

# Doors to Wealth: How to Become a Listing Agent through Door-Knocking

## Back Story

Like all the ebooklets in this series, this provides one answer to the question asked by almost every real estate agent at some time or another: “What should I be doing to get more listings?”

When I started my real estate business (about a thousand years ago), I was fortunate to have one of those old school brokers who could pull business out of thin air through hard work. She taught me just one strategy—go knock on doors. She handed me Tom Hopkins book, *How to Master the Art of Listing Real Estate*, and I memorized all the techniques, many of which I don’t use today, but that’s all I knew then. I worked hard and got fairly wealthy.

You can never teach other people how to be good at something. That's something they learn for themselves, by trial and error. You can teach them how to do it, but not how to be good at it.

I started in a Salt Lake City neighborhood called The Avenues, an upscale yuppie area. I was new to real estate and had no real idea what I was doing. I knocked. I used my script. I got rejected. I sometimes got come-ons

from old men. And then about 10 days later, someone in one of the nicest locations with an adorable brick Tudor home said “Yes.”

I listed and sold the home. I remember the neighborhood agent—the one who’s signs you see everywhere—asking me how I got that listing. She was dumbfounded when I told her.

Over the next 10 years, I learned many new marketing strategies, how to harness the internet and how to generate referrals. But I never stopped door knocking. It’s still my core strategy, and everything else I do to generate leads is built around that.

Last month I took a new agent with me door knocking. 1 ½ hours into it, we got our first lead. It was an absentee owner who had suggested he was thinking about selling. Several more home owners confirmed the lead. When we got back to the office, we contacted the absentee owner, and within a week had it listed.

Does it always work that way? Not by a long shot. Can it work that way? Yes, all the time. I’ve gotten listings where the owner was about to sign with another agent, and I convinced him I was a harder worker (no, I didn’t know the other agent). I’ve gotten listings because I noticed a house being cleaned and painted. I’ve gotten listings from elderly people who didn’t have a good real estate relationship to help them move. I’ve even gotten a listing because the neighbors said the owner was in jail, so I went to the jail to get his signature on the listing!

Door knocking for listing leads is investigative. It’s also about follow-up. Many of my door knocking listings came months or even years in some cases after I knocked their door.

There is no other way, in my opinion, that works as well as door knocking for as little money (\$0). Sure, there's also cold calling, but I find the rejection rate so much higher and I don't get the enjoyment of chatting with people about their homes. I'm not what you'd call outgoing, bubbly, or effusive. But when it comes to talking to people about their homes, I love it. Most people are proud of their homes. It takes very little energy to tap into that pride at the door. A simple comment, like "I love the way you designed your garden," can unlock a flood of friendly good-will that will lead to all sorts of information about the neighborhood and who's going to be moving next.

But more about that later. Let's start with fear and motivation, or in other words, rejection and acceptance.

## Rejection and Acceptance

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I've seen a lot of vitriol against door knocking as a prospecting technique. Many people say it doesn't work for them. Many say that claims by me and the hundreds, perhaps thousands of agents who are successful at it are false. Well, that's fine. I know they won't be my competition, so I don't worry about them.

The same is true for the people at the doors you knock. Some of them will give you a lot of negative energy. That's their stuff. You can shake it off by reminding yourself of that. The truth is I only get about 1 negative person per 35 people I speak with at their door. And usually the negative is mild, ranging from doors shut quickly to degrading comments like, "I feel sorry for you having to debase yourself like this and beg for business." Wow, talk about a sad human being. I've been doing this for so long, that when I get a biting comment, I'll sometimes call them on it. "Hey, I'm out here working

hard to grow a business and talk to friendly home owners. I'm sure sorry I took your time." That's usually enough to get an apology...but not always.

On the other hand, within a door or two, I know I'll find someone who wants to show me their house, tell me about their roses, introduce me to the family dog, and tell me all about the three home owners who are thinking about selling.

Never end on a sour note. If I get a negative comment, I go again and again until I get a positive person and have a positive experience. So often it's the last door I knock that has the really good lead.

Sometimes the hardest part about door knocking is keeping the conversations short. I almost prefer the no-nonsense home owners who just answer my questions without wanting to bring me into the family. I can get through a lot more doors. But on the other hand, when I'm in my geographic farm, I love the over-friendlies.

I want to remind you that I'm not a particularly outgoing or effusively friendly person. I'm not aggressive, but I am assertive. I'm more the type who sits with one friend at a party than the type who mingles. What works for me is that I know how to smile and be professional. I'm relaxed. I don't crowd the door. And most importantly, I stick to my script.

## Scripts

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Are you ready for the first script? It's terribly complex:

*"Hi, my name is Linda Schneider and I'm a Realtor. I'm wondering if you're planning on moving within the next year or two?"*

That's it. It's ALWAYS the first thing I say at the door. I don't tell them the company name, because many people don't recognize it as a real estate company. But they comprehend instantly when I say I'm a Realtor.

Typically I'll hear one of these three responses:

1. Oh, they'll have to carry me out of here in a box.
2. No.
3. Yes/Maybe.

### *Responses 1 & 2 (No)*

For responses 1 and 2, ask:

*"Do you know anyone in the area who is thinking about moving?"*

Most of the time, they'll just say no. Thank them and move on. "OK, thanks. Have a great day." But sometimes they'll start telling you all about a house down the street or a friend in the area, or a next door neighbor. If they do, start asking every question you can think of, like *How long has it been vacant? Who's the owner? Did you know them? Why do you think it's empty? Why do you think they're moving? Do you have their phone number?* Etc.

### *Response 3 (Yes)*

For response 3, go into a series of questions:

- a) When do you plan on moving? (*Not sure. Maybe next year.*)
- b) Where will you be moving to? (*Alaska*)

- c) What's drawing you to \_\_\_\_\_? (They'll usually explain why they're moving...*We're getting an inheritance and want to open a fishery in Alaska.*)
- d) How long have you lived here? (*7 years.*)
- e) When do you think \_\_\_\_\_? (Describe the situation that's making them move...*When do you think the inheritance and all your plans will come together?*)
- f) So when do you think you'll be moving? (Now that they've talked about it, they usually offer a more specific time frame...*Well, probably in August next year, but we hope sooner.*)

## Asking for an Appointment

After getting a yes or maybe, it's important to secure a next step. Many real estate agents simply say, *"Can I stay in touch with you? I'll send you useful information about the neighborhood so that you know what's going on in the real estate market in your area. How's that sound?"*

I think that's a fall-back position. Before saying that, I would try to secure an appointment of sorts with them.

### *Appointments If They're Moving Soon*

Obviously if someone says they're planning to move in the next two weeks to few months, you want to secure a listing appointment right away. You must ask for the appointment, not assume it:

*"Well, obviously I'm a hard working agent, and I'd love to represent your home to buyers. Were you planning on hiring a real estate agent or selling it yourself?"*

If they're planning to hire an agent:

*"Have you already selected that agent? I think you'd find I'm an aggressive negotiator, and I know what it takes to get the most money for a house. Would you be interested in interviewing me for the job of selling your home?"*

It doesn't matter which they choose—you win. Make sure to nail down a specific time and date for the appointment when they'll both be there (if there's a couple involved).

### *Appointment If They're Moving in 6 to 12 months*

In the previous example (moving to Alaska to start a fishery), they're not moving for a year or more. I have a next step up my sleeve to nail down an appointment with them:

1. *Now, did you want to be moved by \_\_\_\_ (August), or did you want to start selling in \_\_\_\_ (August), which would mean a sales date more like \_\_\_\_ (November)?*
2. *You know (thoughtful)... I'm with buyers all day long and see what they notice and don't notice, and what makes them excited to make an offer or move on. And it's not always the things you think it will be.*
3. *One of the things I do for home owners when they're not ready to sell yet is help them put together a quick plan of what they can be doing, inexpensively, to put an extra five or ten thousand dollars in their pocket when they sell. Wouldn't that be nice to have in \_\_\_\_?*
4. *The truth is there are numerous ways home sellers walk away from thousands of dollars when they sell a home, whether it's from poor*

*negotiations, or spending where they didn't need to spend, or overpricing which leads to market fatigue. Then there are the things they should have done to make improvements that would have attracted a higher offer.*

5. *What if we take 15 minutes this Tuesday or Wednesday evening, before or after dinner, to review some of that information so you can put your effort over these next months in the right place?*

If they want to talk, let them talk. If they want to disagree, let them disagree. Each time, listen fully, then come right back to the next part of your script. Most of the time, talking is a way of processing a decision so they can hear more. If you contradict them or interrupt them, you'll just slow their processing down. Let them talk!

Firm up the appointment.

When you meet them again, go through a list of items that they can do to enhance value. Offer to walk through their home and highlight things they need to do (but keep the cost low). Discuss pricing strategies, but don't give them a price yet. Avoid "educating" them too much during your appointment. Instead, use consultative questions that get them talking about what's important to them. You'll sound like a genius when they do all the talking!

### A Question of Pride

As mentioned in the beginning, there's one thing I do that makes all the difference. It warms people up instantly, and opens them up to telling me all sorts of stuff. I don't always use this. Some people I don't want to talk

to. Some people clearly don't want to talk to me. But some people are friendly enough that this breaks them wide open.

Tap into their pride of ownership. Show genuine appreciation: "Your lawn looks like a putting green." "That's a beautiful entryway." "Your roses are spectacular." "I love the color of your house."

I've opened up conversations by commenting on well-cared for cars, the condition of the home across the street, and even a beautiful dog. Just pick something that obviously matters to them. When I'm feeling especially playful and I feel like the person at the door has the right energy, I might even say something negative, like "You know you have weeds growing out of your bags of garden soil." Or "Do you ever actually plan to put wheels on that car or is it more like a piece of sculpture?"

I don't have a particular place for this moment of appreciation. Sometimes it's after they've said no. Sometimes it's right away, when they answer the door. Sometimes it's well into the conversation about someone down the street who's planning on moving.

I use it mainly to extend the conversation. You learn so much about a neighborhood when you talk to people who've been there a while. Mostly you learn who's just moved in, who's having trouble in their marriage, who's just had a baby, who's getting old, who's husband just died, and so on. You also learn the history of the area, strange happenings, plans for the neighborhood, etc. All this information can be used as you continue door knocking. By the end of your second hour, you'll be sounding like you've represented that neighborhood for years, even if you just started there.

## Practical Matters and Keeping Score


### *Practicalities*

As a practical matter, when I go door knocking...


- ✓ I dress professionally, but not in a suit. Call it business casual.
- ✓ I wear comfortable shoes.
- ✓ I wear my name tag.
- ✓ I choose an area in my geographic farm, or an area where I'd like more listings, even if I don't plan to farm there.
- ✓ I mark the streets I've visited on a map, or I forget after a while where I've already been.
- ✓ I use a clipboard. A clipboard makes me look official. It also gives me a place to keep business cards, write notes, and keep score.
- ✓ I usually do not give anything out—no business cards, calendars, notepads, magnets, flyers, etc. I give a business card only if they ask for one or we have a conversation where it's obvious that a card would be useful to them.

### *Keeping Score*

I keep score by a simple system of hash marks, circles and checks. For every door I knock, whether someone answers or not, I make a hash mark.

Every fifth is a cross over: 

For every person I speak with, I circle the hash mark: 

And for every lead I get, I add a check mark above: 

I also write the names and addresses of people I speak at length with, even if they're not a lead. Then I send them a hand-written thank you note, and make them part of my follow-up system.

## The Gold Is in the Follow Up

Every real estate agent's goal should be to build a pipeline of business so deep and wide that they never have to worry about money again. The ups and downs of the market go away.

A pipeline of business is easier to tap than new sources of business. A pipeline consists of people you've touched already, or their referrals. If you plan to be in the real estate business for a long time, and you don't want to constantly start over, build a referral base.

And if you get a big enough pipeline (also called a database, a crm, or a contact system) you may even generate a significant retirement income by referring your business out or even selling the blue sky of potential future business.

Following up might mean a combination of things, including a Facebook page, a newsletter, and periodic personal calls and notes. Plan your follow up six months to a year in advance.

## Summary

1. "Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a Realtor. I'm wondering if you're planning on moving within the next year or two?"

NO

2. "Do you know anyone in the area who is thinking about moving?"
3. Ask questions, be curious, get contact info if possible.
4. Ask pride question to deepen the conversation, if desired.

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1. "Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a Realtor. I'm wondering if you're planning on moving within the next year or two?"

YES

2. When do you plan on moving?
3. Where will you be moving to?
4. What's drawing you to \_\_\_\_\_?
5. How long have you lived here?
6. When do you think \_\_\_\_\_? (the situation that's drawing them is going to come about)
7. So when do you think you'll be moving?

CLOSE FOR APPOINTMENT

Near Future:

*"I'm a hard working agent, and I'd love to represent your home to buyers. Were you planning on hiring a real estate agent or selling it yourself?"*

*"I think you'll find I'm an aggressive negotiator, and I know what it takes to get the most money for a house. Would you be interested in interviewing me for the job of selling your home?"*

Far Future:

1. *Now, did you want to be moved by \_\_\_\_ (August), or did you want to start selling in \_\_\_\_ (August), which would mean a sales date more like \_\_\_\_ (November)?*
2. *You know (thoughtful)... I'm with buyers all day long and see what they notice and don't notice, and what makes them excited to make an offer or move on. And it's not always the things you think it will be.*
3. *One of the things I do for home owners when they're not ready to sell yet is help them put together a quick plan of what they can be doing, inexpensively, to put an extra five or ten thousand dollars in their pocket when they sell. Wouldn't that be nice to have in \_\_\_\_?*
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5. *What if we take 15 minutes this Tuesday or Wednesday evening, before or after dinner, to review some of that information so you can put your effort over these next months in the right place?*

One of the critical keys to using any script and doing any selling is **CERTAINTY**. The more you sound like you are absolutely sure of what you're saying the more they'll simply follow along.

People want you to be the expert. They want you to know what you're talking about. Don't disappoint them by sounding unsure, hopeful, questioning when you mean to be making bold statements. You can't ask someone for the job of selling their home when you don't sound like you can do it.

It doesn't matter if you believe you can, or even if you can. But if you sound like you can, sellers will go along with you.

Best of luck going forward in your door knocking adventures. Be bold, be sure, and be relaxed. Have fun, enjoy people. And stick to it.

Take notes, follow up, and build a pipeline. Business comes from the oddest, most unexpected places. You just have to be out there stirring up the pot and seeing what rises to the surface.

Kind regards,



Linda Schneider

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