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## Spring Cleaning

# 17 time-sucking tasks real estate agents love to do and how to avoid them

Weed out the activities that don't help your bottom line, and focus on those that do

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When speaking to a friend who works for a CRM company, she asked about the processes and tasks that [real estate agents](#) do. In her mind, it was just a few things, but to her surprise, I rattled off 50 different things that the average agent does. As a result of that conversation, she had an a-ha moment about why it's so hard to disrupt real estate.

As Cara Ameer wrote in [What does a real estate agent do all day anyway?](#): "From a consumer's first thought about making a real estate move to actually taking the leap (whether that means right now, next month or three years from now), the agent is incubator, initiator, action-taker, coordinator, scheduler, personal concierge, resource person, problem-solver, mediator, miracle worker, red-tape cutter, transaction manager and chief make-it-happen officer of everything else that doesn't fall into the prior categories."

## The Eisenhower grid

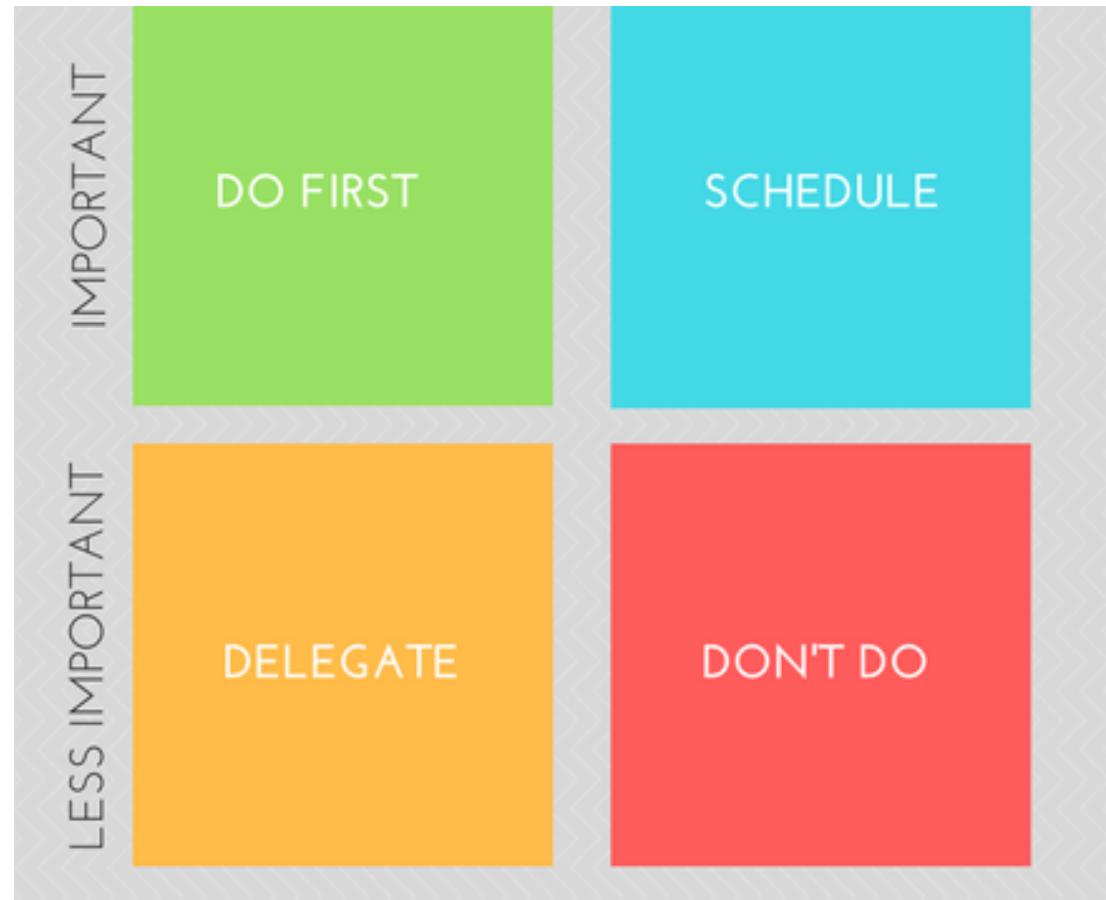
Indeed there are a myriad of tasks that agents need to do, a few that they must do and several tasks that they neither need to nor must do. Let's simplify the tasks by placing them into categories. However, before I do that, let's look at [the Eisenhower grid](#).



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If you take a moment to consider the grid, then it needs little explaining.



According to the [video](#), the grid separates tasks into four categories:

1. **Do first:** You might use a timer to help you concentrate or time-block these critical tasks as you complete them first each day
2. **Schedule:** These are less urgent, yet important, tasks that you can schedule out in advance
3. **Delegate:** These tasks are less important for you to do personally but still pretty urgent; you might keep track of these by telephone, email or on a to-do list to check back on later
4. **Don't do:** These are time-sucking activities that you need to weed out of your day

Often agents put off important tasks until they become urgent. They spend most of their time in the non-important and non-urgent tasks.

Let's dive into the various tasks that agents complete all the time and call out the non-productive tasks for what they really are: time-suckers.

## **Urgent and important real estate tasks**

For my purposes, urgent is anything that's due today.

tasks, listed in descending order of importance.

- Active and intentional lead generation (calling your past clients, friends and family fall here, not below)
- Contract work with a deadline of today
- Return calls to potential clients
- Return calls to “clients”

You’ll notice it’s a short list, as these are truly the most important tasks agents should prioritize daily.

## Important but not urgent real estate tasks

These are tasks that we have to do as agents, but often they can be done after your lead generation activities. I put them here because if you haven’t lead generated today, then that’s immeasurably more important than *anything* on this list.

These tasks can become urgent if not attended to. Every one of these tasks should be done by an assistant or outsourced in some way.

The broker tasks are important to the MLS and to the broker. They have very little value to the agent other than being a mechanism that withholds payment from the agent if not done.

- Filling out contracts
- Responding to emails
- Setting up homebuyer MLS listing sheets
- Doing a CMA
- Talking to current clients
- Showing homes to clients
- Scheduling photographers
- Putting signs and lockboxes out
- MLS and broker-specific forms

## Urgent but not important real estate tasks

It’s hard to find unimportant items that are urgent, but as agents, there are a lot of people who have seemingly urgent and important tasks that require us to complete them.

they often require your attention. Likewise, spending time on Facebook comments is a huge time-suck for many agents.

- Returning agent phone calls
- Responding to comments on Facebook

## Not urgent nor important real estate tasks

Also known as 17 time-sucking activities real estate agents love to do:

1. Reading comments on Facebook
2. Talking about the **new Realtor logo**
3. Understanding **Twitter, Snapchat or WhatsApp**
4. Trying to figure out which tech company is going to destroy real estate
5. Talking about the president or past presidents
6. Broker open houses or caravans
7. Team **meetings with your broker** (not your own team meeting)
8. Checking your email outside of your **time-block** (read below)
9. Sending emails to other agents about your listing
10. “**Humble bragging**” on social media; example: “Oh, I’m so tired, I just finished writing 100 offers and showing a million homes today!” No one likes this, and your clients see it as fake too.
11. Trying to teach yourself any complex marketing tactic that has entire industries around it; example: SEO, PPC, website design, etc.
12. Designing your own postcards
13. Calling agents to critique their offer or their manners
14. 90 percent of the time, calling other agents — period
15. Going to **inspections** for your clients
16. Taking your own photos of homes; seriously, **hire a professional**.
17. Answering the phone after 7 p.m. There’s nothing that can’t wait until the next morning, with the exception of contract deadlines.

I’m sure you might be thinking “yeah, but ... ” by now. To sum up all the above, you should be spending your time in this order:

- **Lead generating activities:** Ask yourself, “Does this produce income, or can it?”

- **Compliance activities:** Ask yourself, “Does this keep me legal and/or ensure I get paid on time?”

Everything else likely isn’t urgent or important. There are a few items I could see agents doing, but the point is — they don’t drive the business forward. They might be fun things to do that make your job a bit more enjoyable.

Going to agent caravans (or broker opens), for example, is a complete waste of time in every category except maybe fun. If you nail your lead generation and hit your appointment goals, then fine, fill up your calendar with fun activities!

However, there is one task that is the worst, nastiest, most deadly to all real estate agents:

## Checking your email

Outside Facebook, email is the biggest time-waster for most agents. As you read this online, if you’re on a desktop, you likely have a tab open with your email. In fact, if you get an email, chances are really good that you checked it, and then have to come back, reorient yourself and get started.

Email is evil. You’re addicted to it, and you don’t even know it (OK, you do know it). You get a little hit of dopamine every time your email chime goes off, or you see that little blue dot. When you deal with an email, you’ve accomplished something, and your brain rewards you with more stimulus. It gets worse.

Email is insidious because it redirects your attention and interrupts your workflow. You never get into “the zone” (you know, like Michael Jordan) because you keep getting interrupted.

It kills your productivity because it forces you to deal with it and make decisions. Then, depending on what you did, you can come back to your task, but you have to reorient yourself all over again.

## How to be more productive

If you’ve ever been to a productivity seminar, you’ve likely heard of [The Marshmallow Test from Walter Mischel](#). If not, the short version is that the study gave 4-year-olds a marshmallow and told them they could eat it anytime they wanted, but if they waited until he came back they’d get two marshmallows.

*Seventy percent* of the children only waited one minute before eating the marshmallow. That’s us! We’re eating these easy task marshmallows, when we could be doubling our business by waiting.

Time-blocking requires discipline. Most of real estate tasks are not urgent! However, we go to those tasks because we can complete them, and we're addicted.

Breaking the addiction is going to require hard work. Chris Smith covered this a little bit in [Do you control your phone or does your phone control you?](#) The very best agents, the top performers do one thing; they spend their best energy (usually in the morning) doing lead generating activities first, before all else.

|      |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8am  | Assemble Call List, Add To-Dos, 8am<br>Lead Generation NO EMAIL!!!!<br>8:30 – 11:30am | Assemble Call List, Add To-Dos, 8am<br>Lead Generation NO EMAIL!!!!<br>8:30 – 11:30am | Assemble Call List, Add To-Dos, 8am<br>Lead Generation NO EMAIL!!!!<br>8:30 – 11:30am | Assemble Call List, Add To-Dos, 8am<br>Lead Generation NO EMAIL!!!!<br>8:30 – 11:30am | Assemble Call List, Add To-Dos, 8am<br>Lead Generation NO EMAIL!!!!<br>8:30 – 11:30am |
| 9am  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 10am |   |   |   |   |   |
| 11am |   |   |   |   |   |
| 12pm | Return Calls & Emails, 11:30am<br>Get Lunch Invite A Friend<br>12 – 1pm               | Return Calls & Emails, 11:30am<br>Get Lunch Invite A Friend<br>12 – 1pm               | Return Calls & Emails, 11:30am<br>Get Lunch Invite A Friend<br>12 – 1pm               | Return Calls & Emails, 11:30am<br>Get Lunch Invite A Friend<br>12 – 1pm               | Return Calls & Emails, 11:30am<br>Get Lunch Invite A Friend<br>12 – 1pm               |
| 1pm  | Book An Appointment Here<br>1 – 3pm   | Listing Appointment At The Smith's<br>1 – 3pm   | Book An Appointment Here<br>1 – 3pm   | Book An Appointment Here<br>1 – 3pm   | Book An Appointment Here<br>1 – 3pm   |
| 2pm  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3pm  | Follow-up   Contract Work<br>3 – 4pm  |
| 4pm  | Book An Appointment Here<br>4 – 6pm   | Book An Appointment Here<br>4 – 6pm   | Book An Appointment Here<br>4 – 6pm   | Home Buyer Consult W/ Jones<br>4 – 6pm  | Book An Appointment Here<br>4 – 6pm   |
| 5pm  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 6pm  | Wrap Up, No CALLS, Just Get Read, 6pm   | Wrap Up, No CALLS, Just Get Read, 6pm   | Wrap Up, No CALLS, Just Get Read, 6pm   | Wrap Up, No CALLS, Just Get Read, 6pm   | Wrap Up, No CALLS, Just Get R   |
| 7pm  |   |   |   |   |   |

The easiest way to time-block is to schedule it on the calendar, three hours from the first second you start working to the end. Not all of that is calls. Some of it is prep time, but prep time is not email or Facebook. Those shouldn't even be open.

It should be your CRM, call list or phone contact list — and nothing else. Who you are going to call (or meet if you're [door-knocking](#) or [networking](#)), and that's it.

Notice in the above image, the green activities are “money” activities. The red are open appointment slots. It's not pretty to look at, but it's effective.

You might look at this and think that it's too rigid, and that's fine. However, the only thing I would suggest changing from this calendar is the number of appointments you want to go on. That's it. Leave the lead gen where it is every day.

So before you read another post, drift off to Facebook or check your email, ask yourself if you've done the most urgent and important activity today?

*Joshua Jarvis is a digital marketer with [4rd Marketing](#) in Atlanta, Georgia. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#) or [Facebook](#).*

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