

5 Essential Skills for Real Estate Success

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Narrowing your focus is all the rage among business and productivity gurus these days, but does it apply to all professions across all industries? Silicon Valley venture capitalist Peter Thiel refuses to listen to his managers if they attempt to discuss anything *beyond* their top priority for the quarter, but this approach would never work for real estate professionals. After all, you wear too many hats! And while it's impossible to master *every* imaginable skill, identifying your weak points and gaining proficiency in those areas could greatly improve your bottom line.

The following list is by no means exhaustive, but there's a good chance that at least one of these skills is lacking in your arsenal. With a little extra time and effort, however, gaining proficiency in the following areas could take your business to new heights.

Tech Literacy: Feel free to skip this section if you consider yourself a techie (or you're a Millennial who sent your first e-mail before you could walk). As for everyone else? Take a deep breath and stay with us. Remember, *everything* new seems overwhelming at first... from driving a stick shift to posting on Facebook... but here you are, reading an electronic newsletter sent across cyberspace! Did you picture yourself doing this back in 1983?

If you're lacking in basic computer skills, take a look at Lynda.com, Coursera.com, or one of the many training sites across the web. If you're a true beginner, you can start with Lynda's [Computer Literacy for Windows](#) or [Computer Literacy for Mac](#). Once you get the fundamentals down, it becomes easier to learn the more advanced concepts you put to use on common programs and platforms (everything from MS Word to the MLS).

Whatever you do, don't let fear hold you back! You've become an expert in a field that bewilders most outsiders. We're all newbies in the beginning, and you'd never chastise a first-time home buyer who didn't understand how FHA loans work. All it takes is patience and persistence to learn something new. Technology will open the door to marketing opportunities you never knew existed.

Basic Bookkeeping: Did you know that most self-employed professionals significantly underreport their expenses? Basic Bookkeeping is simple, and you could probably master a program such as QuickBooks after a few hours of training. Again, Lynda and other websites offer simple tutorials.

You can also take a look at WaveApps.com and FreshBooks.com. These cloud-based accounting solutions let you manage your books from your computer or mobile device. You can take pictures of receipts, upload bank and credit card statements, review your "cash on hand," etc. Wave is free (with non-invasive advertising), and FreshBooks plans start at \$9.95 per month.

Organization: It's not very exciting, but implementing a simple system for organizing your task list and your appointments will reduce your stress level and make you more productive. David Allen's [Getting](#)

[Things Done: The Art of Stress-free Productivity](#) is a classic, and he's taught his system to business leaders around the world. In fact, you can [click here](#) to see a video of him speaking to a crowd of Google employees. If the Getting Things Done (GTD) method appeals to you, [click here](#) to read an article on LifeHacker.com that reviews some of the best productivity applications based on David Allen's system.

Of course, if GTD seems like overkill or it just doesn't appeal to you, you can always find a seminar that teaches basic organization techniques. The bottom line is that you need a system, and some very clever people have done all the hard work for you. All you need to do is learn a system and stick with it until it becomes a habit.

Negotiation: If you like to make people happy (and most real estate professionals do), you might find negotiation a bit challenging—even if you've been in real estate for years! It's important to remember that negotiation is a normal part of doing business, and your clients are relying on you to hash out the best deal possible.

There are a host of techniques that give you leverage in your negotiations, and they've been well documented. Negotiation seminars abound, and if you can afford it, [Karrass Negotiation Seminars](#) are regarded as some of the best in the world. For a less expensive option, you can always explore Amazon reviews for the highest rated books on the subject. For a quick primer, check out our November 2015 *InTouch* article: [3 Essential Negotiation Tips for Business... and Life!](#)

Marketing: You likely have the sales side of your business down—making connections, demonstrating your unique selling points, and closing deals. However, if you're not properly marketing yourself, you're missing an important piece of the puzzle. Make sure you're tapping into all the marketing channels available to you (e.g., blogging, social media, various types of on- and off-line advertising, and marketing newsletters). Your website should be attractive and easy to navigate, and your listings should include enticing photos and powerful descriptions.

Marketing is largely about brand awareness, and in this case, that brand is YOU! That's why Old Republic Home Protection offers over a dozen free marketing tools for real estate agents, including customizable newsletters, farming tools, open house door hangers, and more. [Visit our Toolbox](#) today to see what's available, or contact me to learn more.