

Interview Transcript

I chose to interview the two real-estate agents that I currently assist, Marsha Emory and Emma Daniels. I chose to interview more than one agent because in the real estate business, ways of communication are very unique to each agent.

The following is a transcript of the interview I conducted at the Re/Max Results Crocus Hill office on October 13th, 2004. By placing their answers together in this way, I felt it would be easier to point out the similarities and differences between the agents.

1. What percentage of your work time would you estimate you spend writing? reading? conferencing? talking on the phone?

ME – Writing: 35%, Reading: 5%, Conferencing: 10%, Talking on the Phone: 50%

ED – Writing: 25%, Reading: 10%, Conferencing: 40%, Talking on the Phone: 25%

2. What kind of communication media (writing, speaking, email, phone, etc.) do you use most often?

ME – Speaking via Telephone/Cell Phone

ED – Speaking via Conferencing/Face-to-face

3. How do you determine whether to use a memo, fax, email or the phone?

ME – “It depends on what is required and how much time it will take”

ED – “Whatever is most convenient and effective”

4. What forms of writing (reports, proposals, memos, emails, etc.) do you most often write?

ME – “I most often email”

ED – Email

5. What are the typical reasons for writing these kinds of documents?

ME – “Because email is fast and leaves a paper trail”

ED – “Email is quick and easy and I would guess it’s what other agents use most also. We have all gotten used to being closely attached to our computers.”

6. Are there expected formats or organizations for these documents? [email]

ME – “No, not really”

ED – “Not really”

7. What other kinds of documents do you write?

ME – Purchase agreements & related documents

ED – “Purchase agreements, offers, legal things like that and marketing material like newspaper ads and postcards and holiday cards.”

8. What are their purposes?

ME – “To engage in a contract to purchase or sell a home or a property lot”

ED – “To buy property or sell property”

9. Who do you write to when you write these documents--what kind of audience do they have?

ME – “The title company, closing companies, loan officers, buyers and sellers and other agents.”

ED – “Professionals mostly, generally those documents are not well enough understood by the buyers or sellers although they do have access to them or copies of their own.”

10. What differences are there between the writing you do for insiders and writing you do for people outside the company?

ME – “The words agents use, and abbreviations”

ED – “Tons. Tone, courtesy, brevity, etc.”

11. I have several documents that I think are common to this field. Would you look at a couple briefly and tell me what they are and what they are used for. For example: What is it? What function does it perform? What is the typical audience for this kind of document? What content do documents like this usually contain?

Purchase Agreement:

ME – “This is what we use to make an offer on a house, or it’s what we receive from another agent’s office that says that someone is making an offer on the house that we have listed.” In short, The Purchase Agreement is a legal and binding agreement to purchase a property if all the included stipulations are met, most importantly the price.

Counteroffer Addendum:

ME – “For example, When an offer is made that is not quite as high as the seller would like it to be, they counteroffer, or suggest a price that is often less than the list price, but higher than the price of the original purchase agreement.” The counteroffer does not only affect price, however. It can also be used to change the date of closing, to request inclusions (like appliances or furniture) or to ask for allowances for things like flooring, paint, windows, etc.

Closing Worksheet:

ED – “This is a form all agents fill out when they turn in a sale. It allows Corporate to be able to take one look at the sheet and know what to do with the file.” The closing worksheet is a fill-in-the-blank generic sheet all agents use as a cover page for their files in transaction.

Estimated Seller’s Expense:

ED – “This is a sheet I would fill out and give a client who was going to list their house with me. It just gives the seller a good idea of the dollar amount they will take with them after their home sells in the case that it would sell for \$X, \$X or \$X; three different prices. It includes estimates of costs such as my services, closing costs, and fees.” I found that both the agents I interviewed use ESE sheets, but that some real estate companies do not require that they be used. Personally I think that they are a great tool for clients who want to see the bottom line. Elizabeth also said that some agents choose not to use them because by listing out all the charges and fees some clients will be scared off by how expensive it is to sell their house. However, sellers who are not initially aware of the costs can be very surprised or upset at closing time of the number they are actually walking away with after selling their home.

Marsha Emory, a young, successful, and independent agent affiliated with Re/Max Results, has been in the real estate business for over 6 years. In her experience, she has worked with a variety of people in many different neighborhoods of the Twin Cities.

Emma Daniels is also affiliated with Re/Max Results and has a record of over 13 successful years as a real estate agent. Unlike Marsha, Emma focuses most often on particular areas of Saint Paul. She too has worked with many different people, from first time homebuyers to real estate investors and has built up a long list of faithful clientele.

After interviewing each of the agents, I have found both slight and major differences in the way each of them does business. Marsha relies mostly on word of mouth advertising. Her style of making friends out of clients has helped her to obtain many referrals and has been vital

to the success of her business. Her style of communication with clients is mostly informal, in a friend-like manner. She most often communicates via telephone and email, as those are the fastest and most effective methods for her. Often she uses fax machines to forward paper documents and obtain required signatures because her clients may be a considerable drive away and faxing provides the timeliest response.

On the other hand, Emma uses a different approach toward communicating with clients and potential clients. Unlike Marsha, Emma often uses paid advertising to communicate the ability of her services to the public. Although, like Marsha, she has many clients referred to her, Emma would say that her main medium of attracting clients is through mailings, newspaper announcements and sign and bench advertising.

Emma tends to prefer face-to-face interaction over phone calls and email. She says that whenever she can she tries to meet with her clients to discuss in person the progress of their buying/selling status and when reviewing and filling out documents. She does use telephone and email regularly, but for the majority of interaction with her clients, she conferences with them directly.

Although these two agents use dissimilar communication styles and mediums when corresponding with clients, I found that they use similar communication styles when speaking with other agents. Hardly a secret to anyone, convenience and speed are key when dealing with the fast-paced real estate market. All successful agents understand this and abide by an unstated rule of brevity. In my first interaction with a real estate agent other than the two that I assist, I felt a sense of contempt from the agent I spoke with, as if I were inconveniencing him just for calling. After more experience and a greater understanding of the daily routines of agents, I realized that he didn't intend to be disrespectful or ill-mannered when speaking, but that he expected me, as an agent's assistant, to understand and speak in the same way. What I realized was that agents are a group of people who, when speaking with others in their field, interact in such a way that is meant to waste not even a smidgen of time. They use abbreviations for everything that to the unfamiliar ear sounds like pieces of secret code only other agents can decipher. They seem to say what they need to and only what they need to as fast as they can say it, then move on to the next item on their to-do-list. As you can obviously tell, this is quite a different style of communication than the approach agents need to take when speaking with their clients.

The interviews I conducted as well as the experiences that I have had have shown me that even though two people do the same line of work and even work under same company, their communication styles may differ considerably in some ways, but be very similar in others.