

THE 2026 GUIDE FOR REAL ESTATE AGENTS

Where Agents Lose Listings

The 7 leaks between a referral, a past client or an online search and a signed listing or buyer agreement, and a 30-day plan to fix them.

For established agents and teams who want more business they own, and less they rent from portals.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Most clients hire the first agent they talk to.

Buyers and sellers don't shop around much. Whoever they reach first, and trust quickly, usually gets the business. That makes the moments before the first conversation worth more than any ad.



80%

of recent sellers contacted only one agent. So did 67% of first-time buyers and 76% of repeat buyers.

NAR 2025 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers (buyers July 2024 to June 2025)

66%

of sellers found their agent through a referral or used an agent they'd worked with before.
Same report

87% vs 29%

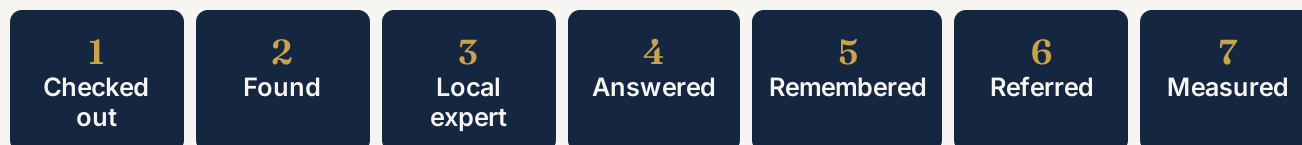
87% of sellers would recommend their agent. Yet only 29% of sellers hired an agent they had worked with before.

Same report

What it means for you: your business lives on referrals and past clients, and both leak quietly. Clients like you, but years pass before they move again, and many hire someone else. The fix isn't more portal leads. It's being easy to find, quick to answer and impossible to forget.

Seven places a client slips away

Whether they come from a referral, a past deal or a search, people move through the same steps before they sign.



Leak	What it looks like from the outside
1. The referral lookup	A friend passes your name, they search you, and find an outdated profile or nothing at all.
2. Living in your brokerage's shadow	No Google profile of your own. The portals and the brokerage own your online presence.
3. Not the neighborhood expert	No neighborhood pages or videos, so Google and AI name someone else for your area.
4. Slow replies	Online inquiries wait hours, and the client talks to another agent first.
5. The past-client fade	No steady, useful contact after closing, so they forget you before they move again.
6. A sphere with no system	Contacts spread across your phone, email and the brokerage CRM, with no plan.
7. Silent reviews, no tracking	Reviews that don't name the area, and no idea where your closed deals came from.

Which leak is costing you the most listings?

Take the free 2-minute visibility score. 10 questions, instant result.

Get my free score

Passing the lookup test

LEAK 1

The referral lookup

A referral gets you considered, not hired. Before they call, most people search your name. What they find decides whether they call you or ask for another name.

- Search your own name plus "realtor" and your city. Look at the first page like a stranger would.
- Make sure your photo, bio, reviews and recent sales show up and match everywhere.
- Have one link to share: a simple page with who you are, the areas you serve, reviews and a way to reach you.

LEAK 2

Living in your brokerage's shadow

Your brokerage profile and the portals are fine as extras. But you don't control them, and the leads they create are often shared.

- Claim a Google Business Profile in your own name if you qualify under Google's rules, with your photo, service areas and reviews.
- Own a simple website on your own domain that goes with you if you change brokerages.
- Keep your name, phone and license details identical on your site, Google, Zillow, Realtor.com and social.

Being the local answer, and answering first

LEAK 3

Not the neighborhood expert

People ask Google and ChatGPT who knows a neighborhood. Assistants name agents whose pages and videos clearly cover it.

- One page per neighborhood you really work: what it's like, recent sales, schools nearby, commute, your take.
- A short video walking each neighborhood: the coffee spot, the park, the drive to work.
- Run the test: ask ChatGPT "Who's a good realtor for [neighborhood], [city]?" Write down who gets named.

LEAK 4

Slow replies

With most buyers and sellers hiring the first agent they speak to, speed is a big part of winning the client.

- Every online inquiry gets an instant, personal-sounding text: "Got it, I'll call you in 10 minutes."
- Set a rule: a real reply within 15 minutes during working hours, and first thing in the morning otherwise.
- If you're showing or at a closing, have a teammate or assistant cover the phone.
- Test it: submit an inquiry on your own website and time the reply.

Staying remembered for years

LEAK 5

The past-client fade

Sellers in NAR's 2025 report had owned their homes for a median of 11 years. That's a long time to be remembered by someone you helped once.

- One useful touch a month: what homes nearby sold for, a local event, a seasonal home tip.
- Mark closing anniversaries and send a short note with an updated home value estimate.
- Invite past clients to one small event a year. Showing up in person beats any email.

LEAK 6

A sphere with no system

Your sphere is your business. If it lives in your phone and three different apps, it can't be worked.

- Put every past client and sphere contact in one CRM you own, not just the brokerage's.
- Tag them: past client, sphere, referral partner, active.
- Block one hour a week: 5 calls, 5 texts, 5 handwritten notes.
- Ask for referrals at the moments clients are happiest: at closing and when they send a thank-you.

Proof, rules and numbers

LEAK 7

Silent reviews, no tracking

Reviews that name the neighborhood and what you did give Google and AI something specific to repeat.

- Ask every happy client for a review by text, with the direct link, and invite them to mention the area.
- Ask every new client "How did you find me?" and log it with the closed deal.

A note on the rules

In California, first-contact marketing like websites, ads and social profiles must show your name and DRE license number (Bus. & Prof. Code 10140.6), and DRE rules add broker identification. Fair housing rules apply to every ad: describe the home and the area, never who should live there. Since August 2024, MLS participants need a written agreement with a buyer before touring. Not legal advice: check with your broker.

Score yourself (1 point per yes)

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | Searching my name shows my photo, reviews and a way to reach me |
| ☐ | I have a Google profile and a website I own |
| ☐ | My main neighborhoods each have a page or video |
| ☐ | Every online inquiry gets a real reply within 15 minutes |
| ☐ | Every past client hears from me at least monthly |
| ☐ | I know where each closed deal came from last year |

5 to 6: strong. **3 to 4:** you're leaking referrals. **0 to 2:** start with leaks 4 and 5 this week.

YOUR 30-DAY PLAN

One month, about two hours a week

Week	Do this
Week 1 Answer first	Submit an inquiry on your own site and time the reply. Set up the instant text and the 15-minute rule. Arrange phone cover for showings.
Week 2 Pass the lookup	Search your name like a stranger. Fix your photo, bio and details everywhere. Claim or complete your Google profile. Make your one shareable link.
Week 3 Own your area	Build a page for your top neighborhood and film one walk-through video. Run the AI test and write down who's named.
Week 4 Wake up your sphere	Get every past client into one CRM. Send your first useful monthly update. Text 10 happy clients your review link.

Track it

One line a week: inquiries, reply time, conversations, appointments, agreements signed, and where each came from. Four weeks of notes shows you which leak was costing the most.

Scored under 5? Let's find the fastest fix.

Book a free 30-minute plan call. I'll look at your business live and hand you the three fixes that would bring in the most listings.

[Book my free call](#)

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want us to find your leaks?

Take the free visibility score: 10 questions, 2 minutes. It shows where you're losing people on Google, AI, social and follow-up.

Then book a free 30-minute call. I'll look at your business live and build you a custom plan: how you show up when referrals look you up, whether Google and AI name you for your neighborhoods, and the three fixes that would bring in the most listings, fastest.

You keep the plan whether we work together or not.

[Get my free score](#)

[Book my free plan call](#)



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SCAN FOR YOUR
FREE SCORE

Sources: National Association of REALTORS®, 2025 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers (buyers July 2024 to June 2025): Exhibit 7-3, chapter 4 and 7 highlights · BrightLocal, Local Consumer Review Survey 2026 · California Business and Professions Code 10140.6; DRE Regulation 2773 · NAR settlement practice changes effective August 17, 2024. This guide is marketing guidance, not legal advice.