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**Too Busy? Turning Away Work? Get Help!**By Dustin Harris

What in the world is going on? An appraiser’s life is crazy right now. If you are doing lending work in almost any part of the country, you know volume is up. At our office, we are about 150% of normal. I have spoken to dozens of appraisers across the country over the past few weeks and I know I am not alone. Where I seem to be alone, however, is in the ability to handle the high volume of orders that are coming at us these days. Most appraisers I know are turning down as much (if not more) volume than they are accepting. Perhaps it is time to look at tweaking your business model.

I don’t think my peers *want* to turn down volume. Most appraisers say that they wish they were in a position to do it all. “I want to make hay while the sun shines,” they say (or something like that). Perhaps there is still time.

Though there are many principles and concepts I teach as an appraiser mentor, one of my main pillars is the “Law of Delegation.” Simply put, this truth states that if you can pay another person less per hour to do the same work as you (and if it is legal, moral, and ethical) you should do so. That way, you can do more of the work that you feel you must personally do for a higher fee.

How? Determine how much you make per hour, pay attention to what you do every day to make that kind of money, and then delegate what you can delegate to someone who makes less than you do. If you set it up correctly, you will make more money doing more of what you enjoy.

**No Trainee/No Problem**

When I talk to appraisers about their desire to do more volume, most of them argue that they do not have the time or desire to take on a trainee. Yet, we sometimes overlook the fact that hiring a trainee is not the only way to utilize the Law of Delegation. As with any business, appraisal work can be broken down into Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III tasks. Think about it this way: Tier I tasks are those that can be taught in a day or two of training and include things like answering phones, scheduling appointments, data entry and organizing records. Tier II items are a bit more complicated and take a little longer to train on. These items might include researching deeds, obtaining plat maps or verifying sales data. Finally, Tier III work is more in the analytical realm and is typically reserved for the appraiser.

When you break down the appraisal process into individual tasks, it is interesting to see the distribution in terms of percentages. Though Tier III items are obviously the most important and higher level components, they are actually the least time consuming. A great majority of the total time it takes to complete an appraisal from start to finish is taken up by Tier I and Tier II work items. These are items (especially Tier I) that can be delegated to competent and supervised staff members.

**Thinking Out of the Box**

There are some who say that hiring help is more costly and complicated than just doing it on their own. Though this may be true for some, for most adding help can work. First, poor employee performance is usually a direct reflection of poor management. Being able to hire, train and manage well is an art. Like any other art, it must be continually practiced and improved upon. Many appraisers do not have the patience for such activity. Thankfully, there are enough third-party companies providing assistance to appraisers (anything from virtual receptionists to typists, to entire back-office management) that you can get the help you need without personally hiring anyone.

Finances can also be an issue to watch for. Catching the delegation bug can be addicting and it is easy to see your business overhead skyrocket if you do not keep a close watch on your payroll. Be smart. Appraisers deal in numbers all day long. Do the math and find out where the sweet spot is for your business.

Though the misconception and stigma about hiring help persists among appraisers, it’s the only way to grow in this changing marketplace. Isn’t it interesting that of all service industries, we seem to be one of the few that continues to believe that delegating work to others is somehow counterproductive or unethical?

Needless to say, the appraisal world has changed and continues to evolve. More is being streamlined and more is being expected of appraisers. Fortunately, there are tweaks and remodels that can be done to your business structure that will dramatically affect your ability to compete.

**Tech Tip**

Finally, do not forget the technology factor. There are products out there galore that help appraisers do more work in less time (and create better quality at the same time). Don’t be afraid to dip your toe in this water. Remember, doing something faster does not mean you are cutting corners. In today’s world, it is possible to use hardware and software to help you to work smarter and stop seeing so much good business slip through your fingers.

I know what some of you are thinking, “If I want something done right in my office, I have to do it myself.” Trust me, I get it. I used that mantra for many, many years. During that time, I too turned down a lot of business that I otherwise would have been able to do. Everyone has their way of running their business. That is what makes each appraisal office unique. I just know that I have been on both sides of the fence. I prefer it where the grass really does grow greener.

**About the Author**

Dustin Harris is a successful, self-employed, residential real estate appraiser. He has been appraising for nearly two decades. He is the owner and President of Appraisal Precision and Consulting Group, Inc., and is a popular author, speaker and consultant. He also owns and operates The Appraiser Coach where he personally advises and mentors other appraisers helping them to also run successful appraisal companies and increase their net worth.   His free podcast can be listened to on iTunes and Stitcher.  He and his wife reside in Idaho with their four children.  He loves playing in the outdoors and watching movies indoors.



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