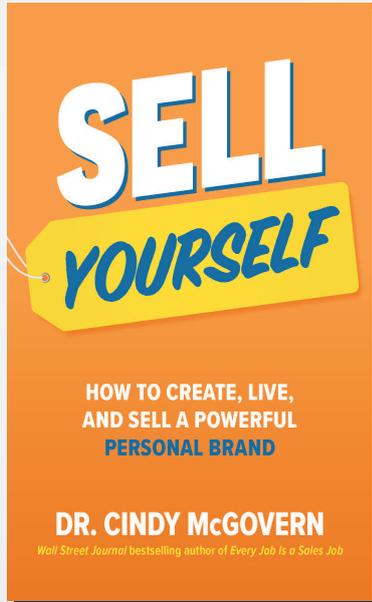


# PERSONAL BRANDING FOR THE REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONAL



*Dr. Cindy*

Why should a homeowner choose you over all of the thousands of real estate professionals in your market when it's time to sell?

Sure, you're licensed in your state. You communicate with your clients. You're dedicated to finding them the right home for the right price.

Your competitors do all of that, too. So why should homeowners choose you?

Real estate professionals are sales professionals. And the best way to boost your business and attract property buyers and sellers is—first and foremost—to *sell yourself*.

*My job is to sell homes, not myself—isn't it?*

Frankly, your job is to do both. The fact is that folks like to buy from people they know, like and trust. Homeowners like to list and buy their houses and condos with agents they know, like and trust.

So having a license—like more than 1.5 million other Realtors in the U.S.—isn't a selling point at all. That is the ante to get into the game. What do you have that your competitors don't? What is your superpower—something that potential clients won't get from other agents?

Sure, showcasing an impressive selection of beautiful homes among your listings will draw customers to you once they see your ads or check for houses for sale online. But just because the listings are yours doesn't mean potential buyers will come to you first when they want to partner with an agent.

They need a reason to. Before you can

sell them a house, you need to sell them that reason. That could be a personal brand that showcases your success.

*How is a personal brand different from my professional brand?*

Your personal and professional brands are intertwined. Both of them will help others see you as the best agent for the job.

But your personal brand will do more for you than publicize how many houses you have sold, how quickly you work and which homes you have listed.

Your personal brand will show everyone you meet that you are smart and knowledgeable about your field and your market; that you have a personality suited to spending long days and evenings driving clients from property to property; and that you are ethical, honest and have your clients' best interests at heart.

A personal brand does, indeed, show off your success and assure potential clients that they can trust and rely on you to sell their homes quickly and for a fair price, and to get them into a new home that they will be happy in for many years.

But it also highlights your core values, like patience, kindness and helpfulness. It showcases your ability to understand how they will use the home and to read between the lines so you can anticipate their needs. It represents you as someone who is up for the challenge of this sale and prepared to step up to the next level once it presents itself.

Your brand certainly is a reflection of

the brokerage you are affiliated with. If that company has a good reputation and a solid brand, that will help you. But that is not going to sell potential clients on hiring you, specifically. Your own personal brand is the only thing that is going to let potential customers know if you're the right individual to represent their interests.

Real estate agents who don't realize that are leaving money on the table.

### *Is my personal brand the same as my reputation?*

Your personal brand is the sales tool that creates your reputation.

How you behave, speak to others, respond to requests, answer your phone, fulfill your promises, react to disappointments and talk about other clients all align to make an impression on clients, colleagues, bankers, title agents, lawyers and others whose paths you cross on a regular basis.

If you live your brand—that is, if you live up to it every day without fail—others will consistently get the impression that you are, indeed, exactly as you present yourself: successful, honest, great with customers.

If you go off brand—even once, in some cases—you can blow a reputation that took you months or years to build.

A personal brand helps you stay on course. It reminds you to behave, speak and react in the way that will show others the “you” you want them to know. That “you” is your best self.

An example: Real estate agents know that the path from listing to closing is a

complicated one. But you deal with every customer and person involved in the transaction the same way: with courtesy, patience, clear explanations, fairness and solid advice.

Every time.

Those customers will tell their neighbors and friends that you dealt with them in a friendly, professional way and that you helped them get the best possible deal on the homes they bought or sold with your help. They will tell co-workers and family. Your colleagues at the closing table will refer their clients to you because they know you will reflect well on them. People will write positive reviews about you and your service on social media and Yelp.

Unless you're inconsistent. Your personal brand—if you create it thoughtfully and make it authentic—will remind you of the way you must present yourself to the world if you want to be a successful agent. If you have a personal brand, you are much more likely to stay on track than if you don't.

### *Is it hard to present my best self to the world day in and day out?*

Think of your personal brand as reflecting you, plus 10%. That means you're 10% more energetic, perhaps 10% more talkative, 10% more confident and 10% more authoritative when you're wearing your agent hat than when you're out to dinner with friends.

That extra 10% can be exhausting.

Some days, in fact, it can be an absolute challenge to show up ready to elevate that extra 10% and wow your clients.

On those days, work in the office or stay

home. Going off brand, even with one client, colleague or vendor, can weaken your reputation as a fair, friendly go-getter. Acting snarky with even one colleague can blow your status as the friendliest Realtor in town. Showing up late or looking like a mess—when your brand has established that you are always punctual and dressed to the nines—can alter a client’s opinion about how professional you are.

Those disappointments turn into gossip, negative social media posts and walking commercials for your brand.

What are you giving up or even destroying when you have an off-brand day? Better not to find out.

### *Doesn't my work speak for itself?*

People who do not believe they need to create, live and sell a powerful personal brand often say their excellent work speaks for itself. They believe if they sell a lot of homes and send out a quarterly mailer showing the houses they have closed, new clients will buzz around them like bees around a flower.

That good work might bring in a few leads. But on their own, your statistics won't make you the top-selling Realtor in your region.

You need to sell more than homes to be successful. You need to sell yourself.

The fact is that there are so many real estate professionals that an inexperienced homebuyer or seller probably believes all of them do the exact same thing. You need to stand out from the crowd.

What is different or better about you than others in that crowd? What story can you share about yourself and your success that goes beyond dollars and cents?

What is it about you that your clients will tell their friends and family? What do they like the most about you? The answer is not that you're a licensed professional. It's not that you sold \$8 million worth of real estate last year.

The answer is personal. It's about you. It's about how you treated the clients. It's about the way you talked to them and explained complicated financing rules to them. It's about the way you remembered their deal-breakers and what they loved most about their childhood homes and what they said they always wanted in a family home but never thought they could afford.

It's about what you sold about yourself during the time you spent with them. In other words, it's about your personal brand.

### *How is selling myself different from selling a house?*

The good news is sales are sales, and you already know how to sell. Consider, however, that not all sales strategies are created equal.

If you have achieved any measure of success selling real estate, you already know that pushing a property onto someone who doesn't love it, can't afford it or wants something else does not create a happy homeowner or a client for life.

But when you work with your clients to find just the perfect property, they will

recommend you to friends and neighbors and return to you years later when they're ready to move again. A sale that creates a win for the seller—you—and a win for the buyer—the homeowner—is the best sale. Win-win sales are known as consultative sales.

That's the best way to sell yourself, too.

## *What's the best way to sell myself?*

Use the same sales strategies and skills that you rely on to sell property to sell yourself. Here is a five-step sales process that can work equally well for both home sales and for selling yourself.

**Step 1: Plan.** You wouldn't take clients around to look at homes without first learning about their income, the size of their families, or their preferences for neighborhoods and home styles. A sale is easiest to make when you are selling something your client wants or needs, so you, of course, determine what that is and which of your listings can fill that need.

Likewise, there's no benefit in pushing yourself on a client who isn't in the market for someone with a personal brand like yours. Perhaps you are boisterous and outgoing, but the client prefers working with someone understated. That's not a mandate to change your brand or personality; it's a clue that you might not be a good fit for the client, and vice versa.

Doing some research about potential clients and the lawyers, title agents and others you will work with on any transaction will help you determine not only if you're a good fit but which of your many qualities you should elevate to

help the deal go smoothly. For example, one client might need to study the numbers and discuss the offer with others before making a decision, while another might go with a gut feeling and sign on the spot. Trying to fit either one into the mold you prefer isn't in the best interests of the client.

It's important to make a different plan for how you will present yourself and work with each client based on his or her personality, preferences and style.

**Step 2: Look for opportunities.** Once you have determined the personal brand that will get you what you want, need and deserve, look for opportunities to show it off. Realize that everyone you interact with forms an impression about you, and if you make a good one, those people will sign with you, recommend you and talk about you in a positive way to potential clients.

Even when you're not officially working, living your personal brand will help you seize opportunities to get business where you least expect it: at the birthday party of a child's friend; at a sports event; on vacation; in yoga class. You never know where you will meet your next client. Be prepared wherever you go.

**Step 3: Establish trust.** If you believe that a truly successful sale is a win-win for both you and the buyer, make sure that comes through loud and clear when you have conversations with potential clients and with people in a position to recommend you to those clients. Listen to what those people need and then offer them what you have only if it fills that need. If you do that, you will establish a reputation as honest, fair and considerate—all parts of a personal brand that will lead others to trust and like you well enough to hire or recommend you..

Beyond the sale you might make today, you are establishing trust with people to make sales for tomorrow. When you connect and gain trust with the people you meet, you plant seeds for them to choose you when it is time for them to buy or sell a home.

**Step 4: Ask for what you want.** This is the hardest step for most people—even sales professionals. So many pros leave money on the table because they don't come right out and ask for the sale.

In the case of personal branding, you can showcase your best qualities, your expertise and your eagerness to please your clients, but that's probably not enough to land those clients. Ask those clients for their business. Ask past clients for referrals. Ask your non-sales colleagues to recommend you. Ask for what you want.

Just as you want to sell your clients what they want, need and deserve, you need to sell them on reciprocating by giving you what you want, need and deserve—their business.

**Step 5: Follow up with gratitude.** If you ask and the answer is “yes,” say, “Thank you.” If the answer is “no,” say, “Thank you.”

Show your gratitude to anyone who considers your request, who buys a house from you or who recommends you to another client. Keep all of the promises you made to them. Follow up with them to make sure they're happy with what they bought from you. Keep in touch with them over the years and make them clients for life.

Real estate professionals are, perhaps, the truest example of how to combine professional and personal brands. As a sales professional, you already know how to sell. Turn your expertise and skill on yourself and use what you know about selling houses to sell yourself as perfect for the next sale you hope to make.



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