

## Gates, Guards and Treasure by Al Lewis.

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### **Welcome. Gates, Guards and Treasure.**

When in the field calling on owners that have experience an expired listing, we often encounter gates and guards. The treasure we seek waits inside the compound, so to speak, for the taking though we sometimes have a hard time getting to it.

How to do this?

Following are a few thoughts on the matter, though by no means all-inclusive. One of the great joys of being in real estate is that we are challenged most every day to use our creative mind to overcome obstacles seemingly blocking our path to success. One variety or another of "Gates and Guards" are among them.

### **The Fenced House.**

When I drive to a house and find that it is fenced, I of course am disturbed by this, but get out of the car and walk up to the gate anyway. Before working the gate to see if it can be opened, I look about to see what dangers (dog) may lie within. I look to each side of the house to see if the back yard is fenced off; if not, I will not enter. I look for signs of a dog occupying the yard and, if I don't find any, I enter, but all of this is subject to a Beware of Dog sign.

If I see one of those I assume the worst and do not enter however bad I want to.

Often there is a no solicitors sign posted. This, I think, doesn't really mean a thing, but seems the thing to do if you own a house with a fence. Often the sign is so old that I think it was probably even put there by a previous owner. I could not count the number of times I have ignored this sign whether at gate or door and I have never had a seller chew me out for ignoring it.

Observing and thinking these things through, if the gate can be opened I go in and do my business. If the gate is locked, I use my brass ring knocker to pang the gate until someone is aroused and comes to greet me. If no one comes, I stand proudly for any onlookers and write my calling note, "Sorry I missed you, will call again," or any other message I feel like leaving.

If a nice custom home and there is a buzzer with speaker-box, I buzz and wait to be greeted. Soon as someone comes on the line, so to speak, I imagine the speaker box to be a real live person I am talking with and pitch my program as though standing in their presence. Having a conversation with a home owner this way often results in a successful first contact experience.

If no one answers, I leave a "Sorry I missed you" note as stated.

### **The Gated Community No Guard.**

When I drive to an address and find that it is within a community set off from the fray by a castle-keep, wall and gate, but without a guard, I again am frustrated for having made the drive to no avail, but I don't just drive away.

I could, I think, just hang around parked to the side of the entry and wait for someone to come or go leaving the gate open long enough for me to slither in, but I don't usually do this nor am advising this of you. Technically, I guess, this is a form of wrongful entry though I have done this many times.

The right tact is to park to the side and use your smart phone to go on Zillow or Realtor.com to see if there are other properties currently for sale within the community and, then, if there are to pull your iPad, tablet or computer out, go online to the listings and call on either the agents or owners direct to request the gate entry code just, so as, to do a drive-by to take photos of the house and community for a buyer.

In just a few moments time you can have a proper authorization to enter. Record the entry gate code under the Community Name within contacts on your phone and from here out you can pop in most any time wanted for years to come.

If there are no other properties for sale within the community, do the same things for sold properties for the purpose of a CMA. Owners, brokers and agents have no problem with this and give you the entry code in a few seconds time.

Once in the community, go to the house intended and pitch your program. If the seller asks how you got into the community, tell the truth, sort of. Tell them you did a drive-by on the house located at so-and-so to take pictures of it and the community for a buyer and thought you'd stop by to talk with them for a minute before leaving. This is all that is needed.

If you don't want to do this from the seat of your car, then do it from your desk later. You can always go back with code in hand. If this is not something you want to tackle, you can take a moment while at your desk to see if there are any open houses scheduled for the community over one weekend or another. Visit during the hours spec-

ified as an agent or buyer and while there go to the house intended.

I'd say the last thing you should consider doing is going to your lead book, looking up the seller's phone number and calling direct to pitch your program while parked at the gate, though this is a viable option.

into an easy caller to hang up on instead of a real estate counselor.

### The Gated Community With Guard.

When I drive to an address and find that it is within a community set off from the fray by a castle-keep, wall and gate with a guard, I again am frustrated for having made the drive to no avail, but I don't just drive away.

In this instance I drive up to the guard and announce, while handing my card to the guard, that I am an agent and would like to enter to do a drive-by on the house at so-and-so (the actual expired listing) for the purpose of taking pictures of it and the community for a competitive marketing analysis I am

doing for another owner inside. If the guard asks which owner, I say I need to keep that confidential.

Often, usually fifty-percent of the time or more, the guard will take my card and let me in. If this does not happen but I am, instead, told



**Mr. & Mrs. Smith:**  
You live in a fantastic gated community that makes reaching out to you to discuss the sale of your property a bit challenging.  
I respect your privacy.  
The program I represent stretches the boundaries of the mass-solution to real estate sales practiced by conventional area-bound agents and companies. I am writing to seek an opportunity to share it with you should you decided to "Sell" again.  
**Never go Unsold or Expired again.**  
Please call any time for a confidential program look over, no obligation, of course, with a new appraisal in hand to see how we might price your home from our perspective.  
**Call any time.**  
Thank you.  
Al Lewis / Affiliate  
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714-744-0617  
00524259

Alternately, "You Live in a fantastic gated property..."

**Sample Contact Letter for Gated Community**  
Insert "Turnaround Sales and Marketing" Card with Note Into Hallmark Card (or other) and Mail. Repeat at Your Discretion.

Most expired listing leads, our main target, provided affiliates of The Real Estate Fellowship come with phone numbers. I only say "the last thing you should do" because this sidesteps the relationship building process and turns it, instead, into a solicitation activity and, you,

that I cannot enter, then I ask the guard to call on the owner of the house I want to call on to request authorization for a visit to take a picture of the house, from the outside only for the stated purpose, and to talk a bit about selling.

This actually works.

Often, the seller is in a quandary, wondering what they can or will do to get their house sold and my calling on them to talk about this is just the thing they've been waiting for.

Because they have set themselves off from the crowd by fence and guard, few agents make the effort to call on them inside the compound. I often am the only one that does this.

If upon doing this, the owner is not home or they refuse admittance, I just let it go for the day, return to my desk and plan a preview of an existing property for sale inside the community with its listing agent or owner for the purpose of qualifying it for a

buyer. Then, once inside, I call on the owner of the expired listing as stated.

If, again, this is not something you want to take on, you can take a moment while at your desk some-time later to see if there are any open houses scheduled for the com-

seller's phone number and calling direct to pitch your program while parked at the gate, though, again, this is a viable option.

As stated, this sidesteps the relationship building process and turns it, instead, into a solicitation activity and, you, into an easy caller to hang

up on instead of a high-energy in-field real estate counselor.

Though a bit stealthy, all of these tactics work and are doable.

**Castle-Keep Owners. Hard-Core, Hard-Headed, Hard to Deal With.**

You would think, wouldn't you, that owners that have sought out and found places to live behind fences, gates and guards are hard-core, hard-headed and hard to deal with; that

they want uninterrupted privacy and will reject all solicitors, especially agents, outright.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

*Side Bar / Stop here or follow me, if you will, down a long and winding*

**Al Lewis** / Affiliate  
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**No Obligation**  
**In-House Presentation**  
**of Broker Services with New**  
**Top-of-The-Mark**  
**Appraisal.**

Never Go  
Unsold or Expired  
Again.

**To Do Better You Have to Get Better** / There's a great difference between putting a home on the market and marketing a home. Should you go on the market again with the same company or a similar local area agent who had equal access to MLS the whole time your house was for sale whose combined magic, when you get down to it, is just the multiple listing service, it's likely you'll have the same experience again and go another six-months or longer unsold. Call any time to talk. You'll always be glad you took action on this.

*Mr. & Mrs. Smith  
I sell 'Top of The Mark'  
Real Estate to Rich overseas Buyers and  
Locals with means. I'm writing to talk  
about selling again.*

Alternately, "Stopped to talk about Selling Again," when leaving card with seller or at door.

**Sample Message on Back of Marketing Card**  
Insert "Turnaround Sales and Marketing" Card with Note Into Hallmark Card (or other) and Mail. Repeat at Your Discretion.

community over one weekend or another. Visit during the hours specified as an agent or buyer and go to the house intended while inside.

Then, again, I'd say the last thing you should consider doing is pulling to the side of the gatehouse, going to your lead book, looking up the

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*road to the truth of the matter and see if the information I share about this doesn't inspire you to greater success by calling on sellers that will pay you from \$50,000 to \$500,000 for the sale of a single \$800,000 or \$8 Million Dollar house just because you got through a gate and said hello. It all starts there.*

### **The Analogue.**

I have practiced and taught new home sales for decades. This activity, as you know, is mostly conducted from within a standalone sales office situated amid a model complex made up of, usually, two to four model homes all lined in a row.

The sales office most always has two doors for coming and going facing the street or visitor parking area that are split by a fence that runs from the sales office to the outer side of the sidewalk in front of the model homes and wraps the entire model complex.

A visiting buyer can enter the sales office by the door outside the fenced area and exit the sales office to see the models through the door inside the fenced area.

The fence or "trap" as it is called is put there to require visitors to return to the sales office after seeing the models to force a conversation with the on-site salespeople. This is done because real buyers, the ones that are seriously considering buying a new home and have fallen in love with one or more of the models, will leave to think it over if they are not prevented from doing so.

It is only by thinking things through, after all, that a buyer can look into the future to protect themselves from future harm posited by the purchase of a new home. Upon

doing this it is rationalized, usually, that the only safe decision is no decision and we never see them again. This is not easily admitted in the presence of a professional salesperson so they avoid visiting with one if they can.

This think-it-over thing is the rationale of fear and is only done by real buyers: scared escape artists that hop the fences, they really do that, and skirt us in the sales office upon returning from the models to get away without so much as looking in our direction; because they want to buy, but fear it, they go to great lengths to avoid entering a buying conversation with an on-site sales professional.

Should they get away without our having a buying conversation with them, they leave, honestly, to just think things over, maybe, over a cup of coffee at a local coffee shop with the full intention of returning should the measure of the pros and cons of buying weigh in their favor; but what usually happens when they do this, as said, is that we just never see them again so we work very hard to prevent that from happening.

The others, the visitors that come back from the models to stand in the center of the sales office and yack and yack and yack about the models, the things they love about the floor plans, the kitchens, etc. are time wasters that rarely buy though that is their ostensible reason for talking with us.

If yackers are all you have to work with, I instruct salespeople, then talk with them and see what develops; but if talking with a talker and you see an escapee hopping the fence or skirting you, excuse your-

self, abruptly if needed, and run to stop them, even out into the street if you have to, to begin a buying conversation that, you will find, usually leads to a purchase.

In sales, whether selling furniture, cars or houses (listing is here implied as a sales activity), it is always the fearful think-it-over bunch that are the easiest to close and they know it; the bold, self-centered, I rule the world bunch are closable too, but if you could somehow identify the fearful from the yackers (so to speak), like a salesperson manning a new home sales office can easily do, your job as a listing agent might be made easier.

Can we do this?

**I say, yes, they are the treasure that live behind the gates and guards.**

Who, after all, wants to live behind a city wall, a castle-keep from days of old except a person fearful about all things and others, the barbarians on the other side?

*Sidebar / Now, come on, don't be offended by this if it is you that lives behind gate and guard, we are talking about sales, get over it.*

The behinders, as I call them, are a great bunch, but they have sequestered themselves there to protect themselves from some imaginable harm the other side of the wall. Think about it for a moment, who, for the most part, live behind fences and gates?

Well, the first to come to mind are the well off, of course, and the rich and famous. They do this to protect themselves from hordes of poor that want what they have. This is understandable.

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Secondly, it is the poor that live behind gate and guard, so to speak, mostly fences of one type or another just like the rich. Enter any economically poor neighborhood and, as you know, you will see that nearly every single house is surrounded by some kind of fence, wall or fortress of iron and steel. They, just like the rich, do this protect themselves from hordes of poor that in their minds want what they have.

The rich and the poor, it seems, have the same problem and attitude of mind underscored by fear, but in addition to the faceless hordes of poor it's you they fear. The fence, gate, guard and particularly the No Solicitor sign are dead giveaways to this. What a stupid sign to hang on the front door of home. It doesn't mean they don't like you, it means they fear you.

This is empowering.

It is the great fearless masses of the middle-class that live outside like the birds and the bees, free in spirit, unfettered by imagined harms of any great magnitude. Enter their neighborhoods and you will only rarely see a sequestered home owner inside a lot-sized city wall. This, by the way, is the first sign of an economically declining neighborhood and should be outlawed by local ordinance.

So, with all of this said, we know we have no problem getting to home owners to talk to about listing and selling that live within unfenced open air homes; but now, more than ever, you know the magnitude of importance of your getting to home owners on the other side of gates and guards to talk to about listing and selling because it is they that,

maybe, because of their fear are the easiest to close; and, I might add, like the runaway escapees mentioned earlier, want to be closed but put it off by well intentioned due diligence: the stake in the heart of fearless living.

They belong to the think-it-over brotherhood of self-control and, because of this, often miss out on meeting people that can help them get to where they want to go.

This is a major drawback of moving into a community sequestered off from the real world.

If it were allowed by the HOA, they, even, would post no solicitor signs on their front porches.

The behinders that have experienced an expired listing have all shown us what it is they want to do, to sell, and have done us the particular favor of eliminating our competition: the main #1, top gun, big fish in a small pond agent (or agents) that probably live inside the same community.

Calling on them is doing them a favor and, specifically, not you.

Should they list with you, well, now, you are burdened with the responsibility of due diligence and doing the work you promised day-in an day-out until the property sells.

You, of course, will be paid well for this, but that doesn't diminish the burden of the work and the responsibility. The sellers, on the other hand, will be paying you with sugar water, equity gained over many years of occupancy for which they had to do little; and, remember, they are rich, don't know the value of money and expect to pay to get what they want.

This is working with intelligence and not time and money.

*Sidebar / Once during a presentation to sign a major development of new homes, 290 units, with the Chairman of a small Savings & Loan who was the developer, himself, I commented that the proper implementation of the marketing program we were discussing would require a stipend for staff and services of three-thousand dollars a month, paid in advance.*

*He must have given his assistant an eye, because after a moment she excused herself, returned a few minutes later and handed me a check for \$36,000.00.*

*I meant in advance the 1st of each month, not a full year in advance. I said thank you.*

*It was from that experience that I changed my charge for services rendered from a monthly stipend to an all-inclusive one-time retainer paid in advance, and from there out got a check for \$36k at each and every sign-up; and, from that experience and the string-of-pearls that followed, that I learned to charge more and not less for what we do for home owners at the top of the market as well.*

People that deal in real money day-in and day-out barely blink at our fees whether 6% or 8% or 9% just so long as they seem justified.

People that look like they deal in real money, but in reality are at their rope's end, argue over every little charge and point. This is the qualifier that directs me to one type of "close" or another.

### **The Last Gate.**

The last gate is a gate you must get through to enjoy success in both your work and life and it is one you have created yourself.

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Made of nothing more than imagination it is stronger than any steel on earth and stands before you either open or closed depending on your automaton programming.

An automaton is a control mechanism designed to follow a predetermined sequence of operations automatically.

It's easy to see your programming, to actually see it by comparing the things you want to do with the things you do.

If you are programmed for success, you want to do things and find ways to do them. That's it, that's the seeing.

If you are programmed for something other than success, you want to do things, but put off doing them indefinitely for one justifiably good reason or another.

No other deep self-evaluation is needed. Look and see, that's it.

A person programmed for success faces an open gate and begins each day anew imagining it an adventure to be experienced.

A person programmed for something other than success faces a closed gate, locked, entwined by masses of chains and barbed wire and fears the new so does little in that direction.

One, the open gate, is conjured up by hope and justified by intelligence; the other, the closed gate, is conjured up by fear and justified by due diligence (more stuff to think through).

Some people talk too much and some people think too much.

Some people, though, neither talk or think too much because they are busy working.

I'd say the latter is the tact that will lead to success listing and selling real estate and not the former.

Let me see you argue with that.

A great leader once inspired a young nation to courage by speaking these words, "...the only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

*Franklin Roosevelt during his first inaugural address at the height of the great depression.*

Facing fear down is not the task of the body but of the mind and it is intelligence that does this.

One, intelligence, leads to the other, success. Accept this, align your wants with your actions and see if gates (doors) don't open for you everywhere you go.

The intelligence is here, in your hands, the doors are out there. See how many you can get through.

The last gate? Where'd it go? Can't find it, can't quite remember what it looked like.

**Best Wishes.**



**Al Lewis  
Broker/Mentor  
Marketing Professional  
Since 1975**

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by Means of Our Standalone  
Advertising Agency.**

**Real Estate Professionals World  
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