

SECTION 3: DEVELOP AN TIME ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The gap between what you have and what you want are your excuses. All it takes to close the gap is to be creative and work your way through the excuses.

-James Altucher

Let's talk about the elephant in the real estate office - time management. Or as some people like to debate, "activity management." You've probably noticed there are endless books, podcasts, and gurus all claiming to have the perfect system. Some focus on time, others on activities, each promising to revolutionize your business.

But here's what I've learned after years of working with real estate agents: The magic isn't in the first word of that phrase - whether you call it "time" or "activity." The real key is in the second word: "management."

Think about that word - management. It implies active engagement, intentional decision-making, taking control. You manage a business, you manage a team, you manage investments. None of these happen by accident. You can't passively manage anything.

This is where many agents get stuck. They let their business happen to them rather than actively managing it. Their day becomes a series of reactions - responding to every ping, ring, and ding that comes their way. Before they know it, weeks have passed, and they haven't moved their business forward in any meaningful way.

The harsh truth? If you're not actively managing your time and activities, something else is - whether it's your clients, other agents, social media, or just the countless distractions of modern life. Without intentional engagement in managing your business, you're essentially letting the world decide your destiny.

So how do we fix this? It starts with understanding that you need a system - but here's the good news: there's no one "right" system. What works for the top producer in your office might be a disaster for you, and that's okay. The goal isn't to find the perfect system; it's to find one that's implementable, actionable, and attainable for YOU on a daily basis.

The first step is surprisingly simple, though not necessarily easy: You need to identify what actually needs to get done. I'm talking about everything - from the big annual planning sessions to your daily prospecting. We're going to break this down into yearly, quarterly, monthly, weekly, and daily activities. (Don't worry - there's a worksheet in the workbook where you can do this exercise.)

Once you know what needs to be done, then you can start thinking about how to track and manage it all. Maybe you're old school and love your Post-it notes. Maybe you live and die by your paper notebook. Perhaps you're all digital with OneNote or an online calendar. Some agents are even exploring AI-based systems to help manage their day. Here's the thing: The tool doesn't matter nearly as much as how you use it.

Because here's the universal truth about any system, whether it's analog or digital: It's only as good as what you put into it. The most sophisticated AI-powered calendar in the world won't help if you haven't first identified your critical tasks and committed to managing them.

In the following pages, we'll walk through how to identify your essential activities and find a system that works for you. Remember, the goal isn't perfection - it's progress. We're looking for better, not perfect. Because at the end of the day, any system you'll actually use is better than a perfect system you'll ignore.

The key is to start thinking of yourself as an active manager of your business rather than a passive participant. Your time - and therefore your business - is too valuable to leave to chance.

Learning from the Masters: Two Approaches to Structuring Your Time

One of the most overwhelming challenges for new real estate agents isn't just managing their time - it's knowing what tasks deserve their time in the first place. With hundreds of possible activities competing for your attention, how do you know where to focus?

Fortunately, we don't have to figure this out alone. Some of the most successful real estate coaches in the industry have developed proven systems that break down exactly what a productive month should look like. Let's look at two contrasting approaches from industry titans Brian Buffini and John Cheplak.

The Buffini Method: Relationship-Based Time Management

Brian Buffini's system is built on the foundation of nurturing your sphere of influence through consistent, multi-channel contact. His method requires dedicated time blocks for both personal outreach and systematic follow-up. In a typical month, here's how your time would be allocated:

Weekly Framework:

- Week 1: Mail informational value documents with personal letters
- Week 2: Conduct pop-by visits and phone calls to follow up on Week 1's mailing
- Week 3: Send valuable email content or newsletters

Daily/Weekly Tasks:

- Write 3 personal notes daily
- Call 5 database contacts daily
- Visit 5 people from your database weekly (pop-bys)
- Add 5 new contacts to your database weekly
- Schedule one personal connection (breakfast/lunch) weekly

The Buffini method works particularly well for agents with strong personal networks and those who excel at face-to-face interaction. While it requires a higher investment in marketing materials and pop-by items (\$250-675 monthly depending on database size), it consistently produces results - typically one closed transaction and two pending deals within the first 100 days.

The Cheplak Method: Digital-First Time Management

John Cheplak's approach takes a more modern, digital-first stance, focusing on leveraging social media and video content to build authority and generate leads. His system requires blocking time for content creation and digital engagement:

Weekly Video Content Schedule:

- Week 1: Create and share market report video
- Week 2: Highlight local business
- Week 3: Showcase local event or attraction
- Week 4: Share your real estate expertise

Supporting Activities:

- Email your database with links to watch your videos
- Convert video transcripts into blog content
- Boost posts to targeted audiences
- Maintain regular social media presence
- Add 5 new contacts weekly
- Create one piece of local website content weekly

The Cheplak method is ideal for agents comfortable with video and social media, offering a lower cost structure (\$40-50 monthly for ads, plus minimal video production costs) while building long-term digital authority.

Both systems share some common elements: consistent contact, valuable content creation, and database growth. The key difference lies in the primary method of engagement - traditional personal contact versus digital connection.

Remember, neither system is "better" - they're just different approaches to solving the same challenge: staying consistently engaged with your sphere of influence while continuing to grow your business. The best system is the one you'll actually implement consistently.

The Power of Putting Pen to Paper

Let me tell you about a fascinating discovery I made while researching time management systems. I came across four different scientific studies that all pointed to the same surprising conclusion: the simple act of writing down your goals dramatically increases your chances of achieving them.

Not by a little bit. We're talking game-changing numbers here.

Dr. Gail Matthews' groundbreaking research in 2015 found that people who wrote down their goals were 33% more successful in achieving them compared to those who kept their goals floating around in their heads. But here's where it gets really interesting - those who wrote down their goals AND shared them with a friend had the highest success rates of all.

Think about that for a moment. Just by moving your goals from your head to paper, you're already a third more likely to achieve them. When was the last time you found a way to increase your odds of success by 33% with such a simple action?

But wait, it gets better.

The Journal of Applied Psychology found an even more dramatic effect - writing down goals increased achievement rates by 42%. That's nearly doubling your chances of success just by taking five minutes to write something down.

"But I'm already organized," you might be thinking. "I keep everything in my head."

That's what many of the high-performing employees in the Academy of Management Journal study thought too. Yet even these accomplished professionals saw significant increases in productivity when they started writing down their goals. It's not just about remembering what needs to be done - there's something almost magical about the connection between writing and achievement.

And here's a bonus that most real estate agents don't consider: The Journal of Research in Personality found that people who wrote down their goals reported higher levels of life satisfaction and well-being. In an industry where burnout is all too common, couldn't we all use a boost in life satisfaction?

What This Means for Your Real Estate Business

Now, let's connect these dots to your daily real estate practice. If writing down big goals has this kind of impact, imagine the compound effect of writing down your daily and weekly activities. This isn't just about your annual sales target - it's about the daily tasks that get you there:

- Those five daily sphere-of-influence calls
- Your weekly social media content calendar
- Your monthly client appreciation activities
- Your quarterly market review sessions

When you write these down, you're not just creating a to-do list. You're engaging in what psychologists call "external storage" - freeing up your mental energy for actually doing the work instead of trying to remember what needs to be done.

Making It Work for You

Here's how to apply these findings to your real estate practice:

- Start with your big annual goals - write them down and share them with your broker or a trusted colleague
- Break those goals down into quarterly milestones
- Create monthly activity targets that support those milestones
- Develop weekly task lists
- Make daily checklists for your non-negotiable activities

Remember, this isn't about creating the perfect system - it's about engaging with your goals and activities in a way that's proven to increase your chances of success. Whether you use a paper planner, a digital task manager, or a simple notebook, the key is to get those goals and activities out of your head and onto something tangible.

The science is clear: if you want to succeed in real estate, start writing it down. Your future self will thank you - and so will your business.

Exercise: Your Business Activity Audit

Take 30 minutes right now to document all your real estate activities. This isn't just another planning exercise - it's about creating a clear picture of everything that goes into running your business.

How to Use This Exercise:

- Start with daily tasks and work your way up to yearly ones
- Write down everything, even tasks that seem obvious
- Include both client-facing and administrative activities
- Don't worry about organizing or prioritizing yet - just get it all down
- Be specific - "follow up with leads" is too vague; "call 5 past clients" is better

Daily Activities

What tasks do you need to do every single business day?

Example: Check MLS for new listings in target neighborhoods

Example: Review and respond to all client emails

Example: Make 5 calls to your database

Weekly Activities

What needs to happen every week to keep your business running?

Example: Post 3 times on social media

Example: Update CRM with new contacts

Example: Preview new listings in core areas

Monthly Activities

What activities maintain and grow your business month to month?

Example: Send market update to database

Example: Review marketing metrics

Example: Host one open house

Quarterly Activities

What bigger-picture items need attention every quarter?

Example: Review business goals and adjust strategies

Example: Deep clean database

Example: Update marketing materials

Yearly Activities

What foundational activities happen annually?

Example: Strategic business planning

Example: Continuing education requirements

Example: Tax preparation

Next Steps

Once you've completed this audit:

- Review your lists - did you miss anything?
- Mark your non-negotiables - what absolutely must happen?
- Identify tasks you could delegate or automate
- Consider which tasks directly generate revenue
- Look for tasks that might not be worth your time



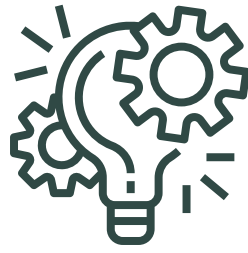
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Active Management vs. Passive Reaction: The text emphasizes the difference between actively managing your business versus letting it happen to you. How has this distinction played out in your real estate career? Can you share examples of when being reactive rather than proactive affected your business outcomes?

System Personalization: The chapter suggests that "there's no one 'right' system" for time management. How have you adapted general time management principles to fit your unique working style and personality? What approaches didn't work for you, despite being highly recommended by others?

Written Goals vs. Mental Goals: Scientific research shows significantly higher achievement rates for people who write down their goals. How might this principle extend beyond just goal-setting to other aspects of real estate business planning? What resistance do you experience to writing things down, and how have you overcome it?

Buffini vs. Cheplak Methods: The text outlines two contrasting approaches to structuring your time and marketing—one relationship-focused with physical touchpoints, the other digital-first with content creation. How might an agent effectively combine elements of both systems? Which components of each system seem most valuable for your specific market and clientele?



ENGAGEMENT PLAN QUIZ

- 1.The real key to success isn't whether you call it "time" or "activity" management - it's in the second word: "_____".
- 2.If you're not actively managing your time and activities, _____ else is - whether it's your clients, other agents, or just the countless distractions of modern life.
- 3.Dr. Gail Matthews' research found that people who wrote down their goals were _____ more successful in achieving them compared to those who kept their goals in their heads.
- 4.Those who wrote down their goals AND _____ them with a friend had the highest success rates of all.
- 5.The Journal of Applied Psychology found writing down goals increased achievement rates by _____%.
- 6.When you write down your tasks, you're engaging in what psychologists call "_____ storage" - freeing up your mental energy.
- 7.Brian Buffini's system is built on the foundation of nurturing your _____ of influence through consistent, multi-channel contact.
- 8.John Cheplak's approach takes a more modern, _____-first stance, focusing on leveraging social media and video content.
- 9.For effective time management, you should break big annual goals down into _____, monthly, and daily activities.
- 10.The best system isn't necessarily the "perfect" one - it's the one you'll actually _____ consistently.

Words to use to fill in the blanks: digital, quarterly, 33%, something, implement, management, shared, external, 42%, sphere

SECTION 4: SETTING YOUR MARKETING BUDGET: INVESTING IN SUCCESS

The two great risks are risking too much but also risking too little. That's for each person to decide. For me, not risking anything is worse than death. By far.

-Jimmy Chin

Let me dispel a common myth right now: Getting your real estate license isn't a golden ticket to instant success. I can't tell you how many times I've seen new agents walk into the office, license in hand, expecting leads to magically appear in their inbox. They've bought into the story that all you need to do is hang your license with a brokerage and wait for the hot leads to start flowing in.

Here's the cold, hard truth: If you're new to real estate, you're not just in the real estate business – you're in the marketing business. Especially during your first three years, you should consider yourself a professional marketer who happens to sell real estate. Those successful agents you see closing deals left and right? They didn't get there by waiting for leads to fall into their laps. They got there by investing in marketing consistently and strategically.

"But the brokerage promised they'd provide leads!" I hear this all the time. Sure, some brokerages provide leads, but think about it – if brokerage-provided leads were enough to build a successful business, every agent would be thriving. The reality is that building a sustainable real estate business requires a significant investment in marketing, just like any other business.

This is where many agents hit their first major roadblock. They've spent money on getting licensed, joined a brokerage, maybe even bought some nice business cards – and now they're hesitant to invest in marketing. "I'll wait until I make some money first," they tell me. But that's like saying you'll wait until you have customers before you turn on the lights in your store.

In this chapter, we're going to talk about how much you really need to invest in marketing, where that money should go, and how to make every dollar work as hard as possible. We'll look at real numbers from successful agents and break down exactly what it takes to build a marketing budget that will help you not just survive, but thrive in real estate.

But first, let's address some common objections I hear about marketing budgets – because understanding why these objections are holding you back is the first step to moving past them.

The Myths That Hold Agents Back

Let me address some common objections I hear when discussing marketing budgets with agents:

"I'll Wait Until I Make Some Sales"

"I'm waiting until I make money before I spend on marketing." I hear this from new agents all the time, and I get it. The idea of spending money before you're making money feels backwards. But let me share a hard truth: treating your marketing budget as an afterthought is like trying to fill a bucket with water before you've patched the holes.

This is the classic chicken-and-egg problem. You need marketing to get sales, but you're waiting for sales to fund marketing. Think about it: if you owned a restaurant, would you wait until customers showed up before turning on the lights and putting up your sign? Of course not. Marketing isn't an expense – it's an investment in your business's foundation.

"I Like to Budget on the Fly"

I once had an agent tell me proudly that she "goes with her gut" on marketing spending. Six months later, she couldn't tell me where her money went or what results she got. Even a basic budget beats no budget at all. Without a plan, you're just hoping for the best – and hope isn't a strategy. Without a plan, you're just throwing money into the wind and hoping some of it lands somewhere useful.

"I'll Do It All Myself"

Let me share a quick calculation that changed how I think about this. If you're aiming for \$150,000 in annual income, that breaks down to about \$72 per hour. Would you pay someone \$72 an hour to stuff envelopes? Because that's exactly what you're doing when you handle every marketing task yourself instead of focusing on high-value activities like meeting clients.

"Top Agents Don't Have to Spend Money"

This is like saying Olympic athletes don't have to train anymore. The truth is, successful agents can rely more on referrals because they've spent years building their business. As a new agent, you need to invest more heavily in marketing to build that referral base. Here's a surprising stat: According to Real Estate Webmasters, only 1.6% of agents making over \$300,000 spend less than \$5,000 on marketing. The myth that successful agents don't need marketing is just that - a myth.

So How Much Should You Spend?

The U.S. Small Business Administration recommends spending 7-8% of your gross revenue on marketing if you're making less than \$5 million annually. However, real estate coaches like Jared James often recommend a more aggressive approach of 28-30% for growth-focused agents.

Let's break it down based on your gross commission income (GCI) goals:

For agents targeting \$100,000 in GCI:

- Conservative approach (7-8%): \$7,000-8,000 annually
- Aggressive approach (28%): \$28,000 annually

For agents targeting \$200,000 in GCI:

- Conservative approach (7-8%): \$14,000-16,000 annually
- Aggressive approach (28%): \$56,000 annually

For agents targeting \$300,000 in GCI:

- Conservative approach (7-8%): \$21,000-24,000 annually
- Aggressive approach (28%): \$82,000 annually

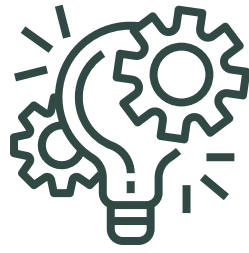
Creating Your Marketing Budget

Think of your marketing budget like building a house – you need a blueprint before you start construction. Here's how to create yours:

1. Start with your annual income goal
2. Calculate your marketing budget based on 7-8% of that goal
3. Allocate funds across different marketing channels:
 - a. Sphere marketing (client appreciation, events)
 - b. Lead generation (online advertising, direct mail)
 - c. Brand building (website, social media)
 - d. Professional development (courses, coaching)

Remember: Your marketing budget isn't just about spending money – it's about investing in your business's growth. The key is to start with what you can afford, measure your results, and adjust as you grow.

The most successful agents don't ask whether they should have a marketing budget – they ask how to make their marketing budget work harder for them. Your marketing investment today plants the seeds for next year's harvest. Don't wait to get started.



BUDGET QUIZ

1. Getting your real estate license isn't a golden ticket to instant success. If you're new to real estate, you're not just in the real estate business - you're in the _____ business.
2. During your first three years, you should consider yourself a professional marketer who happens to _____ real estate.
3. Treating your marketing budget as an afterthought is like trying to fill a _____ with water before you've patched the holes.
4. If you're aiming for \$150,000 in annual income, that breaks down to about \$_____ per hour.
5. According to Real Estate Webmasters, only _____ % of agents making over \$300,000 spend less than \$5,000 on marketing.
6. The U.S. Small Business Administration recommends spending _____% of your gross revenue on marketing if you're making less than \$5 million annually.
7. Real estate coaches like Jared James often recommend a more aggressive approach of _____% for growth-focused agents.
8. For agents targeting \$200,000 in GCI with a conservative approach (7-8%), the recommended marketing budget is \$_____ annually.
9. Your marketing budget should be allocated across different channels including sphere marketing, lead generation, brand building, and _____.
10. The most successful agents don't ask whether they should have a marketing budget - they ask how to make their marketing budget _____ harder for them.

Words to use to fill in the blanks: work, bucket, sell, 14,000-16,000, 1.6, 28-30, professional development, 72, marketing, 7-8



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Starting Budget Philosophy: The text states that many new agents want to "wait until they make money" before investing in marketing. How might this approach impact an agent's long-term success compared to those who invest in marketing from the beginning? What creative strategies could new agents with limited funds use to maximize their marketing impact?

Time vs. Money Trade-offs: The author calculates that an agent earning \$150,000 annually is essentially "paying themselves" \$72/hour. How does understanding your hourly value change your perspective on which marketing tasks to handle yourself versus outsource? What specific marketing activities would you consider worth your personal time, and which would be better delegated?

Conservative vs. Aggressive Approaches: The text presents both conservative (7-8%) and aggressive (28-30%) marketing budget recommendations. What factors should an agent consider when deciding where they fall on this spectrum? How might an agent's career stage, market conditions, or personal financial situation influence this decision?

Return on Investment Measurement: Beyond simply setting a marketing budget, how would you measure whether your marketing dollars are being used effectively? What metrics or systems would you put in place to track which marketing channels provide the best ROI for your specific business model?