
HOW TO BECOME AN APARTMENT LOCATOR

Are you interested in starting an apartment locating business but don't know where to start? Are you a broker and want to recruit locators but need training and resources? Or maybe you already have a business but need more support and training to make it profitable. Don't worry, we've got you covered.

WHAT IS APARTMENT LOCATING?

Apartment locating is a specialized form of real estate representation focused on helping renters find the right apartment. An apartment locator works directly with renters to understand their needs, budget, location preferences, and timing, then matches them with apartment communities that meet those criteria.

As a licensed real estate professional, an apartment locator acts as an intermediary between renters and apartment communities. Locators research availability, compare pricing and amenities, explain leasing requirements, schedule tours, and guide renters through the application and approval process. Their role is to simplify what can often be a stressful and time-consuming experience, while ensuring renters receive accurate information and fair representation.

Apartment locators are typically compensated by the apartment community through a referral commission after a lease is signed. This allows renters to receive professional assistance at no direct cost to them, while apartment communities benefit from qualified, ready-to-lease prospects. Because apartment locators are licensed real estate agents in most states, they are legally and ethically required to act in the renter's best interest and comply with all applicable real estate laws.

At its core, apartment locating creates value for all parties involved: renters receive guidance and support, apartment communities receive qualified referrals, and the leasing process becomes more efficient and transparent for everyone.

WHAT ARE THE START UP COSTS?

One of the advantages of the apartment locating business is it requires less start-up capital than a traditional business. With the right systems, a computer, internet connection, and virtual phone number you can run your company from anywhere in the world. Using automation and your website, you can respond to incoming leads 24/7.

However, like any other business, success as an apartment locating professional requires hard work, consistency, and a solid understanding of how to generate leads. Real estate is one of the most data driven industries so having access to apartment data is crucial to your success. Your most important client is Google, and you can't make Google happy without data.

WHAT TOOLS ARE NEEDED?

You can't make money as an apartment locator with a free Gmail or yahoo email address and a \$50 apartment database. Business in 2024 doesn't work like that; you must invest in yourself. Every locator needs a custom domain, website, and email address. You can't set up email automation and lead funnels with Gmail or yahoo email. Savvy consumers expect a professional business to have its own website, online reviews, and access to accurate apartment inventory.

1. Buy a custom domain.
2. Sign up for Google workspace or Outlook 360
3. Set up a website using your new domain.
4. Set up your email address at your new domain.
5. Hire a graphic designer to create a professional logo.
6. Use AI to create professional headshots.
7. Set up a virtual phone number on Google Voice
8. Set up a profile on your preferred social media platforms.
9. Sign up for our Locator IDX and CRM
10. Sign up the National Association of Apartment Locators
11. Set up lead funnels for new leads and repeat and referrals.
12. Set up an invoice collection system.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR LOCAL APARTMENT MARKET

To succeed as an apartment locator, you need to have a good understanding of your local apartment market. Apartment locating is highly competitive in major metro cities in Texas, Georgia, Arizona, Colorado, and Florida. Apartment locators are popular in cities with more than 1,800 apartment communities. Apartment communities enlist the help of local real estate agents to broaden their marketing reach, offering a commission or referral fee for qualified renters.

To stand out from the competition, you need to identify your target market and develop a niche. You will get better results if your marketing identifies your ideal client. For example, you can specialize in helping people who work downtown and want to live downtown or people relocating to your city for the first time. The smaller and more specific your niche, the easier it is to find potential clients through social media. There is an online group or hashtag for practically any niche which makes it easy to find followers and create an audience. After you master one niche, you can repeat your process and create a second niche.

You want your clients to be impressed by your expertise, so you need to keep up with the latest local trends and developments in the apartment industry by subscribing to an online apartment database. Rental Advisors offers a Locator IDX & CRM, and the National Association of Apartment Locators offers a simple apartment database.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR APARTMENT LOCATORS

To be a successful apartment locator, you need to have a set of essential skills. These skills include:

1. Communication Skills

As an apartment locator, you will be communicating with clients, landlords, and property managers on a daily basis. You need to have excellent communication skills to build a rapport with your clients and a friendly relationship with the leasing staff to ensure you get credit for each transaction.

2. Sales Skills

Apartment locating is a sales-driven business. You need to be able to identify and sell the benefits of your services to prospective clients and convince them why your service is better than the competition.

3. Organizational Skills

To be successful in the apartment locating business, you need to be highly organized. This includes keeping track of client information, property listings, and rental rates. You need automated systems to consistently follow up with clients who are not moving for 60 or 90 days. You need monthly drip email campaigns after the client moves in. Ask them to write an online review. Increase repeat clients with an auto email 90 days before their lease expires.

4. Attention to Detail

In the apartment locating business, even small mistakes can have costly consequences. You need to have a keen eye for detail to ensure that you are providing accurate information to your clients and making it easy for them to list you as the referral source. Every email and every text message should be trackable in case you need it as proof for invoice collection.

BEST PRACTICES FOR APARTMENT LOCATORS

To be successful in the apartment locating business, you need to follow some best practices. These include:

1. Building Relationships

Building relationships with landlords, property managers, and other leaders in the industry can help you grow a reputation as a trustworthy authority in the apartment locating industry.

2. Providing Excellent Customer Service

Providing excellent customer service is key to building a loyal client base. This includes responding promptly to client inquiries, providing accurate information, and going the extra mile to ensure that your clients are satisfied with your services and their new apartment. Providing excellent customer service will help grow your online reviews which will generate new leads and help convince potential clients.

3. Staying Up to Date with the Market

Staying up to date with the latest trends and developments in your local market can help you provide better services to your clients and stay ahead of the competition.

4. Leveraging Technology

Technology can be a powerful tool for apartment locators. By using apps and software tools, you can automate your workflow, outsource administrative tasks to a virtual assistant, and provide better services to your clients.

STEPS TO START AN APARTMENT LOCATING BUSINESS

If you are interested in starting an apartment locating business, here are the steps you need to follow:

1. Obtain a Real Estate License

As an apartment locator you are representing the needs of another. All 50 states require a real estate license to hold you accountable for ethical and moral representation and to ensure you put the other person's need above your own. Our website has a list of the real estate licensing board for each state so you can find out the educational requirements to obtain a real estate license.

- <https://apartmentlocatorassociation.org/do-apartment-locators-need-a-license/>

2. Write a Business Plan

The members only section includes action plans and checklists to write a business plan that outlines your goals, target market, services, and marketing strategies. You can't be successful without a written plan and timeline. There is a recommended book list. The members only section also includes professional communication templates, personalized lease verification form and guest card, commission dispute templates, and the commission collection guide to help you set up your business process.

After you write your business plan you set up your systems. Each process needs to be written down so it can be duplicated. Ideally, you will delegate non-licensed tasks to a virtual assistant as you grow. Our forms, templates, and action plans are specifically written for apartment locators.

3. Register Your Business

Register your business with the relevant authorities and obtain any necessary licenses, permits, and insurances. Take the time to thoroughly research this topic because in our experience a quick Google search is not adequate. Apartment locating is a small industry, there isn't an abundance of information about certification. To set up an LLC, register with the Secretary of State website and obtain a Tax ID number on IRS.gov.

4. Set Up a Website and Social Media Accounts

Set up a website and social media accounts to promote your business and attract clients. An online presence is necessary to attract and retain clients. Online reviews play a huge role in referral business as people look for social proof before using any online service. A Google business profile is free and is an excellent source of leads and builds your organic SEO. We recommend collecting reviews on Google over Yelp because Yelp has made changes to their algorithm in the past to reduce the number of online leads displayed. Google is free and your number one client is Google.

5. Subscribe to Locator IDX

Locator IDX is the easiest way to integrate locator friendly properties on your website. It includes a searchable apartment locating website but if you are building a WordPress website you can purchase a data feed to populate your site. Rental Advisors offers a suite of products for apartment locating professionals. Locator IDX is a front-end and back-end system for brokers, teams, and individual agents. It's customizable to fit your needs and market. Learn more at <https://locatoridx.com>.

6. Set Up Invoicing

Apartment locators get paid by the apartment community after moving in. In most states, the commission is paid to your broker, who distributes your percentage of the commission per their payment policies. Some brokers take care of invoice collection, and some brokers expect the agent to take care of it. Make sure you have written instructions from your broker on how to process commission checks because the process needs to start immediately after your client moves in. Any delay submitting the invoice to the apartment community, providing all documents they require, and following up on the status of the invoice in a timely manner reduces your chances of collecting the invoice. If a property is purchased or obtains new management, it is very difficult to collect commission from the previous management. The members only section includes a comprehensive commission collection guide with instructions, email templates, and best practices to collect your invoices. Using a CRM or online accounting service to automate your invoice reminders until the invoice is paid is very important.

MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR APARTMENT LOCATORS

Marketing is a crucial aspect of building a successful apartment locating business. Here are some marketing strategies you can use:

1. Search Engine Optimization

Optimize your website for search engines to improve your visibility in search engine results pages. Google is the most popular search engine and Google should be your number one client. Using free Google products is an excellent way to impress Google's algorithm. Done correctly, Google is always prospecting for your business.

2. Social Media Marketing

Use social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube to promote your business and engage with your target audience. With consistent engagement you can easily reach 1,000-1,500 followers which is more than enough to generate leads. Social media is important for social proof. As an online business potential customers are going to perform a search of your online presence. You don't need a profile on every social media platform, focus on the ones you enjoy using so creating content doesn't feel like a burden.

3. Content Marketing

Create high-quality content, such as blog posts, videos, and infographics, to attract and engage your target audience. Our members only area is a great resource for marketing ideas and checklists for apartment locators. We've partnered with Locator IDX who have helped launch 100+ apartment locating brands to use their website design and marketing checklists they've developed over the last five years. Download and print these guides from the training center after you login to the members only area.

4. Referral Marketing

Offer incentives to your clients for referring new clients to your business. Check with your state licensing board for limitations on the value of the incentive. In Texas the limit is \$50 to the person making the referral but can be any amount to the person signing the lease. Some apartment locators use rebates for client retention, just make sure you're compliant with the state licensing board. Use your CRM to automate referral programs to past clients and generate repeat business 90 days before their lease expires. As you enter invoices into your CRM and accounting software,

add a date 6 months or 12 months in the future depending on the lease term. Your CRM can automatically ask for repeat business 30 days before they give their notice to vacate.

BUILDING A STRONG ONLINE PRESENCE FOR YOUR APARTMENT LOCATING BUSINESS

In today's digital age, having a strong online presence is crucial for any business. Here are some tips for building a strong online presence for your apartment locating business:

1. Create a Professional Website

Create a professional website that highlights your services, listings, and client testimonials.

2. Use Social Media

Use social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Facebook to promote your business and engage with your target audience.

3. Leverage Online Reviews

Encourage your clients to leave reviews on websites such as Yelp and Google to improve your online reputation.

4. Use Online Directories

List your business on Yelp and create a local Google business page to improve your visibility in search engine results pages. If you have popular online directories in your local area, list your business and create a profile. Local online directories are an excellent source of leads.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FOR APARTMENT LOCATORS

Like any other business, the apartment locating business has its fair share of challenges. Here are some challenges you may face and solutions to overcome them:

1. High Competition

Competition in the apartment locating business is high in certain markets. To overcome this challenge, you need to identify your target market, develop a niche, differentiate yourself from the competition, and create automated systems to simplify client engagement.

2. Inaccurate Information

Providing inaccurate information to your clients can damage your reputation and credibility. To overcome this challenge, you need to have a keen eye for detail and always verify information before providing it to your clients. Design communication templates to save time and improve accuracy. The members only section has several personalized forms and templates for lease verification, guest card, and commission dispute resolution.

3. Outdated Business Model

An outdated business model will prevent your apartment locating business from growing. To overcome this challenge, you need to embrace technology, offer value-added services, focus on the customer experience, specialize in a niche market, and collaborate with property managers to identify problems you can solve.

4. Client Retention

Client retention is crucial for building a successful apartment locating business. To overcome this challenge, you need to provide excellent customer service and maintain the relationship after they move in. The cost to retain a client is much cheaper than the cost to obtain a new client, both in money and time. Write a client retention campaign once and use it over and over.

Conclusion

Building a successful apartment locating business requires hard work, consistent communication, lead generation, dedication, and a solid understanding of the market. By following the best practices and using the right tools and resources, you can overcome the challenges and build a thriving business that provides value to your clients. So, what are you waiting for? Start your apartment