

Make a Name for Yourself

Teach Kids About

MONEY

By Nancy M. Petersen

Real estate agents profit from personal promotion campaigns and community volunteering that make their names household words. But personal marketing is a double-edged sword for brokers and managers. It rakes in plenty of transactions, but it also creates plenty of clients who remember the agent's name but not the name of the brokerage. The more personal marketing agents do, the more invisible the brokerage becomes.

But what would happen if brokers could adopt a community outreach program that

- targeted young and growing families in their prime home-buying years,
- had staying power,
- allowed agents to participate,
- established a strong bond for the brokerage with community leaders, including mayors, council members and teachers, and
- was creative enough to be an effective recruitment tool?

A program called Money Savvy Kids has the potential to do all of these things for brokers.

Never Too Young to Learn

Money Savvy Kids, a curriculum that teaches first- through fifth-

graders how to manage money, is the brainchild of Susan Beacham, a former senior vice president for Bank of America. Beacham sought to do something about a phenomenon she saw all too often in her 20 years in finance: women thrust into the role of managing money who were not prepared. When her own daughter entered first grade, Beacham resolved to break the cycle.

"To tell you the truth," she says, "at first I didn't really think about boys. I was focused on girls. I talked with my daughter's first grade teacher about doing 'something,' although I was unsure what that something was. She encouraged me to see that all young children needed to learn about money, and she told me if I could write a curriculum for first graders, she'd teach it.

"I didn't have a clue how to translate 20 years of financial experience into a message that first, second and third graders could understand," Beacham says. "But, as a mother, I know that if you start teaching kids when they are young, the lessons stick for life. After all, kids are taught to 'spend' as soon as they can understand what television is all about. Shouldn't we also be teaching them to 'save,' 'donate' and 'invest' at the same early age?"

Beacham, who left her top spot at Bank of America in 1998 to spend more time with her two young children, spent three years developing and experimenting with the curriculum for Money Savvy Kids and teaching it herself in local schools.

The Money Savvy Kids curriculum consists of a coil-bound, 136-page Teachers Handbook; a CD-ROM with 109 color presentation images to be projected from a computer or printed onto overhead transparencies; a recording of the Money Savvy Kids song for the class to learn; and four newsletters that drive home the important concepts. Each child also receives a student activity book and a Money Savvy Pig.

Suitable for grades 1 through 5, the curriculum includes information about the history of money, how kids can earn money, and the four core values of saving, spending, donating and investing. A field trip—often to the local bank—also is encouraged. The curriculum is easy for teachers to





Susan Beacham's award-winning, four-chambered piggy bank helps teach young children about personal finance—saving, spending, donating and investing. Sponsoring her school-based curriculum provides a great opportunity for brokers to connect with the community.



Sometimes teachers resist programs that require too much preparation. The Money Savvy Kids curriculum is fully scripted and ready to go. It can work in after-school programs too.

for such long-term benefit.”

Working for Brokers

The Money Savvy Kids curriculum makes an ideal community outreach program for brokers and agents to cosponsor. To get the curriculum into schools, educators will want to hear that there is long-term support of the program. The stable presence of the brokerage in the community will be a persuasive selling point.

The licensing agreement with Money Savvy Kids requires an initial investment of \$560 to acquire the teacher’s workbook plus 25 Money Savvy Pigs and Student Activity Workbooks. These last two items must be replenished as students use them.

One cosponsorship idea would be for a broker to sponsor and imprint the teacher’s workbook with the company logo and then partner with an agent to sponsor a school in his or her neighborhood, imprinting each pig with the agent’s name. Because the pig goes home with kids, the program provides ongoing introductions of the agent to families in the neighborhood.

Programs are more likely to be adopted in schools if they help meet the state learning requirements. One way to introduce the program is to do it the way Beacham first did—personally approach a teacher. Or the program may be presented to a local principal or school board. A simpler option might also be to introduce the program as an after-school activity.

Brokers may also want to partner with mortgage companies and banks. Beacham, rapidly becoming known as Mrs. Money, already has introduced Money Savvy Kids to these groups at their professional meetings.

Brokers often struggle to find worthwhile projects that benefit both them and their agents. This idea has the potential to build success by building strong community relations. ■

Nancy M. Petersen is a staff writer for REAL ESTATE BUSINESS. The Money Savvy Pig, Money Savvy Kids, and Mrs. Money are trademarks of Money Savvy Generation LLC. Reach Susan Beacham at 866.390.5959, www.moneysavvygeneration.com or Susan@MSGen.com. Readers can receive a 15% discount on these materials.

use because the teacher’s handbook contains a complete script for each teaching transparency (see the illustration above). The big hit of the program, of course, is the fact that each child receives the Money Savvy Pig piggy bank and stickers to customize the pig for his or her own.

The Pig Takes Off

At the risk of sounding a little whacky, Beacham admits the idea for the Money Savvy Pig literally came to her in a dream. “I had been using four colored-plastic cups in the teaching presentations to illustrate the concepts of save, spend, donate and invest. And one night, perhaps influenced by many readings of my children’s favorite book, *Charlotte’s Web*, I just saw this colorful plastic pig with four sections in my dreams.

“Children at this age are just so responsive to toys,” she says, “They learn through play. Again, our society teaches them to spend through traditional toys, such as cash registers, Shopping Barbie and the like. My daughter even had a stuffed toy brief-

case that came with an embroidered (and branded) credit card! I knew I needed something to capture their imaginations.”

The pig did more than capture the kids’ imaginations. *USA Today* and *Business Week* named it one of the Best Products of 2002. The Parents’ Choice Foundation called it the best educational toy of the year. The pig generated a buzz in *Time*, *Business Week*, *The Chicago Sun-Times*, Chicago television stations and *Money* magazine, and was featured on *Oprah*.

It was introduced to the real estate industry when Mary Kelly, marketing director of Prudential (corporate) caught the pig being featured on the *Today Show*. She called Beacham the same day and invited her to present the idea to Prudential affiliates at the 2003 Prudential annual convention. “This is an outreach program that really suits the real estate industry. It’s a brilliant idea, and that’s why I wanted to connect Susan with our agents and brokers right away. I think any broker or agent would feel proud to adopt a program that has the potential

