



By Bob Canter, President/Founder

What will set you apart from your competition?

Being a better agent...put yourself in the customer's shoes!

The most successful sales people I know intuitively put themselves in the customer's/client's shoes. No matter if they are in commercial real estate or in another sales business. What does this mean in terms of commercial real estate?

There are a number of stages to go through in order to be considered a top flight agent, which all lead to becoming the best agent and separating you from your competition.

First, you must have a honest and sincere passion for commercial real estate. What this means is that you are willing to make the necessary sacrifices in order to learn your trade. This does not mean you will go out into the commercial real estate world and become Donald Trump overnight. You will have to pay your dues in terms of the number of hours each week you devote to learning something new about commercial real estate. The day does not end at 5:00pm.

Second, if you put yourself into your customer's shoes, what is the first thing you'd expect from an agent? You would have awesome market knowledge. You would know just about every building and space available in your defined market. In other words you would be able to talk the talk. What this means is taking the time to learn your market to the exclusion of everything else. A cab driver can do a better job if you don't have market knowledge.

Third, after you have learned the market, you need to have an understanding of the dynamics of a commercial real estate deal. There is no "one size fits all"! There are different approaches to different property types. You should pick a property discipline and learn everything you can about it, be it office, industrial, retail, multi-family etc. If you want to be a leasing agent, you must learn how to navigate a lease for your particular property discipline, as well as know how to structure a deal. This means knowing the transactional mechanics of the deal. If you want to be an investment broker (who doesn't these days?) you must learn the dynamics of investment real estate. You will need to know about how investments are financed, how to truly calculate an investment return, how to compare

different investments against one another. You need to understand the inner workings of the buildings, as owning investment commercial real estate takes capital and knowing how to manage a building, which entails proper maintenance and repair. What may look like a good deal on the surface could wind-up being a dud, because there were surprises in regards to future capital costs....this is called deferred maintenance. And your buyer **EXPECTS** you to have at least investigated or to have asked the right questions on their behalf before you even present the investment to your buyer.

Fourth, you must continue to sharpen your technical skills. The commercial real estate industry has finally arrived into the 21st Century. Technology is changing very rapidly, and the group of agents coming into the business have grown-up using technology. So if you feel that the technology revolution went speeding by you, you must take some remedial classes on the latest technology that is used in the commercial real estate business. If you are techno-savvy you still need to keep on top of the latest trends etc. Technology is a tool and not the final answer to all your dreams of being successful in the business. The tool helps you gather and disseminate information faster in a more productive and professional manner. It does NOT replace getting out and meeting people within the industry and talking to prospective clients. It does not replace all the other skills that are outlined within this article.

Fifth, this may be the most important aspect of this article. You need to learn about your customer's/client's/prospect's business. Not just what they do, but how they do it, who are their competitors, who are their customers, what made them successful, what are their financials, what is their corporate structure, meaning who makes the decisions, what technology do they use and why. You need to understand their concerns, and have empathy for the customer/client/prospect. You also must **never** lose your integrity, therefore if you do not know something admit it and go find out quickly. You will look much better to your customer if you are truthful. If you make something up I will guarantee you that you will be caught. The customer asked for a reason and will ultimately find the correct answer no matter what, because it is obviously a concern of theirs. Even if the answer kills your deal, you will still have the trust and faith of the customer/client/prospect, and that will most certainly keep

you in good standing with your client/customer and allow you to make the deal on some property. If you lie or are dishonest, you lost all their trust and that folks is the real bottom line. And it won't end there, because people talk, and they usually talk about negative things, and you do not want to be the talk of the town at the next cocktail party in this negative way.

Lastly, when you show interest in your customer's business it allows them to open up to you and feel a sense of trust and bonding if you will. Why, because you took the time and energy to learn about their business. Remember next to their family their business is the next most important aspect of their respective lives. It's like people who earnestly ask how you are and how are your kids before they fill you in on their lives. How does that make you feel as opposed to the person that starts telling you when you first approach them... "Hi, let me tell you what a great vacation place I just got back from, or let me tell you about the hot new car I just bought, or I can't wait to tell you what my little darling did at school or the game." Get the picture.

You can do so much research on line that it is inexcusable not to be able to talk about the business your client/customer/prospect is in. Take an interest in what they do and be someone who wants to help find their real estate solution that is best suited to their needs. You can not come across as the pushy, arrogant, I know better than you agent. That will get you ZERO commissions. You are in a service business, and yes that means servicing your client/customer/prospect to the best of your ability, with their best interest as first and foremost in your mind and how you conduct yourself.

Now it's time to get going and follow the above. If you need help in how to go about these steps or wish to learn more about commercial real estate please give us a call, we want to hear your challenges because we are here to help.

What's the deal with no quoted rental prices for available space?

Why is it that so many agents put commercial space on the market for lease with no rental price? Why would they do it? What is their objective? Is it serving the best interest of their client? Let me answer these questions in reverse order.

How can **NOT** putting an asking rental price on available space be in the best interest of the owner. The answer is it is **NOT** in their best interest. The first thing that comes to mind "is there something about the space that the listing agent is hiding?" or that some game is being played. If space is available then it should have a price. Would anyone even look at buying or leasing a car that didn't have a price? Of course not. What this says is that either

the owner has no idea of their property's value which is a scary thought because his agent should be more than able to let the owner know what market is. If the owner understands the market, then why not put a price on the space. It's called gamesmanship if there is no rental price quoted.

The only **objective** that can be taken away from not having a price is the listing agent must feel they will find a prospective tenant that has no idea of the market and will hopefully overpay for the space. There can be no other explanation. What are the chances of that happening? Low probability is the answer. 75%-85% of most commercial leasing deals involve a "tenant rep" broker. Therefore the prospective tenant knows for sure the market. Let's say a tenant calls the listing broker directly...however that space does not work, and the agent tells the prospective tenant, "I know of some other space that may work". How does that agent explain they know the prices for the other competing spaces but not their own? Interesting isn't it?

What not having an asking price does is slow the process down. Therefore how is that in the best interest of their client? Lost rent is lost rent and time is the enemy of available space. But if the broker doesn't get the space leased quickly, that gives the broker more time to have their signs on the property that generate leads. This will also create a climate of distrust. The prospective tenant must say to themselves ... "Let me guess what you will accept". And of course anyone with a half of brain will offer the lowest possible price or take a pass for that matter. Now what? In my brokerage days and even now, I will refuse to show space that does not have an asking rental price. I simply tell my client that the owner is playing games and we don't have the luxury of time to play when there are other perfectly acceptable spaces that meet the client's requirements and have asking rentals. So until the commercial brokerage community starts to shun this shoddy method of marketing their rental listings, there will continue to be the consequence of not having asking rentals on many properties. This serves no ones interest except the listing agent.



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