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# A Personal Touch Wins Business

Expand your lending footprint by adding value to your referral partners

**T**echnology has brought more efficiency to mortgage professionals' lives. We can now do in minutes what used to take hours — typing up loan applications, verification forms, good-faith estimates, etc.

But with technology's efficiencies, mortgage brokers and originators often forget that this business is about building relationships — and relationships are built face to face and conversation by conversation. They can't all be formed via e-mail.

We retain clients and referral partners and increase our business with them by occasionally meeting them in person, whether it's at their office discussing how we can enhance our relationship or over lunch talking about our families. The biggest challenge for most mortgage professionals seems to be determining a comfortable reason to meet with prospective customers and referral partners. You need to know where they are coming from and have something of value to provide.

The livelihood of real estate agents is based upon you not messing up their transaction and thereby costing them a paycheck. You can certainly present yourself as a mortgage professional, but they are probably reasonably content with their current lender. Remember, in today's

vanilla lending environment, you can't say that you have different products or underwriting guidelines — everyone pretty much has the same products. But you can show them how you can help support the growth of their business and assist them in capturing more market share.

You have to provide value. One way to do so is to provide marketing materials and support to enhance referral partners' businesses or to aid their employees and clients. There are numerous software programs that can provide mortgage professionals with open-house fliers, buyer-financing menus, loan comparisons, etc. Some mortgage companies make these materials available to their originators at no cost.

Imagine the ability to contact a real estate agent or small builder and offer to supply them — within compliance — with fliers to keep in their listings or to make available to their open-house guests. Imagine providing a financial planner or a human-resources director with fliers that show the advantages of owning over renting or loan comparisons so that their clients — prospective borrowers — know how much cash they would need to close and what mortgage payments they would need to qualify for. Imagine sending your current borrowers an analysis of their

current loan program and payment structure compared to a refinance option.

By providing these materials, potential borrowers can easily pick up your marketing flier in a real estate listing and know to contact you if they need to refinance to a lower rate or to pull cash out of their home equity. Marketing fliers are a good way to assist the professionals with whom you work and can be co-branded to promote their activities as well as your own. This turns out to be a win-win relationship for mortgage professionals and their business partners.

Without a sustainable action plan, mortgage professionals are left constantly chasing that next lead rather than having a book of business chasing them. Providing value to referral partners gives you a long-term strategy for building your business and helps you build your own lending footprint. ●

**Stuart Blend**, business-development manager for Southwest Funding with about 100 retail offices in 14 states, has more than 20 years of mortgage-industry experience, which includes developing and running the retail mortgage division for several large multibranch mortgage companies. Blend also is known for his training and speaking. Reach him at (877) 878-8989 or [sblend@southwestfunding.com](mailto:sblend@southwestfunding.com).