

Invest in the Power of Paper

Branch out from electronic communications with personalized messages

By Natalie Yanez

Do you remember the last time that you received a handwritten card from a client or a business partner? For many people, receiving personalized mail that is thoughtfully crafted and sent with purpose can be quite meaningful.

In this digital age, so many of us are quick to shoot off a text, email or direct message. We do this, of course, because these options are fast and efficient. With so few hours in the day, it makes perfect sense. The art of the handwritten card, however, is much less common and, consequently, it is so much more meaningful. The act of receiving such correspondence can be humbling and heartwarming.

To know that someone took the time out of their busy schedule to write a note creates a unique and special moment for the recipient. In all honesty, you probably have not printed any congratulatory emails. Taking a few moments to personally write a message by hand creates a more significant and meaningful relationship. That is what the business of mortgage origination is all about — relationships.

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Deeper connections

Let's look back to the good old days of networking prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Introverts were quite comfortable utilizing a more expeditious networking approach while extroverts relied on their endless gift of gab. Regardless of conversational skills, however, mortgage originators may have been too focused on the people we could sell to or those who could help us expand our business.

The truth is, the people in the mortgage business often passed up opportunities to make personal connections with fellow networkers and hardly ever focused on building relationships.

Ironically, one of the best ways to sell mortgages or grow your pool of prospects is to build rapport.

When you exchange business cards, do you ever jot down something unique about that person? If you do, then you probably have found that this is an incredibly effective networking tool. These notes may include a shared birthday, a mutual love for a sports team or the fact that their kid attends the same school as yours. Even if your conversation is brief, there is usually a moment when you learn something interesting about that person and you can quickly write it down on the back of their business card.

Many people, when they get back to their office, might send a “great to meet you” email or fire off a LinkedIn connection request. Imagine if you instead followed up with a handwritten note-card? It is simple yet wildly memorable and makes a bigger impact. Not only have you proven to that person that you were listening and that you valued what they had to say, it also shows that you care enough to build a relationship.

These tools are at the essence of a mortgage originator's business-development strategy. Cultivating strong peer relationships by investing time and energy into building rapport is crucial to that process. When you excel at these skills, you become a “super connector,” a person whose peers call on them when they need something, whether it is business or personal.

What could be more valuable than being someone's go-to resource? Building deeper relationships allows you to position yourself as the person everyone knows they can turn to when they need help. This is not necessarily because you alone can provide what they need; it is because you will listen and/or know someone who can help. Being a super connector is an invaluable skill that will help you to build and grow your relationships. Not everyone can do that.

Collaboration over competition

Mortgage originators who are familiar with the credit union industry may know about its philosophy of “people helping people.” Credit unions are far more collaborative than competitive, an aspect that has helped them to better serve their member-owners by investing in products and services that benefit the industry rather than individual organizations.

Credit unions, for example, share the nation's largest free ATM network, which is a sizable benefit to the 100 million-plus credit union members.

Within the industry, you will not only find credit unions working to stay connected with their members but also with each other. It's common to hear stories about one credit union going out of its way to help a peer institution, something that happens both nationally and globally.

This has been especially true in recent years with so many businesses being impacted by natural disasters, such as wildfires or hurricanes, and most recently by the coronavirus outbreak. The credit union industry is one that values relationships at every level. When an industry creates and respects an ethos, it trickles down to everyone who represents it and is served by it.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have heard slogans such as “we will get through this together” or “together we are stronger.” These phrases are true — by working collaboratively, you are stronger. Teamwork is essential to everyone's daily lives, both personally and professionally, and it is built on relationships.

Just as people put effort into building professional networks, they also should devote that same effort to in-house co-workers and colleagues. The personal touches and attention to detail that create new relationships also ring true for existing relationships. So, it's equally important to send handwritten cards to your current acquaintances.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the business of real estate lending, both during and post-quarantine, people are striving to get back to a place where they can connect again. Face-to-face time is crucial to the growth of your mortgage business. Sure, a Zoom or GoToMeeting conference can be an effective way to stay connected momentarily, but it cannot replace true in-person interaction.

With some focus and planning, you can invest your time into developing positive, mutually beneficial relationships. To do that, start by picking up a pen. ●



Natalie Yanez serves as the credit union relationship manager for Extensia Financial LLC. She has spent more than a decade working in the credit union movement and is a certified credit union development educator. She enjoys building relationships and working with others toward a common goal, both professionally and personally. Yanez holds a bachelor's degree from San Diego State University and a master's in business administration from California State University, Channel Islands. Reach Yanez at (818) 836-6337 or nyanez@extensiafinancial.com.