

# Negotiation or Collaboration, How are You Interacting with Your Agents?

By Jon Cheplak

## ***The condition of your organization is the condition you created.***

Is it fairly easy for you to accomplish your daily objectives as a leader or have you created an environment that lends itself to long hours, problem solving, and then as an afterthought, the revenue producing activities?

Current challenges in today's real estate businesses stem from the way we lead, not from the way agents act in our office. Agents' react to how we, as managers, lead. How are you leading your agents today?

Let's delve deeper into the context you may have created when you hired your agents. Were you selling during the interview? Were you clear about your expectations? Did you make it appear to the agent that they would be your customer? Worse yet, did you tell the agent that they were your customer?

## ***Are agents your customer?***

Webster's Dictionary defines *customers* as:

1. *One that buys goods or services.*
2. *Informal. An individual with whom one must deal.*

**1. One that buys goods and services:** Do you operate your office in this manner? The broker/customer (agent) relationship is based on the value of what is being bought or sold between the broker and the agent. With buying and selling comes negotiation and questions in terms of value. This model has agents negotiating on a daily basis to make a living from their clients, and then requires them to do the same with their broker. This sets the stage for a tug of war that leaves no room for partnering or interdependence. It's purely a relationship built on independent needs. Managers and agents acting on independent needs does not lead to growth of a company, but interdependence does.

**2. An individual with whom one must deal:** Is that what it feels like with your agents? Are they someone that you have to deal with?

## ***The customer is always right!***

This philosophy creates a condition of singular accountability. That would be the broker being held accountable by the agent. Does this

sound like your daily experience? An interesting notation is that the top expectation agents have of their broker is accountability. Agents are also waiting for the next "thing" or "tool" that you are going to try and sell them into using. Now ask yourself, do you like being sold? No one likes to feel they have been sold, and your agents feel the same way.

## ***Are your agents your business partners?***

Webster's Dictionary defines *partner* as:  
*Member of a business partnership.*

Are your agents customers or are they your partners? If you asked your agents the same question, how would they respond? Below are some further questions to reflect on.

## ***1. How often do you survey your agents with the following questions?***

- What do you like about our company?
- What don't you like about our company?
- What do we need to start doing that we're not doing?
- How are you willing to support?

True leadership is about being open to feedback and acting on it. Ask these questions, absorb the feedback, and respond with action.

## ***2. Are your agents a part of the policy creating process?***

New policies are not in and of themselves a problem for agents; how you create policies, who is involved in creating them, and how you implement them, can be.

## ***3. Do your agents provide input in all areas of the company vision moving forward?***

If not, why? Your agents are down in the trenches every day giving them great insight into what will make the company work better.

## ***4. Are you a transparent leader?***

Agents trust people they know to be genuine. Leadership is not about appearances, it's about being real.

**5. When you hire your agents, are you overselling or are you letting them know that you and your company have flaws?** Are you telling the truth in the interview or are you painting an unrealistic picture

that leaves room for no errors?

Every family and organization has its problems, let's be honest. If you fall into the "sales trap" during the interview, you will have a rude awakening with your recruits when something simple as the copy machine or the internet goes down. Talk to your vision, talk about the inspiring and productive environment, but don't leave out the fact that you are human. Create and deliver on realistic expectations.

**6. In formal settings, such as a sales meeting, do you address your agents as your business partners or as your agents?**

You must continually declare and act on what you believe in for your agents to also believe in and align with.

**7. What policy or fee are you considering to propose to your agents in the near future?** Are you concerned about whether they will accept it and the risk that you might lose some of your agents?

With a partnership from the agents, this will be a smooth and seamless process with little to no resistance.

This discussion should provide you insight on the difference between treating your agents as your customers versus treating them as your business partners. With your agents as your customers, you will hone your sales, negotiation, and manipulation skills. You will also be constantly trying to figure out what you can sell them next, leading to a revolving door. As your business partners, agents will align and collaborate in the best interest of the organization moving forward. They will feel important and a part of the company vision driving this process. Do your agents feel they are a part of the vision?

Stop selling your agents the next best thing and start involving them in the next best steps your company needs to take. You will be amazed at the ease of this process and tremendous contribution your agents will make to your company's development and growth.

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