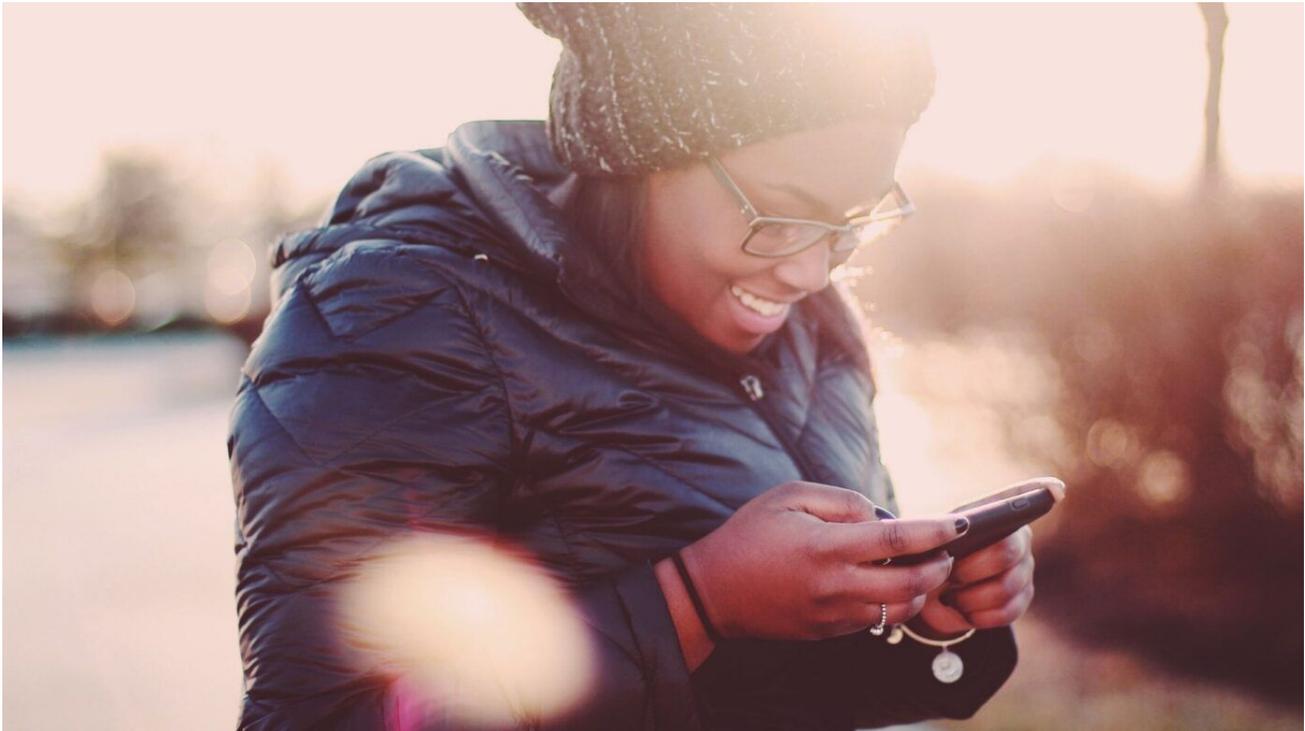


How to talk business with your sphere (and not seem pushy)

Spark meaningful dialogue with your VIPs, friends and family by structuring and timing communications just right.



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Most real estate agents would agree that leveraging personal connections is paramount to success in real estate — whether you call them your “tribe,” your network or simply your friends and family, your sphere of influence plays a key role in the growth of your business. Why, then, do so many agents hesitate to make time for fruitful communication with these very important individuals?

Some agents are fearful of coming across as smarmy or overbearing — especially to those closest to them — but that fear often produces a watered-down message and softens the intended outcome, leaving the agent thinking that maybe it’s not even worth the time and effort.

But the truth is, you can spark invigorating dialogue with this critical audience by purposefully structuring and timing communications so that they comfortably integrate a business message in a meaningful way. Here’s how.

Elevate your VIP strategy

A friends and family touchpoint shouldn't be part of a drip campaign directed at a broad prospecting audience. Treat this group like the VIPS they are.

Think of a high-level customer service experience you had in a retail environment or restaurant where there was a focus on you. Apply that same service mentality. Make them feel important and appreciated as you get your information across by including these four types of content:

1. Acknowledgement

Start by focusing on them. Acknowledge your relationship and remind recipients that they are important to you. This turns "Hi, hope you are well" into "Hi, this weather reminds me of our trip junior year." Reinforce that personal connection right up front.

2. Message

Next, gently and tactfully move on to why you are reaching out. Deliver your message with an opening line that is either newsworthy, inspiring or entertaining. Here is an example of an announcement that honors your relationship: "After four years of being a real estate agent, I decided to go all in and just passed my broker exam! I just want to thank you for all your support; you helped get me here."

If inspiration is more appropriate for your VIPs, you can try something like: "I just wanted to share with you this house I just sold. Imagine if we had this kind of backyard when we were growing up!" This reinforces your shared history and values.

An entertainment angle is always appreciated. Something like, "A funny thing happened today at my open house ..." can help break the ice for your update.

3. Ask for action

At this point, asking for action should feel a bit more natural. Be clear and specific about what you need. Avoid wimpy messages like: "If you hear of anyone looking to buy a house in my area, let me know." If your friends and family are engaged in your journey, referrals will be a default.

This particular audience is invested in you. Ask them to help with specific actions, like:

- *Encouraging views on a new video you posted*
- *Asking for comments and shares (not likes) on your social media presence*
- *Spreading the word about an event (e.g. an open house or seminar)*
- *Getting feedback on new marketing materials (e.g. voting on images or headlines)*

4. Sign off with power

Finally, bring it back to them and make another personal connection. This can be as simple as adding their name in a final line with a personalized thank you. For example: "Annie, you always have some great suggestions."

Also, add a P.S. — it is one of the most-read pieces in any communication, and it gives you the opportunity to leave things on a warm and authentic note. For example: "P.S. BTW, hoping to see you when I fly home for the holidays."

This is the final impression your message will leave, so again, place the focus back on them.

When should you reach out?

The short answer is: whenever there is a meaningful reason. This rules out slipping in a sales message in text to confirm weekend plans. If you are stuck, use the following three key times to begin a personal dialogue:

1. Before the high selling season

Late winter/early spring is a great time to remind your people of what you do for a living — it'll keep you at the top of their mind in this extremely dynamic season where they may actively hear of people wanting to make a transaction.

2. On a special day for them or for you

Birthdays are obvious, but connecting around an unexpected event might be more meaningful. Remembering a special anniversary, from running a marathon to adopting a pet, is a great reason to reach out. If it is a shared experience, even better.

3. During the holidays

Ah, the classic reach-out-and-touch-someone time of year. Break out and get a little more airtime by choosing New Year's or Thanksgiving, even Halloween if it fits your relationship. (With a last name that starts with O', I have used St. Patrick's Day with lots of success — it was fresh and unexpected.)

Some last-minute tips

All of these recommendations work whether you are prepping a script for a video or call, or writing an email, text, or letter. Mixing up these formats over time makes them feel more organic and builds receptivity.

Social media has trained us all to become more visual, so regardless of your format, add pictures, video clips or even GIFS to help lighten the touchpoint and increase recall power.

And finally, remember that these people are on your side — they like hearing from you. Don't let the goal of perfection stop you from starting; just pick a few friends and start from there.

You'll soon notice their interest in your business grow, and chances are you'll gather takeaways that you can integrate into ongoing campaigns to broader audiences.

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