

# Generating Leads From Sports Marketing and Long-Term Branding w/ Gary Ashton

Frank Klesitz:

All right, so this is Frank Klesitz, your cohost, with Chris Watters from The Listing Lead Show. I want to thank you so much for listening. If you enjoy this podcast and you enjoy these shows, go to [listingleadshow.com](http://listingleadshow.com) and subscribe to get notified of the shows we put out. You may be wondering how come we don't put out more regular shows? Well, because no regular guests.

Chris Watters:

And I'm a high maintenance cohost.

Frank Klesitz:

Yes, and Chris is a high maintenance cohost, and there's lots of-

Chris Watters:

Frank sends me potential guests and I say, "No, no."

Frank Klesitz:

Or we record a show and it doesn't get published. But we only want to put podcasts out worth listening to and not stick to some arbitrary publication schedule. So, when you see this come across your Apple podcast or whatever you use to listen to the show, it's always going to be a good one. And to deliver on that our guest today is Gary Ashton. He has built for himself the number one RE/MAX team in the world out of Nashville. Actually where I just recently moved to.

Frank Klesitz:

I used to be San Diego and I just moved to Nashville, actually technically just outside Nashville south so I'm coming to you live from Nashville today. And we're going to ask Gary how he gets his listing leads. This is The Listing Lead Show. Welcome, Gary.

Gary Ashton:

Hi. How's it going?

Frank Klesitz:

Thanks for doing this, Gary. He's sitting at the Nashville airport.

Gary Ashton:

Austin. Austin airport.

Frank Klesitz:

I apologize. Flying to Nashville. He's at the Austin airport.

Gary Ashton:

That's right.

Frank Klesitz:

He was down there for a meeting so if you get a little background noise on there please forgive us. We'll do our best to edit it out.

Gary Ashton:

I was screened by Chris this morning or this afternoon to make sure I was clear to do the podcast and apparently I met the criteria so I'm on.

Frank Klesitz:

You definitely met the criteria. No question. Why don't you go ahead and it's okay to brag, Gary. I mean you are the number one real estate team in the world. Why don't you update the audience just a little bit on the scope of your team and operation you have in Nashville.

Gary Ashton:

So, I have to clarify it because everybody's very protective of their naming rights of being number one because everybody's number one at something. We're the number one RE/MAX team in the world.

Frank Klesitz:

So, give us an idea of the scope of that operation in Nashville.

Gary Ashton:

So, now we're I think 180 to 190 agents. We have I think 50 to 60 full-time staff and we're the broker partner for Zillow, the Nashville Zillow office which now probably end sometime in 2022. Official real estate team, can't say realtor because that's a trademark violation but official real estate team of the Tennessee Titans. Official real estate team of the Nashville Predators. And what else are we. That's about it.

Gary Ashton:

And I think our volume last year was \$824 million, heading for a billion this year if we can make it. That's my goal.

Frank Klesitz:

So there's lots of questions I can ask you, but this is The Listing Lead show. I'm going to start with asking you how you get your listings? So let me ask you this question.

Gary Ashton:

Well, you just asked me it.

Frank Klesitz:

I know. What is the number one, number one source for listings for all those agents and where your listings come from? Number one source. What is it?

Gary Ashton:

So this is what the common misconception is because we do a lot of advertising. I've been doing radio for maybe eight to 10 years. It all starts to blur. And then we've done the sports marketing thing for seven or eight years. I've done SEO for gosh, since 2004 I think. And we did Top Golf for a couple of years. So, what I'm saying is all these different places where we've developed and created some brand awareness, brand equity. So to say it came from one source it's very hard to say, but I will say that maybe two years ago so what's that, maybe 2018-19, after listening to Kris Lindahl for a couple of years telling me to do billboards and Justin Havre up in Canada, I ended up doing billboards. Because I had somebody come into my market that was known as an MO and so I knew that they were going to start doing a bunch of billboards.

Gary Ashton:

So, as soon as I found out they were coming in, the next day I went out and bought 50 billboards and interestingly enough everything that Chris and Justin said came true. It was a lift to the business. But I think it's because you can't just go out and do billboards. I think you have to create that foundation over the years.

Frank Klesitz:

Yeah, billboards do not work by themselves.

Gary Ashton:

No.

Frank Klesitz:

They amplify everything else you're doing.

Gary Ashton:

Yeah. So now we're doing billboards, TV, radio and the SEO. So where does that final... If you talk about Gary V, the jab, jab, jab, right hook, where does the right hook come from. It's a combination of everything. And it's over a period of years. You can't just put your billboards up and then expect everybody to start calling you for listings.

Gary Ashton:

So, it's a long-term thing. That's why I was saying building that foundation and then we've just grown and reinvested.

Chris Watters:

Something I would add... I know Frank you're looking for a very definitive answer and I faced this same problem. I first started radio and then I added billboards and TV and in the beginning I could easily track it. You have the landing page, a vanity number. It's the only expensive lead gen thing you're doing. And then you layer something else on and you see a lift.

Chris Watters:

But at a certain point... And I've literally sat next to the inside sales team and listened to their call recordings or the guys live on the phone because I'm so sick of them not writing out how the people heard about us. And literally I mean this sounds crazy but I've heard this so many times from people. They said it's like a sign from God.

Gary Ashton:

I've never heard that on our calls.

Chris Watters:

And I'm supposed to call you. I've heard that so many times. The point is it's really hard to say what's number one or what's the best thing. What I'm selfishly interested in knowing about is the sports marketing you do. I mean to be the official real estate team of an NFL team like holy cow.

Chris Watters:

It sounds like you started doing the sports marketing pretty early in like eight years ago because your team has really exploded in the last five years. And so from 2015 to 2020 you guys exploded. But from 2010 to 2015 you guys were doing great but it was modest growth. So was it radio was the first stepping stone and then sports marketing created that huge upward lift?

Gary Ashton:

Honestly, if you look at it like that we had our own team. We were a team within a brokerage. And then in 2015 or 2016 I got broker released from that brokerage. And that's when I started my own brokerage but I partnered with Debra Beagle and Jonny Lee. So at that point we had a lot more control over how we do things.

Gary Ashton:

And then Scott Hull is my tech guy, sales leader. We started a whole ISA department and we started working the leads completely differently. My shiny object is how do we get more leads, get more leads, get more leads. But then we were throwing so many leads at agents. We were inundating them and then there was no accountability. There was no... I mean what we did and created over a period of time was just implementing systems and accountability and training. Training was a big thing.

Gary Ashton:

So, that in itself probably accounted for a lot of the growth. So, it's just a combination of all things. The advertising was improved. The message was improved because I was doing guaranteed sold for a long time which I never really liked. And then it was just more of a branding play, but probably the biggest thing is actually owning the brokerage and then by luck or by design having people within the organization that stepped up and really started implementing a lot of the systems that, I think, led to the success.

Gary Ashton:

So it's not me. It's the people that I'm around.

Frank Klesitz:

So Gary, let me ask you this question that the audience wants to know. What's going through everyone's mind is you're spending ridiculous money, relatively speaking, not ROI speaking because it works, on staffing, on fixed label costs as well as on advertising. And here's my question. I really want to ask this from you because this is your opportunity to really give a good answer like the world. Clearly you're unique. Clearly you're the outlier. How did you have the emotional strength? Was it a bank loan? Was it equity? Was it fadings? How did you begin to write the checks every month on the staff and the checks every month on the advertising in the beginning when you were making the shift to like I have to hire staff and I have to buy leads, especially with this long-term branding idea.

Frank Klesitz:

How did you have the emotional fortitude to do that?

Gary Ashton:

So, I always say it's luck, vision and money. So it's a combination of all those three, but it's kind of like if you go to Vegas and you start gambling. You don't go in with \$5 million and start throwing down \$1 million on red. You start generally small. Small amounts and you gamble a little bit here. You get some return. You gamble a little bit more, you get some return.

Gary Ashton:

And then instead of taking the money out, you keep playing it. You keep reinvesting in the business. This is what I did.

Frank Klesitz:

Why did you do that? That was really big of you to take that money and keep throwing it back in. You clearly have a temperament for the ability to do that. What makes you unique to be able to do that where most people don't do that?

Gary Ashton:

So, when I was married I probably had a little bit more of somebody saying, "Don't do that. Don't do that." But when I was single, which I still am, then I don't have anybody really saying, "That's not going to work." So I think I'm just speculative by nature. I don't gamble. Everything is generally I think reasonably well thought out.

Gary Ashton:

I don't know if I mentioned earlier on, Kris Lindahl had been telling me to do billboards for two or three years and I didn't because I thought the return I was getting from-

Frank Klesitz:

How many did he have at any one time in Minneapolis?

Gary Ashton:

Kris? Oh, he has a couple hundred. He dominates. So, in Nashville I think I have about 80. I have a fairly strong presence but in Minneapolis, Kris really dominates the market.

Frank Klesitz:

Let me ask this follow-up question. I want to hear your take on your ability to bootstrap from all of your listings and sales and take whatever money's leftover and throw it just right back into advertising and staff, right.

Gary Ashton:

Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Frank Klesitz:

Got it. When you go to the market... When we use advertising, let's get this one question in.

Gary Ashton:

Okay.

Frank Klesitz:

You're on all these billboards. You're on TV, you're on radio. Right now-

Gary Ashton:

You sound excited for me. That's great. I like that.

Frank Klesitz:

I am. I'm very excited for you. This is exciting. I mean I really look at you as a role model. I'm like I'd like to get there. I don't have the guts to drop that kind of money on billboards. I just started personally for my side business about \$10,000 a month on radio which gave me a heart attack. But I'm not playing the game like you are, Gary. So let me ask you this question. In all of your advertising what's the message?

Frank Klesitz:

So you're the competitor with the message here. What's your message? What's the message on all the radio ads and TV ads? What's the message they're hearing from you?

Gary Ashton:

I actually used the same message for a while. Guaranteed offer. But for a long time I've had this underlying, I guess you would call it a catch phrase or a slogan that's associated with me which is don't sell without the intel. And that's always been throughout our campaigns, that's always been the underlying message. Don't sell without the intel. And we've been doing that on radio for a long time and then we'd use another message like guaranteed offer or get your dream address without the stress.

Gary Ashton:

But the one thing that people kept coming back to-

Frank Klesitz:

Gary, I never heard that.

Gary Ashton:

What? Get your dream address without the stress?

Frank Klesitz:

Have you heard that phrase before, Chris?

Gary Ashton:

No. People like it.

Frank Klesitz:

That's an amazing phrase.

Chris Watters:

It's an amazing phrase. What was it again?

Frank Klesitz:

I'm writing this down. I'm going to write this down.

Gary Ashton:

Oh, it's copyright. Get your dream address without the stress.

Frank Klesitz:

[inaudible 00:16:21] well baby. I love it.

Gary Ashton:

But the one thing that we kept on using and it became apparent that people... If I would meet them they would go, "Hey, don't sell without the intel." And I think that's kind of like my phrase. And so rather than trying to come up with other things, rather than trying to battle against-

Frank Klesitz:

Like unique selling propositions.

Gary Ashton:

Yeah.

Frank Klesitz:

Pitches. So instead of doing like guaranteed offer, guaranteed sell, some bait let's call it to get the call, you went with a catch phrase on everything.

Gary Ashton:

Essentially, but it's not a catch phrase. So if you listen to the radio, the radio explains the rationale behind explaining what having the intel means which is because we have so many people visiting our site every day. We're at 10,000 to 11,000 people. We have access to all these off market properties through they advertising and the marketing we do because it generates people. So we have all this intel about properties so don't sell without he intel. Come to us first.

Gary Ashton:

Chat to us. We'll give you the insight. We'll tell you how many people have been looking to buy a home just like yours. So, the only thing you see on the billboard is don't sell without the intel. But like I said we've been doing that for three years now so we've built up that brand equity. People have come to know us, trust us and then having the association with the world brand like the NFL and the NHL. Seeing our names associated with that.

Gary Ashton:

We're on TV a lot. The local news sources will use us in their real estate reporting segments. So, we're seen as part of the community. We give back to Children's Miracle Network. Over time it just builds up the confidence in us as in somebody that can sell your house. And so don't sell without the intel is just something that's branded us and it's memorable and that's what people associate with.

Frank Klesitz:

Do you think you will ever change that slogan Gary? Have you ever thought about changing it?

Gary Ashton:

Well, I have changed it and I've gone from all these other ones that we've used. Get your dream address without the stress is one of them.

Frank Klesitz:

That's more buy side focused though, right. Would you change the seller focused?

Gary Ashton:

Getting your dream address without the stress was the fact that you could sell your house... Sorry, buy your house without the stress of having to sell your house because some of the programs that we use, we have the ability for people to buy without selling and we have the Ashton advantage. All the different ways that we can help you sell your home.

Gary Ashton:

I actually like get your dream address... No, don't sell without the intel. I think that one's become the most impressive on the billboards. It gets the message across. It's reinforcing everything we're doing on TV and radio. And nobody else-

Chris Watters:

I want to ask a quick question. So a few moments ago you said the way you were able to emotionally withstand the pain of paying out thousands of dollars waiting to get a return was by doing it in small bite size chunks, not coming out of the gate spending \$50,000 to \$200,000 a month.

Gary Ashton:

It's a gradual growth.

Chris Watters:

For people that are listening to this right now that are trying to find or trying to identify what are those small stones they should be stacking right now. What would you tell them to go out and do? What are



the stones they should go out and start stacking if they're in the same position you were in 10 years ago?

Gary Ashton:

Well, the most obvious thing is to work on the sphere of influence because that's such an old school way of generating some business and everybody wants to zoom past that and generate leads left, right and center. But first of all, you have to create the money to be able to reinvest so the cheapest way is to go out and just work your sphere of influence and do the old school things.

Chris Watters:

What would you do after sphere? What else? If you've got \$5,000 to spend a month what would you go put it in?

Gary Ashton:

So, right now I would be on Google local services if you can get on there which is essentially pay for click.

Chris Watters:

Yeah, it's like a higher, better PPC, yeah.

Gary Ashton:

Yeah, so you have to be early in on that so you have to make sure that you have the reviews. That has been really good for us.

Chris Watters:

Conversion rate of that stuff is really good just for people listening. Those Google local service ads conversion is great.

Gary Ashton:

This is what I'll tell you on that. It's still a function of how much people are aware of us in the city because again, once you're building that brand awareness on the radio and TV and then they go to Google and they search for Nashville realtors and my name pops up. That's reinforcing everything that subliminally they've been aware of over the last two, three, four, five years.

Gary Ashton:

So, even with Google I think what they're having to do is they take me off after a while because my call rate is so high because of the awareness of us in the market. So they're almost throttling us so they can give other people in the market a chance. It's true.

Chris Watters:

It's a struggle, Gary.

Frank Klesitz:

Gary, if you went into another market right now with the resources you have, what's the first thing you would launch, the second thing you'd launch and third thing you'd launch? Money is no object. Resources no object. What's first, second and third thing? How would you stack it?

Gary Ashton:

Well, I think I know Chris is doing this in other markets and he's going in heavy on the billboards and having that supported by radio. So again, it's the one-two effect. And then you've got all the-

Frank Klesitz:

What would be number three? So, radio, billboard, one-two. What's three?

Gary Ashton:

Well, the retargeting or targeting ads. Having stuff through Facebook and just generally retargeting is-

Frank Klesitz:

People coming to your website.

Chris Watters:

Go to the website. We target them.

Gary Ashton:

Yeah, sorry. Yeah.

Chris Watters:

Great question, IP target.

Frank Klesitz:

Let's ask [inaudible 00:23:46]. You're a big tech guy. Do you know a service that you... Have you heard of anything where you can upload a list of all the homeowners in Nashville and run ads just to those homeowners?

Gary Ashton:

So, Revalult is something that I tried in 2018 and that was supposed to be predictive analytics of people that were thinking of moving or they were showing all the signs and it sounded awesome to me. And they were supposed to scrape your existing database and then match that with people. So that didn't work, but that was 2018 and I think they just started. I think we adopted that service too early on and it didn't work for us. But just recently I've heard lots of good things about Revalult so we're about to start another program with them. That's the latest.

Frank Klesitz:

Gary, would you go into another city and add a professional sports team?

Gary Ashton:

Yes.

Frank Klesitz:

You would?

Gary Ashton:

Yeah because that gives you credibility amongst the residents of that town. So that essentially makes you a local. If you're part of that, that you're associated with them. So it's that subliminal messaging. If you're associated with the NFL. If the NFL is promoting me as the official real estate team then there's got to be some hoops and hurdles and criteria that I've had to jump through to become the official real estate team of the Titans. Again, it's those subliminal things.

Chris Watters:

So, I want to inject just a little moment. So Gary, we've had several guests on the show previously that when you have the means, the resources. They recommend radio and billboards and they've shared different strategies. You're the first person we've had that does sports marketing. And so I'm kind of curious your deal with the Tennessee Titans, the audience that's watching it on TV, the audience that's at the stadium, how are they seeing your message? Is it on the scoreboard or there's a banner? Are you on some flyers? How are they seeing your messaging?

Gary Ashton:

Well, there's a few levels. So the most organic level is that when I got the deal with the Titans they gave me a suite. And I said I didn't want the suite. I still wanted some tickets to the games but I wanted four tickets I could use for promotion. And then I took four tickets for me. But then I wanted to use, I had an RV which I wanted to use and do a tailgate. So I asked if I could get a spot where I could do a tailgate. I wanted to wrap my RV with all the branding and then invite clients basically. So make it a client appreciation party.

Gary Ashton:

Essentially the clients were past, future and present and anybody that was walking past our tailgate at the stadium then just trying to create the awareness that way. I don't know if you've been to our tailgates but we have a lot of branding at the tailgates. So very obviously associated with that. Even if you don't come to the tailgate, you walk past it, you see it and it's all Gary Ashton. It's all about me.

Chris Watters:

What about in the stadium?

Gary Ashton:

Right. So then the second level is you walk into the stadium and then they're not billboards. They're poster size. So those are all around the stadium as you walk through the concourse. So again, that's subliminal but it's reinforcing. It's really just my name again, a picture of me.

Gary Ashton:

The one constant is the picture of me. And then when you get into the stadium and you're watching the game and then you have the ribbon advertising that goes around. It's probably about two to three feet tall and it's ribbon advertising that goes... What are you laughing at?

Chris Watters:

No, this has to be amazing. When you go to a game and you see your name. I'm sorry. It's cool. Hang on really quickly. Do you access a suite box? Do they give you an owner's box to watch the game or anything?

Gary Ashton:

No. Originally they gave me a suite as part of my deal. So essentially I'm a sponsor. So just like anybody else you're a sponsor so part of your sponsorship deal is to obviously you want to be going to the game so you get tickets.

Gary Ashton:

So they gave me a suite and that's when I said I wanted to trade that out. Instead of taking the 16 person suite, I wanted four tickets for me in club level and then four tickets which I could use for promotional. So, I don't know if you're aware of this but the NFL, you could buy tickets to the Titans game Frank, because you now live in Nashville. But you couldn't use those to promote anything that you wanted to because you don't have-

Frank Klesitz:

Yeah, you couldn't go on the radio saying I'm giving away tickets.

Gary Ashton:

No, so you don't have rights to the mark. Having the rights to the mark is strong for me again because that association that I'm allowed to give away four tickets as a promotional thing for every game.

Gary Ashton:

And so I didn't want the suite. I wanted to trade that for a space where I did my tailgate. Which, for me, meant instead of... I mean if you guys come to Nashville it would be awesome to take you to my suite. That's pretty cool, but there's 12 people in there. Whereas, if I would tailgate essentially we get 30 odd thousand people walking past at every game which again it creates that awareness.

Chris Watters:

It seems like the location of your RV is pretty critical.

Gary Ashton:

Yeah, well we have it... So, actually when I did this I thought they were going to give me a corner in the parking lot somewhere, but they actually gave me this spot right in front of the entrance road into the stadium. It's pretty cool.

Frank Klesitz:

What do you have at your RV? Are you giving away hats, tee shirts.

Gary Ashton:

No, no.

Frank Klesitz:

Are you cooking food?

Gary Ashton:

We do hamburgers and hotdogs. We don't really give anything away. It's just a tailgate and it's hanging out with people, inviting people so we do hamburgers, hotdogs. Frank, you're invited whenever you want to come up to a game.

Frank Klesitz:

I would love to come. I'd love to come.

Chris Watters:

And Gary, do you go to every game or do you have people helping you host that RV?

Gary Ashton:

Well, I've got a team of 180 so that's part of the deal is that every game we divide it into groups of about 10 or 15 so the agents come and help out. When I first did it I used to set it up myself with the help of a few people. But now we've got people coming in and driving and bringing in the RV. We also have a trailer, a CMT trailer where the side comes down so it turns into a stage. It's a big deal.

Chris Watters:

Wow. You're really leveraging this thing. That's good, man. Your own tailgate.

Gary Ashton:

Yep.

Frank Klesitz:

That's good.

Gary Ashton:

Go to [GaryAshtonTailgate.com](http://GaryAshtonTailgate.com).

Frank Klesitz:

Perfect. [GaryAshtonTailgate.com](http://GaryAshtonTailgate.com). Gary, I'm coming to a tailgate. I'll drive 30 minutes north from where I'm at.

Gary Ashton:

So you were asking me then how do we leverage it. So then within the game... So if you're not at the game you listen on radio. We have ads on there which is through Mike Keith who's the voice of the Titans. So again, it's that association with the actual NFL team. And then we have TV commercials that run throughout the game.

Frank Klesitz:

Great. All right. Clearly a lot of stuff to talk about with branding and marketing at the highest level. That's the big takeaway here. I want to go a little deeper downstream to give the audience something a little more tangible. So, clearly this is generating leads and you have people on the phone following up with these leads.

Gary Ashton:

Yep.

Frank Klesitz:

A brief question. Do the agents follow up with the leads or do you have a call center of ISAs following up to give them to the agents?

Gary Ashton:

So, when I started generating leads I was the person that was answering the phone. Sorry, making the calls. So, I would always do really well as soon as a lead came in because I was getting maybe one or two leads a day from PaperClip. So I would always make the call. I would establish the relationship with the person on the phone.

Gary Ashton:

And then when I started getting more leads I did the same thing but then I would say, "Hey, Frank on my team is the Brentwood expert so I'm going to pass you over to Frank. He's going to chat to you and figure out what you're looking for." And then there would always be that oh, so we're not going to work with you. So there was always that disconnect and they felt they were being handed off to somebody else.

Gary Ashton:

So that's when I instead of taking all the calls myself I would hand them out to the agents. But as we know agents get busy, agents don't do follow up so then we implemented the ISAs who are overseas which is great because they were making the calls and doing the follow up.

Gary Ashton:

But still there's a little bit of a disconnect there so the next thing for us that really moved the needle I feel was using in-house ISAs who are licensed. So all our ISAs, I think we have 10 now, are based in Nashville. They're all local Nashville. They live here. They're licensed. They know the market.

Gary Ashton:

And so now the leads come in and they're nurtured by our in-house ISA team who are actually licensed agents. So they can talk with authority on the market, talk about price, all that stuff. And then those leads get assigned out so there are appointments and requests. That's when they get assigned to an agent.

Frank Klesitz:

Gary, that was really insightful.

Chris Watters:

Are you doing that on the list side and buy side?

Gary Ashton:

Yep.

Frank Klesitz:

That was really insightful, Gary.

Chris Watters:

On the buy side, Gary, are you scheduling the meetings at a coffee shop, at the house or in your office? What's the protocol there?

Frank Klesitz:

Chris, move your mic up.

Gary Ashton:

With those the appointments are generally to go see a property. So it's meeting them at the property most of the time.

Chris Watters:

Okay.

Gary Ashton:

But don't get too into the weeds on that because I don't 100% know.

Frank Klesitz:

Gary, let me ask you this. Why does a licensed real estate agent take an ISA role.

Gary Ashton:

Well, you have to remember that they're not licensed, they're not realtors when they get the job. We want people who are good on the phone. Like the first person that became the licensed ISA was Scott and he went from being a realtor to starting the ISA team because he was married and they were having their first baby. So he wanted more of a nine to five kind of schedule which is what he thought, but it didn't turn out that way. He didn't want to be out showing homes all day long.

Gary Ashton:

So that's when we suggested he take over or start this ISA department. So then our second hire after that was a friend of Scott's who worked at BMI which is a music publishing in Nashville. What his job was was just calling people, asking for essentially collecting money I think is what it was. So, very used to making calls and being on the phone all day long.

Gary Ashton:

Had no interest in selling real estate but we knew that we needed somebody that was good on the phone and then back to the original point of to get their license means that they can actually talk about real estate sales and questions.

Gary Ashton:

So personality but somebody who wants to make calls all day long is very different from somebody who wants to be a realtor. Because a realtor generally wants that freedom to be able to go out and meet people and socialize and be outgoing. Driving around neighborhoods, showing property. That's what realtors like to do.

Frank Klesitz:

So all of your agents just get business handed to them from the ISA team?

Gary Ashton:

Well, they could also generate business themselves, but yeah from the business I give them is through the ISAs.

Frank Klesitz:

That's a pretty sweet deal. You're going to come with your brand and you're going to spend all this money on marketing. Then you have licensed ISAs following up and just handing people to go work and go on the appointments. I'm assuming after that you have a transaction management team, [inaudible 00:37:31] team.

Gary Ashton:

Yeah.

Frank Klesitz:

Right. So all your agents are doing is just going on appointments and negotiating contracts, right.

Gary Ashton:

Correct. Well, some of them they actually want to talk to a realtor. They're new and to the point where they're going to be in the area and they want to talk to somebody. But essentially yes, they're appointments or showings.

Gary Ashton:

So because we understand that agents are not good with follow up because agents are out busy doing other things so you can't say that they're lazy. You just say they're focus is in a different area. So when you've been out showing homes all day long, when you come home the last thing you're probably going to do is do your nurture and your follow up from all the leads that you got last week.

Gary Ashton:

So we take that away from them and allow them to do what they're best at which is meeting people and showing homes and writing contracts.

Frank Klesitz:



Chris, you have the same model too. You spend money on marketing. You have ISAs following up and passing to agents, right. You don't put the agents on leads.

Chris Watters:

That's right. Yep.

Gary Ashton:

I think that's been common over the last few years that's kind of developed.

Chris Watters:

I'd probably say one little nuance is when we bring in new agents, not new agents but relatively new agents in the grand scheme of things, we take them through a 30 day bootcamp and we do get them calling on the phone rather quickly and prospecting so they understand scripts and best practices.

Chris Watters:

And then we're also pushing them to do other activities like open houses and things of that nature. Gary, I don't know how you do it but we have a point system based off your activities and whoever is doing more of the activities to grow and do better, get more appointments.

Gary Ashton:

So this is something that Scott's developed which is kind of like an in-house thing that tracks the number of calls, the number of emails, the quality of the calls. So it's not purely about volume. It's about how success... What the outcomes are. Because just making 100 calls doesn't guarantee you success if you've got only one closing out of it. If you're making less calls and having more appointments and more closings. So we have that whole system in the background but we do the same thing. We have a three or four week bootcamp and then it's training everybody because most of the agents are new when they join. So it's taking what they've learned in real estate school which is the barrier to entry, but then applying that in the real world by really learning how to leverage what we have as a team to the negotiating, the scripting, the intel that we have because you don't want anybody to sell without the intel. So it's creating that knowledge to the agents.

Frank Klesitz:

What's the hours of coverage for your inbound team? So you have a whole call center of 10 people answering all the inbounds from all your marketing. What are the coverage hours?

Gary Ashton:

I think it starts at 8:00 or 7:00 and ends at 8:00 or 9:00. I can't remember exactly.

Frank Klesitz:

Seven days a week?

Gary Ashton:

Yeah.

Frank Klesitz:

Seven days a week. And are they in the office or do they work from home?

Gary Ashton:

I think we were one of the early on, I've always been a proponent of working remotely. So even before COVID I've never had an office. I've always pushed for that. Some people don't like working in the office... Sorry, working at home. As agents they like to be in the office environment. But somebody that's just answering calls it's kind of a... Not a lonely job but you've usually got two or three screens and then you're just answering calls so you can do that from home. We've been big proponents of that for quite a long time.

Frank Klesitz:

Let me ask you this. When your agents go on the appointment. I already saw open door ads in Nashville as I'm driving around. Everywhere I look I see an agent advertising all up the interstate. Can you tell me some of the unique offerings, some of the things you need to show up on a listing presentation to bring value to the seller. Like tangible, real problems you solve for the seller like the agent needs to have.

Gary Ashton:

So, for us it's really been... It's establishing what's the motivation for selling. So some people will just want to sell quickly and they're not looking to maximize their profit which is the whole guaranteed offer program essentially. It's creating that level of convenience where you don't have to do any open houses, you don't have to do any showings. You don't have to do any repairs. So then you've got to find out the motivation. Is it timing or is it money. Because we can do the guaranteed offer. We've got a couple of investors that will do that. Or obviously the broker partner through Zillow. But we also do auctions. An auction is essentially the same. It covers everything the same in terms of you don't have to do any repairs. You don't have to do an open house. You don't have to do your showings. You can pick your closing date, but instead of getting one guaranteed offer, you're going to get multiple guaranteed offers.

Gary Ashton:

So it depends on people's comfort level with that. Some people like that and then some people want to maximize their return. So obviously with a guaranteed offer you're only essentially getting one offer whereas if you want to put it on the market we can show them through the reverse search on our website, we can show them essentially how many people have been looking at a house like theirs in the last 45 days.

Gary Ashton:

So we can show them that there's a demand for the property. It's really just figuring out what the motivation for the seller is.

Frank Klesitz:

So you come to the appointment with all options and help them understand all their options.

Gary Ashton:

Yeah, that's where you've got to ask the right questions, be able to explain the different options that we have which I don't think many people have everything that we have. So, we're a good choice for most people.

Gary Ashton:

Then it just comes down to are you willing to pay for that. And so then comes the question of the commission, the struggle with commission. The downward pressure on commission. And some people aren't willing to pay for what we provide so we don't get every single listing, but we get most of them.

Frank Klesitz:

What do you see happening in five years with commissions?

Gary Ashton:

I kind of feel like there's a trification meaning that there'll be the lower end of the market which will be just a flat fee and more emphasis on the iBuyer program where people just don't have any... They're very used to... Actually low end. Hang on, I thought this through before but the low end is more of a flat fee. The higher end is the people buying the \$4 billion to \$5 billion homes. They just want amazing service which is kind of what the successful agents do right now is provide the concierge service. But I think that will become even more apparent at the higher end level.

Gary Ashton:

And then you've got the mid-level which is where again the agents have provided the best service will be the ones that have longevity. Because he will be competing with the iBuyer program. So lower end just a flat fee. The other ones that are more price sensitive and then the middle is just you've got such an added value that you can compete against the iBuyer program. And then like I said the high end is just they're happy to pay whatever it takes for them to get the house with the knowledge of the agents.

Frank Klesitz:

Gary, with all the money you have going out on staff and all the money you have going out on marketing are you able to make a profit just on the commission alone or are there other sources of revenue coming in to support that infrastructure?

Gary Ashton:

So we're primary focused on the commission. I always explain to the agents every deal on the commission splits they're making way more money on the deal than I'm making. The only way I make the money is by the volume of deals. But with all team programs it's trying to develop money from those ancillary services which is essentially what teams do. I don't have my own mortgage company but we get contributions from a preferred lender to things like Ylopo, the pay [inaudible 00:47:38] that we're doing. And then I'm just in the early stages having talked to Chris about this for a long time. Setting up a title company, joint venture of a title company.

Gary Ashton:

And then moving is another one that we don't actually have as a revenue stream, but other people that will do that. Which is what Zillow is doing. Zillow is becoming just a big team leader so they're using the real estate transaction as a driver for all those peripheral services. So they will get down to the point where they can lose money on the transaction or potentially do it for free as long as you use all their peripheral services.

Frank Klesitz:

How much of your staff, Gary, is overseas versus in the States?

Gary Ashton:

Oh, overseas staff is either six or eight so it's not many. Most people are here. And we use a lot of overseas companies based in Australia and stuff. But actual employees they're all local. So we're actually giving back to the community.

Chris Watters:

Good.

Frank Klesitz:

What's your favorite piece... You love tech, Gary. What's your favorite piece of technology right now?

Gary Ashton:

Right now.

Frank Klesitz:

What's your favorite real estate tech?

Gary Ashton:

So real estate tech. I like BombBomb. BombBomb is one of my favorites which is, I mean they've been around a long time but it's funny because I've had BombBomb for a long time and it's like anything else. I like shiny objects so I got it and then didn't use it. And then I found people that were using it so then I started using it. Then I started seeing the value in it.

Gary Ashton:

Then I really started looking at how to use BombBomb and really more for accountability within the team. So being able to track open rates and how long people have watched a video. Segmenting out who has and who hasn't. So I like BombBomb. I like Blinq. Have you heard of Blinq? It's not really real estate but it's integral to what we do because it's a dynamic signature within your email which relates to the QR code which then enables you to transfer your contact information which I think they're going to expand into Linktree for Instagram. Everything will be in the same environment essentially.

Frank Klesitz:

What's it called? Blink? What is it?

Gary Ashton:

B-L-I-N-Q. Blinq.app I think it is.

Frank Klesitz:

.app. It's an email signature generator.

Gary Ashton:

Yeah. Which for me I like it because it creates constant branding so every agent has one, but it enables us to maintain that consistency in terms of the branding. You can't change your email address so you can't be Frank@gmail.com. You have to be Frank@NashvilleRealEstate.com. You can't change the office phone number. You can't change the office address. So it helps to create that consistency.

Frank Klesitz:

Because you're controlling everyone's email signatures in the organization.

Gary Ashton:

Correct. Yep. So, I really like that.

Frank Klesitz:

Give us two more. Give us a couple more. What other good tech things do you like?

Gary Ashton:

So, one that we just started is a company called Witley. Do you know them? W-I-T-L-Y.net. So that's just video retargeting which is obviously... I mean people have been talking about video being important for years but it's obviously more and more important. So, for me that again helps to reinforce the brand association with the leads that we're generating from all the sources.

Gary Ashton:

So it's going back to having me thanking people for registering on the site. Giving them tips on all the stuff that you guys do but it's targeted towards people that are in our database of people that hopefully our agents are working with. And then I think I mentioned Revaluate. That would do something with those guys too which like I said in 2018 I think we were ahead of the curve a little bit but I've talked to a few people that whole predictive analytics is something that it's really... It's pretty cool to be able to know and track somebody's journey through life and basing it on where they visit. They've got all these little indicators that at some point tip the bucket to say ding, ding, ding, ding, they're moving. So it's getting ahead of those.

Gary Ashton:

So RE/MAX has an app called First.IO which is a similar kind of thing. It's taken everybody, all your contacts in your phone and using all the predictive stuff to make you aware that you should be contacting somebody or you should be reaching out to somebody. And so using that. So it's kind of, it's just database stuff.

Frank Klesitz:

Yeah, I know that well.

Gary Ashton:

Oh, that's right. I should be using GetVyril.

Frank Klesitz:

Gary, it's fine. Share who you use. The two things I want to share with the audience is a \$5 a day Facebook remarketing budget that goes to everyone who's visited your website. Everybody that's

clicked on your ads or commented on your ads or done anything, interacted any way online. As well as taking your whole database. Gary, I'm sure yours is huge, but your own database and uploading to Facebook. And just having one little ad with some nice little videos for \$5 a day running to that list is one of the more effective things you can do to point out your videos.

Frank Klesitz:

And then the other thing is just a company we use, Gary. It's like we value and I have a relationship with is Likely.AI. Yeah Likely.AI. They have the database refresh where you take your whole list and upload it to them. They'll append maybe any missing contact information from my understanding. And then kind of run it against what are they looking at online, all that data that's for sale on different lifestyle changes. And say hey, these people are predictive likely to sell. And I think that they said when they backdate the data it's about 10%. So there's a list of 100 there will be 10 people that are going to sell in the next 90 days on those addresses.

Frank Klesitz:

So that's how you always really kind of check out the data providers of all the predictive analytics is like hey, if you sell me this list how many of these homes are actually going to trade in the next 90 days. And that's the percentage of how accurate it is. It's very important you try to know that or maybe there's an independent third party that tests those things with the companies. I'd tell the audience to go check out Likely.AI and then if you're a Vyril client listening to this, go spend the \$5 a day on remarketing your videos to your database.

Gary Ashton:

I just wish Facebook was a little easier to use because I think I knew enough to be dangerous. Like you said upload your database, Facebook will scrub it. You can create the look alike audiences, but it's almost like you need a university degree now for Facebook.

Jerry:

Well, it's a very powerful thing. You just keep it real simple. If anyone is listening to this, go in there, create a campaign, create one ad set, throw the warm audiences in there and inside that ad set you run a couple of ads running that audience of some videos, of call to actions so people know who you are. That's the name of the game.

Frank Klesitz:

Jerry, this is super helpful. Thank you. Any other good tech tips and we'll start wrapping up the interview.

Gary Ashton:

Call Action is another one that we use. There's a thing... Essentially it's about automation and everybody wants to automate everything. So we're heavily automated and for me it's just about finding the balance between automation and real people. And you can be too automated and then you've got to be careful of the... You've got to look at it from the consumer experience in that yes, you need to be constantly trying to reach out, convert and follow up, but you've also got to make sure that there's a consistency and that the experience is if they get text messages and emails and then you actually reach them that you're not then sending emails and texts that aren't consistent.

Frank Klesitz:

Aren't relevant. And accidentally fire off something they shouldn't.

Gary Ashton:

Yeah. And that's a problem... Not a problem but something that I'm becoming more and more aware of is that because I keep bolting on all these shiny objects. So my analogy I think is I'm in a band, I'm playing the drums. I've got Frank up front who's the agent who's singing, delivering a great performance. Then I've got all these people in the band. Another guitarist, keyboard player, bass player. So when everybody's playing in unison, the message from the singer's being delivered loud and clear.

Gary Ashton:

And then the consumer is going, "That's a good song. I like that. I like that message." But when the drummer starts to do a drum solo the same time as the guitarist is doing a solo, the same time as the keyboard player is doing a solo and the singer is trying to sing, that's when the noise comes in. And that's when the consumer will say, "Well, he's a good singer but I can't hear anything because of all the noises." That's when they unsubscribe.

Gary Ashton:

So even though the information that we're giving to them is useful, they're just overloaded so they get out. So it's creating that concerted, is it concerted? Consistent campaign that makes sense, that delivers in the correct sequence and supports everything. So that's the whole thing that we're doing with ActivePipe. I don't know if you know those guys.

Gary Ashton:

It's allowing the consumer to almost create their own journey by the responses that they're giving to us via email. They're selecting, they're creating a journey themselves which is essentially what agents should be doing if they were really monitoring everybody's navigation around the back end, seeing what properties they've been looking at. Seeing what favorites they're saving. And then going in and just in the searches and things like that. So ActivePipe is one that we've got high hopes for. They're an Australian company so they've been around for a while in Australia and they're relatively new in the U.S. like the last year or so.

Frank Klesitz:

So Gary, I have a question for Chris and Gary. You're the top real estate agents in the world, both of you. Do leads every go directly to agents or does it always go through an ISA team? I've seen different models. You two have the ISAs that go to the agents.

Gary Ashton:

So, I have a lead source which is through Realtor.com which are live transfers and they do go to the agents. So the agents have to accept those. So those are an example of where the agents do take the leads directly live. So they're not going through ISAs. And then Zillow does the same thing. They've got live transfers.

Frank Klesitz:

Cool. Chris, do you have any more questions for Gary? We're wrapping up an hour of his time. This is really helpful, Gary. Thank you.

Chris Watters:

I'm really appreciative of Gary coming on the show. I'm checking out all these new shiny tech objects and I'm super excited about them. That was super insightful, the information on sports marketing. We've had quite a few guests talk about the benefits of radio, billboard and their various strategies. Man, a wealth of knowledge today. You shared a lot of information.

Gary Ashton:

So, the one thing I will say about sports marketing is it doesn't guarantee you that you get every player. But you have to look at that as just as more of an awareness thing and credibility. And then you can use the players or the people in the organization to help you offset the cost of the sponsorship.

Gary Ashton:

So you can zero base it based on... And then obviously you can make money with it too. Even though it's expensive I think it pays off.

Frank Klesitz:

Well Gary, thank you so much for your time today on The Listing Lead Show.

Chris Watters:

Yeah, this has been great.

Frank Klesitz:

We learned something.

Gary Ashton:

I'm going to have to start listening to it now. It's awesome.

Frank Klesitz:

It's a good show.

Chris Watters:

Hey Gary, you should. Frank will tell you I'm hypercritical of the guests and I've turned down a lot. Just this past week we turned down a lot of people and I'm so glad you were in Austin this week and we got to see each other.

Chris Watters:

I apologize for all the background noise. That's my four year old jumping on my leg.

Frank Klesitz:

What's up.



Chris Watters:

Anyways, so the COVID. This is like part of COVID, right. It's just a normal thing to have kids interrupting you on Zoom and on podcasts.

Frank Klesitz:

It's going to go viral now.

Chris Watters:

We had a great guest two weeks ago, Andrew Duncan. Just some pure genius on billboard strategy. We had probably the... I don't want to call him the god.

Gary Ashton:

Andrew, I helped him to get into the Tampa Bay Buccaneers which is the NFL team. So I set it up for him because I think he wanted to do some sports marketing. It turned out that they were too expensive because they're a big market. So then I think that's what led him to do the Tampa Bay Lightning. I think he's a strong proponent of the sports marketing. Is he still doing it? I think he is.

Chris Watters:

Yep, he did. He talked about that on the show and another great episode or another great thing he talked about on the episode was his billboard strategy. He's more using an entertainment type of strategy to catch people's attention like whatever is relevant at that point in time, he uses that in correspondence with his billboard strategy that he changes out from a messaging perspective. Anyways, this has been a great insightful show on another mass media play.

Gary Ashton:

I'd be interested to see his billboard campaign. It must be on digital rather than static stuff.

Chris Watters:

No, he said on the show he's doing the static paper, vinyl billboards and he changes them every three months.

Gary Ashton:

How is he tying that into what's relevant at the time? That's what I was getting at.

Chris Watters:

He mentioned something on the show about Star Wars and being Han Solo or something. I think there's a new Star Wars coming out in the fall.

Gary Ashton:

Okay, so not like on up to the hour relevant. Okay. I'll be interested to see what he's doing.

Chris Watters:

He did something during the election with Trump and Hilary back then. Stuff like that.

Gary Ashton:

I stay away from all that.

Frank Klesitz:

Gary, thank you so much for your time today.

Gary Ashton:

Oh, thank you. It's fun. Chat with you soon. Adios.