



## CASE STUDY

# Frank Gordon Estate Agents Port Melbourne

FRANK GORDON ESTATE AGENTS was the number one agency for house sales in Port Melbourne, Victoria last year. An independent, family-run agency with just three sales agents, they sell around 40 properties a year specialising in houses in the \$1m to \$2.5m range. They take a tailored and informative approach to their marketing which has helped establish them as a well known local brand with a loyal client base.

We spoke to Alice Callaghan, their head of marketing about the secrets to their success using ActivePipe.

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*“Success in real estate is built on relationships”*



**ALICE CALLAGHAN**

Frank Gordon Estate Agents

“Success in real estate is built on relationships,” Alice says. “The key to building a relationship is building meaningful touchpoints of communication so that you remain front of mind. We’ve been using ActivePipe as an extension of the helpful, informative and approachable service that is embodied in our principal, Frank, and our team.”

## How Frank Gordon approach email marketing

Before moving to ActivePipe, Frank Gordon Real Estate created their emails manually using data from their CRM.

“Previously we sent market updates once a quarter with minimal personalisation. One of the reasons was because doing it through your CRM was just too fiddly,” says Alice. “It would take me hours to try and make it look good and it would usually end up as an attachment.” Moving to ActivePipe means the agency can now create better looking emails more frequently and share information with their

clients more quickly - something that proved extremely important during the Covid-19 lockdown. The flexibility of ActivePipe allowed Alice to email their database on a weekly basis, sharing new information as it came to hand.

“We have a much better understanding of who is reading the emails and our open rates,” says Alice. “That’s given us reassurance and positive feedback on what’s worked. The drag and drop functionality is a huge time saver - it used to take me ages to add properties doing it the old way and it always looked awful!”

Alice admits that like most agencies, their CRM management can do with some work. Though as the team has started to see results with ActivePipe, they have become more motivated to clean up and segment their data.

“Like a lot of agencies, we’ve needed to move away from that old school approach where a lot of contacts become stuck inside the Director’s inbox over time and never end up in the database ,” says Alice.

“But now he’ll say, “I need to get these people into the system because they’ll get the emails.”

“A lot of the director’s contacts have come up to him and talked about the emails he’s sent them. This has inspired him to push the team to be a lot more diligent about getting the right contact information into the database.”

## Alice’s Approach



### Step 1

Segment your audience



### Step 2

Determine email frequency based on audience

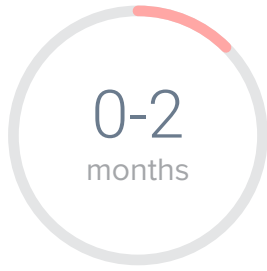


### Step 3

Create informative and useful content

### Step 1: Segment your audience

Alice has a system to identify all their potential vendors by how soon they are likely to act. Vendor categories are broken down to 0-2 months, 3-6 months and 6 months or more. This helps the Frank Gordon team understand the kind of information that will be of interest to increase their open and engagement rates.



0-2  
months



3-6  
months



6+  
months

## Vendor categories

“We have a technique where the first week for open houses we only invite neighbours and our database of local buyers. This not only provides a reason to encourage buyers to join our email list, but it also helps us better serve the pre-registered buyers who are interested in the property” says Alice.

Automated emails operate in the background to make this manageable.

“We segment our buyers into two categories - active and inactive. If you’re a buyer and you don’t come to an open, talk to anyone, interact or have any notes added to you for a lengthy period of time, you get added to an inactive buyer list. We set it up that if someone goes to that category, we send an email saying “are you still looking to buy?”. If they open that email up, they move back into an active category and that has really helped us clean up our data,” Alice explains.

Other categories include investors, landlords, local builders and developers - people who are interested in the local market. During Covid-19, the team added all of their landlords to their email list which had huge benefits.

### Step 2: Determine email frequency based on audience and their need for information

“We send market update newsletters every month when the market is steady and normal, but at the moment we are sending them out every fortnight and at the height of Covid-19 we were sending every week,” said Alice.

Alice says there is no ‘one size fits all’ to email frequency. Instead, determine the frequency based on your audiences and put yourself in their shoes. How often do you think is appropriate to hear from your local agent?



Buyers will expect to hear from you once a week with the latest listings, but potential sellers may find that overkill. Alice advises using your open and unsubscribe rates to refine your frequency.

### Step 3: Create content that is informative and useful

“There’s a lot of automated emails out there and some of it is great, but to create a point of difference we want to be a trusted partner and understand the market, analyse trends and the economic impact so when people see the email in their inbox, they want to open it,” says Alice.

Frank Gordon Estate Agents take a highly customised approach to the content that they include in their emails.

“All our emails will be an intro on the market, an analysis which includes search activity on Realestate.com.au and then any new policies that are impacting the market and local clearance rates,” says Alice.

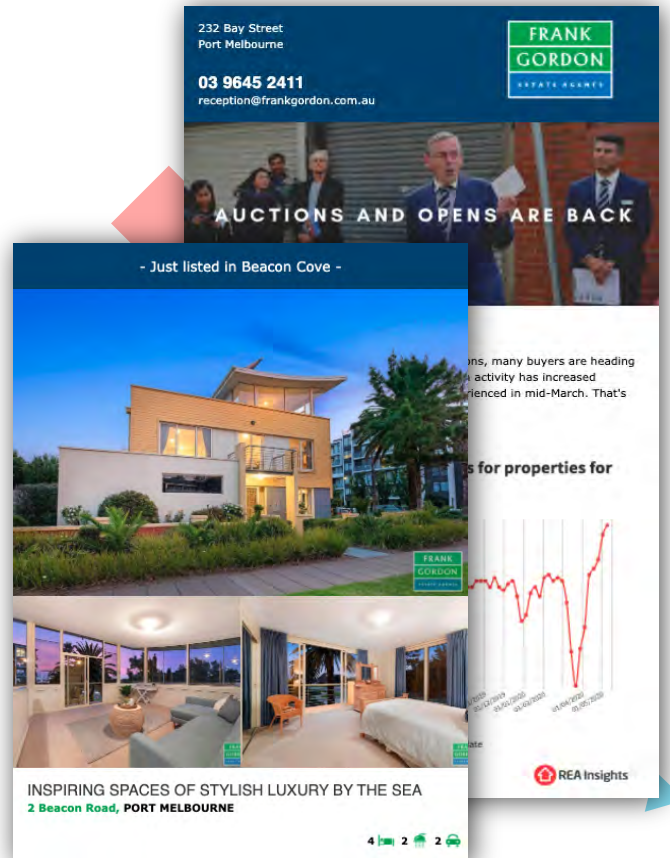
Alice also regularly scours real estate websites for useful pieces of data, and will link to articles as seeing who has clicked the links is a powerful way to determine interest.

Their emails have a “What This Means For You” section which Alice tailors for each audience. “Everytime I’ll write a market update I do a version for landlords with a focus on the rental market and a version for potential vendors which have more of a focus on what things mean to them,” she says.

“I also do a version for buyers which includes a focus on open attendance, clearance rates, amount of stock on the market, as well as the properties we have for sale.”



Alice’s buyer emails highlighting off-market listings generate a lot of interest.



Frank Gordon Estate Agents has two full time employees working on marketing and sales support but Alice says the work she does on email content is used for multiple purposes.

“The content we create becomes the script for the phone, is used as part of the market analysis for appraisals and I will use the content as a blog - it’s a good piece of content that gets used a few times so it’s worth the effort,” she says.



The lesson here is to ensure you’re not treating your EDM campaigns as a silo in your business. Look at how the information can inform and drive your sales team and support them to have better conversations with clients.

## Success rates and feedback

The biggest benefit of using ActivePipe has been the system's ability to help the agency scale their communication and narrow in on those prospects that are most likely to list.

The agency has sent out 42,000 emails since introduction with 20,000 of these have been opened by their audience. The direct sales result includes a number of appraisal requests, inspection requests and at least one buyer match who went on to purchase the property. However, Alice says the impact has been much broader.

Their past two campaigns to prospective vendors had an open rate of 52% and 45% against a benchmark of 20%. The unsubscribe rate was under 1%. Emails to landlords had an even higher open rate at 60% with 25% of readers clicking on articles and looking at properties.

From here they identified hundreds of "high value" contacts and over a hundred people who had updated their profile, giving the team more information about their needs.

Over the past month alone, the team connected to hundreds of vendor leads and landlords a total of two times each - more than 800 connections.

"In a sales team of three people, it would be impossible to talk to that many people while juggling other commitments like buyer inspections" says Alice. The content of the emails has also helped her sales team be more focused in the calls they do make.

"Our open rate is double the average benchmark, so we know our audience is engaged".

The anecdotal feedback has also been strong. When Covid-19 struck, Alice made the call to add all their landlords into the system, a task that took quite a bit of work, but was worth the effort.

"We got a lot of responses thanking us and telling us how informative our emails were," says Alice. "A few even told us things they were worried about which we then used as topics for future emails - it was a great feedback loop."

## Top Tips from Frank Gordon Estate Agents

- Segment your audiences by thinking not just about who the person is, but by what they are currently doing, and how soon they are going to take action.
- Set up email frequencies that make sense to that audience and do not feel invasive. Put yourself in the shoes of your recipients.
- Create content that will be meaningful to each audience. One size does not fit all but the extra effort of customising will be rewarded with higher than average open rates, and great feedback.

# What the Frank Gordon Team love about ActivePipe

- **Efficiency** – It is far quicker to set up neat emails and ActivePipe auto-pulls much of the information for you.
- **Functionality** – The ability to schedule sends, target users based on engagement, update profiles and organise appraisals all within the one system.
- **Visibility** - We can now track engaged audiences and target our follow up more effectively. We can see what properties our contacts are looking at, and the system identifies new leads for us.

## The Numbers

54,677

Emails sent

45%

Avg open rate

(Benchmark 20%)

>1%

Unsubscribe rate



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