

How to win friends — and do more business

If we want to increase our production, we need more friends. The more friends you have, the more homes you'll sell



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I recently attended a friend's birthday party. A group of about 20 people enjoyed dinner and catching up about their lives. I spent most of my time with five of the 20 people. Why? Of the 20, five were real estate agents, so we had to catch up about the [changing market](#).

This is where it gets interesting. There are various similarities between the agents. All have been in the industry for a similar amount of time. They're all a similar age. And, as you guessed, they have the same social network. So, we need to ask the question: Which agent produces at the highest level? And why?

The highest-producing agent at the table wasn't more experienced, at the premiere [brokerage](#) or even more skilled. But the reason is clear: She seemed to know every second person who walked by the table. Simply put, she has the most friends.

"If you want to increase your production, you need more friends."

This isn't to downplay the importance of skill, but without people to talk to, you won't have the opportunity to use your skills. If I want to improve at golf, I could watch every video — but if I don't swing a club, I won't improve.

Let's ask a simple question: Why do more experienced agents sell more homes? Yes, they're likely more skilled and confident, but there's more to the story. They've had more time to build. They see the value of their network and they've increased their number of friends.

The same goes for being a [new agent](#). Why do certain people start in real estate and see immediate success, while others take years to scale their business? The new agents who breaks out of the gate know more people. Their connections made before being an agent benefit them after they have their licenses.

Real estate isn't the only industry where your network is directly correlated to success, but it's one of the few industries where almost everyone you meet will need real estate advice. Or, at least, they know people who will need guidance.

So does this mean we need to talk to more people? Without a doubt. But what if I'm an introvert? We've grown up branded with the perspective that we must avoid strangers. "Stranger Danger." Also, we have the incorrect assumption that exercising our extroverted side will lead to rejection, increased anxiety and less pleasure.

But our minds play tricks on us. [Studies suggest](#) when we strike up conversations with strangers, we're happier, less lonely and more optimistic. I'm an introvert, but I rarely regret a conversation.

Does this mean it doesn't matter who we know as long as we have a large network? Yes, but being strategic helps. Eating cereal with a fork will fill you up, but a spoon will fill you up faster.

To build our number of friendships, we need to meet people, improve our ability to connect and nurture our friends over time.

Width vs. depth

Let's be aware of two concepts when building your number of friends: Width and depth. You'll always land short of your potential if you ignore either one.

Focus solely on width: You may think you know people, but they don't feel like they know you. So, you may have leads, but your conversion suffers.

Focus solely on depth: You're the agent who wins every [listing appointment](#), but you have a smaller database and are lacking in a number of appointments.

Build: Increase your number of friends

Building your number of connections is the width. You're aiming to increase your number of friends by casting a wider social net. You accomplish this in various ways, but regardless of the setting, you'll be talking to people.

When meeting new people, many agents shy away from mentioning they're in real estate. We won't bring it up unless asked. We won't offer insights unless asked. This is a mistake. Increasing your number of friends comes with many benefits outside of real estate success. However, we're talking about increasing our production, not solely increasing how many people we know.

[Talk about real estate](#) with your friends, acquaintances and strangers. Offer your perspectives. They need to know you're in real estate, and you should be able to talk about your market.

Of course, we don't want to overdo it. We know that's off-putting. Be more interested in them, be inquisitive, but please bring up real estate when you naturally can. It will pay off.

Hobbies:

The beauty of real estate is that you can build your network in various ways. When selecting your [hobbies](#), there are two requirements:

- You can enjoy the activity with others
- You can meet a variety of people

Examples include sports, wine, food, kid's activities, art, spirituality, cars, reading, technology and movies.

If you're interested in it, find a group in your city or start a group. You should try a variety of hobbies before selecting your hobby. Test the waters. Then find ways to do the activity with a broad group of people.

For example, if you're taking up tennis, join a social league. Just playing tennis with the same person is better than watching Netflix, but it's less impactful than using the activity to meet new people.

And this is at the heart of hobbies: Use the hobby to meet people. Yes, enjoy it, but use your hobby to meet people. The hobby you select is fun but is also part of your job as a real estate agent.

Pro tip: *Although not necessary, if you choose a hobby or interest where you excel, you will likely see immediate referrals. This is the "[halo effect](#)" in action. This bias refers to the tendency to allow our impression of a person, company or business in one domain influence our overall impression of the person or entity.*

Help:

Traditionally, we think of helping as volunteering. But we can extend volunteering to various ways of helping people. Take, for example, Realtor [Jeff Pasche](#). He lives in a winter climate and

shovels walks in his geo-farm. He then leaves a door hanger that reads, “Jeff Pasche shoveled your walk.”

As agents, we need to find an ongoing activity or volunteer organization that we can commit to.

Similar to hobbies, try a variety and land on a few. Select helping activities that lead to expanding your network. For example, donate to the food bank but also volunteer at the food bank. You’re helping and meeting people.

Other examples include [community organizations](#), local causes, politics, kids, mental health, clean energy and startups.

Business:

Business owners in your city can be one of the best sources of business for you over your career. Often, these people have large networks. They are “[super connectors](#).” Super connectors are people that, if in your network, can and do offer a disproportionate number of referrals.

How can you support the business community in your city? Can you join your local chamber of commerce, interview local business owners or attend business networking events?

Helping local businesses is a form of “help” and could even be a “hobby.” But connecting with business owners is a separate category. Every agent should be contributing to the business community in their city.

***Pro tip:** Join a coworking space. A key benefit to coworking is the simplicity of using these spaces. All you need to do is sign up and show up. Why? Because your conversations will instantly increase. (If your town doesn’t have a coworking space, consider looking for business centers; even a popular coffee shop can do the trick)*

Wellness:

Wellness and fitness have a particularly fascinating benefit for real estate agents:

1. There are plenty of options to focus on wellness with others.
2. Being healthy will [make us more confident](#) and better equipped to be a successful agent.
3. The [increase in endorphins](#) brought on by wellness improves our ability to connect.

In fitness classes, everyone is high-fiving and encouraging others. There is inherent bonding under conditions where everyone works toward a common goal.

Since we need to meet people and stay fit, why not combine them?

As with other activities, the type of activity matters less than the consistency. There are various ways we can [make friends](#) while working out, but you don’t need to be limited to the gym. For example, there are sports, yoga, CrossFit, mindfulness, group fitness classes, running groups and more.

Your place:

Like fitness, we need to eat, drink and connect. Every agent needs a place. Usually, your place is your go-to restaurant, cafe, bar or coffee shop. Like the show Cheers, it's where "everyone knows your name."

Make more of an effort when you are at your place. Talk to the staff. Ask them about their weekends. Bring clients to your place when setting up a meeting.

If it's a coffee shop, your mentality when arriving should be to focus on talking, not just ordering coffee.

The employees and owners of your place will quickly notice you. They remember people who engage with them. They'll start asking about real estate and the market and you'll begin connecting with other regulars

Too often, agents aren't strategic with places they go on a regular basis. You're not just going for lunch or coffee in real estate. You're prospecting.

The extroversion muscle:

Every real estate agent should leave the house or office at least two to three times per day. Maybe you're going to your place, a fitness class, walking your dog, getting groceries or dropping your kids off at school.

These aren't just errands or activities anymore. It's prospecting.

We need to talk to strangers. And [strangers aren't as scary](#) as we think. We all have levels of anxiety when striking up conversations with strangers. It's not always easy. But if it was then every agent would do it.

We need to talk. Look for opportunities to make a comment or ask a question. After all, meeting new people is half our job.

But like anything that isn't easy, it becomes easier with time. If you're like [most people](#), you lean more towards being an introvert. Over half of people classify themselves as introverts.

Without a doubt, I'm an introvert. I can't flip a switch and become an extrovert, but something interesting happens when you start talking to strangers: You begin to feel more extroverted. This is exercising your extroversion muscle.

Like any muscle, it will be uncomfortable the first time you use it. Like an infant taking their first steps, striking up conversations with strangers may feel shaky. But, before you know it, the toddler is running laps around the house. The same goes for your comfort and ability to connect with strangers.

There are two things you can do to increase the number of casual conversations you have: mirrored reciprocation and beyond "how are you."

Mirrored reciprocation: This is a term coined by [Peter Kaufman](#). Peter Kaufman is the author of the book *Poor Charlie's Almanack* and CEO of Glenair. The premise is simple: People will respond in a similar way to how we approach them.

If we're kind, open and authentic, they will be as well. If we are cold and distant, they will be as well. This makes talking to strangers quite easy. Be warm, kind and interested and your conversation partner will act the same way.

Beyond 'How are you?': This strategy, as the name suggests, is making every conversation you have with strangers go beyond "how are you." Saying "Hi, how are you?" isn't enough; push yourself to find a topic of conversation that goes beyond that. But what can we say to these people? Let's look at how we can improve our conversations.

Connect: Improve our ability to make friends

There's a reason we default to talking about the weather. It's something we all have in common. To improve our ability to make friends, we need to find commonalities.

Hobbies, volunteering, business groups, fitness classes and your place are all items you will have in common with people at these locations.

So, all we need to do to improve connection is find common ground. This likely isn't news to you if you're in real estate and have learned about connecting and building rapport. So the challenge is how do we find commonalities?

We need a framework. We need topics. We need questions.

A common framework for finding commonalities is the FORD method. This has you bring up topics related to family, occupation, recreation or dreams. Although these topics can work, I find them antiquated. Talking about family can be overstepping and asking me about my dreams in a casual conversation feels like asking someone to marry you on the first date.

A more modern framework is **HEFE**. The topics you bring up are hobbies, entertainment, food and environment.

- **Hobbies:** Activities that they do outside of work.
- **Entertainment:** What shows are they watching? What are they doing for fun? Bonding over a recent Netflix series is one of the most common (and effective) ways to kick off a conversation.
- **Food:** Something we all have in common and most of us are interested in something related to food. Restaurants, types of cuisines, eating lifestyles and diets.
- **Environment:** This is your surroundings and one of the best ways to start a conversation. Talk about what is going on around you at that time.

These topics are key to building rapport and finding commonalities and all you need to do is ask a HEFE question and your conversation will be off.

But sometimes, you need to figure out the questions to ask. In that case, you can use conversational ammo.

Conversational ammo is talking about topics that allow others to call out similarities.

You're making it easier for them to linger on topics that interest them.

For example, you're chatting about the weather. You could say, "it's a beautiful day," or you could say, "it's a beautiful day — I can't wait to get home, take my crazy dogs for a walk, fire up the smoker and try a new bottle of wine."

The second approach gives them conversational ammo. They could ask about your dogs, where you take them for walks, your smoker, the type of food you're smoking or wine.

Allow your partner to bring up topics of interest to them.

Conclusion

If we want to increase our production, we need more friends. The more friends you have, the more homes you'll sell. But how do we increase the number of friends we have? It's easier than we think. We simply need to increase our number of conversations with people. Also, we need to improve our ability to communicate.

Increasing our number of conversations can come in many ways, but some of the most effective are hobbies, helping people, business groups, wellness/fitness and talking to more strangers.

Improving our ability to communicate with future friends comes down to common ground. To find common ground lean into frameworks such as HEFE and you'll always have topics.

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