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Life Balance-Action Plans and To-Do Lists for Today's Realtors

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An Interview with Industry Icon Danielle Kennedy...

Way back in the day, when I started my journey into real estate, there was a speaking sensation sweeping North America with a passion, purpose and a can-do message of perseverance. That sensation was Danielle Kennedy and from everything I've seen, she hasn't slowed down one bit.

Hot off the release of her new book *WorkingMoms.calm*, I caught up with this real estate super hero to learn a little about what she had to share about creating life balance, tackling action plans and what the right to-do list can do for you! So, hold on to your hats, and join me for a little Kennedy magic!

Q: Hey Danielle, great to talk to you again, it's been a long time! When I first heard you speak, you were a single mom making big waves in this business while juggling the pressures of family vs. career. Tell us your thoughts on creating a good life balance.

A: I believe life balance is about perspective. You have to always remind yourself of the big picture. What may seem like a catastrophe right now, in the greater scheme of things is usually pretty minor. Losing a buyer or a low appraisal may seem big at the moment but compared to what? Losing your health, your ability to be active and alive, or the loss of a loved one? Those are big. Keep things in perspective. Having lived on this planet for awhile certainly

helps as well. You soon learn: "This too shall pass." That is a good mantra for a bad day, upsetting news or what seemingly appears to be a temporary setback.

Q: Words to live by! I remember reading and re-reading Og Mandino's book, *The Greatest Salesman in the World*, and repeating that scroll a time or two in my life as well! Tell me, what would you say to agents grappling with making a living in this business in today's economy?

A: Well, I joined the real estate industry in a tough market, which was truly a blessing in disguise. I learned quickly that there was no free lunch. You HAD to get out of the office and prospect. I am a believer in the niche marketing. In my newest edition of *How to List and Sell Real Estate*, I lay out a viable action plan.

I recommend you work eight niches and additional ones that may appear during certain market conditions--such as working with lenders on REO properties and short sales. And I believe you should work those niches EVERYDAY. No matter how slow or busy the market is. I give that same advice to new and experienced agents. When we look at those who've left the industry through this market, I think many probably never learned the discipline of niche marketing. They might have gotten in during easier markets and EXPECTED business to fall in their laps. You have to self-generate business in real estate. Not easy to begin with but once you begin and it starts to take hold, it's amazing how you can flourish.

Q: Great advice, Danielle. You and I share the same passion for niche marketing. Explore that a little more for our readers, please!

A: As I said, I believe in working eight niches:

1. Past customers
2. Open houses
3. FSBOs and expireds
4. Social networking
5. Local business network
6. Past life acquaintances
7. Introductions
8. Farming

I just listed them in order of payback. For example if you are coming out of a slump or want to take your business to the next level, you need to devote 3-4 hours per day on niches 1-4: past customers, open houses, FSBOs and social networking. Your return on those niches happens faster than the bottom four, but don't neglect the bottom four! Once you have generated more business in your pipeline from the top four, start on those. You'll find there's a big difference between action and activity. ACTION leads to transactions for example: business development, prospecting. ACTIVITIES leads to time wasted, for example: gossiping, long lunches, obsessively checking emails etc.

Q: True enough! I'm a big to-do list person, and I know you are too. Tell us why you think that's important and what agents today should have on THEIR to-do lists to thrive in this business.

A: Oh, I love To-Do lists. I usually put the things I hate the most on top so I can get those tough jobs over with early in the day. Your BlackBerry, iPhone or any PDA is great for staying on top of your day as well. I always mix personal and professional on the list, because family and personal time is as big of a priority as business. If you promised a child you would be at a soccer game that is as important as a listing appointment. Believe me, if you honor personal

commitments the way you honor business commitments, you are going to be one happy grandma or grandpa one day because your kids will make you a priority into their adulthood.

Q: Spoken like a happy grandma! Let's pretend I'm a new agent seeking a mentor, what's some of the first advice you'd give me?

A: If I were mentoring you, I'd say the most important thing for you to do is to develop the everyday habit of new business development. Never be satisfied with the status quo, each day stretch to a new area you've never done before. Start building your brand through niche marketing; there is so much business in places we don't even know exist because we limit our thinking.

I'd say get unstuck. You see a lot of agents who are stuck in the office, stuck with a guru, stuck on Facebook, or in a defeated mindset. So, get unstuck. I'd also tell you to never ever give up. One thing that helps that process is consistency. Don't focus on outcomes. I believe in goals but believe they should be a private thing. While telling everyone a goal of a new Cadillac might motivate some people, it can also sometimes limit your thinking and your success. When agents focus on their own agenda, the public can often sense that and feel as if they are in it for themselves. Real estate truly is a service industry and providing that service is a day-to-day process that requires disciplined behavior. Live in the moment.

When people have perspective, and when they are doing something they love with life balance, they don't burn out because their life is about more than just one thing. Diversity is what keeps burn out at bay. Extend that to your whole life and create diversity in business/personal/family time. Date nights, face time with your kids, treating yourself to an afternoon off, and really focus on those things without interruption, life never gets boring. Remember this, one of the

greatest gifts of being a hard worker is to really be able to fashion a wonderful personal life. It's the vehicle or ticket to creating a life that you imagined. It is also a way to contribute your talents to the parts of society that need you that you wouldn't be able to do if prosperity wasn't in your corner.

Q: I agree whole-heartedly! Danielle, you and I have talked a great deal too about the power of consistency - of not just showing up once, but time and time again. Tell our readers your thoughts.

A: I believe you should contact your past customers at least once a month in some way. Send out an email, postcards, knock on the door, notes, letters, all of it. And work your way through the alphabet at least every three months. Don't worry about checking in, you're not bugging them. Send them a picture of you winning an award, with a note telling them how much you appreciate that they are a part of what you do and that they're wonderful. Put a system in place to contact them consistently. Plant those seeds for referrals. After all, as Woody Allen says, "80% of success is showing up!" Farm every week, work FSBOs every day and Expireds every week. My new book is filled with scripts, dialogues and strategies for success.

Q: I know, I'm excited for you! Your 30th Anniversary Edition of “How to List and Sell Real Estate” is coming out in March 2010. Congratulations! Give us a sneak peek of what they'll learn.

A: Well sure! I'd love to! Some of the new chapters cover:

- How to talk to a buyer when there's a turn around market
- How to work a nickel in a challenging market
- How to deal with the affluent

- The art of social networking
- The new rules for fall-out avoidance
- Hot websites and many ways to maximize your brand on the internet
- And BUILDING STRONGER CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH ACTING TECHNIQUES

Q: Sounds amazing, Danielle! Thank you so much for your time. You're still an extraordinary force in this industry and an inspiration especially to we single working moms!

A: Thanks, Julie. I appreciate the opportunity!

What a treat to learn from those who've weathered the storms and ridden the crests in our business. I thank Danielle for her time and her incredible insights. Please join us again for more interviews with the industry's best!

Want to learn more from our friend Danielle Kennedy? You can reach her office toll free at 800-848-8070 or visit her site at www.daniellekennedy.com. Ready to kick your niche marketing into high gear? Visit www.prospectsplus.com today or bookmark our blog at blog.prospectsplus.com to discover a wide spectrum of real estate marketing tools and techniques. Call me if you need me at 866.405.3641!