

MANAGING BUYERS

“MATCH.COM” FOR HOMES

This tech tool matches buyers to the homes they're most likely to want to buy.

CHRIS WIDEN, THE KEYES CO., FORT LAUDERDALE

At a recent open house, Chris Widen, a sales associate with The Keyes Co. in Fort Lauderdale, started chatting with some prospects. “They were leaving that day to go back to New York,” says Widen, “and the house we were in wasn’t for them.” Rather than simply letting them go, Widen registered the prospects on RealScout, a service that offers buyer-data-driven listings and home-search experiences to help sales associates win and sell more listings. “RealScout allows buyers to enter criteria so they can hone in on the homes they want,” Widen explains.

Logging on to his account a few days later, Widen noticed that his prospects were actively searching for homes. “I contacted them, and they found a house that met their criteria based on search preference,” he says. The prospects then asked Widen to visit the property and take more photos. “The husband is a general contractor, so they knew that even if the house needed work, that wouldn’t be a problem. The wife made an offer on it sight unseen and took a flight down a few days later to give it her final blessing.”

Widen notes that the home was a “hot property that needed work but was priced competitively. Because I signed her up for RealScout, she saw the property right away and got it.”

The Keyes Co. offers RealScout free to its agents to keep customers in house and moving through the transaction cycle. According to Miguel Correa, director of The Keyes Co.



4 Lead-Conversion Services

Boomtown:
boomtown.com

Placester:
placester.com

RealScout:
realscout.com

SmartZip:
smartzip.com

ecommerce team, “RealScout helps sales associates in two ways: First, by retention of the customer through [personalized listing] emails. Second, if our agents follow the dashboard to see who is active, it can help them pinpoint where they should be spending their time. If [prospects] are very active, they’ll have a better chance of closing a deal.”

Widen uses the system in these ways:

1. PROVIDE PERSONALIZED SEARCH RESULTS. “I put all my buyer leads into RealScout,” says Widen. Sometimes, he creates a search for prospects, and sometimes, they do it themselves. Once prospects’ search criteria are entered, RealScout will send infor-



Brokers identified company websites, CRMs, back-office accounting and transaction management systems as the most important business technology tools they use.
—REALTrends “Improve Your Technology Spend” Study realtrends.com/research/how-to-improve-your-technology-spend

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mation on the listings that most closely match what they are looking for. “The emails are personalized, so they look like they are coming directly from me,” says Widen. “Also, as prospects engage by searching for properties, the system intuitively collects the words the prospects are searching and sends new suggestions and emails. There are a lot of calls to action in those short emails, so prospects may text, email or call me right away.”

2. TARGET ACTIVE PROSPECTS. With the program, Widen can monitor the activity of a large number of prospects. “I can see who’s engaged. That helps me determine who to call right away and who may be on a longer sales cycle.”

3. LEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA. Widen boosts Facebook posts that encourage prospects to sign up for searches. He has two types of Facebook-boosted posts. One says, “Looking for a home? Click here to learn more.” The other features Widen’s most current listing and is boosted to anyone within a mile of the property.

“RealScout gives me a personalized URL (chriswiden.realscout.com), so anyone clicking on a Facebook post is going to that site, where they can opt in to get emails about new listings. A call to action pops up asking them to set up an account.” However, he says, the information needed to sign up is minimal. “It’s first and last name and email—that’s it. They can add a phone number if they want, but it’s optional. Plus, Facebook autopopulates the info so they don’t even have to enter it themselves.”

4. COLLECT NAMES AT OPEN HOUSES. “Every person who comes to one of my open houses is asked to provide name,

phone number and email address. Then, I send an invitation to search for property and create their search parameter. This helps me gauge their seriousness,” he says. “I find younger buyers love it because they can interact with me via text and online. They can leave a comment on a listing, I’ll get an immediate notification and get back to them.”

5. CONNECT WITH HIS DATABASE. Widen has about 1,000 prospective buyers actively engaged on RealScout. “These are people with whom I’ve had conversations.” So as soon as the service picks up one of his listings from the MLS, he emails everyone in the database about the new listing. “I let my sellers know that I’m doing this, and they’re impressed with my marketing.”

Overall, Widen says, RealScout allows him to handle buyers’ leads easily and get a pulse on their activity.

“It’s more user friendly than the search portals provided by MLS interfaces. Plus, it’s intuitive and provides property suggestions in much the same way Amazon does after you purchase something. Since I have buyers who think they want a specific property but buy something completely different, this is a way to keep their options open without doing a ton of manual research,” he says.

One drawback is that the information is not always up to the minute. “Updates don’t always happen in real time as MLS interfaces do when notifying me about a new listing. Some areas are so hot that every second counts when it comes to seeing a new property.”

However, he says, “The system is super-easy to use, and customer support is great.”

“If I can convert even four more leads to sales, I’m in great shape,” he says. #

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