

Let Me Stand Out!

Increase Your Market Presence

Using Savvy Marketing Techniques



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By Bill Gladstone, CCIM, SIOR

For commercial agents, including tenant (buyer) representatives, both personal and property marketing is extremely important. A functional business model needs to be in place to provide both company marketing (from your broker) and individual marketing (your responsibility). If you rely solely on your company's marketing, you are competing equally with other agents. If your company is not marketing differently or more strongly than other competing commercial real estate companies, you are marketing just like everyone else. As a real estate agent in a competitive market, the last thing you want is to be average or ordinary.

Your broker's obligation is to make sure the company shows a strong presence within your market. Your job is to highlight your accomplishments and stand out among the competition. It is unrealistic to expect your broker to spend extra time and money to make you stand out.

How Can Your Company Make the Most of its Resources?

What is your firm doing to position itself and you in the marketplace? How can you tell if your company is promoting the expertise of the firm and its associates at the highest level possible? Your goal should be to take yourself and the rest of your company to a higher level of recognition within your market. For example, if you, as an agent, find something of interest, do you bring it to the attention of your broker?

There are many options for increasing both firm and broker recognition.

1. **Signage exposure on your listed properties.** Your company should include your name on all signs for properties you list. This ensures that interested parties contact you directly. It also advertises you as a sales agent and your company as a broker.

2. **Property press releases.** These inform the public of listings and transactions, and they help to establish your company's market presence and credibility.

3. **Professional photo on the company Web site.** All companies should be proud to display their sales team along with their short biographies. This helps establish credibility.

4. **Help in establishing name recognition.** Your broker should work with the local newspaper to get your name mentioned in articles so you can be recognized as a market expert.

5. **Sponsoring local and regional events.** This helps companies attain name recognition and market presence for both themselves and their agents.

Your Promotion Options

In addition to benefiting from company marketing, it is vital for you as a sales agent to accept responsibility for your own marketing. This should build on what your broker has done and will elevate you within your company.

For instance, I am an agent with NAI CIR. The Bill Gladstone Group of NAI CIR has seven people working in various capacities. We have designed marketing plans for the Group that work well on both property and personal levels. Of our team of seven people, we have four in marketing, two in sales and operations, and one in administration. Our annual marketing budget is \$135,000, which we divide between digital and traditional marketing.

Client Contributes for Special Marketing Projects

Because our marketing program is comprehensive, clients rarely question commission. I receive a marketing budget in addition to commission—rare in our market. The marketing budget is not a fee paid

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back at settlement or lease signing. It is strictly a fee for the services we provide beyond what would be considered “normal” services like flier mailings, newsletter and magazine exposure, e-mails, eProperty Updates, and Web site postings. For smaller properties, the budget is usually around \$600 and primarily covers the cost of postcard mailings. My Group develops the

concept and design, and the budget covers postcard printing and postage. The budget for larger properties is usually \$1,000-\$3,000. The amount depends on the size of the property and on whether the owner recognizes the importance of a marketing budget. The budget covers a number of different items including newspaper ads, property-specific object marketing, and increased postcard mailings.

I strongly believe that if you treat your marketing program seriously on both the property and personal sides, you will excel in commercial real estate. It won't happen overnight, but it will materialize if you remain focused and commit the necessary and reasonable funds.

Spend it to Make it

As you pursue a marketing plan, remember that you need to spend money in order to make money. This must be an ongoing, year-round program focused on helping you gain prominence within your market. It is especially important during these economically challenging times when sales and leases are down. Understand that, no matter how advanced your program, you will still feel the highs and lows. It is critical to stay strong during tough times. Be a risk-taker and push forward based on your business model. Try being liberal because many of the competitors you face in the market will be conservative.

Before going too far, first review your company's marketing plan. Your broker shares in your fees and should be held responsible (to a reasonable degree) for giving you sufficient exposure within the market for you to feel that the portion of your commission they receive is equitable. Your broker's marketing should help put you on the same level as your competitors. After that, you are

responsible for making yourself stand out in the marketplace by using your own marketing tools and resources.

What We Do to Stand Out

What does the Bill Gladstone Group of NAI CIR do to stand out in the crowd? While we heavily market our properties, we focus on personal marketing in an effort to brand the Group as a known entity in this market. For example, we offer advanced marketing programs to our clients that exceed the marketing efforts by others in this area.

Our digital marketing program is exceptional. We have our own Web site, BillGladstone.com, which markets our listings and our Group. The site features additional resources such as case studies, local vendors, recent transactions, and exclusive articles. We also post our listings to several other Web sites. Our eProperty Update, which details all our available listings, is updated each month and can be downloaded from our Web site. We have a broadcast e-mail program that features four of our listed properties each week. The program allows us to track customer interaction and click-throughs.

I also find informative, professional articles in trade magazines to pass on to our business contacts (by category: developers, investors, attorneys, etc.) through e-mail. We produce our own videos using green screen technology for educational and listing presentations. This takes us well beyond the basic PowerPoint presentations of our competition.

We also have a comprehensive traditional marketing program that includes a plan for marketing our properties equally. This plan includes:

- a mailing program, sending more than 2,000 fliers a month to specific targeted audiences;
- a bimonthly newsletter and a four-color, 36-page magazine, each sent to more than 3,000 businesspeople three times a year;
- a property listing “Hot Sheet”; and
- unique postcard campaigns.

We use the Group’s name whenever possible to increase our personal marketing. With seven licensed REALTORS® in the group, we have an important advantage in the market. We use this as our Unique Selling Proposition. Potential clients understand they get much more with us than if they hired a single agent. We strive for top-of-the-mind aware-

ness, and we have various object marketing items to support this: our bobblehead doll made in the likeness of myself; bobblehead calendar; bobblehead notepad; Bill Gladstone T-shirts, polos, and dress shirts; flash drives branded with the Group name; and oversized branded paperclips using the “@” sign imprinted with our Web site address. My Group and I always seek opportunities to give presentations and to network with commercial brokers from other markets, especially at the SIOR and NAI conferences. We continually buy tables at local, high-profile events and invite well-known community leaders to sit at our table. As a sponsor of these events, our Group’s banner is displayed prominently in the room. These marketing efforts have resulted in higher traffic counts to our Web site. Currently, we average 2,000 sessions a week.

Remember, just because these items fit into our marketing plan, they may not work for everyone.

Keeping the Forward Motion

With the many options and choices available, you need to determine what works best for you. In many cases, there will be a trial-and-error period. A combination of personal and property marketing, along with a strong company platform, will yield results. I would strongly encourage you to understand your options, discover possible avenues, and plan your financial strategy.

Marketing is no different from negotiating a deal: You must make the right choices and have a high level of determination and confidence in your ability. But just as in deal making, be ready for some setbacks. Develop programs and implement them with your business model in mind. Do not get discouraged if some fail. Commercial real estate is not a science—it is more of an art. In science, if you mix A and B together, you get C, with a guaranteed reaction. With real estate, if you mix A and B, there is no telling what could happen. You may get the reaction you hoped for, or it could go in another direction completely. Be prepared for anything and never give up. You will eventually develop an exceptional program that yields great results.

To view examples of our marketing, visit www.BillGladstone.com and click on the Marketing link. While there, you can subscribe to our many different publications and broadcast e-mails. If we can be of any help to you in the future, please give us a call. 