



Good W.H.A.L.E. Hunting – Partnering with the right Realtors

A lot of the mortgage professionals I've worked with over the years have told me that real estate agents are difficult to work with. Some might say that's a nice way of putting it.

Although not in the same capacity, I've worked with Realtors for the last 12 years.

As a whole, they're no more difficult to work with than mortgage professionals, insurance agents, or any other type of business professional/small business owner.

Some of them are awesome, some are a pain in the butt. You've got folks on both ends of the spectrum and everywhere in between.

That's how it is with everything.

The fact is: as a mortgage originator, if you play your cards right and learn how to play the game, Realtors can make you a LOT of money.

You also need to be empathetic and understand that Realtors are getting hit up by mortgage people for referrals every single day. Nonstop.

Agents might as well keep a fishbowl on their desk for LO business cards and set up a separate vm box for all the loan officers hitting them up trying to get their foot in the door for referrals.

That's where a lot of the loyalty issues come in.

You've got real estate agent/loan officer relationships, which, most of the time, are a one-way street when it comes to referrals.

On top of that, these agents are getting bombarded all the time by new loan officers trying to outdo each other—offering all kinds of goodies, from dinners, to ballgame tickets, paying for marketing with MSAs, etc.

Everybody says they'll do a good job on the loan, they'll close on time, they've got great communication... yada, yada, yada.



Good W.H.A.L.E. Hunting – Partnering with the right Realtors

So, what separates you from the other 25 loan officers that have approached the same Realtors you're talking to (just in the last week) asking for business?

How are you going to prevent the next LO that comes along with a decent value offering from snagging one of your producing agents out from under you?

Here's the key that's going to separate you from all that noise:

Bringing REAL VALUE to the table.

Not donuts or rate sheets, or promises of impeccable customer service.

And you definitely don't want to just start paying for half of their marketing with your fingers crossed hoping that they'll eventually refer you a deal.

That hardly ever works, and when it does, it's not the position you want to be in.

You don't want to be chasing Realtors around with your hand out because you paid for something.

A good place to start is understanding what the obstacles are in building new Realtor relationships. Once you do, they're a lot easier to overcome.

For example: any Realtor that's worth talking to already has loan officers they're comfortable working with.

Pretty obvious, right?

You need to disrupt their existing loan officer relationships; you have to get the in-house mortgage person out of the equation, and establish loyalty.

And all of that is a lot easier than you might think.



The fact is, Realtor co-marketing is broken.

You could spend a life-time chasing around the wrong agents with a revolving door of Realtors that seem hot one minute and then never return your calls the next.

You don't want that.

Neither do I—that's why I wrote this.

The strategy I'm going to share with you does not entail you becoming their marketing assistant, or some lengthy honeymooning process either.

What I'm going to show you is how to:

1. Find the RIGHT Realtors.

We call these your “W.H.A.L.E. Agents.”

W.H.A.L.E. stands for Worth Helping A Little Extra.

These are producers that you enjoy (or at least can tolerate) working with that are in a position to refer you at least 1 client/deal per month. Not 1 referral, 1 sale.

2. Approach the relationship from a position of strength.

You don't want to find yourself genuflecting to Realtors and groveling for their referrals.

That's not going to be needed when you're actually bringing them business (while generating your own exclusive leads).

That's what this strategy is all about.

Just like you can't sell a mortgage to a click, Realtors can't sell houses to clicks.



Good W.H.A.L.E. Hunting – Partnering with the right Realtors

Chances are, if they're doing any marketing (SPOILER ALERT—those are the ones you want get in with!), they're getting a lot of traffic with very few leads...

Or, just as bad, they get a ton of leads, and almost none of them close. They have a quality issue.

A lot of times, it's both—they don't get enough leads and the leads they do get suck.

Those are 2 key and universal pain points for Realtors.

This strategy lets YOU step in and bring a solution.

That's going to be your USP—your unique selling proposition.

And it's one you can take to the bank... literally.

Realtors want to close more deals, and you can make that happen.

Good W.H.A.L.E Hunting: Strategy Hunting NEW W.H.A.L.E. Realtor Partners

First, start by making a list of the real estate agents you're interested in working with.

These should be new agents you don't currently have a relationship with and aren't sending you any business.

Chances are you already have a few of these in mind. If so, great—get them on the list.

You probably need more though, so let's dive right into how to find them.

The way you identify Realtors that are "Worth Helping A Little Extra" is by looking for agents that are actually doing business and actively marketing.



Good W.H.A.L.E. Hunting – Partnering with the right Realtors

No sense in teaming up with Realtors that don't sell and just want free stuff from loan officers.

The fact is: the good Realtors are already taken, and they're busy.

They're not just sitting around waiting for a loan officer to come in to chat and hand them a stack of business cards.

They're also comfortable with who they're already working with.

You're going to have to disrupt their current loan officer relationships to make something happen.

With the right approach and a solid Unique Value Proposition, that's a lot easier than you might think.

We already know that Realtors aren't all that loyal to loan officers, *which works to your advantage when you're on the offense.*

With respect to their LO relationships, agents are often thinking, "What have you done for me lately?"—leaving the door wide open for you to swoop in.

(Remember, they're the ones usually dishing out the referrals, so this sense entitlement isn't altogether unwarranted.)

Before we go any further, let's reexamine whys the loyalty issues exist between Realtors and loan officers.

Don't be bitter about it; instead, think about it from an agent's standpoint: they've got loan officers coming at them all day every day asking for business.

This one has a box of donuts. That one has a fruit basket—everyone has "great rates and service, with excellent communication skills, quick turnaround time, and thorough follow up procedures...

Do you see where I'm going with this?



Question: what's your Unique Selling Proposition for a Realtor?

Say a new producing agent is standing in front of you right now...
what's your pitch?

How do you shift past the usual (awkward) nonsense and get them
to hear you out?

Will you win them over and get them excited about working with
you?

I should be able to shake you out of your sleep at 2:00am and you
knock that out of the park every single time.

And don't get caught up in the hype of an in-house loan officer.

That's a nonissue.

I talk to in-house loan officers all the time, and they usually can't
figure out for the life of them how they're sitting on the floor with
45+ agents and they don't get any business out of it.

It all comes back to agents being comfortable with who they're
already working with.

Agents change brokerages all the time.

When a producing agent switches companies, they usually keep
their entourage, including loan officers they've been working with
(assuming those LOs are doing a good job on the loans and
answering the phone when the agent or their clients call).

By the way, I hear Realtors gripe that LOs don't answer the phone
all the time—that's an easy way to separate yourself from other
loan officers. Answer the damn phone! 😊

These are the reasons why you need a bullet proof Unique Selling
Proposition to disrupt things.



We'll cover your U.S.P shortly, but first, let's talk about finding the right agents so you can put your new USP to use and start making some money.

Finding New Producing W.H.A.L.E. Agents

Preparation is key. You don't want to waste time talking to and chasing Realtors that have nothing to bring to the table.

Rather, spend time up front researching and finding the right agents to approach.

For this next part, building your lead list of Realtors, adding notes, etc.—having a good C.R.M. will be incredibly helpful.

If you don't have a C.R.M., use an Excel or Google Docs spreadsheet.

Producing agents shouldn't be hard to find, and there are a lot of ways you can go about it.

One of my favorites is to use the search engines just like a consumer would.

More often than not, you'll see producers at the top of search engines for phrases like "CITY real estate" and "CITY homes for sale".

If an agent has a website that's on the first or second page of Google or Bing for highly competitive real estate search phrases, whether it's an organic listing or a paid ad, they're doing more than the average real estate agent to promote their business.

Not to mention they're getting plenty of traffic as a result.

You'll have to sift through the mega sites like Zillow, Trulia, Realtor.com, Homes.com, etc. (we'll talk about how to use these sites shortly) to find the individual agent websites, but they're there...



Good W.H.A.L.E. Hunting – Partnering with the right Realtors

Especially when you make your way to pages 2 and 3, which isn't optimal placement, but still pretty good considering we're talking about highly competitive real estate key phrases and Realtors that are going toe to toe with giant national real estate portals for search engine placement.

You can find these agents all over for any city or geographic area you're interested in targeting.

Some of the most popular real estate search phrases are:

- CITY real estate
- CITY real estate listings
- CITY homes for sale
- Homes for sale in CITY
- CITY condos
- CITY condos for sale
- CITY realtor
- CITY real estate agent
- Search CITY real estate
- Search CITY homes for sale

Simply replace "CITY" with your city, town, county, or community of interest, and test searches including a reference to state or state abbreviation (i.e.—"San Diego, CA homes for sale") where applicable to pull up search results with Realtor websites that are getting traffic to them.

Many of the results will be larger Brokerage websites (which may or may not be a good option for you—set these aside for later), and also, major real estate search portals.

These major real estate portals can provide you with direct access to their advertisers—agents that are spending money on marketing. You can do similar research directly on these real estate portal websites (Zillow, Trulia, Realtor.com, Homes.com, etc.)

Same idea—just run some searches and take note of the Realtors that are paying for premium advertising listings.

Now, obviously just because an agent is paying for premium placement doesn't mean they're a good fit for you (or a producer



Good W.H.A.L.E. Hunting – Partnering with the right Realtors

for that matter), but it shows that they're investing in their business, which is a good starting point.

Keep in mind: this strategy is not about paying for their marketing. Instead, you're going to piggyback off of *their* marketing efforts. To do that, you need to provide value. A lot of it.

Another strategy to help you determine which Realtors are worth approaching is looking at their track record by checking information available through the MLS.

This includes number of sales for the year, listing inventory, length of time their listings are on the market, and other helpful information you can access.

You can also find proactive agents that are marketing and driving traffic through craigslist, social media, videos on YouTube, email marketing, etc.

There's also no shortage of agents that are consistently spending money on traditional advertising, which you can spot all over your local market.

These are all agents you could be helping generate more business. That's the key.

Once you've come up with a list of 25+ new W.H.A.L.E. candidates, you're going to stack-rank these agents based on the perceived opportunity they present and productivity —your A's, B's, & C's.

Of the 25 or potential W.H.A.L.E. agent partners, your goal is to partner up with 3-5 of them, no more than 10.

Each of these agents should be in a position to send you at least 1, possibly 2 new clients every 30-60 days.

Also, you'll want research their Facebook, LinkedIn, MLS data like number of transactions and listings, website, online marketing,



offline marketing, etc. to make sure you're only focusing on agents that are worth going after.

Good W.H.A.L.E Hunting: Strategy Hunting Existing W.H.A.L.E. Realtor Partners

This approach of teaming up with agents and providing them with leads and lead generation landing pages works just as well for existing Realtors that you've already worked with.

In fact, it's easier to call on agents you already have a relationship with (even if you've only worked with them on a deal or 2) than it is to go after brand new agents cold.

This strategy gives you a compelling reason to call on Realtors that you've worked with in the past and would like to get more business from, without it being an awkward (and usually pointless), "Hey you got any referrals you could send me?" type of phone call.

Usually, it's not necessarily the fault of the LO that a relationship fizzles out.

A lot of times, it's because another loan officer came into the picture and snatched away the agent by offering some sort of value above and beyond a promise to do a good job on the loan.

By the way, most Realtors won't call to report that to you either (unless they're trying to pit you up against one another to see who can come up with the best perks, which is a red flag in terms of their character and may not be the type of agent you want to be working with).

Usually, they just become less responsive and eventually, fade away completely. Sometimes it's more abrupt than that.

Another common scenario is you've worked with an agent on just one or 2 transactions, you know they're a producer and could be sending you deals regularly, but they're not and you haven't found



a good way of circling back to them and taking the relationship to a new level.

I'm sure you've also got Realtors you work with that do send you clients rather consistently, but you know they could be sending you more deals than they are currently and you'd like to position yourself ahead of the other LOs that are currently getting that business.

Other times, a deal falls through and so does the relationship with the agent.

Or you just lose touch for no reason in particular.

And when it comes to agents that you know are sending you all the clients they can... remember: all good things come to an end.

Continuing to do a great job on the loans and answering their calls is of the utmost importance, but chances are, if they're a producer, you're still at risk of another good LO that's a strong salesperson and persistent in their pursuit of that Realtor's business luring them away.

These are all golden opportunities and low-hanging fruit when you have the right USP.

You've got to go after what you want.

This strategy gives you that ability to reach out to the Realtors who you know are producers and that you've enjoyed working with, but for one reason or another, ended up losing contact with you and are currently referring their business elsewhere.

Like I said before, Realtors aren't all that loyal to loan officers, giving you ample opportunity to bring them back into your inner circle when you've got a solid USP to help you do exactly that.

This time, by making sure the referrals are a 2-way street and helping them generate more business, it's going to be a lot harder for the next LO that comes along to steal your agents.



There is no better way to get a good Realtor fired up and differentiate yourself from other LOs than by making it clear that your goal, as their preferred mortgage partner, is to help them grow their business by providing them with qualified leads and helping them get more sales from their marketing efforts.

The great rates, service, answering calls, communication, turnaround time, etc.—of course that's important too, but that's to be expected, and you should let them know that.

All of a sudden, the other LOs that are harping on those things as if they're groundbreaking offerings, never before seen or heard by anyone... seem pretty silly.

The fact is: good agents come and go. Although you can't prevent good Realtors from working with other LOs, you can put systems in place that increase loyalty and make it a lot more difficult for other loan officers to waltz in and snatch your agents out from underneath you.

You're going to use the same W.H.A.L.E. Eligibility Checklist from the earlier section to stack rank your existing agents' productivity and likeability before you start reaching out.

Also, same as before, you'll want research their Facebook, LinkedIn, MLS data like number of transactions and listings, website, online marketing, offline marketing, etc. to make sure you're only focusing on agents that are worth going after.

Once you've got all that information in your C.R.M. or spreadsheet, you'll be ready to make contact with your existing agents with the goal of building better relationships and getting more referrals from Realtors that have sent you business or are currently sending you business, but could be doing more, and also, rekindling relationships with agents that have fallen by the wayside.



Finding Realtors with Websites Built by Specific Website Providers

I've covered how to find Realtors using some general searches on Google and the large real estate portal websites.

That works well, but you've got to sift through the results to find the agents that have websites.

Here's another prospecting strategy for you that yields nothing but agents with their own websites...

There are a lot of real estate website template companies out there. Many of them have hundreds, thousands, and in some cases, tens of thousands of Realtor clients... all with nearly identical websites.

That makes their clients easy to find... if you know what you're doing.

The good news is: even if you don't, I do.

I'm going to share with you how to strategically target Realtors in YOUR market that are using some of the most popular real estate website companies out there.

A few advantages of targeting Realtors with websites include:

- Most of them are full-time and more serious about their business than agents who just piggyback of their Broker's website
- Most of them are doing marketing and trying to generate leads
- Most of them have mortgage content on their website, which typically does nothing for them at best, and actually hijacks their traffic at worst
- Once you get your landing pages onto one of their sites, showing other agents with the same website provider how it works is even easier

The key to successfully prospecting Realtors online is understanding how search engines work.



Each search engine will produce different results, so if you plug the same search phrase into Google and then Bing, you will know you have “exhausted” a search phrase and can move to a new one.

Trigger Words/Phrases

There are “trigger word/phrases” that you can add to just about any search string that will further define your search results and help you find prospects you would not have found otherwise.

Whenever you type in a specific search phrase and you’re looking for an exact match of that phrase, such as:

- Mortgage Center

...you must place that phrase in quotes—“mortgage center” in order to yield an exact match.

If the segment of the search string is only one word (or has no spaces), for example:

- Apply

...you don’t need to use quotes.

Here are some examples of trigger words & phrases:

- Apply Now
- Apply Online
- Apply Today
- Branch Manager
- Financing
- First Time Homebuyer
- Get Pre-Approved
- Home Search
- Home Sellers
- Loan Application
- Loan Officers
- Mortgage Application



Good W.H.A.L.E. Hunting – Partnering with the right Realtors

- Mortgage Calculator
- Mortgage Center
- Our Team
- Relocation
- Search for Homes
- Staff
- Staff Directory
- Your Home's Value

You can also use large brokerage names to find agents with a specific agency:

- Better Homes and Gardens
- Century 21
- Coldwell Banker
- ERA
- Exit Realty
- Keller Williams
- RE/MAX
- Realty Executives
- Sotheby's
- Weichert

To define geographic targets to include in your search strings, include one of the following:

- Area Code
- City
- City, State
- State
- Zip Code

To “attach” search strings together, use a plus (+) sign. This will produce results that match your specific criteria of websites that **ONLY** include your trigger words + a reference to, for example, the city or state you're targeting.

Real Estate Website Companies



Many real estate website providers brand their websites with phrases like “Website Built by _____,” which makes it easy to find their clients.

You literally copy and paste the phrase into Google (in quotes) + any city or state you want to target and there you go... a list of every Realtor in that area using that specific website template provider.

The following is a breakdown of some of the largest real estate website template providers in the U.S., along with search strings on how to find their clients.

Keep in mind: including trigger words/phrases within these searches allows you to create even more customized and specific results.

One last thing: I’d include examples of these websites, however, most agents change website providers every 1-2 years, so including URLs is pointless as the website providers are not going to stay the same, and if anything, would create confusion.

The good news is: adding your landing pages to any of these websites is a matter of copying and pasting links on the desired pages. All of these sites are customizable and ALL OF THEM need conversion optimization.

TIPS:

- Replace the references to “STATE” with an actual state, city, or zip code you want to target
- Add additional trigger words/phrases to any of the search strings below to get more specific results
- At the end of the list, I’m going to give you a link to a web page so you can just copy and paste these search strings right into Google

Agent Advantage (Homes.com)

Search Strings:



"Homes Media Solutions" + "mortgage calculator" + STATE

"Powered by Homes.com" + STATE

/MortgageCalc.aspx + homes.com + STATE

Agent Image

Search Strings:

"Design by Agent Image" + STATE

"Agent Image" + "mortgage calculator" + STATE

AgentWebsite.net

Search Strings:

AgentWebsite® + "property organizer" + STATE

"Web Hosting by AgentWebsite®" + STATE

BoomTownROI

Search Strings:

boomtown + financing + "what's my home worth" + STATE

“is a team of local real estate experts ready to reveal the secrets of how we can help you sell your home. From setting the price to creating marketing campaigns” + STATE

TIP:

- The entire paragraph above is “stock” on these websites, so by placing the entire text in quotes and running a Google search, you will pull up all the websites that have that exact same paragraph on them.
-

Craig Proctor Systems (Consulnet)

Search Strings:

"owned by ConsulNet Computing" + STATE



"craig proctor" + "Buy with ZERO Down" + STATE

iHomeFinder

Search Strings:

"Powered by iHomefinder" + STATE

iHomefinder + /valuation-form/ + STATE

Kunversion

Search Strings:

Kunversion + finance + sell + agents + STATE

"Find Your Home's Value, Instantly" + "Did you know that home values are up almost 20%?" + "What's yours worth?" + STATE

kunversion + resources.php + "real estate" + STATE

LinkURealty

Search Strings:

"Powered by LinkURealty" + STATE

LinkURealty + "VIP Home Request" + STATE

MarketLeader

Search Strings:

"Powered By Market Leader" + STATE

"The quality of a school can greatly influence home values in an area. As a local expert" + sell + STATE

PipelineROI (a la mode)

Search Strings:

"Another website by PipelineROI" + "looking to buy" + STATE +
"home search"



"Another website by PipelineROI" + "looking to buy" + "your home's value" + STATE

TIP:

- a la mode has mortgage, appraiser, and home inspector clients as well... avoid those by using more specific searches, like those including a brokerage name in the example below...

One more example search string:

"Another website by PipelineROI" + california + "keller williams"

Placester

Search Strings:

"Real Estate Marketing by Placester" + STATE

"Powered by Placester" + STATE

"Real Estate Advertising by Placester" + STATE

Point2Agent

Search Strings:

Point2Agent + "how much can you afford" + STATE

"The correct selling price of a home is the highest price that the market will bear. To assist you in determining the correct asking price" + STATE

Real Estate Webmasters

Search Strings:

"Real Estate Webmasters" + STATE

"Listings Site Map" + "Search MLS" + STATE

RealGeeks

Search Strings:



"Address Search" + "Interactive Map Search" + "IDX Real Estate Websites by" + STATE

"How much is your home worth?" + "...get instant property value now!" + "advanced search" + STATE

Real Pro Systems

Search Strings:

"Real Pro Systems" + /Buyer-Resources/Loan-Analysis + STATE

"Real Pro Systems" + "homes for sale" + STATE

Superlative

Search Strings:

Superlative + "homes for sale" + STATE

Superlative + /dream-home-finder.html + STATE

Top Producer

Search Strings:

"powered by TOP PRODUCER" + STATE

"TOP PRODUCER" + /home_values.asp + STATE

WebsiteBox

Search Strings:

WebsiteBox + "get a free home evaluation" + STATE

WebsiteBox + buyers + sellers + communities + "search homes" + STATE

Wolfnet

Search Strings:

"Website Service by WolfNet Technologies" + STATE



"WolfNet Technologies" + "What's Your Home Worth?" +
STATE

Z57

Search Strings:

Z57 + "homes for sale" + STATE

z57 + "your home's value" + STATE

z57 + "mortgage center" + STATE

z57 + /prequalify.shtml + STATE

Zillow

Search Strings:

"our coverage areas" + "Zillow, All rights reserved" + STATE

"Compare Mortgage Rates" + "Zillow, All rights reserved" + texas
+ "SEARCH FOR HOMES"

Extra:

- Websites with Zillow's "Zestimate" tool

"Home Value Estimate" + zestimate + "Another address?" +
STATE