

# ***Five Star Professionals Comment on Column by Jim Smith***

## **Jeri Groves, Groves Homes, LLC:**

I think the whole 5280 thing IS a massive rip-off. I have it on my signature, but won't bother with the "extra" promotion in 2013. It's just another gimmick, I think. I'm not a member of QSC, but it sounds like a very interesting program. Since I get 99% of my business from referrals, I guess THAT'S the best "endorsement" anyone could ever want, right?

I just got the news that I'd been "selected". I did, in fact ASK how I was selected and they never presented an intelligible answer. I have to think it's on listing or sales volume.

## **Steve Kinney, RE/MAX Professionals:**

I wasn't aware that RatedAgent.com existed - and LOVE the concept. I do very much like the 5-Star Program and feel that I get a good return on my \$500ish annual investment for a minimally-upgraded ad.

Like you, I often think the 5-Star Award is somewhat lacking in the way of credibility. There are a number of consistently lousy brokers who are included there and it surprises me that they are invited to participate.

Last year I was tempted to count the number of various ads and then do the calculations you did to see what the revenue they generated was. My guess is that the 5-Star program is paying 5280 magazine something to participate since there is a significant additional cost to print a much-larger magazine - but at the same time, these lists for Realtors, doctors and other professionals surely drives traffic to the 5280 site and sells some copies of the magazine too.

It's been more than three years since I received the "award" the first time. At that time I did have a brief conversation with the 5-Star representative, which may have been an interview of sorts, but that has not occurred again for the two subsequent "awards" as far as I can remember. I'm pretty sure that the subsequent calls were solely sales calls. The first year, I asked who nominated me and I'm certain that I never heard who it was because I would have mailed them a thank you card - and I often wonder who nominated me and what the selection criteria was.

I have REALLY wished that there was a better resource for information for prospective Buyers and Sellers to easily turn to for objective information and it appears that QSC will do that - and I'll put that on my e-mail footer. And, I intend to participate. If that information was more easily available, I

think that the choices people make about who they chose to represent them would be significantly different.

Interestingly - and maybe it's sad - when I've mentioned in conversations or on e-mail footers my various accomplishments and designations, the one that gets the most attention, or "congratulations" comments is the 5-Star program! The fact that I'm a part of the Realtor Roundtable, various fairly-impressive designations for repeatedly making RE/MAX's Platinum Club, consistently doing 50+ transactions a year, my volunteer work, etc., don't command as much attention...

## **Scott Matthias, RE/MAX Professionals:**

I never have bought much into the 5280 Five Star Professional rating. I have done QSC now for 3 years and feel it is the best rating service out there! It is a true 3rd party getting our clients true opinion of our service!

I did read your column and am in agreement. I haven't been contacted lately from 5280 because I never did agree to any of their upsell requests. So, no, they have not contacted me recently or interviewed me.

## **Eric Mott, Innovative Real Estate:**

We only heard from some of our clients who were contacted by 5280 asking if it was "for real", no data given to us as to "who" was included in surveys or anything from 5280 besides the upsell packages.

## **Joann Perito-Gonzalez, Avenues Unlimited:**

As a professional involved in sales, I will always embrace an opportunity to get exposure. As we all know, in any advertising it is seeing that ad, logo, whatever numerous times. I have been able to capitalize on a very small budget to get exposure and it really does not matter to me who endorsed me or what they had to say. That comes back in the form of repeat business and referrals, and the fact that they know they can pick up the phone and call me for any number of reasons AFTER our transaction. Five Star Professional came to me and had a very affordable cost. I chose a very small ad that I did NOT get to create, and I ordered some postcards. So, for me, the cost to be in the Magazine and toot my horn a bit, was well worth it. I use a

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very subtle form of promoting it and am not out there yelling and screaming it to get listings. I rarely, if ever, compete for my listings. Just the nature of MY business.

The way it went down was I was contacted by the company that handles the Five Star search, so to speak, and they explained how they got my name. I immediately asked them "what is this going to cost me," as I am extremely skeptical of these type of phone calls. They said it technically could cost me nothing, but that it would allow me to buy some space in the advertising section to further illuminate my being selected. They explained how the process goes with the surveys to clients within a period of time. They said you must get a survey back with accolades and that they then contact the other people in the transaction and verify you are in good standing with DORA.

They really did not push the advertising. It made sense that it was worth going back to those clients within that time period and acknowledging the award and thanking "whoever" for filling out the survey. Another way to stay in front of your folks. I never felt pressured to purchase anything. I chose to.

When I did ask if you had to have a certain number of surveys returned, she said no. She indicated I had a few, but she was not privy to those particular clients as she was at the latter end of the process at that point. It did not really matter to me. One, two, three, seven returned was not the issue. It was that SOMEONE had taken the time, and the others became aware of that, as did the one or few that took the time.

### **Ann Connelly, Your Castle Real Estate:**

I would agree with what you said about 5280 Five Star Professional. Glad to see QSC getting more exposure. I routinely refer clients to other QSC members across the nation and find the agent list extremely helpful on QSC's website. Interestingly, last year 24 brokers (including me) at Your Castle Real Estate knew they were receiving the 5280 award and tried to get Five Star to let us have a group photo and pay for a half page ad. They refused. Don't know what will happen this year. Good luck with your articles and thanks for contacting me.

### **Jim Carroll, Keller Williams Avenues Realty:**

The QSC program sounds like a good idea. The question I would have is what would keep an agent from turning over his transactions that were not good and giving only the good ones. I was not aware of the QSC program and have not signed up yet. Thanks for the info.

I did not hear back from 5280 Magazine but their printed information says it is taken from surveys mailed out to past clients, title companies, & lenders. I have a client & title company both tell me they received this survey about me & they filled it out giving high awards (of course) about me. So I do know surveys were sent out. Maybe all they need is one but I don't know.