad format and other branding materials—and we taught him how to make relationship development his number one priority.

RESULTS

Today, our client has a professional presence in neighborhoods where he was previously unknown. He has an immediately recognizable brand identity which has allowed him to attract clients in market niches where, before, he had seldom done business. His increased name recognition, broader audience and growing presence in new neighborhoods have contributed to rapidly increasing sales—and to relationships that will sustain our client when the market turns south.

