

Ride the Technology Tidal Wave with an ePRO Designation



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This is a true story, and surprisingly it happened only three years ago. An out-of-town customer came to Pennsylvania to look for a home. A Realtor® showed her around for an afternoon, and the seeds of a future sale were sown. The customer would return in a couple of weeks with her husband with the hope of choosing a home during that visit. In the meantime, the search continued on the internet.

So far, so good. But something happened during the next two weeks—or better said, didn't happen. This customer e-mailed the agent with questions about homes seen on the internet but never got a response. When the e-mail-friendly customer reached the agent by phone, the agent told her flat out that he didn't use e-mail and would rather communicate by phone and fax. Do you think the customer sought another agent?

Three years later, this 2003 anecdote sounds quaint, if not absurd. Who doesn't use e-mail these days? But it serves to show how easily agents can be swept aside by the swift tidal wave of technology if they don't ride its crest.

The trend in real estate to employ the internet, e-mail and personal websites for more sophisticated communication, marketing and even risk management is ever expanding. Somehow in the crush of daily tasks, agents must try to catch the wave if they hope to serve an ever-growing segment of affluent "connected" real estate consumers.

To help agents keep up with the internet technology that will raise their bottom line, the National Association of Realtors® launched an ePRO certification program in 2001 with an exclusive vendor, InternetCrusade. Apropos to the subject matter, the InternetCrusade coursework is taught online with an interactive approach. Agents spend about 30 hours online at their convenience over a six-month period taking a guided tour of cyberspace. When they emerge, they will have a personalized technology plan to fit with the rest of their business blueprint.

The program, created by Realtors® for Realtors®, is designed for all skill levels. Even a technology wiz will

come away with information that can boost profits, according to ePRO testimonials.

In a 2006 visit to LCAR, InternetCrusade's president, Saul Klein, noted that the ePRO designation makes agents stand out in a crowd. Of more than 860,000 Realtors® nationwide, only 6,000 have earned the designation. In Pennsylvania, only 673 of the 32,000 Realtors® are ePROs, and only 29 of them are located within 20 miles of Lancaster.

In Pennsylvania, the ePRO course counts as one broker credit or 15 hours of continuing education credits—or both if the agent becomes a broker after the 2008 license renewal deadline. It also counts for one elective toward the designations of Accredited Buyer Representative, Certified Residential Specialist and Certified International Property Specialist.

Unlike some of the other designations, ePRO does not entail an annual fee, yet ePRO graduates become part of an active community and referral network.

Detailed information on ePRO can be found at www.epronar.com. The site posts a schedule of free workshops where you can learn more about the certification program, as well as hear a few technology tips that can increase earning power immediately at little expense. You may also sign up online and start the course today.

In Saul Klein's workshop at LCAR, he waxed Shakespearean about the technology tsunami, quoting from Julius Caesar, "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries."

Thought of the Day

"What happens to a man is less significant than what happens within him."

~ Louis L. Mann ~