

# UP and RUNNING in 30 DAYS

A Proven Plan for  
Financial Success  
in Real Estate



Carla Cross, CRB, MA | Fourth Edition |

 Dearborn™  
A Kaplan Real Estate Education Company

4 T H E D I T I O N

# Up and Running in 30 Days

A PROVEN PLAN FOR  
FINANCIAL SUCCESS  
IN REAL ESTATE

CARLA CROSS  
CRB, MA

**Dearborn**<sup>™</sup>  
Real Estate Education

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UP AND RUNNING IN 30 DAYS: A PROVEN PLAN FOR FINANCIAL  
SUCCESS IN REAL ESTATE, FOURTH EDITION

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Published by DF Institute, Inc., d/b/a Dearborn Real Estate Education  
332 Front St. S., Suite 501  
La Crosse, WI 54601

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Printed in the United States of America

12 13 14 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN: 978-1-4277-1145-8 / 1-4277-1145-3

PPN: 1907-1304

## DEDICATION

*Up and Running in 30 Days* has been inspired by people from two worlds—the worlds of musical performance and real estate sales.

At four I sat down at the piano to pick out the melody and chords to popular songs. That early love of music led to years of performing on piano and flute in front of thousands of people. It also introduced me to the performance concepts that ensure mastery of skills. For those indelible lessons in performance this book is dedicated to two influential teachers—Stacy Green, University of Oregon piano instructor, and Del Chinburg, my flute teacher in grade school and high school. You'll find in this book references to “perfect practice makes perfect,” “precision in following the process,” and “improvising after you know the tune.” These aphorisms aren't mine. They were taught to me by these master performer-teachers, and I learned them by doing them—the only way we really learn.

I stumbled into the world of real estate sales by chance, simply to help my husband. Although I didn't realize it at the time, the musical performance skills I had perfected as a pianist and flutist were exactly what I needed to hone and master the skills of real estate sales. For believing in my abilities and answering my innumerable questions, I acknowledge my first real estate “boss,” Robert Grace, who taught me to “just do it.” “Go meet people” was his mantra—so, student that I am, I did just that.

Perfect practice makes perfect. We learn by doing. Mastering something takes dedication, tenacity, and determination over time. These are the lessons my mentors taught me, and these are translated into real estate practice in this book. Thank you for allowing me to pass the lessons of my teachers and mentors on to you.

—Carla Cross

P.S. As I read through my dedication, it may sound to you like mastering performance isn't fun! Not true. There's nothing more exhilarating, more motivating, and more inspiring—plus confidence-building—than doing something well enough that you want to do it again! (That's how you'll feel when you sell your first home.) And that's what I'll help you do as you use this resource.

SAMPLE

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## P R E F A C E

*Up and Running in 30 Days* is dedicated to all the agents who have taught me “what works.” I have enjoyed helping great salespeople launch their careers to high profitability—quickly. *Up and Running* is organized to help you do the same.

As I write this fourth edition, I want to add a huge thank you to the many managers who continue to select their real estate agents for success. Armed with that exceptional selection process, these managers are willing and able to dedicate 100% of their efforts to coaching and assuring each agent is successful. I personally appreciate you and your dedication to raising the standards of the industry. As you select carefully, you assure we provide invaluable service to clients—and you assure that your coaching efforts with each agent will pay off. It’s a win-win for everyone.

In *Up and Running* you have a personal, detailed, workable business-development plan. It has taken me two decades in real estate sales, management, and training to organize and prioritize this business—so you won’t have to.

With *Up and Running* you can start your career today, using the same activities top producers use to create multi-million-dollar careers. Congratulations on choosing to become a dedicated, professional, successful salesperson. Before you know it, you will be serving as a success story for the industry!

SAMPLE

## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

To assure new agents get the technological support they need, as well as the start-up business planning support already offered in earlier editions of *Up and Running in 30 Days*, I called on my friends and technology/social media experts Brad Hanks, Amy Chorew, John Mayfield, Tricia Andreassen, and Scott Pierce (Listings-to-Leads). Each contributes greatly to our industry, and I know I can trust their input and advice regarding all things technical and social media. You can find their contact information in the References section of this book.

In addition, thanks to my son, Chris Cross (yes, I know, but we could have named him ‘Red,’ ‘Blue,’ or ‘Double’), who is a decade-long sales veteran in Bellevue, Washington. Chris provided me a list of what he believes the new agent should have in his technology arsenal. These suggestions have all been incorporated into this fourth edition of *Up and Running in 30 Days*. But, most importantly, listen to your coach. Figure out what you need to support your business. And, remember, it’s still a relationship, trust-driven business. Here’s to your successful career!

SAMPLE

## ■ 13 Tips to Assure *Up and Running* Works for You as a Coach

Let me begin by saying thank you for choosing to coach your new agents. In this age of complexity and high consumer expectations, I believe it is the only way for agents to thrive quickly. To help you coach your agents effectively through the *Up and Running* program, informational “Manager’s Tips” are included. You’ll find them in each section.

### How to Coach the *Up and Running* Program

Before you provide *Up and Running* to your agents, there are a few organizational steps you’ll want to take:

1. Read sections 1–3 to get an idea of the overall scope of this program. You will assign the introduction and these three sections to your agents the first week they are in the business, so they’ll understand the scope and concepts of the program.
2. Look at the ‘get ready’ list in section 3. Look at the list of recommended technologies at the end of this section. Add the ones you think are important for the new agents.
3. Read through sections 4–7, which outline each of the four weeks’ activities. See the assignments in each of these four weeks.
4. Use section 12 to coach the agents to the specific assignments. All the blank forms and assignments you need are there.
5. Look at section 8, the skills for lead generation. If you want to supplement the skill development in that section, create lists and packages to use with each of your agents in *Up and Running*.
6. Note the resources you’ll want to provide your agents prior to their assignment completion. For example, have ready your company or outside resource for your agents prior to them completing the assignment of assembling a listing presentation. This will be extremely helpful to your agents in getting their systems in place faster, better, and with more confidence.
7. Look at section 9 for the resources for business support packages.
8. Take a look at section 14 at the end of this program for additional resources.

9. Create a resource notebook in your office or online with articles/ blogs on how to contact and re-contact the various lead generating sources outlined in this resource.
10. Before your agents start the program, do an initial meeting with them to explain the program and how you will coach the agents.
11. Get the Mutual Expectations agreement in this resource signed prior to starting to coach the agents. You can also request a video for your agents from [www.carlacross.com](http://www.carlacross.com) explaining the program and mutual expectations.
12. Decide where in the program you will review expectations and results and make adjustments.
13. An additional tip: Provide the *Up and Running in 30 Days* resource to your desired recruits, explaining that it is the business plan you use for starting businesses.

Thank you for your dedication to our industry and especially to that agent lucky enough to have a start-up coach. It makes the difference between a career that barely succeeds (if at all) and an exceptional career start.

## INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on purchasing your start-up business plan for your real estate business. There are many books published for new agents about starting your business. They give you good advice. But this resource has a different goal. My goal is to provide you what's missing in 98 percent of new agents' arsenal:

*A proven, prioritized performance plan to bring you success in 30 days*

It's a business plan, designed to give you specific steps to start your business. In fact, most people would call this a full business plan. But, there are two big differences between this *Up and Running* plan and others' business plans:

1. A real business plan has three more parts: vision, review, and mission.
2. This plan helps you prioritize what to do on Monday, rather than asking you to create a full picture of your business. (How could you do that? You haven't been in business yet!)

It's great to learn interesting things. It's helpful to get lots of advice. But if you don't know exactly what to do each day to get a sale, what good is all of that advice?



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**Big Idea:** Advice is useless without the judgment to prioritize it.

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Don't get your hopes up that this book is going to tell you everything you ever wanted to know about selling real estate. First, you don't need to know everything before you talk to a human being! Evidence: there are thousands of real estate agents with licenses right now who know a lot, but don't sell much real estate. I don't want you to become one of them!



---

**Big Idea:** Real estate is a *performance art*, not a *knowledge pursuit*.

---

**Why this start-up business plan is unique.** Besides books with lots of advice, there are also activity plans available to you. But, again, this start-up plan is distinctly different from those checklists new agents are given to complete. The specific structure and foundations of this start-up plan have been carefully created based on my decades of experience as a

1. top producing agent (I sold 40 homes my first year);
2. coach to hundreds of new agents who became productive fast; and
3. high-level performing musician and music coach.

## ■ Five Structural Components Work Together to Get You a Sale

As an agent, you learn that every home must have a firm foundation that is structured against natural disasters of your particular area—flooding, landslides, and so on. (I live in Seattle!) You also learn that some builders are great at building foundations, while others aren't so good. It's the same in a business start-up plan. I've identified the five structural components in a business start-up plan that ensure that you get the best foundation, while protecting you from the pitfalls to which the majority of agents fall prey. Here are these components, and why they are so important to your success.

1. **Get you to top performance fast.** As a top producing agent, I learned how to put together and implement a start-up plan that worked. Then, I proved this plan works for others, as I used it to coach hundreds of new agents to success fast. Many of the new agents I hired and coached achieved top 10 percent status their first year in our company, which consisted of 400 agents, including those who had fifteen years' or more experience.
2. **Provide a top-flight "performance plan."** More than experience and background has gone into crafting your start-up plan. I really learned how to craft a good performance plan as a musician and musical performance coach. (I started teaching piano at age 16, and taught private and group piano and flute lessons in colleges for several years.) To learn to do something, you must have a structure that helps you perform correctly from the start. It must give you your next steps—in the right order. It must challenge you at the right times. It must teach you the principles so you can "go on auto" yourself.



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**Big Idea:** This performance plan is the basis for your career success—forever.

---

**Up and Running will:**

1. Get you to top performance fast
2. Provide a top-flight “performance plan”
3. Help you consistently get better results
4. Get you a sale in 30 days
5. Protect you from adopting the habits of failure

When a learning experience is badly crafted, you can’t perform at a high level. (Think trying to use a computer when too much is thrown at you too fast, or when you don’t have a chance to get your hands on that computer quickly enough.) When a learning experience is well crafted, you learn well—and fast. (Think Montessori school or the Suzuki violin method.)

I think I learned these lessons so well, because I saw how badly my piano students performed when I couldn’t lay out a well-structured performance plan! I saw the need to create a very clear, precise performance foundation, so those who wanted to learn to play the piano (or sell lots of real estate fast) could accomplish their goals. *Up and Running* integrates these performance principles like no other plan you could find!

---

**Big Idea:** Performing well results from a highly organized learning experience.

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3. **Helps you consistently get better results.** As a musician, I know that in order to get great performance fast, I need a way to measure what I’m doing and make adjustments. In music, we listen to our performances, usually with our coach, and evaluate to make adjustments. Then, we play it again with the benefits of our evaluations. That’s how we get higher performance. As a real estate coach, that’s what I do with my clients: help them look at their performances and make adjustments for higher performance results. So, another big difference in this resource is that I’ve built in the measurement tools you’ll need to analyze your progress and adjust your activities to get the results you want. I haven’t just given you activity plans. I’ve given you the *means to measure your results*. I’ve given you the analysis tools to make adjustments. I’ve given you all the tools you need to become a master at *self-management*.

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**Big Idea:** Measuring what you do frequently propels you to higher results.

---

4. **Get you a sale in 30 days.** When do you expect to make your first sale? If you’re like the majority of new agents, you expect to make a sale in your first 30 days in the business. I discovered those expectations when I did a survey of hundreds of agents who had under three months in the business. (The results of that survey are in *Become*



musical background, not a sales or business background. I had never taken a sales skills course. I didn't attend any type of training school. It was really trial and error, and I'll bet I made every mistake in the book! So, just because I'm writing this book with all this advice, you shouldn't think I was ever perfect—or ever will be.

What I did do was go out into the field and sell a house my first week in the business, and frequently continued doing that while I made all those mistakes. I learned as I went, and I set about doing it better every day. I think my musical and scholastic background helped me stay motivated through that baptism by fire, and caused me to not settle for mediocrity. The reason I'm writing this book is so you don't have to make the mistakes I made, and here you have a wonderful track to run on.

---

 **Big Idea:** We learn from our mistakes.

---

## ■ What's New in the Fourth Edition

*Up and Running in 30 Days* was first published in 1995. Since that time, thousands of new real estate agents have used the program to get “up and running” in 30 days. Now, here's the fourth edition, which I think is the best yet. Why? Four reasons:

1. I've realigned and added **new trends** and what they mean to you, the new agent, as you start your career, so you can make performance adjustments.
2. I've created a cleaner, **more structured road map** to use this resource to its fullest potential, so you won't get off track. It's also easier for managers to use to coach agents to the plan. For instance, I've added a Technology Budget and Planner so you can integrate technology faster into your business.
3. I've added a section on **scripts and letters** with examples for you to use. I want to make it easy for new agents to get the sales training support needed to make lead generating calls their first week in the business (not everything you need to know, but just enough).
4. In this fourth edition, I've added scripts, dialogues, and processes for answering and following up on Internet leads. Too many are not followed up or are not handled correctly. I want to help you make the most of every lead you get.

5. Because social media is becoming a force in marketing, I've added assignments to create a presence in major media, along with a Social Media Planner.
6. I've added many **"Big Ideas"** to ensure that you really grasp and internalize the principles of high performance that so many agents miss, and you get the motivation and inspiration you need to "keep on keeping on."
7. To help managers coach to the plan, I've added Manager's Tips in every section. Having a coach and a motivator is essential to starting your career right—and fast.

#### ***New in This Edition***

1. Newest trends and what to do about them
2. More structured road map and reporting tools
3. Scripts and letters
4. Training on answering and following up on Internet leads
5. Social media implementation
6. Big ideas that make training and advice "stand out"
7. Manager's tips

New trends, lead-generating sources, and skills that are discussed in this edition include:

- Why lead generation is king
- The segmentation of the buying population and how you must refine your sales approach for each segment
- How consumers are choosing real estate agents and what you must be aware of and manage
- Consumers' low ratings of real estate agent practices—and how you must respond
- Guidance, scripts, and letters to get and follow that Internet lead, a big consideration in lead generation today
- More technology and marketing resources for you, to support your business
- A sample plan and the format to create your marketing plan to follow up on each of your initial leads

The organization of this new edition has been refined so you can use this resource to its full potential:

- Stronger "get ready" directions for the new agent: information on how to create a budget, how to organize information in three resource manuals, a checklist of "get ready" materials (it's literally your start-up plan, not just a book or an "idea fest")
- Improved clarity in the four-week start-up plan, so you'll know exactly what you are to do
- A detailed, highly structured prioritized system to track your goals and results in each of the four weeks (and great for your manager to use to coach you)
- Explanations of why I've prioritized your sources as "best" to "not so good," so you'll be able to customize your plan to self-manage better and faster
- Built-in "caveats": what to watch for as you start your business so you won't fall into the same failure patterns too many new agents create

- “Big Ideas” to ensure you get the really important concepts of starting and managing your business
- A scripts and letters section (Section 13), where the scripts I introduce in Sections 8 and 9 are detailed so the new agent can learn, use, and refer to them often
- Summaries in each section so you can revisit the crucial points

**A shifted real estate market demands focus with a plan.** As I write this, experts say we’ve been in recession for a few years. And, most real estate experts and seasoned licensees (like me) agree that it is clearly a new type of market: the kind of market that doesn’t forgive lack of lead generation! In other words, just assume people won’t “turn themselves in to you.” You have to go find them. That’s lead generation, and as you’ll see in the trends, the trend experts say “lead generation is king.” The good news is that if you accept that truism, you will do better than most agents.

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 **Big Idea:** Shifting markets demand a great start-up plan to succeed.

---

### What You *Won’t* Find in This Resource

1. A lot of training. Why? Because:
  - I don’t want to clutter this start-up plan with lots of ideas on how to do things. As previously mentioned, I don’t want to distill it to an “idea fest.” That’s not what you need. A business start-up plan needs to be *separate* from curriculum-based training so the new agent understands the priorities of his business. (Few new agents ever receive or implement a start-up plan, because they’re too busy “learning important stuff.”) New agents actually think that they can just choose any way to start their businesses, and that they are all the same. Not true. What is true: there are many methods to call on for-sale-by-owners. But if you don’t make the sales calls to them, it doesn’t matter to your income that you have learned three ways!

---

 **Big Idea:** For real estate success, *action* is more important than *learning*.

---

- New agents need a clear, separate, prioritized, directive plan telling them what to do every day, week, and month to be successful. They need direction from their *first day in the business*. They

don't need to do long-term goal-setting. They need to know what to do on Monday—and why.

- New agents typically can't "see the forest for the trees" and you may receive some bad advice on what you should be doing. After all, most agents don't do lots of business. So, they're going to give you their versions of a "business plan" . . . a very slow business plan! You want to start fast. You just can't use a slow-start business plan.

2. General "get started" advice such as how to choose a real estate company, how to choose a manager, how to interview, how to hire an accountant, auto and dress considerations, and so on: Why isn't any of this advice included here? Although these are all admirable topics, they are peripheral to your business plan. Check the bibliography to see the book I've written that addresses many "get started" concerns.

---

**Big Idea:** A start-up plan tells you *what* to do. Training shows you *how* to do it.

---

### **But What about the "How"?**

It is true that we generally won't start something until we know how to do it. So, in Sections 8, 9, and 10, I've provided a start on "how to"—how to make sales calls and how to execute critical sales skills. You will need to supplement the "how" with the training program provided by your office or REALTOR® association. But a new agent doesn't need to know everything about everything to start making sales calls!

### **References**

Throughout this resource and in the References section, I've added specific technology tools as they relate to the tasks I've asked you to complete. Please note I am not endorsing these! I just want to provide you some examples of specific tools available to you. Check with your broker to find out if there are certain companies' tools your broker recommends. In addition, some real estate companies have contracted with providers to create a branded version of the generic software.

In the References section, I have also provided information to supplement the level of training I'm able to provide you here. There are specific listing tools, selling tools, and sales tools, as well as a training program that is "*Up and Running on steroids.*" I've also provided a coaching tool for

managers to use with *Up and Running*. Why aren't all these tools included in this book? This resource would be 1,000 pages! Also, each of these tools has specific uses. You wouldn't buy a car that was also an airplane, a boat, and a bike, would you? It would just be too weird! Again, don't let those trees get in your way of seeing the forest (your performance plan).

**Are you willing to make an investment in yourself?** You have the ability to make hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in real estate. Invest in the coaching and training tools you need now to become that professional you want to be. It amazes me when new agents start their careers and tell me they don't have enough money to invest in the tools they need—or they are unwilling to invest in themselves. Successful professionals always invest in themselves, because they believe in their abilities to attain their goals. What other field could you enter that gives you the ability to earn six figures while you were investing only a few thousand dollars to attain it? (Yes, I said “thousand.”) I have never met a successful agent who refused to invest in himself!

---

 **Big Idea:** People who are going to be successful invest in themselves because they believe in their abilities to attain their goals.

---

### Learn to Think Like a Top Producer

My long-term goal for you is to teach you how to *think*. I want you to understand the principles in creating a prioritized, successful plan. I want you to implement this plan until you become what some people call an “unconscious competent.” Then, no matter the market, you will have the plan and the skills to earn as much money as you want.

---

 **Big Idea:** Doing this plan for four weeks will teach you how to think like a top producer for life.

---

## ■ When and How to Use This Program

### When to Start the Plan

Start the plan your first day in the business! Brokers: give this to your new agents during their orientation process. Ask them to read Sections 1–3. Then, meet with the agents to start week one of the start-up plan (see Section 4) within their first week in the business. Why? The new agents expect to make a sale their first month in the business!

---

**Big Idea:** Start using this plan your first week in the business.

---

### How This Resource Is Organized

The following table shows a clear idea of how this resource is organized:

#### How *Up and Running* Is Organized

Overview	Sections 1, 2, 3
Four-Week Plan	Sections 4, 5, 6, 7
Training	Sections 8, 9, 10
Completed Plan	Section 11
Forms and Assignments	Section 12
Sample Letter/Scripts	Section 13
References	Section 14

### Overview

**Sections 1, 2, and 3.** In the first section of this book, we investigate the trends you need to recognize as you start your business. Then, in Section 2, I explain the six principles of a high-producing business. This is a very important section. I want you to know the “why” of your business start-up plan. I’m going to let you in on a secret: this start-up plan isn’t just to get you through your first four weeks. It is to set the priorities of your business *forever*. In Section 3, I prepare you to start your plan, explain the manager’s role, and give you an overview of your first four weeks. Read these sections right after you finish your orientation with your office so you’ll be set to start your week one action plan.

### The Four-Week Plan

**Sections 4–7.** Your actual four-week prioritized start-up plan starts with Section 4, which is your plan for your first week. Section 5 is your plan

for week two. Section 6 is your plan for week three, and Section 7 is your plan for week four. This isn't just a book. This is literally *your business start-up plan*. I didn't write this to give you *ideas* about how to start your business. This is the specific, prioritized, proven action plan for you to dive into and complete each week. This is the action plan your coach will hold you accountable to. This is the action plan that will get you business as fast as you want it! Start your week one action plan in your first week in the business so you'll get a sale fast.

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**Big Idea:** Most people would call this business start-up plan a business plan for *seasoned* agents!

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### **Training: Sales Skills and Marketing Plan**

**Sections 8–10.** In Section 8, I teach you how to contact the four types of lead-generating sources in *Up and Running in 30 Days*. In Section 9, I show you how to create a marketing plan and a promotional tool to stay in touch for as long as it takes. In Section 10, we explore the seven critical sales skills that are extremely important for you to master *right now!* Armed with the sales skills and marketing strategies, along with your lead generating action plan, you are as educated and trained as many agents in their fifth year in the business in these areas. In addition, you know the priorities of a very successful business, and you've been implementing them automatically every week—because this four-week plan is designed using those priorities and principles. You automatically start thinking like a top producer. These are your resources. Remember, they aren't in the four-week plan because I don't want to clutter up your “forest” with too many trees!

### **Resources: Sample Plan, Forms, Weekly Assignments, Scripts, Letters, and Processes**

**Sections 11–13.** Here are the *Up and Running* structured forms, scripts, and letters you need to make your plan, implement your plan, and track your plan. I've even included a sample start-up plan for you, along with a sample marketing plan, so you can see how all the pieces of the puzzle fit. These are more training resources for you.

### **References**

**Section 14.** In the References section, I have listed various support tools that are appropriate for you to use in your first few months in real estate. They include sources for statistics, marketing, Web sites, and soft-

ware. I've provided information about my training and coaching tools for agents and managers as a further support to you. I realize I can't put everything you need to know in one book, and it wouldn't be organized properly to best train you. (Let's take it one step at a time!) So, when you want to dig deep to create complete systems, when you want to train yourself at a higher level to list and sell, look to those specific resources. To keep the text clean and clear, most of the time I will simply point you to references at the appropriate areas in the text by saying "see the References section."

### Symbols to Focus Your Attention

I've added more ways to help you focus on what's important:

1. Big Idea 
2. Caution symbol 
3. Manager's Tip 

You've already seen Big Ideas. I've added that in this edition to draw your attention to major points. You get so much information that I know is very difficult to prioritize. Here's my attempt to help you do so. I've added the caution symbol to provide clarity on the reasons new agents fail. The concepts and skills I'm giving you here aren't just nice to know and do—they're *need* to know and do for you to be successful fast. I've left all the other stuff out! Finally, I've provided tips to managers to use this program, indicated by the manager's tip symbol.

### How to Use This Resource

1. **Read the first three chapters as soon as you get the book** in order to get an overview of the principles and structure. If you're a new agent, you'll want to get these chapters read in your first three days in the business. In Section 3, I have a list of "get ready to go" materials. Gather them quickly so you're ready to start your four-week plan.
2. **Start the four-week plan (Sections 4–7).** Remember, since this is literally your start-up plan, you'll want to start the plan your first week in the business. As you proceed in your plan, the week's assignments will refer to the sales skills you'll need to master as you carry out that week's plan. The explanation of the sales skills, marketing plan, and promotional tools are in Sections 8, 9, and 10.

## ■ A Perspective about Training Programs and Start-Up Plans

A new agent doesn't have the perspective to make judgments about the quality of his or her training program or the quality of the start-up plan he or she is given. In fact, most new agents think all training is the same, and that going to the company training program will ensure his success. Neither assumption is true. In addition, new agents think any plan of action given to them by their managers is as good as the next one. That's not true either. In this section, I'll provide you some perspectives about what training can do for you, and what you shouldn't expect it to do. I'll also provide you some ammunition to judge the effectiveness of any start-up plan you're given. As a lifelong performer and coach, I know that the performance models that you're given, and that you follow, predict the kind of performance you give.

### The Limitations of Training Programs

I hope your company has a great training program. However, it won't be enough to ensure your success without your implementing your business start-up plan for these reasons:

1. Training programs tell or show you the "how." They don't provide a directive performance plan and hold you accountable to it over a period of time so you get your priorities straight. That's coaching, and it must be done by your manager or an outside coach.
2. Most company training programs are focused on the technical aspects of real estate (how to write a purchase and sale agreement, all about financing, and so on).
3. Most training programs do not teach *sales*. Or, if they do, they don't teach sales using the facilitation skills required to ensure you master the sales skills you need to succeed (role-playing countering objections, role-playing giving a listing presentation, etc.) You may conclude that hearing someone tell you how to do a listing presentation, or seeing someone do one, gives you everything you need to make a great presentation yourself. Only role-play, coaching, and performance evaluation will make you a great salesperson.

### A Big Training Manual: Does It Equate to Success?

You've finished your training program. You have a huge training manual. Now, what do you do? You know a lot of things, and you have a lot of information in that training manual. But, without *Up and Running*, you still don't know *what do on Monday*. I learned how new agents get the wrong idea about selling real estate firsthand. As a manager, I sent my new agents

to the five-day company training program. When my new agents came back, they would ask, “Now, what do I do?” I would get out *Up and Running*, which I had introduced to them in their interview, and remind them that this is a business plan—a performance plan for *real life*. Sometimes I wished I just had not let them go to training, because they came out of training thinking it was *optional* to start the *Up and Running* plan! Why? They thought information was all they needed to succeed. They didn’t have to actually take any actions!

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**Big Idea:** Don’t get your priorities wrong because you have been “trained.”

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### **Critical Analysis: How Good Is That Start-Up Plan?**

You know what your training will do for you. So I hope you are convinced you also need to implement a business start-up plan to put all that information in perspective. But watch out—there are more poor ones than good ones out there. As a CRB (Certified Real Estate Broker) instructor for 12 years, I taught thousands of owners and managers nationally. I saw plenty of poor plans managers shared with me. (These were the plans they were giving their agents, too.) Here are some commonalities of them:

- They are laundry lists of busywork activities interspersed with activities that actually make you money, so the agent doesn’t get any evaluative perspective to self-manage.
- They *do not* prioritize lead-generating activities, so the agent thinks all types of lead generation have equal payoffs.
- They *do not* have methods of setting goals, keeping track of results, and analyzing results to make changes quickly. (*Up and Running* provides sales ratios so you learn how many specific actions it takes to get the results you want.)
- They *do* incorrectly prioritize actions. For example, as a high priority, they direct the new agent to “see all the inventory” before doing anything else. The rationale is that it’s very important to see all the inventory to build a knowledge base. It is important, but only as it relates to working with buyers and sellers. (It’s the means, not the end.) But new agents don’t want to do the high-rejection, high-risk activities such as talking to people. So they gladly see all the inventory until it becomes their job descriptions!
- They *do* include plenty of “busywork” as equal priority to lead generating—such as a broker having an agent visit a title company to learn how it operates. This keeps the agent busy and out of the

broker's hair! Also, the new agent loves the broker for a while, because the broker isn't asking the new agent to do those high-rejection activities—those activities that lead to a sale!

Bottom line: No would-be successful agent in his right mind would continue doing this type of plan any longer than he had to, because the successful agent recognizes the plan is a poor one.

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**Big Idea:** Be very critical before you commit to any start-up plan. It is prioritizing your mind! The start-up plan you may love because it keeps you out of sales activities isn't the plan that is going to love you back (get you the sales you want). What you do every day becomes your job description.

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### An Effective Start-Up Plan

Here are the six attributes of an effective business start-up plan:

1. Does not give equal weight to all activities
2. Provides an organized activities schedule with certain activities prioritized first because they lead to a sale (in *Up and Running*, these are called “business-producing” activities)
3. Includes an organized activities schedule with certain activities prioritized *second*—and explaining why (In *Up and Running*, these are called “business-supporting” activities)
4. Provides a road map for a continuing plan (remember that “plan for life”?)
5. Builds in the “why” of the plan structure, so you learn to self-manage
6. Has a method to measure and make adjustments in your plan as you progress

### Business-Producing Activities Get Highest Priority

I have to admit that many of the concepts I created in *Up and Running* resulted from my seeing agents fail—again and again. One of the ways they failed was that they couldn't differentiate the value of the activities they would complete in a business day. Because they naturally wanted to avoid rejection, they chose to do the low-rejection activities they felt comfortable completing—which didn't lead them to a sale! So, to help “train their minds,” I separated those business activities into two categories:

#### **Your business actions are either**

- Business-producing activities—highest priority
- Business-supporting activities—lower priority

1. Business-producing
2. Business-supporting

The activities that are highest in priority are those that result in a sale or listing sold. Why? Because those are the only two ways you get a check! These activities are specifically *lead generation*, *presenting/showing*, and *closing*.

These activities, which top agents call “dollar-productive activities,” are listed and performed *first* in your *Up and Running* plan. When I began selling real estate, one of the best agents in the company told me to write at the top of my daily plan, “How will I make money today?” That was good advice. It pays to develop that “success habit” that all top producers have.

### **Business-Supporting Activities Get Lower Priority**

Activities that are not directly lead generating, presenting/showing, or closing are termed *business-supporting activities*. As you may have guessed, low-producing agents complete a variety of business-supporting activities. (They conveniently run out of time before they can spend any time lead generating!) *Up and Running* is structured *not* to let you fall into that bad habit. As you follow the guidelines in *Up and Running*, you will learn to create your daily plan consciously, recognizing the value of your activities.

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 **Big Idea:** Schedule and perform business-producing activities first.

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### **Building Success Habits from Day One**

The best business-producing plan teaches you to think like a top producer and helps you set the pace for your career. *Up and Running* meets these goals by offering:

- The business-producing plan followed by top agents
- The concepts behind the plan, so you can adapt it to meet your needs
- A specific plan for your first four weeks in real estate, so you can't get off track
- The support and technical activities you should be doing your first four weeks in real estate
- The sales skills and sales calls, including specific scripts, you need to master to complete the business-producing activities in *Up and Running*

### **Your Most Important “Success” Ingredient: Accountability**

You've heard it before. Businesspeople make fancy, multipage, even excellent business plans, and then fail. Why? Because making the plan

doesn't ensure success. *Doing* the plan does. (You wouldn't expect that if you studied the life of Mozart you could automatically play a Mozart sonata, would you?)



**Big Idea:** No success is realized without action.

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If action brings about success, then why don't people get into action? Because it's human nature not to! So what is the missing ingredient you need, besides a great start-up plan and action-oriented training so you have the skills to implement the plan? You need someone to be *accountable to*. Study after study shows that we attain our goals when we are accountable, regularly, short-term, to someone. That's because we human beings tend to work on time frames and schedules. (Do you really get your taxes done by April 15 because you love doing them?) Those studies prove we work best on deadlines. We work best when we have a heavy workload. We work best when we have high expectations of ourselves, and we have someone—our coach—who shares those high expectations. (I know all this from being a pianist from age four, and having the privilege of being taught by exceptional piano coaches.)



**Big Idea:** People succeed not because they have a plan. They succeed because they're accountable to it.

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**Keeping the priorities straight without a coach is very difficult to do.** I know what you're going to tell me. You're goal-oriented. You're a self-starter. You don't need a coach. That's what most new agents say, and over 50 percent of them fail their first year in the business! Unless you have already attained high performance in music, sports, and the like, how would you realize that you can't achieve those high levels of performance without a coach?



**Big Idea:** The habits you form your first month in the business greatly influence your career success—forever.

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Most agents have never been in a field that requires such a high degree of self-direction and the mastery of many skills to succeed. So they don't know how easy it will be to get priorities all backwards! They also don't realize how difficult it is to change a bad habit. If you want to be a great pianist, you'd find a great teacher, wouldn't you? So, look at starting your real estate

career just like you would look at becoming a great pianist or golfer. You need someone to be accountable to. You need a trained, committed coach, so you have deadlines, expectations, someone to help you keep those priorities straight, and someone cheerleading and believing in you.




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**Big Idea:** No one succeeds alone.

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## ■ Summary: The Full Scope of *Up and Running*

*Up and Running in 30 Days* offers you a clear, concise start-up plan built on the six foundational structures conceived by me. It provides the “game plan” coaches must have in place to coach you to success. It is also built to *protect you from failure*. It provides you the why, how, how much, and what answers you need to get into action quickly and with confidence.

- **Why.** In *Up and Running* you get the “why.” You’ll be able to discriminate between effective and ineffective plans and actions long after you’re not following the *Up and Running* plan to the letter. You’ve been given the gift of the tools you need to self-manage your career—forever.
- **How.** In *Up and Running* you get the “how.” *Up and Running* explains critical sales skills and sales calls so you can find a partner and practice until you have mastered these skills.
- **How much.** *Up and Running* shows you exactly how to create sales by the numbers, teaching you to measure success and providing reassurance that you are on target.
- **What.** In *Up and Running* you get the “what”—what to do each day.

What’s next: read Sections 1–3 so you have the background to start your four-week plan to success. Prepare to start your four-week plan *now*, so you get the habits of success. Here’s to a thriving career launch!

# The Churning, Shifting Real Estate Industry and What It Means to You

You're launching your career in a rapidly changing market. I've identified nine major trends that are dramatically impacting real estate sales and will, in turn, dramatically impact how you are going to sell real estate. The reason I've included this section is that you are going to go into an office that may have many seasoned agents. These agents are influential. They will speak with authority to you. However, I want you to realize that they are speaking to you from a "historical" perspective (e.g., less than 25 percent of agents have a database or contact management system. That's pretty "historical"—or old school!). Although I want you to respect the seasoned agent's perspective, you are not seasoned. You are launching your career. You may need to do things differently. You will want to launch your business for the future, not the past! In this section, I'll give you advice on how to launch your business so you can take advantage of these trends instead of letting them take advantage of you—or discounting the need to plan with these trends in mind.



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**Big Idea:** Launch your business for future success.

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These nine trends are:

1. Evolving company economic models (various methods of how you'll get paid)
2. Lead generation is king
3. Systematizing your business with technology (what you do and don't need to succeed)

### **Nine Trends That Affect Your Business**

1. Evolving company economic models
2. Lead generation is king
3. Systematizing your business with technology
4. Social media as a marketing tool
5. Segmentation of the buying population
6. Coaching
7. Shrinking commissions
8. Consumers choosing agents differently
9. Teaming

4. Social media as a marketing tool (how much effort and time should you spend)
5. The segmentation of the buying population (how you must niche your business)
6. Coaching (why more agents are seeking coaches, and what you should watch for)
7. Shrinking commissions (what you must do to gain the commissions you want to charge)
8. Consumers choosing agents differently (what you must manage)
9. Teaming (is joining a team in your best interest?)

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**Big Idea:** Respect a historical perspective but plan your business to compete for the future.

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These trends have permanently affected real estate sales; to be successful in the field you must learn to recognize them—and embrace them in your practice. In this section, I’ve noted the positives in the trend and the “watch out for” aspects of that trend. I’m not endorsing any particular company, concept, or practice. I want to provide you with the critical analysis you need to make your own best decision about how to do your business.

## ■ Trend One: Evolving Company Economic Models

This first trend addresses how and what you get paid. When I started in real estate over 30 years ago, there was basically one company economic model. Very simply stated, it was this: a person owned a real estate company. We agents worked for that real estate company. For our work, the owner paid us 50 percent of the commissions. It was our one source of revenue from the company. Over these past 30 years, both “variations on that theme” and other types of economic models have emerged from that model. One of the most important decisions you’ll make is to decide which model fits you. I’ll give you a short description of these models with the pros and cons of each.

**The “traditional” split fee model.** This model is a variation of the 50/50 commission-splitting model under which I worked. Today, companies using this model generally have a sliding commission split. That is, the more you earn, the more of the total commission you are paid. These

plans can get quite complex, so be sure you understand the details of this type of plan.

- **Positives:** Generally, the kind of company that collects relatively more of the commissions offers more service and support to its agents. It has spent many dollars and many years creating a solid company name. For the new agent, these can be very important. To get your money's worth, take full advantage of the company programs, such as training, coaching, and marketing.
- **Watch out for:** Unfortunately, some new agents assume (or are even told) that the company will be responsible for their successes. That's just not true. If it were, then all new agents with a high support company would reach their goals, and no one would fail. What is true is that you, as a new agent, must go out and generate your own leads, no matter the company structure. You may be given some leads from company sources, so you must know what you may be charged for a company lead.

**The 100-percent model.** About 40 years ago, another economic model emerged in real estate—the “100-percent concept.” In this model, agents keep 100 percent of the commissions they earn while paying a “desk fee.” This desk fee varies from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars a month, depending on the company. (A variation on this theme is a charge for each transaction. Sometimes a transaction charge is coupled with a desk fee, too.) This model was designed for experienced agents who already know how to run their businesses and don't need many company support services, such as training, coaching, or marketing. Today, many 100-percent companies do not allow the new agent to start at 100 percent because they offer additional training and coaching services to the new agent. These companies have learned that new agents need a high level of support to succeed. From an organizational standpoint, these companies are acting more like the traditional model, while keeping their independent “instincts.”

- **Positives:** New agents are drawn to the independent model because they get to keep 100 percent of the commissions. That looks great to the new agent, who is spending a lot more money in the first few months than he or she had budgeted! Having to generate their own leads also forces new agents to be independent, developing the very business habits taught in *Up and Running*.
- **Watch out for:** 100-percent companies assume that an agent has the business skills to run her own business without much support or training. If you're a new agent, that may not apply. Also, there's very little coaching or mentoring in the pure 100-percent model, simply because there is no company dollar to pay for those services.

In addition, check out the other fees you will be paying, because they could add up to about the same as if you were starting in the traditional model company.

**The shared revenue model.** This model emerged about 20 years ago, paralleling its introduction to business internationally. Here, the company shares additional revenues to commissions, which are usually paid in splits, just like the traditional “split revenue” company. These additional revenues may include profit-sharing, stock options, or company-dollar revenues (what the company gets when an agent sells a home). Generally, these revenues are shared as a reward for helping the company grow. To gain these additional revenues, agents must refer another agent to the company. That way, the company grows, creating more revenue and profit, which are then shared throughout the company with those who helped the company grow.

- **Positives:** Sharing revenues can create a sense of excitement, common focus, and camaraderie. This is motivating to a new agent, who can feel lost in a new business with little day-to-day imposed structure! If the new agent takes full advantage of the training and coaching offered, he can benefit from this environment.
- **Watch out for:** Getting carried away with the excitement! Too many times, agents have been sold on that extra revenue, as if no one had to sell anything to get rich. In addition, you don’t just get that extra revenue for showing up. You get it for referring (mini-recruiting) agents to the company. Now you’ve got two lead-generating jobs: Finding leads for your business and finding leads for your company (recruits). So, find out exactly what those revenues are and how you are going to earn them, before you commit to a shared revenue company. Remember, you still have to start your business by generating your own leads!




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**Big Idea:** How or how much the company pays you doesn’t determine your success. Your actions do!

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## Choosing a Company to Support Your Career Goals

The main question all serious, determined new agents should ask their prospective company is: “How will this particular office, this particular manager, and this particular company help me achieve my career goals?” Too often agents choose a company based on how much of the commission they will be allowed to keep. That’s the last item a determined new

agent should consider. I proved how faulty that logic was while managing a real estate office. I was competing with an office down the street from me (it was the same company, however). The other office charged the agent a desk fee of \$1,000 per month. My office took a percentage of the commissions. The difference to a productive agent was about \$10,000 a year (with my office charging that \$10,000 more). So, why wouldn't any agent go to that other office? Because they made and kept more money with me. My statistics proved I helped new agents make four times more in their first year than did the less expensive office, where most of the new agents failed—quickly—because they did not receive direction or coaching. In addition, my statistics showed many more of my agents' listings sold, at higher prices and at higher commissions. If you want a successful real estate career, you will choose the company you feel is best suited to support your career goals.

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 **Big Idea:** What's important is what you keep, not what you make.

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## ■ Trend Two: Lead Generation is King

In their excellent book, *Game Plan: How Real Estate Professionals Can Thrive in an Uncertain Future*, authors Steve Murray and Ian Morris also name this trend as one of the top ten for the next five years. In my view, lead generation is always king. But, Murray and Morris's point is that real estate professionals who want to be successful can no longer depend on leads just coming their way. Instead, they must actively go after them. That means creating systems, disciplines, priorities, and goals for capturing, working with, and keeping leads—forever. Here's what they say:

*...contact management, lead cultivation, and customer relationship management systems can and will play a huge role in determining which agents and companies are most successful.*

- **Positives:** For those of you who intend to be successful in sales, this trend should be a comfort. That means, if you invest in yourself, your work ethic, and your systems, you will be ahead of the pack. In *Up and Running in 30 Days*, I've laid out a plan of action for those of you who do intend this success. I'm not being facetious here. Some agents are surprised that, in fact, one must lead generate to be successful in this business.

- **Watch out for:** Companies and/or managers who tell you that leads will simply come to you. That would include all those reactive (you sit and wait for the lead) lead-generating strategies:
  - The traditional ones, such as open houses and floor time or relocation leads
  - The technologically driven leads, such as software and programs that capture leads for you (they don't just sell themselves; you must have an effective capture, engagement, and follow-up program)

Unfortunately, interviewers use the “we will take care of you and give you leads” strategy to convince new agents to work with them. Then, after the agent is with that office, the agent learns there is no free lunch. Do I mean that you shouldn't accept various types of leads from others? No. But, consider this. If that lead source goes away, what are you left with? You are a first-day agent all over again! The *Up and Running* program will protect you from that, helping you build your own business so you always rely on yourself, not someone else.

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 **Big Idea:** In today's real estate climate, order takers need not apply. To be successful, you must create relationship continuance, no matter your lead-generating sources.

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### ■ Trend Three: Systemizing Your Business with Technology

To be more effective, you need to “duplicate and delegate.” The trend today is for agents to move faster and better by systematizing what they do and using technology to do it. The first step is to create checklists and processes for everything you do. These become your systems. For you new agents, take full advantage of every checklist and presentation your company offers. You'll save hundreds of hours of time and energy, because these resources are the result of experts' work.

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 **Big Idea:** It's much easier to refine a ready-made system than to create one from scratch.

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Your second job is to find some technology to support these processes. Your company may have already done that research work for you. It is amazing to me the number of agents who do not take advantage of

the technology their company has paid for in research, development, or partnering costs. For example, one large franchise had partnered with a lead follow-up company to ensure that their agents had a simple, effective method to follow their Internet leads. The franchise spent thousands of dollars and hours researching companies to ensure that they chose a company in the agents' best interests. They negotiated a great price for their agents, too. However, only about half of the agents in that franchise took advantage of the thousands upon thousands of dollars their company spent to create that partner agreement. I just can't see any reason not to take advantage of such a great opportunity.

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 **Big Idea:** Use the technology and systems your company has invested in for your convenience.

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- **Positives:** You're going into the industry as it has matured in its choices for needed technology. It will be easier for you to choose those that are important to your career success.
- **Watch out for:** Invest quickly enough, but don't invest in gimmicks. Also, don't let yourself think that if you have all the technology toys, you'll be successful.

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 **Big Idea:** Duplicate and delegate.

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### From Recipe Box to Software

As a new agent, I was handed a recipe card box and recipe cards and advised to keep all my prospect and client names on those cards. Organizing and tracking contacts with a system is one of those models I've been telling you about. Because my boss directed me to organize and keep track of my contacts, I started that lifelong habit. Although recipe and card files are passé, when you go into your office you probably will still observe some agents trying to keep track of all the names they gather on scraps of paper and in card files—if they keep track of them at all! Why don't they? They haven't gotten into today's world of relationship marketing, or they didn't have a boss like mine, who directed me to start this way. They're still selling "a new client every time."

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 **Big Idea:** If every time you sell a home you sell it to a new customer, every year is your first year all over again!

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Use technology to support your dynamic business. The easiest way to organize the names of prospects and clients is on a computer. If you're not in the technology world now—jump in. You'll need technology to do the following (these are not my priorities, just a list):

1. Work from wherever you are with a **laptop** so you can find properties, do market analysis, and create presentations anywhere, anytime
2. Organize your prospects, clients, and affiliates (such as mortgage lenders) in a **database** (if you're not extremely computer literate, start with Microsoft Outlook, which almost everyone already has on their computers)
3. Organize your follow-up programs for specific target markets via a **contact management program**
4. Capture and follow up on your Internet leads with **Internet lead follow-up technology** designed for that purpose
5. Measure your **progress to your goals** with specific software
6. Keep in contact with your customers via **cell phone** and pager (you will find it truly amazing how few agents return phone calls)
7. Carry your contacts (database), schedule, and so on with you on a **personal digital assistant**
8. Create a personal **Web site and/or blog** that promotes you and/or provides your prospects and clients access to information they value, such as updates on their property, marketing, or transaction progress
9. Take pictures with a **digital camera** and add them to your Web site or your flyers
10. Invest in a video flip camera so you can promote yourself and your listings via video
11. Budget for your expenses, track expenses, and create, implement, and analyze your profit and loss statements with **financial software** (such as QuickBooks, Quicken, or Money)

#### **Your Technology Needs**

1. A laptop computer
2. Database of prospects, clients, and affiliates
3. Contact management program
4. Internet lead follow-up technology
5. Program to measure your business goals
6. Cell phone
7. PDA or smart phone
8. Personal Web site and/or blog
9. Digital camera
10. Video flip camera
11. Financial management with software

See the References section for resources for these valuable tools.

These include only a few of the technologies agents use in business. Before you buy anything, interview three technology-savvy, high-producing agents in your office and identify the technologies they consider important. Don't expect your real estate company to provide them, although seasoned agents within your organization may be willing to provide direction on the best use of technology. Also, see your manager for advice on the most up-to-date technology you need to perform.

### **Your Technology Budget and Planner**

Using technology to support your business has become a much higher priority than it was when I wrote the second edition of this book a few

years ago. So, I've created a Technology Budget and Planner for you to use to plan your technology acquisitions and implementation. The Planner is in Section 12 and is an assignment for you to complete in your first week in the business. Your assignment will be to decide which technology is most important to you now, and when you're going to purchase and implement it. That way, you can progress in your technology plan every week during *Up and Running*.

Here are suggestions for the technology needed by new agents and a couple of very helpful programs to use from technology expert John Mayfield:

- Portable Scanner—HP 1000 is a must.
- Good printer with duplex capability—Duplexing allows for printing just sold and listed postcards.
- Small video camera—Get testimonials, videos of homes listed, information about the local area, and tips on buying and selling. Video blog everything!
- Learn to use Google tools—They're free, and tools like Google Docs, Google Sync, Google Picasa, and Google Voice are especially helpful.
- Use a cloud-storing and sharing site like Drop Box—[www.DropBox.com](http://www.DropBox.com); it's free for up to two gigs of space and is a must for all real estate agents.



**Big Idea:** Invest in the technology you need NOW, not later.

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**People want to be sold homes by people, not by computers.** Don't hide behind your computer learning new technologies. Don't think you're going to be successful because you know more about e-mail than anyone else. And don't judge start-up plans such as *Up and Running* as less than complete because they don't include details on all the latest technology. What matters is that you stay with the start-up plan, adding your improvisations as you go.



**Big Idea:** Prioritize it right: Technology provides *support* for relationship marketing.

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## ■ Trend Four: Social Media as a Marketing Tool

The average real estate agent is in his 50s. Social media has become a huge concern of real estate agents: how to use it, and how much time to spend on it. In addition, results are difficult to measure. So, agents are asking themselves, “Is the investment in time (and perhaps money) worth the results?”

I’m going to simplify the mystery of social media. The key word here is *media*. What is *media*? Those are the marketing delivery methods marketers use to communicate their marketing messages. Traditional marketing media include newspaper ads, television, and direct mail. Internet marketing tools include Web sites, social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube), and e-mail. Think of social media as several media choices you can use to promote yourself and your listings.

Do you have a marketing plan? If you’re like most agents, you don’t have a marketing plan as part of your business plan. That’s why I’ve included one in *Up and Running in 30 Days*. When you create this marketing plan, you’ll have many media choices to make. A good plan mixes traditional and Internet methods. *Up and Running* will help you create your social media presence and integrate it into your marketing plan.

### Using Social Media

1. Integrate it into your marketing plan
2. Restrict yourself to business communication
3. Remember your goal is to form warm relationships—in person

- **Positives:** Social media is either low cost or free. It allows us to communicate and stay in touch with those who like to follow us. It expands our choices of media for marketing.
- **Watch out for:** It’s easy to spend too much time “playing computer.” In fact, some types of agents would rather sit in front of a computer than go meet people. After all, it’s safer and a computer doesn’t talk back (well, usually). But, as you’ll learn in *Up and Running*, successful sales consists of engaging people, earning their trust, and communicating “until they buy or die.” High trust is earned face-to-face, not computer-to-computer.




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**Big Idea:** Integrate social media into your business marketing plan, and choose your media wisely.

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## ■ Trend Five: Segmentation of the Buying Population

As a new agent, I know you’re just concerned about finding someone who wants to purchase or sell a home! Yet, let’s think past just that. There are now four distinct segmentations of buyers (meaning those who want to

buy our services). As you think about these distinct groups, ask yourself, “How do I have to adjust my selling style, my technology, my communication, and my expectations for each of these distinct groups? Which groups will I naturally relate to?”

1. Traditionals—those older baby-boomers who are retiring
2. Baby-boomers—getting ready for retirement, these folks make up the largest buying population and have the greatest assets
3. Gen-X—these folks have purchased first homes, but because of the housing bust, can’t move up
4. Millennials—first-time homebuyers, typically looking for affordable housing, such as condos, co-ops, and so on
  - **Positives:** If you are able to adjust in the areas mentioned here, you can relate and sell to more people. To be successful, you must be flexible and sensitive to these differing needs and desires.
  - **Watch out for:** Don’t try to lump all these needs into one. The average real estate agent is in his 50s; the average buyer is in his 30s. Also, minorities will account for many more clients in the future, yet minorities are a small part of the real estate community. In many areas, buyers are frequently more tech-savvy than agents (that’s generally true in the Seattle area, where I live, because of Microsoft® and related businesses).

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 **Big Idea:** One size fits all is no longer applicable to real estate sales. Agents must specialize in each of the niches they want to serve.

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## ■ Trend Six: Coaching

### **Coaching is:**

1. Directed
2. Regular
3. One-on-one
4. Planned communication
5. Focused on action

Coaching is *a directed, regular, one-on-one planned communication focused on action* in which the coach

1. directs action following a particular agreed-on game plan (like *Up and Running*), and
2. holds the person coached accountable to that particular agreed-on game plan.

Coaching is needed today because of the skill level required of an agent to be successful. In addition, it is difficult to find adequate skills training. As you will see when we talk about consumer demands and expectations

in this section, consumers are expecting and demanding much more than agents are delivering.

Think of coaching like a piano or golf lesson. You take a piano lesson because you want to *play the piano*. You play for your teacher and you practice outside class (your action).

Does everyone in real estate sales need a coach? My short answer: yes. But not for the reasons you may think. Often new agents think they need a coach because they must have all the *answers* to succeed. They wrongly consider a coach an “answer man.” These agents are correct in that they won’t have all the answers—but no agent I have ever known failed from lack of answers. What agents do need to succeed is *direction and focus*. A coach can help an agent with direction—what to do daily, how to implement a plan, how to measure success, and how to stay focused on what’s important.

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**Big Idea:** A coach’s main function is to hold the agent accountable to his goals.

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**Big Idea:** No one ever failed because he or she didn’t *know* enough.

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### Choosing a Coach

Here are three important points you should consider as you search for a coach:

1. The specific program should be highly organized and precisely outlined with checklists and systems. Ask, “What system are you going to use to coach me?” You need a specific plan because you are new. You have no history.
2. The specific program should be related to a “game plan”—a business start-up plan. Ask, “What game plan are you going to use?”
3. The coaches should be trained and coached themselves. Ask, “What’s your coaching background, and what sales principles do you believe in?” For example, each of our coaches in the Carla Cross Coaching program has been trained by me and coached regularly by me.
  - **Positives:** Having a coach keeps you on track, motivated, and, ideally, inspired to reach your goals.
  - **Watch out for:** Your coach is trained and dedicated to your success, and is following a proven game plan (otherwise you’ll be paying just to talk to someone every once in a while).

## ■ Trend Seven: Shrinking Commissions

Commissions are going down, and have been for the past five years. We've gone through a boom period of real estate, during which hundreds of thousands of new agents entered the business. Although some of them did quite well quickly, they may have not provided the level of customer service the consumer expects. Why? Because they were new. When the market is really great, agents don't have to be too good to make money!

What's different now? The market is in what the old pros call the new normal—a market that demands much more of the agent, and that doesn't deliver leads easily to agents. That's actually good for the consumer and good for the agent. Why? Because that means agents have to learn to sell and to provide great customer service to build a business.

**Earning a generous commission.** Don't just rely on a fast market to get you sales. Build your business with an eye to maintaining and growing it with valued customers. Remember, it costs six to nine times more to get a new customer as it costs to keep an old one. Your job is to find potential buyers, qualify them, sell to them, and then keep in contact with them regularly to show you care more about them than just their money. The consumer was a predictable experience coupled with high trust. They want you to save them time and help them prioritize information. That's what you'll get paid the big bucks for.

In a shifting market, success doesn't come from chance. It comes from implementing the *Up and Running* plan every day.

- **Positives:** A shrinking commission means agents will have to provide true “value-added” service to be paid what they feel they are worth. As a new agent, you can start that way.
- **Watch out for:** Don't settle for cutting commissions because you don't know how you're worth a larger commission. In *Up and Running*, we help you provide dozens of pieces of evidence to buyers and sellers to show them why you're worth the commission you want to charge (and show you, too!).



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**Big Idea:** Don't take for granted the fact that you are value-added. The consumer expects more than agents think.

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## ■ Trend Eight: Consumers Choosing Agents Differently

Traditionally, consumers either stumbled upon an agent (e.g., going into an open house) or got a referral from a friend. Although that's still true, consumers have another powerful method to choose an agent: the Internet. Increasingly, consumers are looking at evaluations on Internet sites such as Zillow or LinkedIn to find out what other clients thought about that agent. Take a look yourself. Some of the evaluations are wonderful. Some are stunningly awful. And all are very public! There are even specific agent-rating sites such as [www.realestateratingz.com](http://www.realestateratingz.com) and [www.incredibleagents.com](http://www.incredibleagents.com). Also, take a look at Zillow, which has agent ratings now. Bank of America and USAA are also getting into the game. You must work for long-term customer engagement and great ratings to sustain your real estate business. This will continue as a trend, and, I believe, change the way consumers choose and keep their agents!

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**Big Idea:** It costs six to nine times more to get a new client than to keep an existing client. Retention is king, and reputation is key.

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- **Positives:** It will be great for those competent, caring agents who really take care of their clients. It is easier now for potential clients to get feedback from third-party sources, clients just like them.
- **Watch out for:** Doing a *next* kind of business, where you don't care what happens after the sale. The client has recourse now, of the most expensive kind—a poor review!

## ■ Trend Nine: Teaming

What is teaming? It is affiliating yourself with a “rainmaker” agent, an agent who will deliver leads to you, for which you'll pay a portion of your commission. You're teaming up with that agent to do the work that the rainmaker agent doesn't have time to do. First, teaming doesn't mean partnering—two agents working together. If you join a team, *you are working for that rainmaker agent*. Generally, agents who grow teams have been in the business at least a few years. They've developed a large business. To grow their businesses, they need to “duplicate and delegate.” So they hire assistants and buyers' agents—agents who work with buyers the rainmaker agent has generated. Many times they hire new agents and train them in their methods.

## How Joining a Team Can Help a New Agent

Teaming helps agents obtain leads as they start up business. While agents earn the most in commission dollars when they generate their leads themselves, a new agent may need to pay for someone else's lead generation to begin to develop business. There is a downside to this approach, however. Agents can become complacent and sit and wait for leads. They won't generate—until they get tired of paying for someone else's leads.

### Questions to Ask the Rainmaker

1. How many leads will I get per week?
2. How do you manage the team?
3. How will you train me?
4. How much turnover has the team had?
5. Can I sell homes from my own leads, and what will you charge me?

- **Positives:** You may be able to jump-start your career with leads given to you.
- **Watch out for:** Be careful to choose a rainmaker who really has enough good leads to distribute to you. Sit in on her team meeting to see how she manages the team. Find out if and how the rainmaker will train you. Find out how much turnover there has been on the team. Find out whether you can sell and list houses outside the team—and how much the rainmaker would charge you if you did. Read the contract the rainmaker asks you to sign and be sure you understand the consequences of your involvement.

Evaluate how good a leader that rainmaker is. Some rainmakers are great salespeople but lousy leaders, and so their team never gels. Most team leaders ultimately expect their team members to generate their own leads, in addition to team leads. If you can't meet the rainmaker's expectations, you are terminated. Be willing and ready to take the responsibilities of team membership seriously.




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**Big Idea:** If they aren't your leads, you're starting the real estate business all over again when you leave the team.

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## ■ Summary

### The Churning, Changing Real Estate Industry—What It Means to You

The nine major trends discussed here have significance on your business as a new agent:

1. **Evolving company economic models**—No matter which model you choose, the lesson here is that you must generate your own leads to ensure that you create your own real estate business at the income

level you desire. Be aware, too, that there is no free lunch. Figure out whether you want the benefits of a specific company structure before you commit.

2. **Lead generation is king**—Be sure you understand your responsibilities to generate leads and are willing to do the business this way. The days of easy-come buyers and sellers is over—for good.
3. **Systematizing your business with technology**—Too many agents are still doing business “by the seat of their pants.” So it’s not a business, it’s not even a career, it’s just a vocation. As a new agent, you must invest in technology to systematize your job so you can do it faster and better.
4. **Social media as a marketing tool**—Make social media a part of your media marketing arsenal. Discipline yourself to concentrate on social media for only a small portion of your day—and be sure it’s business, not pastime.
5. **Segmentation of the buying population**—Educate yourself to handle specific buyer niches. Decide which of these four segments you’re comfortable with. Develop skills and technology to match the needs of your chosen buyer segment(s).
6. **Coaching**—More and more agents are seeking out independent coaches to fill in the gaps left by the constraints most companies and offices face (time, expertise, and money). Most important for new agents is to find a coach who can hold new agents accountable to their business start-up plan. Over 50 percent of new agents don’t make it through their first year. Be part of the half that does!
7. **Shrinking commissions**—Consumer demand for better service, coupled with less service provided by generous-commissioned agents, has pushed commissions downward. To earn the commissions they are worth, new agents must get really good really fast.
8. **Consumers choosing agents differently**—Monitor your evaluations on the Web; decide to work for repeat and return business; accept that exceptional customer service is worth more to you than one quick sale.
9. **Teaming**—Joining a team within an office is a choice that may be good for the new agent because the new agent will receive leads from the rainmaker, plus high direction and structure. However, there is a high cost for those leads, which must be weighed carefully by the new agent. Not only that, when you’re accepting someone else’s leads, you’re not creating a business for yourself. If your lead source leaves you, you’re a new agent again!

With that background, you’re ready to learn the six principles of a high-producing business. Armed with the “why” of prioritizing your start-up plan in the manner described in *Up and Running*, we know you’ll not only

implement this plan correctly, you'll have the invaluable skills to continue these principles throughout your career.



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**Manager's Tip:** Be sure to get Stefan Swanepoel's Real Estate Trends report each year. You can see it at [www.rerends.com](http://www.rerends.com). I also recommend the book *Game Plan* by Morris and Murray, where these industry experts analyze what they believe are the ten trends for the coming five years.

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SAMPLE

# UP and RUNNING in 30 DAYS | Fourth Edition

This new agent's business start-up plan is so detailed and comprehensive that most real estate professionals would term it a business plan. Yet, it's directed to the new agent, because it provides specific guidance in lead generation, marketing, technology, social media, and sales skills to become an exceptional agent—fast. This program is also excellent for seasoned, challenged agents to get them back on track to success.

## Highlights include:

- The four best lead-generating sources for new agents—and how to contact and convert them to clients
- A prioritized lead-generating plan to provide focused guidance to the new agent
- A detailed business start-up plan, with the conversion rates for leads to listings to sales, so new agents know exactly the work it takes to reach their goals
- Seven critical sales skills with scripts and dialogues, including how to convert the Internet lead to a trusting client
- The technology a new agent needs right now—with a technology planner
- An expanded four-week plan with detailed weekly, prioritized checklists to follow with social media included
- A completed sample start-up plan, marketing plan with social media, and budget for the new agent
- Specific, detailed dialogues for lead-generating sources
- The impact of new trends agents must recognize—and how agents can harness these trends to jump-start their careers
- Over 100 *Big Ideas*—motivational and practical sales advice to keep the new agent inspired and on track (great for sales meetings, too)

"*Up and Running in 30 Days* has been an instrumental tool for The Real Estate Group. Carla's attention to detail coupled with her explicit real estate lead-generation solutions and her production tracking charts and graphs make this a must training tool. This program is perfect for the new associate as well as the experienced REALTOR® wishing to grow their practice."

—Steven Edwards, CRS, GRI, CDPE, Broker/Owner,  
The Real Estate Group, Virginia Beach/Chesapeake, VA

"*Up and Running in 30 Days* is both a great agent plan and manager plan. It gets agents into a production mindset to start organizing and building their business as an effective system, teaches how to plan their days, and measure how effective their time was spent. Most importantly, it focuses them on the activities that are truly income-producing. As a manager of a smaller independent firm, it has given me a professionally-packaged presentation of training resources that I now can demonstrate during the interviewing process. The materials inspire and motivate me, and give me an energy boost as a manager that I can, in turn, direct back to my agents."

—Greg Fedro, Manager, Recar & Associates, Austin, Texas

**Carla Cross, CRB, MA, President of Carla Cross Seminars, Inc., Cross Institute, and Carla Cross Coaching, is an international speaker, trainer, and coach providing sales and management guidance and resources to real estate professionals. Through her three decades in real estate, she's won numerous awards, including National REALTOR® Educator of the Year by the National Association of REALTORS®, and was named one of the 50 most influential women in real estate. She's the author of international sales and management programs for entities such as the Managers' Council of Certified Real Estate Brokers (CRB), RE/MAX Eastern Canada, RE/MAX Europe, Royal LePage Canada, and GMAC. Carla's 6 published books and 20 resources are used internationally by hundreds of thousands of real estate professionals to advance careers.**

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ISBN-13: 978-1-4277-1145-8  
ISBN-10: 1-4277-1145-3



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