



(INTRODUCTION)

You are the business.

Real estate school may have filled your head with the knowledge necessary to be an effective student of the profession, but it's mostly designed to help you effectively pass the licensing tests. So now that you're licensed, what do you do? Now the real learning begins. You need to develop effective habits and systems early in your career in order to keep clients coming to you on a steady basis for years to come.

As a new agent, you're the CEO, President and owner of a start-up business -- a business with zero clients. Every morning when you wake up, you're essentially unemployed. Yes, you will more than likely be working with a well-established company in your area that will provide training and mentoring during your first few years. This company will also have rules, guidelines, and ethical standards, and will provide an office for you to work out of. But what this company will *not* do is grow your business. It will not write your business plan. It will not develop your work habits or give you clients.

Eighty percent of all small businesses fail during their first three years. Interestingly enough, around eighty percent of all new real estate agents do not renew their licenses after their first three years. Coincidence? Probably not. Don't be part of the 80 percent. This is the best profession in the world if you do it right. Use this handbook to give "You, LLC" the road map for the first 60 days of the rest of your career.



(STEP ONE: FIXED COSTS)

Running a business isn't free.

Hopefully someone has told you along the way that it's not cheap to get started in the real estate business. There are some unavoidable fixed costs that are necessary before you can get up and running. On top of that, you still have to pay your own personal expenses, and since commissions won't be rolling in on Day 1, a good rule of thumb is to have at least six months of living expenses in the bank. To estimate your start-up costs, use the chart to the right. If you're not sure how to estimate some of these costs, get help from a friend, mentor, or managing broker.

State Application Fee	
Errors and Omissions	
Board Application	
Board Dues Annual	
MLS Sign Application Fee	
MLS Month 1	
Business Cards	
Computer	
Signs	
Lock boxes	
Company sign-up fee	
Miscellaneous	
MONTHLY TOTAL	



Build your network. Get organized.

Part 1: The Sphere of Influence

This is one of the most important exercises for a new agent. Laying the foundation for your **Sphere of Influence** will set the stage for success for years to come. On the other hand, if there's a prominent reason for agents not making it through the first three years, it may be poor management and development of the Sphere of Influence.

Your "sphere" is everyone you know or are acquainted with in your life. This includes family, friends, former co-workers, classmates, and neighbors, but it doesn't stop there. It also includes your husband or wife, or girlfriend or boyfriend ... and it includes all of *their* friends, family, co-workers, classmates, etc. Sit down with your partner, your parents, and anyone else close to you, and brainstorm about who you can add to your sphere. Social media networks -- such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn -- make it easier than ever to identify people in your sphere.

Go through your contacts in each of these locations and make a list of the people you know. You can use the spreadsheet provided as a companion download to this guide, or you can just build your list in a word processor or on paper. Be as thorough as you can. Keep a name, address, email, and phone number for each contact. If you don't have complete information, this is a perfect time to pick up the phone, send an email, or send a Facebook message asking for your contact's information and letting them know about your new career. Here's an example:

"Hi John, it's (Your Name). Long time no talk! I'm updating my contacts for my new real estate business, and I wanted to make sure I had your information right. I think I may have an old address, so would you mind giving me your current address?"

It's as easy as that. You made contact, and now they know you're getting into the real estate business. Once you have your list of contacts completed you're ready for the next step.

Part 2: Manage your database

No, you cannot use Facebook or your phone contact list as a long-term solution to managing your clients. You need a Customer Relationship Management program, or CRM. A CRM is a way to organize, categorize and keep track of everyone you know. You can make contact through this system and make notes. You can also manage tasks and responsibilities to your clients. Pick a system that is easy for you to use.

There are several CRMs on the market, so do some research and find one you feel comfortable with. Some common CRMs include Microsoft Outlook, ACT (for real estate), and Top Producer. After making an informed choice, take the time to learn the system. Then take the contact list you created in the previous step and load it into your new CRM.

Your CRM will be your home base of operations. Every time you meet someone new or hear of someone who may need to buy or sell a home you will add them to this database. As your personal database grows so will your business.



(STEP FOUR: GET A MENTOR)

Don't be afraid to ask for help.

It's never fun reinventing the wheel. Speak to your broker or find an experienced agent in your office who is willing to be your **mentor** over the next several months. Keep in mind that a good mentor may be busy with his or her own work, so make a structured plan for when you can ask important questions and learn how your mentor is doing business. The technical details of real estate, such as contract writing and negotiations, are very important and need to be taught by your mentor. You can also work with your mentor to seek out business development and lead generation techniques. Find a mentor who is willing to share how he or she became successful and will impart experience and wisdom to you.

Just don't expect your mentor to hold your hand through the entire process. You have to take initiative. Be proactive in seeking guidance. Mentors aren't mind readers.



(STEP FIVE: ANNOUNCEMENT LETTERS)

Tell everybody. Then tell them again.

It's time to let the world know that you're now a real estate agent! Craft a letter that you can mail or email -- or perhaps both -- to the database you just completed. This letter will be the announcement letting people around you know that you've started a new career and you're building a client list. Make this letter personal, and don't be afraid to ask for referrals. You cannot get what you do not ask for! Be sure to tell them how to send business your way, and be specific.

When you send the letter to your sphere, make sure you stick a business card in the envelope. An even better idea is to include a refrigerator magnet with your card stuck to it. You can get blank refrigerator magnets at most office supply stores. Peel off the paper and stick your business card to it, and there you have it: a refrigerator magnet that the people in your sphere will see every day.

You're not done yet, by the way. This can't be the only message you send out. Be sure to track who responds to your announcement letter. Send out another letter one month later thanking everyone for the positive feedback and letting them know how business is going.



(STEP SIX: PLAN FOR THE FUTURE)

Don't just wing it.

Part 1: Create a business plan.

It's prudent to have a plan. Your **business plan** is your road map to success. It'll guide you over the next year and help you measure your progress. Coming up with a business plan

can be difficult for new agents due to some of the unknowns of the business, so have your mentor, broker, or a trusted agent in your new office help you. You can also try the Breakthrough Success Plan (www.breakthroughbroker.com/breakthrough_success_plan), which will help you create a business plan step-by-step.

Part 2: Create a marketing plan.

How are you going to get business? What lines are you going to put in the water to find buyers and sellers, and how are you going to make money? These questions are important to your survival over the next three years, and you can answer them by creating a **marketing plan**. Again, for a new agent you may need some guidance from a mentor, broker, or trusted agent in your new office. Give the BreakthroughBroker.com's Marketing Action Plan a try at www.breakthroughbroker.com/marketing_plan.



(STEP SEVEN: STAYING INFORMED)

Become an expert.

Part 1: Keep up with the news.

You may not immediately be able to walk the walk, but you sure can start to talk the talk. One of the best things a new agent can do is read, read, and read some more. You should read everything you can get your hands on -- local business and real estate news, national real estate news, blogs, realtor board news, etc. Read *everything*.

One of the barriers to success for new agents is that they're not sure what to talk about with prospective clients, who will invariably ask, "How is the market?" Well, what are you going to say? By reading current events, and understanding what is going on in real estate in your region, you can answer these questions intelligently. You'll also pick up the industry jargon, which will make you sound like an expert if used in the right situations.

Here are some excellent resources on the web or in print:

WEBSITES

Inman News -- www.inman.com
RIS Media -- www.rismedia.com
Realty Times -- www.realtytimes.com
BreakthroughBroker.com News Hub -- breakthroughbroker.com/learn/news
Agent/Genius -- www.agbeat.com

BOOKS

The Millionaire Real Estate Agent by Gary Keller
Shift by Gary Keller
21 Things I Wish My Broker Had Told Me by Frank Cook
How To Master The Art Of Selling by Tom Hopkins
Sell With Soul: Creating An Extraordinary Career In Real Estate... by Jennifer Allen

Part 2: Get involved in the industry.

Engagement and involvement are imperative to a quick start. The more active you are, and the more people you speak with in the real estate business, the more success you'll have. Attend any real estate-related event you can over the next 60 days. Some events you should be going to:

Company meetings	Parties/Networking
Broker open houses	Charity events
Affiliate events/training	HOA meetings
Company listing tours	

Activity begets success. Engaging with other people in the business will give you growing confidence and knowledge, and it will show when you're speaking with new or prospective clients. You never know when or where you'll run into a new lead that you can capitalize on.

Part 3: Get to know your affiliate partners.

These are people in your area who are involved in the real estate industry in a support or affiliate role. These industries include, but are not limited to: Mortgage, Title, Moving and Storage, Staging, Attorneys, Extended Stay Housing, and many more.

As a new agent you may not know people in these industries yet. Ask your mentor, broker or a trusted agent in your office for several referrals. Make some calls and set up appointments to meet people in these industries. Create lasting relationships with several people in each industry. These alliances will both help you grow your business and be great contacts for your clients.

You'll also gain knowledge of their companies and what they do. Don't be afraid to tell them you're new. Many good affiliates will recognize a new agent's potential and will look to help you in any way they can.

Part 4: Practice makes perfect.

To be an accomplished professional in any arena you have to practice. Professional athletes practice every day to be at the top. The more you practice and rehearse in your head or with fellow agents, friends, or family, the better you will be when the time comes to perform.

Practice the questions that will be asked of you and run your answers over and over in your head. The following are some examples of questions that are asked of real estate agents from prospective clients:

"How's the market?"

"I would love to sell my home, but I'm not sure what it's worth."

"Why would I use you as my agent? My neighbor is in real estate."

"How would you market my home?"

"Tell me about your company."

"What are the interest rates right now?"

"Is it better to rent or buy a home right now?"

“I’m calling about the listing your company has on ABC Street, can you tell me a little about it?”

These are just a few questions being asked by people thinking about making a real estate-related decision right now. Ask your mentor or broker what hot topics or issues are happening in your area. Practice your unique answers to these questions over and over in your head. As you role play these situations, don’t short yourself. In order to feel comfortable when the time comes to really answer these questions effectively and look like an expert, you have to have answered each question a hundred times in your head.

Part 5: Never stop learning.

By now you should have a mentor, and you should be reading everything you can get your hands on, but don’t stop there. Seek out educational opportunities as often as you can to learn more about all facets of the profession. Your confidence level will rise with each class taken. Seek a wide variety of classes. Fill in the following table with upcoming educational events you will attend for the next 60 days.

Topic	Location	Date	Time



(CONCLUSION)

Good luck!

By completing each step in this handbook, you’re well on your way to making a successful start to your new career. Keep a positive attitude, be patient, and the clients will come in time.