

## **9 Steps to Coach Struggling Agents Up or Out**

Start agents off on the right foot way before you have problems. When agents begin sputtering, it's often because they've never had a structure to guide them through the tasks that'll make their business strong. Work with each agent early on to lay the right foundation.

'Have a specific agreement with agents as to what they are going to do,' advises Nancy Butler, who managed real estate for more than a decade and then worked as a financial planner, where she advised real estate agents and brokers; Butler is now a business management speaker and coach – often for real estate companies and agents – at Above All Else, Success in Life and Business in Waterford, Conn. "They'll show up to the office but rarely have a plan that's going to get them where they need to be". Butler says agents need a daily plan. "They have to have specific tasks outlined for what they are going to cover for each day and every hour they are working," she states. "That's a plan you need to help them put in place before they arrive for the day."

Butler recently led a coaching session for about 25 agents, after which she sat down with each individually. "They were all different," she recalls. For one, this was a third a career. It was an older person who didn't have the drive he had when he was 30 and didn't want to be pushed that way. Success for him was having a good work life-balance and being there when clients and his family needed him. He had an idea of success that might have been different from the idea the manager had."

To be sure you understand a particular agent's goals, ask where they see themselves in six months, one year and three years. "If you ask about 10 years out, they may not be able to comprehend that at this point because they are struggling with this year" says Butler." "Once you get the answer, help them to figure out the tasks they need to accomplish by what date to be on track: If you want X amount of sales by the end of the year, you have to be seeing this many people and get this many listing each week. Maybe agents don't know those numbers and you can help them work backward."

Then ask agents to write up their own plan for how they're going to get their business in line for the rest of the year, advises Butler. Ask them to tell you things like, "To get this many listing by this date, here's how I'm going to do it. I'm

going to have so many network meetings each week. Here's who I am going to talk to by this date."

"They need specific things to check off their list because they're floundering," notes Butler. "The next time you meet with them, you now have something tangible to review: "This is what you said you were going to do. And how can I help you to get these things done?"

Your time is valuable, so you can't coach unproductive agents indefinitely. How do you identify an agent you won't be able to reach? Just go back to the agreements and plans you've asked them to draft and sign. "If you've created a written document as to what they're going to do with their time and what they're going to accomplish and when, it makes it much easier," says Butler. "If time and time again, they're not doing things they agreed to do, it's easy knowing when to let them go."

The message isn't that they've let you down, says Butler. It's that they're not accomplishing what they want for themselves. Here's the dialog Butler suggests: "It's got to not feel good to know what you want and to not have it happen. And no matter how much we've worked together, it's not working. You need to find a place where you can thrive, and apparently this isn't it."