

NEW JERSEY EDITION

TOP AGENT

MAGAZINE

Take My
Word For It:
The Power of Testimonials &
Making Word-of-Mouth Count

3 EASY AT-HOME
DIY PROJECTS
TO INCREASE
PROPERTY VALUE

GOOGLE ADWORDS:
How to Make Google
Do the Work for You

FEATURED AGENT

**FRANCINE
LAURI**

COVER STORY

Area Specialist

**HEATHER
CORRIGAN**

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HEATHER CORRIGAN



FRANCINE LAURI

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Google AdWords: How To Make Google Do the Work for You

There is no denying that the internet is the first place a buyer begins looking for a new home in this digital age. Knowing how to put the powerful tools available on the internet to work for you can give you a decided advantage when it comes to attracting prospective buyers to your listings, as well as you as an agent. Google is easily one of the major superpowers of the internet, and they have one of the most powerful advertising tools available. Knowing how to utilize Google AdWords in the correct manner can make your internet advertising immensely powerful and possibly your best way to reach prospective buyers.

Google AdWords is also extremely cost-effective. This multifaceted tool gives you much more control over your advertising campaign than other more traditional methods. You can target specific audiences, choose the specific search terms, also known as keywords, that will bring up your ad in someone's search results, and you can set a budget for each campaign that will dictate it's reach and how long the campaign will run. Here are some tips for how to put Google AdWords to work for you.

1 MAKE SURE YOUR ADS ARE GOING TO SEND USERS TO A SITE THAT WILL CAPTURE THEIR ATTENTION

You can spend an infinite amount of money on Google advertising campaigns, but if those ads don't send users to a site that will capture and hold their interest, then you've just wasted all that money. Don't put your cart before the horse. Make sure you are considering exactly where these ads are going to send users. To set up your website for success, at the very least you want to make sure users are greeted by clear call-to-action, such as a message that will encourage them to sign up for your newsletter or subscribe to your blog. You want to set up your website to maximize and capture the leads the ad campaign sends your way.

2 BUILD CUSTOMIZED OR CUSTOM-MADE WEBSITES RATHER THAN TEMPLATE WEBSITES

It is easy and tempting to use template websites, or to offer your agents template websites if you are a real estate manager or broker. While this offers a cost-effective solution to providing every agent with a website, it does little to set you or your agents apart and capture the attention of users that are used to seeing a wealth of differ-

ent websites. You want to set yourself apart from every other real estate website users are viewing in their search for a house.

3 MAKE SURE YOU ARE OFFERING VALUE ON YOUR WEBSITE

Don't simply use your website as a kind of brag sheet. Let users know what makes your particular services valuable to them. Highlight your expertise in a certain location through tools such as blog posts, providing market updates, or giving pertinent information on a unique type of property. This will ensure that your online advertising campaigns are much more successful.

4 LOCATION IS EVERYTHING!

Location is everything in real estate, and the same holds true for Google AdWords. You can target specific locations in your ad campaign. While one approach is to focus on the area around your location, a more advanced approach would be to link AdWords campaigns to your Google My Business account. This is a Google service that includes your address in the ad, allowing people to then click on it and see exactly where you are located on a map.



6 HARNESS THE POWER OF DATA

When you run a Google AdWords campaign Google Analytics captures a wealth of information about your target client demographic. You can gain real insight into your online visitors, such as when they visit, what they do and look at on your site once they get there, and what search terms they use. You can use all of this information to grow your business. Use Google Analytics to determine which users (location, gender, age) are utilizing specific aspects of your site, such as looking at multiple listings, reading your blog, etc. You can then use this information to target these specific demographics in your AdWord campaigns, Gmail ads, the Google Display Network, and other advertising.

5 USE GOOGLE ADWORDS IN YOUR CAMPAIGN TO EXPAND YOUR BUSINESS IN GENERAL

Focus an AdWords campaign on expanding your business by incorporating specific zip codes and neighborhoods that will help you establish a presence in an area where you would like to increase your real estate business. Making sure that your ad appears in search results that are related to the real estate in a specific area will help shape the image and brand of your business as well as bring in new leads.

Using the internet to help advertise your business and your listings is one of the smartest moves you can make as an agent in this modern age. However, you don't want to simply go into the process blind or you're wasting a lot of potential resources and data that could make all the difference. To reap the benefits of Google AdWords, you must apply an intelligent strategy to using these campaigns.

TOP AGENT

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Area Specialist

**HEATHER
CORRIGAN**



Heather “The Hurricane” Corrigan of RE/MAX Signature Homes centers her business in Bergen County. She consistently receives the Gold Status award each year and has been recognized with the Conversion Award and Top Producer Award.

Heather “The Hurricane” Corrigan, of Oradell, New Jersey, combines her professional background in marketing and advertising with an unrelentingly goal driven personality to build a successful real estate business centered in Bergen County. Heather says, “I earned the hurricane nickname. Everyone here knows me – they know how hard I work, and if they don’t know me as a REALTOR[®], then they know me from the PTA, or they’ve seen me get an award at my temple. I’m a hurricane: I get things done, nothing stands in the way, and I don’t just sit around waiting for things to happen – I make them happen.”

In the five short years since she started working with RE/MAX Signature Homes, Heather has worked her way into the core of the industry, and now she consistently receives the Gold Status award each year. She has been recognized with the Conversion Award and Top Producer Award, but the acknowledgements that she takes the most pride in are her countless five-star reviews



on Zillow. Heather attributes her success to her optimism, doggedness, and flexibility: “I love figuring things out – for people and *with* people. Every deal is different, because every homeowner is different, and every house is different! I love learning what people want, and customizing together as we go along, working with clients and agents to get the best results – there is no blanket way to do things.”

Heather’s work and enthusiasm extends far beyond the negotiating table. Working with the head of her marketing department, Heather creates and distributes themed gift baskets that she sends to clients and every single agent that she works with. “We’re doing a car show this weekend, so I’ve got air fresheners with the ‘Hurricane’ logo. During wintertime, we’ll do ‘You’re The Bomb’ chocolate bombs.” This



“I love figuring things out – for people and *with* people. I love learning what people want, and customizing together as we go along, working with clients and agents to get the best results – there is no blanket way to do things.”

passion for marketing and building relationships has helped her to build recognition both around her neighborhood and in various digital arenas. “I’m thankful that I still get to use so much of my media skill set. I had a commercial on HGTV News 12, and now that I own the product, I’ve been able to move it to different media, and use that to my advantage.” Her broadly cast media network, combined with the robust digital presence of RE/MAX,

has helped Heather turn her personal brand into a business icon.

Her rapid rise to success and prominence is due in part to her understanding of marketing and modeling, but she is also quick to acknowledge the magnetic powers of her hometown on its own and insists that anyone and everyone can find a slice of paradise. “Presto is where I have my client appreciation



events, and Schreiber's is an awesome, good old fashioned German deli. He's amazing – caters all of my dealings with running the PTA events. And he donates food! These are the kinds of things that people are in search of coming here from the city and looking for a real community.”

Now that she has cemented her position in the industry, Heather is looking forward to watching her own children thrive: “We all do modeling and acting. Jack, he's sixteen, he does football, wrestling, and track while also working a part time job at Humdingers and acting. Her daughter, Siena, she's twelve and does



**GREATER BERGEN
REALTORS®**



cheer, Girl Scouts, and also acts. Heather's husband, Mike, is active in the real estate world as well by helping REALTORS® with their signs and other day-to-day operations. It's busy, but we always find time to go out for sushi and regroup as a family!"

Heather also performs stand-up comedy and recently emceed a real estate comedy event. She frequently attends various expos and shows in the community, and you can check her website for upcoming appearances.



For more about Heather, call 917-440-3767,
visit heatherthehuricaneremaxrealtor.com,
or email heather.gocard@gmail.com



3 Easy At-Home DIY Projects to Increase Property Value

Most homeowners have a lengthy list of chores and bit projects they intend to accomplish around the house. Oftentimes, those to-do items are completed piecemeal over a long stretch of time, or else sometimes not at all. However, when it comes time to prepare a home for market, all those tasks begin to pile-up and overwhelm. The

list of things to do before the photographer comes or the first open house is held might seem endless, but not if you tackle just a few things here and there as you go. These sorts of projects—easy, DIY, at-home tasks you can accomplish in a few hours or less, with tools you most likely have on hand—go a long way with marginal effort.

Complete a quick rehab of closets and storage areas

Many agents advise clients to declutter and depersonalize their spaces ahead of professional photography and home showings. The idea is to provide prospective buyers with a neutral palette. Not only does this allow them to imagine their own lives unfolding within those four walls, but it also helps make a home's square footage stand out. One way to add visual space to your home without calling in the contractor is to declutter common storage areas and closets. When buyers can get a complete look at a closet's capacity, or a pantry's depth, or the garage's full functional potential, they get a better sense of a home's potential and thus, its value. In that vein, consider decluttering and cleaning your high-traffic storage spaces: the garage, pantries, closets, attics, and basements. Besides, organizing and discarding unwanted items help you prep for a move anyway, while giving potential buyers a peak at how spacious your home really is.

Add easy curb appeal with a bit of sweat equity

Sure, curb appeal can arrive in the form of a new mailbox, pathway lighting, or updated house numbers, but it can also come cheaper than that. Curb extends to the upkeep of your lawn, landscaping, and home's façade, and there are plenty of ways





you can give these zones a refresh without spending anything but time. Keeping your front and back yard green and uniform adds a lux layer to exterior square footage. Likewise, polishing the outside of your windows, trimming hedges, and sweeping the walkway can make a tidy and well-cared for first impression. There are other measures you can take too. Planting wildflower seeds in empty beds, or collecting some landscaping rocks to frame mulched areas can add a bit of character to your residence. Repainting the front door, ensuring trees are trimmed, and keeping back patios

neat and uncluttered also underscore a home at its finest, which is ripe for buyers to snatch up.

Transform tiled spaces into sparkling clean surfaces.

Bathrooms and kitchens are where sellers can stand to add plenty of value in the process of selling a home. While pricey renovations might be out of the question for some, there are still affordable and time-effective ways you can transform for these spaces for the better. Cleaning,

bleaching, or redoing your tile grout—in either kitchens, bathrooms, or other tiled spaces—can give these high-trafficked areas a new lease on life. Ensuring windows, mirrors, stainless steel appliances and backsplashes are streak-free and polished also demonstrate to buyers that your home is well-cared for and practically move-in ready. Sometimes, the devil is in the details. You might consider relining drawers, changing out knobs and fixtures,

or else decluttering cabinets and shelves for a fresher look.

No matter the challenges ahead as you prepare your home for sale, completing a few small tasks every weekend or so can put you miles ahead of the competition. Without spending a dime, you can add serious value to your home's bottom line, setting you up for success as you begin your own home-shopping adventure.



FRANCINE LAURI

Before getting licensed as a REALTOR® in 2020, Francine Lauri worked in the home textile industry for 25 years holding senior leadership positions in design, operations, logistics, product development, marketing and sales. She brings her breadth of experience from all of these areas to her real estate clients today across the counties of North Jersey, including Hunterdon, Essex, Morris, Somerset, and Hudson. Her calm demeanor, professionalism, follow-up and one-on-one approach with her clients sets her apart and makes her highly sought after as a REALTOR®.



people coming back to work with her. “I always try to have a touch point with my clients multiple times a year,” she says. “As a result, a lot of my clients are friends.”

From attending local events and farmer’s markets in Jersey City to supporting the Pride Parade and the fundraising efforts of her brokerage, Francine plays an active role in her community. She’s a mother of two children and has two dogs plus a horse

for her daughter who is an equestrian. In her spare time, she loves heading to her beach house for a little well-deserved R&R.

While she has the support of her brokerage, Francine works independently across urban, rural, and suburban areas. She works with both buyers and sellers, dealing with everything from septic to utilities, rentals, sales and listings. With extensive interior design and renovation experience, she’s truly a resource for all things home-related. “North Jersey is a competitive market bordering New York City, so it’s a great place to do business,” she explains. “I’m really happy to be working in these communities in particular.”

Looking to the future of her business, Francine plans to continue doubling her business year over year. She did \$5 million in her first full year of business and has already completed \$10 million in sales this year. The most important thing to her, however, is to continue to service her clients to the best of her ability. “I love real estate. Being able to have my own schedule offers me the flexibility to both be there for my clients and spend time with my family.”

To get the word out about her services, Francine employs various marketing strategies — both digital and traditional. Primarily, she sends out mailers and emails, hosts open houses, and passes out handouts. Many referrals seek her out from within her own sphere or they find her through her brokerage. A few weeks ago, her firm became an affiliate of Corcoran Sawyer Smith, which has dramatically increased their network and the tools they are able to use for marketing. Of course, it’s Francine’s ability to make her clients feel comfortable with the buying and selling process as well as her strength in strategizing and negotiating at the closing table that keep



To learn more about Francine Lauri,
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The Daily Schedule of a Successful Real Estate Agent

Everything you do should be intentional. A busy schedule isn't the same thing as a productive schedule. Sometimes people write things like "find clients" on their to-do list, but finding clients isn't actually a task. It's a goal. Your daily schedule should be created with your goal in mind if you want to be a successful real estate agent, but a goal is too broad to add to your calendar.

Instead, you can break your goal down into projects, break those projects down into tasks, and schedule time in your calendar to complete each task. You'll find that some of these projects will have an immediate impact on your business, and that those are the tasks that should be completed first.

The fact is that as a real estate agent you can set your own schedule—if you're not productive until 10am, then you don't have to start your day until then. But having a daily schedule means that every day you have a running start on all those other agents who just "wing it."

You don't want to feel burned out and busy but like you're simultaneously not getting a whole lot done. You can only keep up 70+ hour weeks for so long before your body breaks down and both your performance and income drop as a result.

Since every real estate agent's operating hours look different, the following daily schedule is broken up by the suggested amount of hours you

should spend on each task rather than specific times of day. However, certain tasks, like prospecting, appointments, and listing presentations should be performed at times when it's most convenient for clients. If you're an agent who likes to end their workday at 5 o'clock, remember that this is also the same time your clients are likely ending their day, meaning you might be unavailable for showings during the only time their schedule allows.

1 hour – Spend this time waking up, exercising either at home or at the gym, and eating breakfast.

2 hours – Use this time before you head to the office to develop a morning routine, if you haven't already. You can meditate, journal, practice affirmations, or read personal development books to prepare for the day ahead.

1 hour – Once you're at the office, spend this time to review the day's schedule, catch up with your assistant or other colleagues, and check the latest industry news. This is also the time of day that you can role play to prepare for appointments.

1.5 hours – Spend this time prospecting and appointment setting.

1 hour – Now it's time for a lunch break. If you're a multitasker, you can also use this time to prepare for the afternoon and any meetings you have scheduled or connect with followers on social media.

3.5 hours – This is that time of day that you should schedule all your appointments and listing presentations. If you are a newer agent, you might use this time instead to do more prospecting and appointment setting.

.5 hours – Look over the day's schedule again and ensure you've checked every task off your to-do list. While you're at it, be sure to review tomorrow's schedule and goals too.

2 hours – Now it's time to unwind. Use this time to have dinner and spend time with you family. If you have children, this is usually the time of day when they are wrapping up homework assignments and getting ready for bed. It's important that you make time for these moments the same way you make time for your work.

2 hours – Spend these last couple hours before you fall asleep to have quality time with your spouse or perform your self-care routines.

8 hours – Now it's time for sleep—getting a full night's rest is crucial if you want every day to be productive.

As you can tell, there's still some wiggle room left in this schedule, but the important thing is to block out time every day so you can achieve your goals and help your clients.



TOP AGENT *Laughs!*



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Take My Word for It:

The Power of Testimonials & Making Word-of-Mouth Count

Ratings, reviews, and testimonials are among the most powerful tools an agent or real estate professional has at his or her disposal. Think of it this way: almost all of us go online to get a sense of dining options, film scores, and product reviews. When it comes to real estate pros, people want the same measure of comfort and advice from those who have already experienced your services. The

bottom line is this: testimonials create a relatable emotional appeal to others, while giving potential clients some first-hand insight into your ability to deliver.

With all that in mind, consider the valuable rationale behind testimonials and word-of-mouth attention: how to harness it, and what it can do for you and your business.

Testimonials and word-of-mouth buzz build your brand

If you aren't displaying positive testimonials and reviews on your social media outlets and website, then you're missing out on a key opportunity. Those exploring your pages are likely seeking real estate representation, and reviews and testimonials serve as a first-hand glimpse into who you are and what you can do. If you can, try to tie reviews and testimonials to specific names or social media handles, as you'll be highlighting the interpersonal component at play. Think of it this way: potential clients are more likely to trust the experiences of past clients than to place blind faith in your pitch, which is crafted to create a sale. Most customers would rather look to the experience of fellow consumers before taking your word for it, sight unseen. Well-placed testimonials and personal reviews can bridge the gap when it comes to your brand and the prospective client.

Testimonials and word-of-mouth buzz demonstrate your value compared to others

Good agents are a dime a dozen, but top agents stand apart from the pack for a variety of reasons. Chief among those reasons is the ability to differentiate themselves from the norm by highlighting their personalities, their track records, their values. Testimonials and word-of-mouth buzz don't just focus on whether an experience was good or bad. It dives into the details of personality and consumer relationships. While the qualifications of many agents might be similar, you can stand out by show-

ing stellar reviews and testimonials that shine upon your character and delivery. When pitched by two agents with similar experience and credentials, but only one has the testimonials featuring positive experiences and lasting relationships—wouldn't you be more inclined to work with the agent who has a proven track record of success?

Do your homework and compile the testimonials that will drive your business

At the close of a transaction, consider providing a comment card with room for clients to write a few reflections, or create an e-mail ready online form that makes submitting feedback a breeze. You can also touch base via e-mail and ask politely for a review of their experience with you. Referred or repeat clients are excellent candidates for testimonials, as they will already know your business well, or will likely be happy to contribute their perspective. If asking for testimonials makes you cringe, you can always incentivize this process in minor ways. For example, you could offer a fun, cost-effective gift certificate in exchange for a testimonial.

Whichever way you gather testimonials that speak to your positive performance, there is no question that these documented first-hand experiences are priceless when it comes to drawing and retaining clients. If you want to inspire interest and build a living brand, there is no better method than by having clients vouch for your working style.

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