

**Marketing Strategies
for the Successful
Creative Real Estate Investor**

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Please feel free to pass a copy of this eBook on to your friends!

Where are all the *Motivated Sellers*?

It's no big secret that the key to success in real estate investing is to find and deal with only motivated sellers, right?

What exactly is a motivated seller?

Motivated sellers are homeowners that have an absolute need to sell their house for any number of reasons, rather than simply want to sell, for example:

- Foreclosure
- Behind on taxes
- Major repairs needed
- Divorce
- Need to move out of town or state
- Probate
- Lost their job
- Major repairs needed

... Or any number of the possible reasons that creates an urgency to sell a property.

It's this urgency that allows us to use creative investing techniques to acquire these properties. In most of these cases there are mortgages that need to be paid and the seller just wants debt relief. Our goal is to structure our offers to provide them with a solution to their problem, and build in one or more paydays for us in the process.

Seems simple, right?

Well, there is no quicker way to get frustrated and burned out in the real estate investing business than trying to negotiate with endless un-motivated sellers.

However, if you spend all your time only working with motivated sellers, then the business quickly becomes exciting and extremely profitable. But, how and where can you find these amazing, mysterious, elusive "motivated sellers"?

The real question is **how these motivated sellers will find YOU!**

The simple answer to the question is like Ted Turner's famous quotation...

"Early to bed, early to rise, work like heck and advertise."

...It's your advertising efforts that will determine how much exposure you're getting, and if your "motivated sellers" are able to find you.

Marketing is a critical component to the creative real estate investing business model, and let's face it... You can train and educate yourself to be the best real estate transaction engineer in the world, but it **won't make you a penny** if you don't have any deals to negotiate.

A good marketing system will **bring the deals directly to you**, so you can spend more time on negotiating, structuring deals, and submitting offers rather than...

wasting your valuable time chasing dead leads and un-motivated sellers!

There are a number of marketing methods that are **successfully** being used by investors all over the country to reel in motivated sellers, and build large and small empires.

I would like to share with you the **best marketing strategies that I have used**, and that you also can quickly put in place to get those motivated sellers calling.

You may already be using several of the techniques that I will cover, but my hope is to give you a few "golden nuggets" of information that you may have not been aware of.

So, without further adieu, let's start with the simplest form of advertising...

#1 Business Cards...

This is an obvious one... or is it?

A business card can be more than just a method of exchanging numbers with other business contacts. If you think of all the possible ways that you can get a little extra mileage out of your business card, then it becomes another very powerful marketing tool.

For example, if you design your business card like a miniature postcard, then you can leave them just about anywhere you can think of to attract some good leads.

You could have your cards printed on florescent colored paper to make it stand out and grab people's attention. You definitely want to use a huge catch phrase on the front of the card like, "How to sell your house 1-2-3!", or "How to avoid foreclosure!" to try and quickly explain to the reader what services your business card is for.

The printer that I use for my business cards has a great card stock that looks like a folded \$20 bill. When you unfold it, the inside has plenty of room to write your ad copy and provide contact information. This works really great because it creates curiosity, and everybody grabs it to see what it is.

After all... who wouldn't pick up a \$20 bill if they saw it laying somewhere?

You should definitely use the back of your business card to explain what you do and write your miniature ad copy. Why waste this space? Take advantage of any opportunity to tell people about how you can help them... and what better place to do that than on your actual business card.

Now, think of all the places that you can put these little advertisements. For example, restaurants, convenience stores, bulletin boards, gas station pumps, on the back of urinals (for men), or on the toilet paper dispenser (for women), and just about anywhere else you can think of.

You can put one in the envelope of every bill that you pay, or on your windshield when you go into the mall (perfect for the \$20 bill card). This has endless...

possibilities! And best of all... they are really cheap and small enough to keep in your pocket so you can leave them basically everywhere you go.

Now, if you really want to get your business card working for you... print on your card that you offer a \$500 referred fee for anyone who refers you a deal that you buy. This is an easy way to get some more mileage out of your card, and make it appealing to people who do not necessarily have a house to sell.

By simply changing a standard business card into a miniature billboard, you can find really creative ways to use them to drive in leads. This one technique alone could potentially bring you one or more additional deals per year.

#2 Bird Dogs...

Some of my best deals have come from bird dogs!

A bird dog is a person who is out looking for properties for you and you pay them a referral fee for either sending you leads, or when you buy a referred property.

Bird dogs are usually best used for finding vacant properties, or properties that look like they need major repairs because these are easy to spot by driving by. You can give your bird dogs a list of criteria that you want they know what to look for.

For example, I pay a \$500 referral fee (if I buy the property) to anyone that brings me a lead that meets any of the following criteria:

- Vacant single family or multi-family residential properties
- Residential properties that need extensive repairs; roof, windows, landscaping, exterior, etc... but are surrounded by primarily nice houses in nice neighborhoods.
- Vacant residential land in low income neighborhoods
- Manufactured homes that need extensive repairs on privately owned land

These properties are ideal for me because I'm primarily a rehab investor, so I'm looking for properties that I know I can increase the value and create immediate equity by updating and repairing them.

However, you can also use Realtors, title agents, attorneys, insurance agents, and any number of home service providers to find you properties that may be a good for creative financing -- and do not need repair -- because they may know the sellers situation.

Everyone knows someone that has a house for sale. By getting the word out that you will pay a referral fee for anyone that refers a potential deal to you... you will be surprised how many unexpected, profitable deals will fall into your lap this way.

#3 Bandit signs, Bus benches, and Vehicle signs...

Signs are a quick, cheap, and easy way to start getting some exposure in your targeted areas. You can purchase signs from any local sign company in your area, and you can usually expect an immediate response when you use them.

The three types of signs most commonly used are vehicle signs, bus benches, and street signs (also known as bandit signs):

Bandit Signs (street signs):

Street signs -- also known as bandit signs -- are typically 18"x 24" wide corrugated plastic boards that have a simple printed message on them with a contact method, and are generally placed along the side of the road, stapled to telephone poles, or placed in yards around your targeted neighborhoods.

These signs are very common. I'm sure you've seen them in your area, and may have even seen a few "We Buy Houses" signs. You can expect to spend about \$1 to \$2 per sign if you buy them in bundles of 200 or more.

In some areas **you can be fined for putting out these signs**. So, you may need to check with your city to find out if code enforcement will allow you to advertise with these signs. If you see other people using these signs, that could be an indication that there are no codes, or that they are not being enforced.

Try to place the signs on streets that have some traffic, but not necessarily main highways. The traffic that's moving on highways is too fast for the drivers to read your message.

Have you ever tried to read one of these signs while you're moving at 35mph? Even if you could read the message, you probably won't have enough time to read the number or write it down.

Also, the signs that are placed on main public roads tend to disappear quicker than the ones buried within specific neighborhoods.

If possible, try to staple the signs up as high as possible on the telephone poles on the corners of side streets in the areas of town you're interested to buy in. These tend to stay out longer because they are not so easily removed by homeowners or the kids in the neighborhood.

Bus Benches:

In some cities, you can purchase advertisement space on the back or side of city bus benches. These are great because they're not subject to be removed like bandit signs are. The cost for advertisement space on these benches will vary in every city.

The important thing to remember with bench or billboard signage is that you want to try to find locations that are close to an intersection where there is a traffic light, or...

across the street from a major shopping center entrance/exit. The location of these benches will determine your success with this method. Try to locate areas where the reader will actually have time to read the sign, and perhaps find a way to write down your number.

Vehicle Signs:

Vehicle signs are great because you only have to pay for them once. A set of 2 magnetic door signs should only cost about \$40-\$60, and this is a one time expense.

You can put a set on your cars, your friend's cars, or whoever else you can convince to let you put them on there. Perhaps you can offer your friends and family a \$500 referral fee for any houses you buy from someone that calls on a sign they saw on their car.

For maximum exposure you can get your vehicle "wrapped" with your message. Vehicle wrapping is where you have your entire car covered with your advertisement and convert it into a rolling billboard.

The printer that I use for my signs has a car sunshade that you can print your message on. So when you unfold the sunshade into your windshield, you have a huge sign with your message on it. These are great to give to all your friends for free, because everyone can use a sunshade and it doesn't require them to put a magnet on their new car.

Once your vehicles are converted into rolling billboards, try to remember to park in spots that will give you the most exposure. If you're using the sunshade, try to back into your parking spots so the shade is visible, etc.

Whenever you go to Home Depot, Lowe's, or any home improvement store, make absolutely sure that your vehicle signage is visible. Try to park right in front of the entrance of the store. You would be surprised how many do-it-yourselfers are struggling to do repairs on their home so they can try to sell it. This is a great place to find potential rehab deals.

What should the message be on your signs?

The message on your signs should be simple and clear, and provide a visible method to contact you. Your sign is useless if the reader cannot quickly read the call back number or website address that you want them to contact you by.

I see signs all the time that have graphics, and two or three lines of text, and then a tiny little phone number at the bottom. This is very hard to read when you are sitting in a car 20 or more yards away from the sign, or moving past it at 30 mph.

Here are two examples of simple, highly visible sign messages:

How to Sell Your House in 8 Days!
Call: 555-555-5555
www.your-website-address.com

How to Stop Foreclosure Right Now!
Call: 555-555-5555
www.your-website-address.com

I would also highly recommend you add a website address to the bottom of all your signage. People can remember a simple website address much easier than a 7 or 10 digit phone number. If possible try to get a web address that is simple to remember like "www.yourtownhomebuyers.com", or "www.avoidforeclosureyourtown.com".

Simply having your web address on your signs could be what separates you from all your competition's signs, and ultimately bring you a higher response rate.

With some testing to find where to place your signs to get the best responses, you may find that signs are all you need to bring in more than enough deals for you to work on.

Recommended Resources:

- For business cards, vehicle signs, bandit signs, car sun shades, and just about any other type of printed advertising... contact Barbara at www.planitpromo.com. They have a large selection of marketing products for real estate investors and can assist you with any of these types of products.

#4 Classified Ads...

Running a classified ad in your local paper is relatively inexpensive, and usually works very well. But a good way to minimize the expense of this method of advertising is to put your ad in the local shoppers and smaller area specific newspapers for the areas that you are investing in.

For example, you would probably not want to advertise in the largest metro area newspaper right from the start, because it may be distributed to areas that you are not likely to buy properties in.

The local shoppers on the other hand are only going to be read by the people in your target neighborhoods, or sections of town. These ads will cost far less, and drive in...

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more relevant potential prospects. But more importantly it will be less expensive to test your ads to improve your responses.

Once you find the ad that is getting the best responses, then you may want to try it in a newspaper with a larger circulation to see if it improves your overall response rate.

There are two basic types of classified ads: the display ad, and the column listed ad.

- A display ad is an image that sometimes has pictures or some other text formatting that is used to stand out.
- Column list ads are the simple text ads that are located in the classified columns that are usually separated by categories.

There are some tricks to placing your ads to get greater results. For example, in many cases the ads that are located in the columns tend to work better than the display ads. Readers are conditioned to scan over the display ads, but will likely read the small column listings looking for something that is of interest to them.

I know that when I'm looking in the classifieds, I usually expect the display ads to be some advertisement of some sort and tend to block them out to concentrate on the actual classified listings.

When you place your column listings, it's a good idea to pay the extra money to put a blank space above and below your ad text to make your ad stand out for those readers that scan the columns, and make it much easier to read.

If you're going to use a display ad, see if your newspaper will let you place it within a column, and try to format your ad to look like a regular column listing. With this method you can make it look like someone had circled it already by adding it to the image before it's printed.

The idea is to make it look like a regular ad, but just add some subtle changes to make it jump out at the reader and separate you from the rest of the listings in the column.

Your classified ads should be located in sections like, Real Estate Wanted, Real Estate for Sale, and if possible Houses for Rent. By placing your add in the houses for rent section, you may catch the interest of a burned out landlord who is looking in the paper to see what rents are currently set at. Then perhaps they may just decide to get rid of their headaches by selling their properties to you.

Recommended Resources:

- Check out the following site for a list of all the available newspapers listed by state <http://newslink.org>

#5 Advertorials...

An advertorial is an advertisement that is written in an editorial format that gives the reader some information about your services, but it's geared to bring awareness to the reader and essentially get them to contact you like any other advertisement.

People will generally give more credibility to an editorial than a paid advertisement, which is what makes this such a strong technique.

Essentially you write the advertorial, and then give it to the newspaper to print. It should look like it was written by someone else that is explaining what you do, and how you are providing such a great service to the community. Then at the end you would have the call to action that tells the reader how they can contact you for help.

This is an excellent way to get exposure in a way that builds instant credibility. After all, you were in the paper because of the great service you provide... right?

Another benefit of an advertorial is that you can get your message out to every reader in your entire area, and people will tend to hold on to these articles in case they should need your services in the future. These people may not be motivated at the moment, but they now have your information for if and when they do become motivated.

You can easily find a copywriting service that will create your advertorial for you. If you search the internet there are a few services that come up in the search results.

Here are some online resources to find advertorial copywriters:

- www.powerquill.com
- www.writingthatsells.com
- www.elance.com

#6 Direct Mail Marketing... Postcards & Letters...

Direct mail is the absolute most powerful way to find motivated sellers and deals. This technique is used by just about every type of business model, and for good reason... It works!

In fact, I use direct mail for just about 90% of all of my marketing efforts.

Using direct mail is undoubtedly one of the most expensive marketing techniques, but if done right, it yields HUGE rewards.

Using direct mail lets you target a specific audience and offers a lot of flexibility and creativity to get your message across to your prospects.

There are two main types of direct mail marketing that are commonly used; postcards, and letters...

Postcards:

Postcards are great for sending large repeat mailings to an entire neighborhood, zip code, or specific mail carrier route. You can get post cards printed for about \$.05 each, and use a bulk mail permit from the post office to get your postage costs down to about \$.16 each.

The key to using postcards is to repeat the mailing several times to the same lists. Postcards tend to get few responses on the first mailing, but continue to get greater responses on each subsequent mailing. It's a good idea to just print 3 postcards for each mailing list right from the start so you can ensure that you repeat the mailings.

Naturally your budget will determine how many addresses you will be able to send to, but it's important to make sure you are able to repeat the mailing. You will get a much better response rate if you send three postcards to a small list then you would by sending 1 postcard to a larger list.

You won't have to worry about getting the envelope opened on a postcard, so you can use mailing labels and postage meters to save you some time and money on getting them addresses and stamped.

There are some elements that you may want to take into consideration when designing your postcards...

Since most people sort their mail over the trash can, you will have to use a headline on the card that will jump out and grab the reader's attention. In most cases the reader is going to quickly scan the card to see what it's about as they simultaneously start to place it in the trash pile... and that's your 1 second chance to get their attention before your card gets tossed.

So, using a header like "How to sell your house 'as-is' in 1 Week or Less!" would be good for getting the reader to continue reading if they're interested.

It's best not to write your heading in all capitalized letters, like "HOW TO SELL...". This is actually harder to read than regular sentence case, and it's critical that your headline gets read clearly and quickly for those who are scanning.

On the back of the card, try to write a message that explains all the benefits of how you can help, and what they will receive by calling you.

Try to format your ad copy on the back of the card into three columns like a newspaper does. Continue your text from the bottom of one column to the top of the next column. This actually makes it easier for the reader to scan the card and read it quickly. Just keep in mind that you want to make the message as easy to read as possible, and provide benefits in bold text for those who will just scan it without actually reading.

Also, try to use a fluorescent color postcard stock to print on. For example, fluorescent orange or yellow tends to get noticed in a pile of mail. You could also add some handwritten notes and text underlines to the image before it's printed to add a personal touch.

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You can also add a handwritten signature to be printed under your closing, and use a P.S. to add an additional benefit like "P.S. Call now for a free report to learn how you can easily sell your house 'as-is' in 1 week or less".

Letters:

In my personal opinion, sending letters is the best method of direct mail marketing!

With a letter you have unlimited space to tell your story and explain exactly how you can provide valuable solutions to benefit the reader.

Here are a few things to consider when creating your letters and mailings:

You should try to write your letter as long as it needs to be to explain to the reader how you may be able to solve their problem. It's a fact that longer ad copy works better than short ad copy. And there's no such thing as a letter that is too long.

However, there is such a thing as a sales letter that is too boring. It doesn't matter if your letter takes 3, 4, 5, or 10 pages to get your point across to the reader as long as it is loaded with benefits to them, and gives the reader a reason to keep reading.

Be sure to write your letter as if it was intended to be read by that particular reader. For example, instead of using... "We can help people avoid foreclosure", try using... "We can help you avoid foreclosure".

Changing the word "people", to the word "you", will make it sound like you are only concerned about helping that individual reader, rather than just anyone who will respond to your letter.

It's subtle, but it works. Marketing experts call this transferring ownership to the reader.

Personalize by Mail Merging:

You can dramatically increase your response rates by using a mail merge program like Microsoft Word or [RealProspect™](#) to insert the recipient's name and property address into the content of your letters.

By inserting the reader's first name into the greeting of the letter -- like "Dear John", rather than "Dear Homeowner" -- the letter will look like you sat down and typed it up just for them... instead of looking like a blanket letter that was sent out to a mailing list.

To add additional personalization power to your letters you can insert the property address in the letter body like...

"If you are interested in selling your property located at 1234 Main St.,
then give me a call at 555-5555."

This makes it easier to get your readers attention if you mention a particular property that they own or live in.

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A mail merge program like Microsoft Word or [RealProspect™](#) will allow you to create a letter template, and then insert your place holders for any of the fields from your mailing list (Name, Address, City, State, etc.). You can insert the recipient's first name in the greeting, and the property address somewhere in the body.

Then when you merge the data, you will end up with a personalized merged letter for each record in your mailing list. You can then save this file and bring it to a printer like Kinko's, or you can print it from your home/office computer.

Getting Your Letters Opened:

The hardest part about sending letters is getting the readers to open the envelopes. So, your greatest challenge will be to make your envelope NOT look like a solicitation, or any other junk mail.

The best way to get your letter opened is to hand address your envelopes. It's painfully time consuming if you do it yourself, but you can hire one of your kids, grandkids, or neighbors kids to do this for you. I pay \$.25 per envelope to have someone sign my name on each letter, fold and stuff the letter into the envelope, hand address the recipients address and my return address, seal, and stamp each letter.

You absolutely MUST use first class postage stamps when you're sending letters. Of course first class stamps will be more expensive, but nothing smells more like junk mail than postage metered envelopes.

Try to avoid using the basic American flag stamps if at all possible. In fact, the best stamps to use are the ones that come out for any of the closest holidays. The goal is to make your envelope look like it was sent by an old friend or relative. This intrigues people to open the letter to see who it's from.

Repeat Your Mailings:

You have to repeat your mailings by sending a letter to the same mailing address three or more times before you move to another list. This process will build your credibility with the reader by showing them that you are serious and still interested.

Repeating your mailings is what will set you apart from your competition. Most new investors will send out one mailing, and then move to a different mailing list. And most often give up if they didn't get any responses. But if you continue to send a letter to the same people, they will most likely call you if they decide to sell their home, because you will look a little bit more credible.

If nothing else you will certainly get calls from them asking you to quit mailing them letters. At least then you can take them off your list so you don't waste any more postage on them. =)

Also, keep in mind that sending letters has a residual value. Many people will save your letter for future reference. I often will receive a response from a letter that I sent out 6 months to a year earlier. In fact, I now put the following sentence toward the bottom of my letter along with my call to action...

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"If you are not interested in selling at this time, please hang on to this letter and give me a call when you're ready."

I basically ask them to give me a call, or save my letter for later when they are ready to sell. This works!

The Call to Action:

Make sure your letter has a call to action. In other words... give the reader several methods to contact you, and make sure you ask them to contact you.

Place the call to action toward the bottom of your letter, just above your signature. Ask them to contact you immediately. Use a P.S. to emphasize the call to action, for example; "P.S. Call now and we can work together to find a solution!"

A great call to action method is to provide them with a worksheet that they can fill in and mail or fax back to you.

As I mentioned earlier, people who are afraid to call will likely feel more comfortable sending in a completed worksheet if you make it available to them. This alone is guaranteed to increase your response rate.

Mailing Lists:

There are hundreds of mailing list providers available in your area, and they will typically charge a few cents per address or for a monthly subscription and can be found easily online.

However, before you buy any mailing lists, check with your county tax appraiser's office to see if you can buy a copy of the current tax rolls on a CD. In my county I can buy the entire tax roll database for every type of real estate there is in my county, for only \$30.

The tax data provides me with all the physical information about all the properties in my county, the name and address of the owners, the last sale date and amounts, and any other possible information I could ever need for most of my mailings.

I use this information to segregate my lists for different mailing campaigns. For example, I'll create a list of all the records that have the owner's address out of state, and I send them an out of state owner's letter.

Or, I'll create a list of all the properties where the owner's address is just different than the property address, and then I will send a letter to landlords.

One of my best lists is where I find all the properties that were last sold for \$100 or less and the owner lives out of state. These are non-owner occupied properties that were transferred by quit claim deeds, and I can usually bet there is a ton of equity in them.

If you cannot get the tax rolls from your county, you should be able to find a local...

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list provider by calling up advertising companies in your area. You can also try some of the online list providers by going to google.com and searching for "mailing lists".

Most lists are very affordable, and can be downloaded in a comma separated value file so you can import it into a prospecting program like [RealProspect™](#), or open it up in Microsoft Excel. Then you can Mail Merge the list with Microsoft Word or the [RealProspect™](#) letter templates feature to create your personalized letters.

Another great mailing list to use is the expired listings list from the MLS. This list will contain all of the recently expired MLS listings that have been on the market, but have not sold. These prospects may be good candidates for lease options, or seller financing deals.

If you're not a Realtor, then you should build a relationship with one. They can be a great source of leads. I have a relationship with a Realtor in my area that routinely sends me lists of expired listings, and lists of recently listed handyman homes. I bought two houses this year alone that he found for me.

I also send him leads when I get responses from sellers who aren't interested in creative solutions. If I feel they aren't a good prospect for me, then I will refer them to my Realtor and I get a huge discount on commissions when he sells a house for me.

You can also subscribe to a "foreclosure" or "for sale by owner" list provider in your area. There are a number of online list providers that you can subscribe to for these leads. Or you can pay someone to get them out of the newspaper for you.

I pay the same person that I use to stuff and address my envelopes \$.20 per record to enter all the new "foreclosures" and "for sale by owners" into an Excel spreadsheet for me each week.

Recommended Resources:

- [RealQuest.com](#) is a great source for mailing lists. You can create a list by setting your criteria for price ranges, zip codes, amenities, and just about anything you can think of to narrow down your lists.
- Here are a few sources for foreclosure listings:
 - [www.RealtyTrac.com](#)
 - [www.Foreclosure.com](#)
 - [www.foreclosurelistings.com](#)

Testing Your Mailings:

It's important to keep testing different things to try and get better results. But don't get discouraged if you aren't getting hundreds of responses to your mailings. In fact, a one half of a percent is considered an average response.

So if you send out 200 letters you may only get one response, and that would be...

considered OK. But if you're targeting your lists properly, and using all the tricks to get your envelope opened... then you should easily be able to get a 2% response or better.

Now imagine if you get 6 responses from a 200 letter mailing to a highly targeted list, and 1 of them turns out to be a potential deal... then that in my book is a great response!

If you're sending out postcards and your response rate is very low, or you're getting poor quality responses... then try sending letters. Then try different envelope sizes, and letter content to get the best responses. If you get something that works, than stick with it until it stops working, or try something else to get an even better response.

In any case, you should always keep track of the responses that each change returns so you can determine what has worked and what has not. You can do this by simply asking the seller how they heard about you.

I actually put a letter ID on the very bottom of my letters. Then I ask the sellers that respond to give me the ID so I know which exact one it was. The key to this trick is to split your list up, and send each group a different letter. Then if you find that one letter gets a better response rate, this is the one you continue with. This technique is called split testing.

To get better and better responses you want to "beat the control", which means that you constantly want to try to get better responses than your best responding letter.

So, if you split your list up into two groups, and you find that one letter responded better... then on the next mailing you should use that letter, but try to beat it with another. If you can beat it, then the new letter becomes your control that you will try to beat on your next mailing. If you find that you have tried and cannot beat your control on several mailings, then this is the letter you may want to continue using for that list type.

Testing is important, and split-testing can lead to some great results. You do not need a huge mailing list to split-test with. In fact you may find your best results by working with a small list and repeating your mailings up to 7 times.

#7 Internet Marketing... You Need A Website!

Every real estate investor should have a website... actually a few of them.

Your website can be used as an online "credibility kit". A "credibility kit" is just a collection of information that you can present to your sellers that will show them that you are a real business professional and not just someone looking to take advantage of them.

You can put testimonials up there that you get from sellers of past deals or letters of recommendation from your insurance agent, Realtor, mortgage broker, or...

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anyone you have good business relationships with to show that you're a legitimate professional.

Not only does a website give you some upfront credibility, but it gives people a way to find out more about who you are and what you can do for them before they contact you. By building credibility you will take some of the skepticism out of the seller, and you will find that you get a more flexible and cooperative conversation from the seller that could lead to an accepted offer.

One of the most important uses for a website is to help you pre-screen your prospects. You can provide a feedback form for your prospects to fill in the details about the property they are selling (asking price, location, mortgage balances, reason for selling, etc.). This information can easily be automatically emailed to you, and then you can be armed with deal closing information when you return the call.

It's a fact that a large percentage of homeowners will look to find information online before they start the process of selling their home. With some simple search engine PPC advertising ([Google Adwords](#)), and by adding your address to all your marketing material, you can drive some of that traffic to your website and cash in on it.

But in many cases its best to have two separate websites for buying and selling properties. By separating them out you can focus your visitors on your sites that are more specific to their needs.

For example, if someone is interested in selling a house, your "selling" website can be focused on the information relevant to the seller, and encourage them to submit a feedback form to collect seller info without confusing them with other aspects of your business. You're going to try and negotiate a discount from the seller, so you may not want to advertise that you are going to sell it for a profit, even if they know that's the case anyway.

Same works for building a buyers list. Just send those potential buyers to a site that explains how you sell houses wholesale, or rent to own.

You may also want to create disposable websites for selling individual houses. Let's say you want to create a marketing campaign to sell the house you just bought on 123 Main St. You could buy a cheap domain name from Godaddy.com like [www.123MainSt.com](#), and then use that in all your marketing. Then when they visit that site it could be a page dedicated to providing information about that property including pictures, driving directions, and a form to submit their contact information so you can follow-up with them.

Additionally you could create separate websites to split test marketing campaigns. Perhaps send out two post cards to a mailing list, each with a different website address and measure the responses on the sites.

Websites can be a great tool in the automation component of your marketing and pre-screening process, and if you use them properly they alone can help make you some serious money as an investor.

Recommended Resources:

by John Schroeder, Developer of RealProspect™ & RealWebsite™
www.realinvestorsoftware.com | www.realinvestorwebsite.com

- [RealWebsite – realinvestorwebsite.com](#) – Create up to 10 websites for buying, selling, split testing your marketing, or for any other reason. Low monthly hosting fee, NO setup fees, and FREE technical support.
- [The definitive guide to Google Adwords](#) – The #1 resource for learning how to create Adwords campaigns to get the best results for the least amount of money, and start cashing in on the swarms of internet searchers looking for solutions to their real estate problems.

#8 One Step vs. Two Step Marketing...

There are two basic ways to approach the call to action that you use in your marketing strategies. There is the one step, and the two step methods.

The one step method is to provide several contact methods in your marketing ad copy, and ask the reader in your call to action to contact you directly. This is the most common approach, and certainly works very well.

The two step method is where you add another step to the process by asking the reader to call for, or to go online, to receive more information. This process will give you more opportunity to build your credibility, and pre-screen your prospects in the process.

An example of the two step approach would be to send a post card out to one of your targeted mailing lists with a message that reads "Visit us online at [www.yourwebsite.com](#) and get a FREE report on how you can sell your house 'as-is' for a fair price, in 7 days or less!". Then provide them with a downloadable report that will explain how your lease option or seller financing solution works.

Now if they call, all you will basically have to do is agree on a price and find your... tenant buyer. This process will pre-screen your prospects for you. If you don't have a website, you could have a pre-recorded voice mail message that they can call into to hear their special report.

Either method will work very well, but using them both simultaneously will make a dramatic difference in your response rate. Try offering a contact method for them to contact you directly, and then use a P.S. at the bottom of your ad copy to ask them to call now, or visit online for their more information.

#9 Handling Responses & Following-up...

If you implement at least 3 or more different marketing techniques, you will without a doubt start to get overwhelmed with responses. Now you have to work on a system to handle these responses to filter out the good from the bad.

The first step is to pre-screen the seller responses to determine who is an actual prospect, and who is a "suspect".

- A "prospect" is a seller that is not only interested in selling, but by the answers to your questions has the potential to accept your offer.

Marketing Strategies for Creative Real Estate Investing

- A “suspect” is a seller who calls you back that is interested in selling, but is only interested in selling on their terms and there is no real potential to make a profit.

You can use something like a pre-screening worksheet that you include with your direct mail letters to ask the critical questions that you need to determine if they are a prospect or not, and ask them to mail this back to you.

This worksheet will allow you to quickly determine if you need to continue on with them, and if so, what potential deal structure you will try to negotiate with them before you call them back.

This can also be done using a live answering service by having a live person ask these questions for you. For example, instead of having your office phone number on all of your marketing, you can put an 800 number that directs them to a live answering service. Then the live operator can ask all the pre-screening questions for you and email or fax them to you. Then you can call the seller back with all the information you need to be prepared to negotiate.

In many cases you may find that a seller is a good prospect, but they are not open to any of your offers. They may be motivated, but not yet motivated enough to accept your offer... these are what I call “semi-motivated” prospects.

There are huge profits to be made by keeping track of these semi-motivated prospects. The key is to continue to follow-up with them until they become “motivated”.

Following-up with sellers is very profitable, but surprisingly is not practiced by most investors. Many investors will talk to a seller, make an offer, and then move on if... the offer is not accepted. But if you take the time to continue to follow-up with them and build a relationship, then you have a much better chance to get an offer accepted if time and circumstances force them to become motivated.

By leaving the door open with sellers if your offer was not accepted, you have provided a way to stay in touch with them. Simply ask if you could touch base with them in a month or so to see if they may have changed their mind. Almost everyone will say yes, and then you now can send them a follow-up letter each month to keep in touch with their permission.

Selling a house is stressful for most people, especially people who have to sell and not want to sell. Not everyone will want to accept your offer at first. But given time to think about it, and gain a level of trust with you by continual contact, sellers can change their minds. Following-up will help guide them to make the decision to sell, and perhaps sell to you.

Keeping track of these prospects can be a challenge, but if you use a system like [RealProspect™](#) to systemize your follow-ups, and organize your prospects, then it becomes a scalable system that can greatly reduce the time and confusion of managing hundreds of follow-ups.

Marketing Strategies for Creative Real Estate Investing

Getting offers accepted is a numbers game. The more offers you make, the more get accepted. The more prospect follow-ups that you can handle, the more potential offers you can make. It's really that simple.

Recommended Resources:

- PatLive (<http://www.patlive.com>) has packages designed specifically for real estate investors to setup automated voice mail systems and have an 800 number for your sellers to call to get more information, or allow them to speak to a live operator and collect your pre-screening questions.
- For more information about [RealProspect™](#); a prospecting system that I designed and developed for creative real estate investing, please visit my website at www.realinvestorsoftware.com.

#10 Systemize Your Marketing and Prospecting...

In order to create great success in any business it's necessary to systemize as much as possible and then spend your valuable time managing and improving your systems, rather than getting consumed with busy work.

For example, Wal-Mart and McDonalds have created systems, and as a result are both insanely profitable. If you spend your time and money in the beginning setting up your marketing and prospecting systems, then you can spend your most valuable time on improving the systems, and making offers.

Our time as investors is most valuable if used to present and negotiate offers. The profits are made when you buy the property, but realized when you sell the property. If you can systemize the selling of your properties also, then you can focus on what earns you the most money, which is **making offers**.

Here's a workflow of how your prospecting "systems" could be designed:

1. **Get your marketing machine in place** by putting your ads in the classifieds, paying someone to place your signs out each week, and pay someone to send your post cards and/or letters to your targeted lists each week.

By paying someone else to handle your signs and direct mail fulfillment you can budget your marketing expenses and then completely delegate that to someone else so you can keep your focus on the big picture.

2. **Setup a two step marketing process** that directs people to call and/or visit online for a special report, or eBook on how you may be able to help them. Or include a worksheet in all your direct mail for them to respond with for those who are afraid to call you.

This will minimize the amount of pre-screening you need to do, and help filter the prospects from the suspects.

3. **Setup an automated answering service** to take your calls and have a live person ask the pre-screening questions that you would like to get answered. And have a feedback form on your website for sellers to complete and submit to you with all the answers to your pre-screening questions.

Then have these responses emailed to you so you can spend a few minutes thinking of how you will negotiate before you call them back.

4. Once you start getting pre-screened prospect response, you can call contact the sellers, go meet with them, and make offers.

If your offers do not get accepted, or if there doesn't seem to be a reason to go meet with the seller yet, put their contact information into a follow-up system like [RealProspect™](#), and schedule to automatically follow-up with them every month.

5. Each month in addition to your existing marketing, send out follow-up letters to all of your prospects to ask if they are interested yet in entertaining another offer.

Then build a system for selling your properties, and now you have a business model that can be easily managed and can scale up to as big as you want it to be. You can step back from it and look at the areas that can be improved, rather than be bogged down with all the details. Licking stamps, and dealing with un-motivated sellers will only frustrate you and cost you BIG in potential lost deals.

What is RealProspect™?

A good prospecting system should be **automated**, and systematic in the way you schedule your follow-ups and organize the prospect information. The only way to fully achieve the automation that will allow you scale up to manage a large number of prospects is by using a computer software based solution.

I have developed a software program called [RealProspect™](#) that will take all **the time wasting tasks** out of your prospecting process, and allow you to focus on your main objective... **making offers!**

[RealProspect™](#) will provide you with a set of features that **give you the ability to...**

1. **Free up your valuable time to spend on money making aspects of your business** by automating the scheduling and processing of all your direct mail marketing campaigns
2. **Increase direct mail response rates drastically** by merging prospect information into letter templates to create personalized letters.
3. **Easily increase your odds of finding more deals** by quickly importing new targeted prospect records from any mailing list provider to add to your direct mail campaigns.
4. **Negotiate and close more deals** by quickly having detailed "deal making" prospect information in front of you when you contact, or are contacted by a seller
5. **Keep your prospecting process efficient and organized** by creating categories to separate prospects by targeted list type, investing strategy, or any other criteria that you define
6. **Avoid wasting time looking for documents and prospect information** by having the ability to quickly search for prospect records by ANY information you have collected on them
7. **Stay on track of what needs to be done to increase your productivity and profit earning potential** by easily accessing all of your scheduled activities in one convenient location and get notifications when activities are past due

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- 8. Put deals together and profit quickly** by keeping a buyers list of wholesale and retail buyers just waiting to give you their money
- 9. Take your prospect information with you wherever you go** by printing detailed and summary prospect reports in a portable format

And easily use the software WITHOUT an expensive learning curve!
So, whatever your common investing technique is, whether its lease options, wholesaling, rehabbing, pre-foreclosures, etc... [RealProspect™](#) can help you stay in control of your direct mail marketing campaigns and follow-up process so you can focus on spending your time on your most important task of making offers.

Here is a typical scenario of how this applies...

Let's say you process your mailing campaigns and send out an average of 25 letters each day... that's only 9,125 letters per year.

If you're getting a 2% response rate (very conservative) by sending these to targeted lists, then you should average 16 sellers that respond each month... that's 182 per year.

If you're following-up with these sellers on a consistent basis and you convert 2% of these responses into closed deals... **that's 4 deals** on a \$380.21 per month marketing budget!

9,125 Letters x \$.50 each = \$4,562.50 (divide by 12 months) = \$380.21/mo.

So let's say you make a modest \$20k on each property... **that's a \$75,437.50 profit** -- a 1,720% return -- on a \$4,562.50 investment!

Now, scale that up to an average of 50 letters per day with a 4% response rate, and profit more than \$20k on each deal... that's you becoming a **very happy** investor!

...And if you're applying several marketing strategies, then you are more likely to build your database of hot prospects much quicker and ultimately have more opportunities.

As I mentioned, getting offers accepted is a numbers game... and the only way to increase your odds is by leveraging a scalable solution that will help you efficiently handle your prospecting, maximize your marketing efforts... **and ultimately bring you more accepted offers!**

For more information about [RealProspect™](#); a prospecting system that I designed and developed for creative real estate investing, please visit my website at www.realinvestorsoftware.com

After Word...

Congratulations... you made it to the end!

Now that you have read the entire eBook, you're ready to crank up your marketing machine to begin feeding you with motivated sellers and profitable deals.

Take one step at a time, and soon you will have an unstoppable snowball effect of leads rolling in that will **guarantee your success** as a creative real estate investor.

Whatever it is that you choose to do in life, I wish you all the greatest success, health **and happiness!**

Very best regards,



John Schroeder – President
RealInvestor Software, LLC
Developer of [RealProspect™](#) & [RealWebsite™](#)



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