

## Adapting to Gen X, Y clients

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The "expert" model of real estate is dying a slow death. Today's Gen X and Gen Y clients have no use for experts or gurus. Instead, the next generation of clients wants to do it their own way.

I was recently speaking with a trainer who is very passionate about helping agents do a better job of generating leads from social media. This is what he said: "Once you meet someone on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, the main goal is to get them from being online to being face-to-face.



Flickr photo by [tanakawho](#) [1].

"The first thing agents must do is get valid contact information so they can put the person in an e-mail drip campaign. Next, agents have got to stop being lazy. Once the agents get a valid phone number, they need to pick up the phone and call that lead."

"What? Pick up the phone and call?" "E-mail them?" Gen X and Gen Y believe that e-mail is for "old people." Furthermore, they don't talk on the phone. In fact, the comments below are pretty typical:

- *"E-mail? The only time I use e-mail is to communicate with my parents or grandparents."*
- *"Talk on the phone? That's way too confrontational."*
- *"I can't control a phone call. It may be someone I don't want to talk to or who may want me to do something I don't want to do. With a text message, I have time to decide if I want to respond as well as how to respond."*

How effective is an e-mail drip system or a phone call if the person an agent is trying to reach never uses either of these communication tools? If agents expect their clients to adapt to what they want, what does that say about their level of customer service?

Furthermore, if agents are not using the communication tools their clients are using, what does that say about their ability to provide their clients with the most up-to-date and highest-quality customer service experience?

One of the most important questions in the real estate industry is, "How would you like me to communicate with you?" This means that you are adapting to what your clients expect rather than vice versa. But this goes beyond just adapting to using text messaging or communicating on social media. The core issue is how you approach the clients you serve.

For example, assume you're working with a Gen X couple who will be purchasing their first home. You assume that they're new to the process, and as an expert with umpteen years of experience you will be in charge of guiding them through the purchase process.

Instead, they begin by grilling you about various aspects of the purchase process. They come armed to your first meeting with a list of 25 questions, as well as the answers they have located on the Web.

They want to know what your opinion is on each of the items, as well as why they have to pay all this extra money in closing costs. In addition, they have a list of 10 properties they would like to see. Suddenly you're on the defensive rather than being the expert. ...CONTINUED

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When working with most Gen Xers, be prepared to handle someone who has thoroughly researched you and your market online. Most Gen Xers are of the belief that they can do it themselves without your help.

The best way to approach this group is to drop the expert approach. Don't ever try to parent them by telling them what to do. Instead, be a resource for them.

You can put together a list of helpful links -- a mortgage calculator, a rent vs. own calculator, public sites that discuss property taxes in your area, lifestyle information, links to community recreational services, reviews of local restaurants, etc. -- but when working with Gen X, it's important to allow them to do their own research.

It's also important to understand that if you won't work with them the way they want, they will go elsewhere.

Gen Y also has no use for your expertise. Instead, members of this generation are highly collaborative. Unlike the individual decision-making style common to Gen X, Gen Y will bring in their friends and parents and share almost everything they're doing via text messages or on their Facebook page.

Their goal is to actively solicit advice from their friends. They have an extremely difficult time making independent decisions. Consequently, they seek as many opinions as possible.

When working with Gen Y, encourage them to bring their friends into the decision-making process. There's no point in fighting it since they're going to do it anyway. Instead, provide them with plenty of resources, but also do what you can to simplify the decision process.

Remember, they are afraid of being wrong and do poorly when criticized.

The good news: Those born before 1965 do value expertise, but even they don't want to be told what to do.

A good way to look at your role as Realtor today is to be a conduit of information, providing all the resources your clients need to make the best possible decision for their unique situation. The great thing about no longer having to be an expert is that it's much easier to point people in the right direction to find what they need than it is to come up with all the correct solutions yourself.

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