



# PRODUCTIVE ESTATE AGENCY IN THE NEXT NORMAL

How to control and drive performance within a residential agency business during times of rapid change.



ESTATE AGENCY  
**MASTERCLASS**  
by Reapit

Unless you have been hiding in a cave for the last six months, you will be very aware that the market has been a tad volatile recently. That of course is a massive understatement, as we all know that it pretty much fell off a cliff in April and has recently come roaring back with attitude. Applicant registrations, viewings and offers are back to similar or even higher levels than before lockdown. How long will this surge in demand last? No one really knows, but it's a real possibility that it may be short-lived, so it's vital we maximise its potential whilst it's here.

But here is the problem. Many of us just were not expecting it. And worse than that - we lost staff over the summer months as the pandemic took hold and difficult decisions had to be made. So, here we are with an opportunity that needs to be maximised, but a significant lack of resources and arguably, market experience.

To those who are relatively new to the agency game, this might seem like an impossible challenge. There are even seasoned players who are used to a tough market, but haven't traded through the fun and games of a housing bubble-bust, like in the late 1980's or early 2000's. However, there are still many in the industry who remember one or even both seismic market events and have survived to tell the tale and share the lessons learnt.

If you are drowning in applicant registrations and viewing requests and can do with good guidance to get things back under control and make the most of a busy time, here are three things you can do:



# 1 KNOW YOUR ENEMY



Straight out of Sun Tzu's 'The Art of War', this is the place to start. You need to understand exactly what is going on before you can put things straight. It is now you need to spend some time working on as well as in the business.

Brainstorming the problem, either on your own or with your staff is a great idea. Do you and your team have a clear view of the relevant numbers? Do you know exactly how many applicants are registering at the moment, for example? What percentage of them are viewing a property and then offering? Having a clear view of your current basic conversion rates and comparing them to what you think they should be will help you understand the problem and lead into a conversation into what might be a possible solution.

## **For example, some of the most fundamental conversion rates are:**

- » Applicant registrations to viewers
- » Viewers to offers
- » Offers to sales agreed
- » Sales agreed to exchanges

Notice I said 'viewers' and not 'viewings'. Multiple viewings can skew your understanding of applicant activity - this is a much more accurate view of business.

Obviously this process is not a one-off; repeating it regularly and sharing the results with your team will help you to identify trends, and possibly even forecast local market changes before they impact on your business, allowing you to stay one step ahead of the competition.

Stepping back from the noise and calmly reviewing the situation based on accurate business data is the first step to taking control and maximising the opportunities as they arise. We will be running a webinar that will go into this topic in more detail very soon.

# 2 APPLICANTS, APPLICANTS, APPLICANTS

The applicant list is important, and like any tool it needs to be both maintained and used correctly. Use it without maintaining it and eventually it will break.

Ask yourself this question, hand on heart - how accurate is the information in your applicant list? Does it truly represent your current applicants' needs and wants? If

truth be told, many agents would admit that their applicant list is not up to date. Some would even argue that it doesn't have to be - having the right properties is the key to a successful business and 'if you have them, they will come.'

It is certainly possible to run a business with an out-of-date applicant list.

However, if you don't have strong and robust applicant management procedures in place, then things begin to creak when the numbers start to rise and this is exactly what we are starting to see happen across the industry right now. Substantial increases in applicant registrations and viewing requests have gone from being a mild irritation

to becoming a major problem for understaffed branches, and as we don't know how long this surge will last and need to make hay whilst the sun shines, it's essential that the situation is brought under control. So here are some ideas that could help:

## 1. ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

When our clients struggle with over-sized applicant lists the problem is often at the original data entry point. Badly qualified applicants wash out the quality data, resulting in bloated systems and lost business opportunities. Applicant registration and qualification is a learned skill and it is obviously vital that any staff member who interacts with the public and carries out this task, receives appropriate training and coaching, so that every business opportunity is spotted and accurate information is recorded.

Are your staff members suitably trained in the art? Do they know how to ask the right questions to identify the more committed buyers? Everyone who touches your business deserves good service, but not everyone is a genuine buyer and it makes sense to concentrate your efforts on those that are ready, willing and able to purchase.

## 2. DIVIDE AND RULE

Dividing your applicants by status is a great way of managing a surge in demand. Agree a clear divide between different types of buyer and then agree different contact cycles for each. For example, you may decide to speak to hot applicants every week, locals with property to sell every two weeks and perhaps just email the rest. There is no hard and fast rule about what these contact cycles should be, it's influenced by market conditions as well as geography - in some areas locals respond better or worse to regular contact. You will know what works best for you; set a plan and follow it.

## 2 APPLICANTS, APPLICANTS, APPLICANTS

### 3. IT'S GOOD TO TALK

And when I say 'speak to' I really mean speak to. This may seem like a herculean task when you look at your existing applicant list, but there is a good reason for doing this. It may seem incredibly 'old school' to actually talk to applicants, but there is no other way to really understand the motivations that drive them. It is also a brilliant way to identify the truly driven buyers, which means you are able to concentrate your efforts on them. The Pareto principle applies here. Almost certainly 80% of your sales will come from 20% of your applicants. Work out which ones they are at day one and you are well on your way to making your life easier and doing more business.

### 4. WHAT IS HOT?

Whilst we are on the topic of applicant status, make sure your team have a consistent and clear understanding of what a 'hot' buyer is. This term is often used in branches, but when different staff have different views of what it means, the hot buyer list becomes a bit pointless.

There is no industry definition of a hot buyer. It depends on the market you are operating in. An applicant with a house to sell that you could get your hands on in a market that is thin on instructions could be (and often is) regarded as hot. On the other hand, a cash buyer with no mortgage requirement could also be thought of as hot when instructions are everywhere. What is important is that you decide what 'hot' means, communicate this to your staff and stick to it. Until of course the market turns, when you do the same thing all over again.

***We have a forthcoming webinar in September that covers the thorny topic of applicant management and how to make it work in this challenging market, so do look out for that.***

# 3 DAILY MORNING MEETINGS



I've been in the industry for almost 40 years. In that time, as an agent, a trainer and a business consultant, I've concluded that there is indeed one activity that in my opinion separates the successful agents from the very successful: daily morning meetings.

The problem is, many agents aren't clear about what makes for an effective and efficient daily morning meeting and as a result there are countless examples of badly run daily morning meetings across the UK that cause more damage than good.

We have an upcoming webinar that covers how to run a successful daily morning meeting in detail, but here are three tips to set you on your way.

## Daily? Really?

Firstly, the clue is in the name. It is a 'daily' morning meeting. For this to really work, you need to hold it every day. That may seem like an overkill, but if it does then you are probably covering the wrong material in your meetings. The daily morning meeting should be a short, motivational, punchy meeting that quickly covers off three things - what happened yesterday, what are we doing today and what is happening tomorrow. It is not the time to review every instruction or analyse your sale pipeline, for example. Both are important and a meeting for each is probably a good idea, but not first thing. This is a tactical meeting that your staff should leave feeling in good spirits, ready to face the day.

## Have an Agenda

Tied in closely with this idea of covering the right material is how long the meeting should last. The most successful daily morning meetings seem to last for no longer than 15 minutes. This should be ample time to cover the correct material; if you are finding that you cannot squeeze it in, then again you are probably covering the wrong stuff. Go back and look carefully at your agenda for the meeting and if necessary, set other meetings later in the day to cover relevant material that does not need looking at first thing.

## Time is of the Essence

Finally, make sure you have an agenda and stick to it. All too often daily morning meetings drift and it becomes difficult to cover all the material in the allotted time. One very simple and neat way to prevent this is to buy a cheap kitchen timer, set it to 15 minutes and then end the meeting when it goes off. This keeps things light-hearted, nicely on track and forces you to cover the right material.

***Our daily morning meeting webinar is an in-depth review of the topic,*** including additional tips and tricks gathered from agents across the UK, many of whom use the following agenda that, with practice, can be run successfully in under fifteen minutes.

**Daily Morning Meeting Agenda**  
(15 minutes maximum)

**Yesterday**

- » Yesterday's diary
- » Yesterday's new offers
- » MA's chased yesterday
- » Yesterday's new applicants
- » Applicants called yesterday

**Today**

- » Today's diary
- » MA's to chase today
- » Applicants to call today

**Tomorrow**

- » Tomorrow's diary
- » MA's to chase tomorrow
- » Applicants to call tomorrow

## Upcoming Webinars

So, there we have it - crazy times don't necessarily have to mean crazy work. Hopefully you use this guidance to get things back under control and make the most of a busy time. And to really keep your head above water with powerful insights that you can use day-to-day, come along to one of our upcoming Masterclass webinars on how to maximise opportunities, manage applicants and prepare daily morning meetings.



### About the Author

Andrew Tyler is Head of Product Communication at Reapit Ltd. He has spent his entire career working in property, starting as a trainee sales negotiator in 1980. He worked in both the corporate and independent sectors in Surrey, Sussex and Gloucestershire for twenty years as a negotiator, lister, manager and trainer. In the late 1990's he ran his own Cotswold sales agency practice.

In 2000 he moved into agency training. For three years he was Head of Training for Countrywide Assured Franchising Limited, helping prospective franchisees to become successful sales agents. In 2003 he joined Reapit as Head of Training and ran the department for fourteen years, teaching RPS best practice to sales and lettings staff across the UK and Ireland. During this time he also developed and ran the Branch Management Masterclass; a series of hands-on consultancy-based sessions promoting the use of data-driven traditional agency techniques in the modern sales and lettings arena, attended by hundreds of managers and business owners. In 2017, Andrew left the training team to focus on providing business and product consultancy to senior staff across the Reapit network.

Andrew is a Fellow of the National Association of Estate Agents. He is married and lives with his wife Diane in the Cotswolds. He is a keen skier, mountain biker and walker.

