

## LESSON

# 9

## Advertising your services: The truth is worth its weight in gold

Advertising can be a powerful tool for developing awareness of your name and your services. But in any market there is plenty of competition and everyone seems to be talking at once. So how do you create advertising that distinguishes you from the rest?

First, be simple. Don't try to say everything at once. In your ad make one point that you know your clients care about. Don't try to be all things to all people. Be consistent in the claim that you make. All great brands stand for one idea: Volvo = safety  
FedEx = speed. Pick an important idea and try to own it.

Above all, tell the truth. People are experts in advertising and they will know in .03 seconds when you are exaggerating or stretching the truth.

### TIPS

**1:** Collect ads from your market and put them on a wall. Make a list of claims made by your competition. You'll likely find that everyone is saying the same thing. Say something different about yourself.

**2:** Use visuals to distinguish your ads. Again, study the ads in your market. Most likely they are showing the same kind of

image. Do something different. People are programmed to ignore words and images that are expected. Show and tell them something different!

**3:** Simplicity is key. Say one thing. Show one thing. Crowded ads that try to do too much are simply ignored.

## CASE STUDY

### Case Study #12-12: Advertising in Guise of News

So you get a newsletter from another REALTOR® in your community. In the newsletter is a section with photos of ten houses "recently sold" in an exclusive area of town. Problem is, you were the listing agent on several of these houses and the way the newsletter is designed it gives the impression that this other REALTOR® made the sale.

You scream like a banshee and immediately file a complaint with your local Board. The REALTOR® comes to the hearing prepared to defend himself, proudly showing his newsletter. His point is that the newsletter is news, not advertising, so Article 12 of the Code doesn't apply. He was simply making homeowners aware of current market values, besides, all of the information in his newsletter is public record. He promises he wasn't "selling."

*Is he guilty?*

**The Hearing Panel finds that he is, indeed, guilty of violating the Code of Ethics. It comes down to intent; you can't disguise marketing messages as "news," if the intent is to promote your business. If you do, you are likely to violate Article 12.**



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LESSON  
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## **Advertising your services: The truth is worth its weight in gold**

### **Instructor's Notes**

- Try to create conversation; lectures are less interesting. Try to talk about personal experiences. Encourage newer agents to talk about situations that might be confusing. In the long run, dialogue is good for your business.
- The week before you present Lesson 9, ask your agents to collect ads from competing real estate firms. Discuss which ads you like and don't like.
- Have your agents list unusual marketing tools that are appearing in your market.
- From experience, yours and theirs, talk about which tools are most effective. Do any push the boundaries of ethical conduct?
- For agents that miss your meetings, these lessons are also available online at [thecodeisgoodbusiness.com/va/lessons](http://thecodeisgoodbusiness.com/va/lessons).