

AGENT

# 7 tips for building a global business from your couch

You don't have to spend the year traipsing around the globe or networking in person to cultivate a robust database of luxury clients. Here are a few ways to create and grow your global business from the comfort of your home



Image by: Canva

BY TAMARA BAKIR  
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Before this pandemic, I was an Emirates Airlines Gold member, racking up air miles while hopping around the world on a monthly basis. This jet-set lifestyle harnessed a natural road to becoming an “international agent” with a client and referral network spanning the globe.

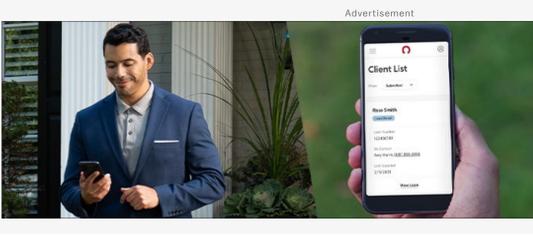
I sold property in Dubai, Los Angeles, Miami and London — and then lockdown happened. Oh, and I had never been into social media marketing or video conferencing. I didn't have a website, and I was worried my international business would come to a screeching halt.

Fast forward to January 2021, and my global business today is stronger than ever. Some of my global wins in this year included a referral from New York City to a Los Angeles developer that resulted in a listing and closing of a penthouse, a seller referral from Los Angeles to Dubai that resulted in a mega mansion sale, an American client purchasing Golden Visa property in Portugal and a Middle Eastern client buying a second home in South Florida.

I have cultivated a global database of 25,000 including around 20,000 property owners as well as agents all over the world. Did I travel? Nope. Have I been networking in person? Negative. So, what did I do? This is how to create and grow a global business from your couch.

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## 1. Join Facebook groups

Joining multiple Facebook groups in your industry is one of the fastest ways to build a network in targeted feeder markets, gain referrals, and meet investors and vendors. Starting and engaging in Facebook group conversations can build credibility and visibility with a large audience that can become a warm list and then develop into one-on-one relationships.

To identify the groups that would work, you can use keywords in the search box such as “Los Angeles investment” or “luxury listings,” depending on the focus of your business. The more focused you are, the more you will get out of this online networking tool.

## 2. Facetime is showtime

Communicating on camera is so much better than phone calls or email. Eye contact and body language is crucial for building strong connections, which is essential in developing client and referral relationships. This is why Zoom's stock skyrocketed in 2020.

I always insist on having first-time calls on camera — be it videoconferencing tool, simply Facetime or WhatsApp video. Facetime is also a perfect tool for virtual showings in real time for out-of-town clients who wouldn't likely trust in airbrushed photo and videos posted online.



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## 3. Speak their language

Cultural diversity translates into different preferences for ways and modes of communication. It is essential to understand your global feeder markets and how they like to communicate.

Different markets prefer different communication platforms. For example, in the Middle East, it's WhatsApp, and in China it's WeChat. Understand your feeder markets and speak their language.

## 4. Be fluent in tech

Thanks to tech, you don't need to be everywhere at the same time, but you can be everywhere at the same time — virtually. The trick is to be active on as many social media networking platforms as possible. They all have different advantages and audiences.

LinkedIn is the best for getting to certain individuals in targeted organizations. Instagram is the best show-and-tell platform for visual and video communication. Facebook and Twitter are the place to start conversations and engage with your sphere and audience.

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For learning and education, hosting and participating in Zoom webinars are impactful. New kid on the tech block Clubhouse has blown up in the past couple of months, giving members a chance to engage in conversations about their business or passions and to grow their Instagram following at the same time.

## 5. Go live

It can be daunting to go live on a social media platform, but unscripted natural video communication is what people really connect to. This type of communication allows people who are far away to get to know you — to hear and see things from your perspective. What's more, the comments tool allows communication with your audience in real time.

The vulnerability is directly correlated with how much people warm up to you, especially in a time when people crave human connection more than ever.

## 6. Learn about other markets

Aside from farming feeder markets, it's essential to identify migration trends and patterns. When you know that there are a couple of key places that people in your market are moving to, it puts you in pole position by learning about the real estate in those markets so you can start conversations about those places that can lead to an outbound referral business.

## 7. Stay top-of-mind

The biggest mistake people make is to make connections without maintaining them. Like with any relationship, if you don't water them, they will die. That's why it's essential to enter everyone you meet into a database with notes of what you learned for future communications. That list can then be placed into an email drip campaign for further communication that should occur at least twice a month.

I send out two monthly email campaigns a month: a “Los Angeles Luxury Living” guide and a “Global New Development” newsletter. It's important to provide insightful information to your network that represents the core values of your business and brand. Naturally, new global contacts with current or near-future business needs should be contacted on a personal basis.

*Tamara Bakir is a global real estate advisor with Vista Sotheby's International Realty in Los Angeles, Dubai and Miami. Connect with her on Instagram or Facebook.*

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