

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

TO LOCAL, INTERNATIONAL & LIFESTYLE REAL ESTATE



CIPS

Certified International Property Specialist

> BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Three Core Components of a Global Marketing Plan

Last October, *Global Perspectives* shared “Three Essential Building Blocks for Global Business.” That issue provided a framework for any CIPS designee who wants to tackle (or revisit) three key foundational steps—the initial groundwork for embarking upon a global real estate practice.

This month goes a step further. If you want global business to factor largely in your future success, how do you build a marketing plan to support that goal?

Inside, you’ll find fresh thinking, specifically for global agents, from three perspectives:

1. creating the best online assets
2. boosting your networking efforts
3. making smart advertising decisions

In addition to numerous thought-starters, you’ll find several Action Items. Some of these recommendations require considerably more time than others. Pick and choose among them, based on your personal preferences and/or where your practice needs the most attention.

Also, don’t limit yourself to the techniques mentioned here. Marketing is a vast topic, and this issue only touches the tip of the iceberg. The only “wrong” plan is no plan at all. Given time and attention, a thriving global real estate practice is entirely within your reach! 🌐



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Your Online Assets

The internet is a resource that cuts two ways. On the plus side, type a few words, and you can instantly find information about virtually any location in the world. That said, when a potential client wants to learn about YOUR market, will you be conspicuously absent from their search results? Don't miss out on global opportunities. Make sure all your online assets are performing at their best!



Website Must-Haves

Without doubt, your website is your biggest and most important online asset. To ensure it's working FOR you (and not against you), be sure it hits these key benchmarks:

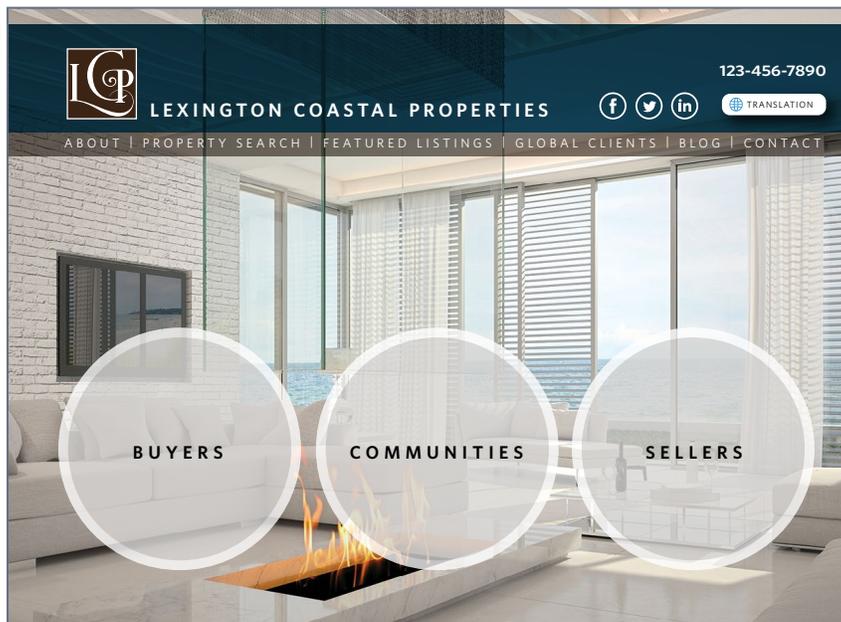
1. Displays a clean, attractive design. Website design is similar to wardrobe fashion: styles change, so looking contemporary and relevant requires occasional updates. Upgrading your website isn't exclusively about keeping up with appearances; it also ensures your site performs at its best. (A newer programming style, running behind the scenes, affects how pages are displayed, how content is indexed with search engines, etc.)

Use graphics wisely. Don't rely excessively on stock photography. A single, professionally-executed image for your home page is great. But lots of amateurish stock images may do more harm than good. It's better to showcase your local market with original photos, infographics, etc.

2. Offers solid content. Remember the phrase "content is king?" Well, it's still true. Visitors to your site need to find clear, helpful information that demonstrates your local market knowledge and explains your global credentials. Don't simply say you're a CIPS; tell visitors what this means.

Fresh, relevant content isn't exclusively for human visitors. It's also essential for generating good results with search engines. Many agents avoid search engine optimization (SEO), simply because it seems too difficult and complicated. Don't overthink SEO, but also don't ignore it, especially if you're a global agent trying to rank well in international searches.

If you simply commit to providing helpful and relevant content on your local market, more than half of your



SEO battle is over, because your pages will include important keywords that will be indexed by search engines, improving your page ranking for various search terms (city and neighborhood names, for example).

Making updates on a regular basis will improve your page rankings even more, because search engines give bonus points for fresh content! Devote one section (Blog, News, Resources, etc.) for regularly adding new material.

3. Easy to navigate and use. A visitor's website experience hinges on many different factors. Ask yourself:

Can visitors easily find what they want? Make sure your site is well organized, with straightforward navigation.

Does it display well on mobile devices? Smartphones and tablets account for more than half of all web traffic.

Is it easy to view properties? 3D virtual tours are increasingly important, especially for buyers who may be on the other side of the world.

Does it offer translation tools? Visitors may have translation options built into their web browser. Still, incorporating these tools directly into your site signals that you're seriously interested in global clients.

Do visitors know how to contact you? Make sure your contact information appears on each page. You can have the perfect online footprint and still lose visitors if they have to search for your phone number or email address.



Creating Content

Sometimes the hardest part of developing solid online content is coming up with good topics. For global agents, your priorities are showcasing 1) your knowledge of your local market, and 2) your unique skills as a global real estate practitioner. Here are several thought-starters*:

1. Your Local Market

Neighborhood profiles - Describe the key features of each neighborhood. It's an easy way to exhibit your local knowledge and add content that's rich in keywords.

Local news and events - Include stories about local businesses, community events, housing market updates, etc.

X reasons to buy in [your market] - Create a list of your market's best qualities, typically providing five to 10 reasons.

Infographics - Convert market data, local information, or interesting facts into attractive infographics. Canva, Visme, Venngage, and other free tools make it easy to create infographics, without hiring a designer.

2. Your Global Credentials

Why should you select a Certified International Property Specialist? - A message specifically intended for global buyers. For potential content, visit nar.realtor/whycips.

Why list your home with a Certified International Property Specialist? - Incorporate your CIPS designation into your domestic strategy by explaining, "I can put your property in front of an international audience."

3. Your Expertise

FAQs about buying (or selling) in the U.S. - Consider which questions are most common among your global clients. Turn this into one page on your site, or a series of articles. Potential topics include taxes, currency issues, financing, immigration, or how real estate practices are similar/different, compared to another country.

Looking to invest in the U.S.? Ask these questions - Instead of answering clients' common questions, explain what global buyers SHOULD be asking, to make the best property investment.

* Please note that when developing content, CIPS designees can freely draw upon NAR resources. Do not, however, copy/paste content from other sources without first obtaining permission. Doing so is an infringement of copyright laws.



Online Profiles

Your website should be the central hub of your online identity, but don't overlook your profiles in the CIPS directory, realtor.com®, LinkedIn, etc. If someone searches for you, by name, these profiles may be among the top results. (Try it, and see for yourself.)

If your online identity needs some work, refer to the October 2017 issue of *Global Perspectives* for step-by-step tips that will ensure your profiles are helping you win more business. (You can find past issues at nar.realtor/global-perspectives.)

ACTION ITEMS

- 1. Identify three "best in class" real estate websites.** Why are they good? What lessons can you learn from them? Take detailed notes on the features you'd like to incorporate into your own site. This might include changing the way you integrate your contact form; how you organize your navigation; the use of photography, etc. Prioritize your list of potential changes.
- 2. Develop a game plan to upgrade your website.** Does your site need small refinements, or is it time for a complete overhaul? Depending on your needs, line up the necessary resources to execute your plan. Placester®, a REALTOR Benefits® Partner, offers REALTORS® a turnkey solution to building and launching a professional real estate website. Visit nar.realtor/realtor-benefits-program/marketing-resources/placester for more information.
- 3. Think like a potential client.** Visit your site and test every link. View it on various devices too. If visitors are encountering problems, they probably won't take time to tell you about it. (Instead, they'll simply leave your site.) That's why it's essential to periodically test everything on your own, or ask others in your office to provide a fresh set of eyes.

Your Networking Plan

Make sure you're leveraging every networking resource at your disposal, whether it's online or in person, professional or personal. After all, it's your people-to-people relationships that will ultimately drive your success. While this is true for every real estate professional, global agents must also factor cultural differences into the equation, and may need to maintain networking relationships spanning thousands of miles and crossing numerous time zones.



An "Elevator Pitch"

"What do you do?" This is, perhaps, the most common question you'll encounter at any event where you're meeting people for the first time. Always be armed with a reply that's short, interesting, and easy to understand. Prepare three slightly different "scripts":

1. A general answer. When talking to consumers, focus on how your work achieves ideal results for your clients. For example, "I'm a real estate agent who helps relocating employees from other countries transfer into MyTown. Most of my clients are from Germany and France. I really enjoy working across cultures and helping these buyers make a smooth transition into a new home."

2. When at industry events. If you're talking to other real estate professionals, it's okay to sprinkle in some jargon that helps further clarify your niche. For example, "I focus on international corporate relocation and have solid relationships with four French and German companies operating in our market. I'm also working with a new Regional Center to attract EB5 investors."

3. Pitch your market too. "Where are you from?" is another common question. Help cast your market in the most positive light, by saying something interesting and memorable. Contrast these examples:

Boring, vague: "MyTown is a far west suburb of BigCity, which was first established as a farming community back in the mid-1800s."

More appealing: "MyTown is the fastest-growing collar community in BigCity and boasts a vibrant, historical downtown area. We also have a strong tech corridor running through the north side of town."

Building and Engaging Your Network

Networking is unique among marketing activities, in that it often lacks structure and organization. It's easy to point to your website, or your ads. Networking, on the other hand, is more intangible, and potentially overlooked. The only way to give it "form" is to take a more deliberate approach:

Organize your contacts. If you have a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool, use it—or develop your own system. Decide the best way to put your contacts into discreet categories, perhaps including Clients/Prospects (current versus past), Personal Network (friends and relatives), Professional Network (lenders, attorneys, etc.), and Industry Network (CIPS designees and other real estate agents). You may prefer color-coding your categories and/or using keywords.

Define action items. What are the best ways to "work" your contacts? Consider this question from various perspectives: Who is my ideal prospect and what will bring them into my "pipeline?" How can I cultivate referral relationships? Which tactics are most effective, and which am I good (or bad) at executing? These questions, and others, will help you decide whether your action plan will include phone calls, personal emails, email and/or social media campaigns, attending local/international networking events, hosting your own events, etc.

Create follow-up systems. A plan is only as good as the systems backing it up. Make sure all new contacts are captured, entered into your CRM system, and receive appropriate follow-up. Streamline any ongoing marketing campaigns as much as possible. Use time-blocking techniques to ensure you carve out personal time for activities like prospecting.



Business Cards

People exchange business cards in virtually every corner of the world. However, expectations and etiquette can vary dramatically between countries, and sometimes between cities in the same country.

Do your research. When traveling to another market, you may need to print a special set of business cards, adhering to different business practices. This may require translations, either replacing the content on the front side of your card, or adding a translated version to the reverse side. It can also help to spell out states, rather than using abbreviations. For instance, instead of FL, say Florida.

Learn the etiquette. In many countries, exchanging business cards involves some degree of formality. This may include accepting a card with both hands, taking time to read it, and making direct eye contact before tucking it into a pocket. Many cultures are quite enthusiastic about exchanging cards, so make sure you arrive with plenty to share.

Did you know you can create customized business cards, featuring the CIPS logo?

Go to NAR's Global Marketing Center (printingstorefront.com/narglobal), upload your photo and logo, add contact details, then print/ship (for a nominal fee) or download a PDF file (free). It's that easy!



International Events

One of the very best ways to expand and strengthen your global network is to attend at least one international event each year. In addition to networking, you'll come home energized with fresh ideas that can only be obtained through face-to-face experiences and direct contact with other cultures.

Not sure where to go, or how to "work" an event? Turn to the June 2017 issue of *Global Perspectives*, which provides essential tips, and compares/contrasts major trade shows around the world. (Past issues are posted at nar.realtor/global-perspectives.) 

ACTION ITEMS

- 1. Prepare and practice your "elevator pitches."** Brainstorm and write down everything that's impressive about the clients you've served, how you stand out in your field, what you're currently working on, and what's great about your market. Use these notes to develop specific pitches for different audiences. Practice them out loud (it will help you identify small improvements) and commit them to memory.
- 2. Develop (and stick to) a personal networking plan.** Determine which tactics will work best for achieving your goals, commit your plan to paper, and enter key dates into your calendar. Writing down your intentions will greatly improve your ability to achieve them! As you work your plan, always be on the look-out for potential refinements.
- 3. Join the CIPS Facebook group.** We've said it before, and we'll say it again. For most CIPS designees, this is the easiest way to share business-building tips and referral opportunities on a daily basis. Nearly 2,000 CIPS designees, located around the world, have already joined this closed group. (Called "Official Group: NAR CIPS Designees.")

Your Advertising

After you've established a strong online presence and begun cultivating your network, consider advertising. It's one of the best ways to broaden your visibility on a global stage and attract new business opportunities. It can also be expensive. That's why you should only incorporate paid advertising into your marketing plan IF you can clearly articulate your objectives: Who do you want to reach? What message will resonate with them? Use the following tips to refine your strategy.



Top 3 Advertising Priorities

1. Your market. For global agents, the top priority is promoting your market (tell the world what's great about it!) and becoming the go-to resource for anyone interested in your area. Consider your role as similar to a representative of a chamber of commerce, economic development organization, or department of tourism.

2. Your self. Promote your knowledge and skills as an international specialist, as well as any areas of specialization (corporate relocation, luxury properties, commercial development, etc.). Earning your CIPS designation puts you in a distinctive class of real estate professionals. However, most buyers/sellers will need your help understanding how your designation translates into tangible benefits. (Just make sure the message remains focused on THEM; avoid any hints of braggadocio.)

3. Your properties. If you're taking care of the first two advertising priorities, and are making good use of all the listing tools at your disposal, your properties will "automatically" receive good visibility. Yes, individual properties may need special advertising attention, but never forget: listings come and go, but efforts to promote your professional real estate practice should never lapse.

Where to Advertise?

Property magazines are among the most logical advertising options for real estate professionals, including both online and print publications targeting various property niches (resort destinations, real estate investors, commercial developers, etc.).

Don't stop there! Depending on the types of clients you want to attract, investigate other publications that may be distributing content to your ideal audience, potentially at lower rates. For example:

Expats - Check out *Expat Living Magazine*, *InterNations Magazine*, and others.

Retirees - *International Living* and *Escape Artist* are popular retirement lifestyle magazines.

International students - Explore advertising options with specific universities, or at internationalstudent.com and other sites.

Immigrant communities - Which local publications are read by foreign nationals?

Additionally, if you'd like to advertise in a major journal, but the costs are too high, consider restricting your ads to special editions specifically focused on your market.

How to Earn Free Advertising

Publishers are always looking for ready-made content, as long as it's educational in nature. Consider what types of stories will be interesting to their readers, then submit a well-written draft. (You may want to hire a writer to review and edit your copy before submitting it.)

This is an excellent way to gain broad exposure and build credibility as a market expert, without spending anything, beyond the investment of your time. If the publisher declines the article, consider submitting it elsewhere, or using it on your own website.

Once your article appears online, in a digital format, share it via your social media profiles, providing additional (free) visibility.



Facebook Ads - Filtering Options

Among pay-per-click options, Facebook is extremely popular. Using its targeting tools, you can greatly improve the odds that your ads are seen by your most promising prospects. Refine your message to match their interests and boost response rates even more, while keeping your advertising budget slim and on target.

For real estate professionals, two of the most popular filter options are Location (you can drill down to individual zip/postal codes) and Age. Also consider:

Languages — Show your ads to people who've indicated French, Spanish, etc. as their primary profile language (and people who've added languages to their basic profile interests).

Gender — Have you noticed that female versus male buyers are drawn to your market for different reasons? Consider creating two ads, featuring different attractions (golf versus shopping, for example).

Expats — Use this feature to find expats (from particular countries) in your local market, or to connect with expats from your home country living overseas (in particular destinations).

Travel — Hotels use this targeting tool to display properties to people who've expressed interest in specific destinations, or are showing other travel-related behaviors. Use the same tactic to connect with buyers of second/vacation homes.

Custom List — You can also upload your own list and create a custom audience. It's a great way to get more mileage from your database. 

New Member Benefit: Advertising Discounts!

NAR Global is negotiating special discounts, exclusively for CIPS designees. So far, two publications are already lined up, with more to come!

Property Professional - 25% discount
Bi-monthly UK magazine for key decision makers and senior practitioners.
arla.co.uk/magazines.aspx

Contact: **Sarah Davies**
Email Sarah at sarahdavies@propertymark.co.uk
and mention code **Real25%** to receive discount.

Canadian Real Estate Wealth - 30% discount
Bi-monthly Canadian publication for real estate investors.
Canadianrealestatemagazine.ca

Contact: **Trevor Lambert**
Email Trevor at Trevor.Lambert@kmimedia.ca
and mention code **CREWCIPS18** to receive discount.



Watch for more publications to be included in this exciting new member benefit!
All discounts can also be found by logging into the Global Marketing Center at printingstorefront.com/narglobal.

ACTION ITEMS

- 1. Identify three publications that provide the best fit with your global practice, and your budget.** Typically, this is as simple as going to an Advertisers page, where you can gather data on the publication's readership (total distribution, demographics, etc.), plus advertising rates and options, for both print and online formats.
- 2. Create and test ads.** Work with a copy writer and a graphic designer. Share your elevator speech (see page 4) and other helpful background on who you want to reach, and what message is most likely to engage their interest. Finalize your ads and track results. Make refinements, based on what you learn, and repeat the process.
- 3. Try running a Facebook campaign too.** How would you describe your ideal client? Take notes, and use this information to make decisions about who to include/exclude from your campaign while being compliant with Fair Housing laws. Finalize the photo, and how much you want to spend. Then track your results.



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BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



**Renew by February 12
to remain active.**



CIPS

Have you renewed your CIPS Designation for 2018?

Thanks to all who have already renewed. Great things are in store for CIPS members in 2018.

If you haven't renewed, please visit nar.realtor/cipsdues to remain part of this growing network. Enter your NRDS ID for your username and last name for your password (first letter of last name in upper case).

Why Renew?

- Connect with over 3,900 designees in 48 countries
- Since June 2017, over 100 referrals in 30 countries were exchanged through the CIPS Facebook Group
- Customizable marketing tools
- **New!** Advertisement discounts exclusively for designees in real estate publications abroad



Have questions or need help renewing?

Contact us by phone at (312) 329-8320
or email us at cips@realtors.org