

Max Your Profit:

7 Moves Top Brokerages Make to Protect Profit and Prepare for Growth

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Introduction

If you're like many of the brokerage owners we work with, you didn't build your business just to spend your days chasing invoices, fixing reporting issues, or figuring out how a process works.

You built it to grow.

But growth has a way of exposing the gaps in the business behind the brokerage.

- A missed fee might go unnoticed.
- A key employee might leave with years of knowledge in their head.
- A new office might introduce new compliance requirements.
- A new revenue stream might launch before there's a reliable process to support it.

By the time you discover the problem, it can already be costing you money, time, or momentum.

That's what this guide is here to help you uncover.

There are seven sections. In each one, we explain why the area matters, give you a question to ask yourself, show you what strong processes look like, and provide practical actions you can take.

We've also included a Brokerage Operations Assessment in the Resources section at the end. If you want to quickly identify where your biggest gaps might be, you can go there first, answer the questions, and use your results to decide where to focus.



Let's go.

Dylan Dean

Real Estate Lead | Nimbl

01.

Revenue

Collect what you've earned.

Why it matters

When talking about lost profit, this might seem like an obvious one. "Collect what you've earned" – well, yes! But unless you have a definitive list of charges to check, *and* a definitive process to go with it, you're relying on memory and human efficiency day-in-day-out.

That leaves a lot to chance.

When your brokerage is busy, even small things can slip through the cracks. A missed fee here, an incorrect split there, or a receivable that isn't followed up can quickly add up to **meaningful lost revenue.**

The goal

Build a process that makes missed revenue difficult.

? Ask yourself

Could I prove that every dollar my brokerage has earned has been billed and collected? What's the process?

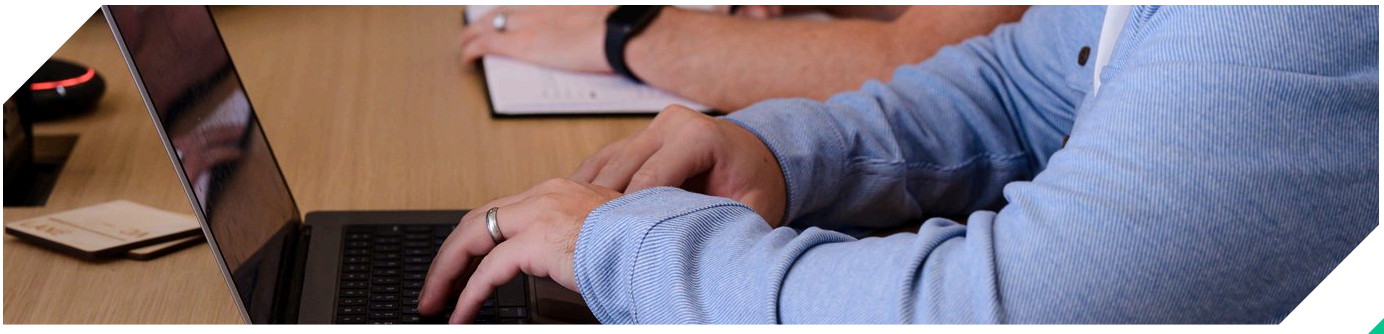
Where we often find missed revenue

- Agent fees that were never billed or collected
- Commission calculations or splits that don't match the transaction
- Transaction, administrative, technology, or other applicable fees that aren't captured
- Different billing practices across agents, teams, or offices
- Receivables that aren't reviewed until they're difficult to collect
- New services or revenue streams launched without a billing process
- Credits, adjustments, or concessions that aren't properly tracked
- Closed transactions that haven't been reconciled to the accounting records

What to do next

- [ ] First sit down and document every fee the brokerage can collect
- [ ] Then create a monthly revenue reconciliation: compare closed transactions against commissions, fees, and other revenue recorded in your accounting system
- [ ] Choose one person to own billing and collections *and* someone else to review the process. Expand this into a team if you're a large brokerage
- [ ] Establish an escalation process for overdue balances or discrepancies
- [ ] Have someone review the process regularly to catch gaps before they become losses

If you can't easily show where every dollar comes from, there may be money being left on the table. The stronger the process, the less you have to rely on memory to protect your profit.



02.

Financial clarity

Get clear on what's happening financially.

Why it matters

Getting a monthly financial report doesn't necessarily mean you know how your brokerage is performing. If the numbers are late, inaccurate, or simply filed away without anyone reviewing them, you're still making decisions without a clear picture of the business.

Strong financial visibility means knowing what's happening with revenue, cash, receivables, profitability, and performance, and understanding **what those numbers mean for your next decision.**

The goal

To know what each report or number can tell you and to regularly use this information to make better decisions for your brokerage.

? Ask yourself

Could I tell someone today how profitable the brokerage is, where the cash is going, and how we're tracking against it?

What financial clarity looks like

- A monthly profit and loss that shows revenue, expenses, and profitability clearly
- A current view of cash position and a short-term cash forecast
- Regular accounts receivable aging reports
- Revenue and profitability broken down by office, team, or service where relevant
- Agent-related fees billed compared with fees actually collected
- Actual results compared with the budget or forecast
- Clear visibility into the profitability of new locations or business lines
- Someone responsible for reviewing the numbers, identifying trends, and raising concerns

What to do next

- [ ] Start by establishing a consistent monthly reporting package that gives you a clear view of the business
- [ ] Make sure your reports are accurate and produced on a predictable schedule, *not* just when someone has time to pull them together
- [ ] Assign someone to review the numbers and investigate anything that doesn't look right
- [ ] Compare actual results against your budget or forecast each month and look for meaningful changes in revenue, expenses, cash, and profitability
- [ ] For a growing brokerage, build reporting that lets you see which offices, teams, services, or new business lines are contributing to — or dragging down — overall profitability

If your financial reports arrive but you don't know what they are telling you, you don't have clarity, you just have financial data. The value comes from accurate numbers, reviewed regularly and turned into action.

03.

Compliance

Build compliance into your year-round operations.

Why it matters

Compliance has a habit of becoming urgent when it's already too late to fix things easily.

For brokerages working with large numbers of independent agents, 1099 reporting is a good example. If W-9s are missing, payment information is inaccurate, or reportable payments haven't been tracked throughout the year, what *should* be a routine filing can quickly turn into a hellish year-end scramble. The same applies when you add employees, enter a new state, open another office, or launch a new business line.

You can be busy, growing, and doing great work, only to have compliance become the party pooper because your processes haven't kept up.

The goal

Stay ahead of your compliance obligations throughout the year, rather than trying to fix everything at year-end.

What great compliance looks like

- W-9s are collected before payments begin and kept up to date
- Agent and vendor information is reviewed and maintained throughout the year
- Reportable payments are tracked consistently and accurately
- Annual payment totals are reconciled before forms are filed
- Someone is clearly responsible for preparing, reviewing, and filing 1099s
- There is a process for handling corrections, notices, and missing information
- Key compliance deadlines are scheduled well ahead of the actual filing deadlines
- Payroll and employment requirements are addressed as employees are added
- State registrations and other requirements are reviewed before entering new markets or opening new locations

03. Compliance

? Ask yourself

If your 1099s were due tomorrow, could you confidently say your agent information, payment records, and reporting were complete and accurate?

What to do next

- [ ] Start by making sure you have a complete W-9 for every agent and vendor who requires one before payments begin
- [ ] Review your agent and vendor information regularly throughout the year rather than waiting until 1099 season to find missing or outdated information
- [ ] Reconcile your payment records before year-end and investigate discrepancies before forms are prepared
- [ ] Assign clear ownership for 1099 preparation, review, filing, and any corrections or notices that follow
- [ ] Finally, build compliance checks into your growth plans. Before adding employees, entering a new state, opening a new location, or launching a new business line, identify what new registrations, payroll, tax, or reporting requirements may apply

Compliance should be a process, not a year-end fire drill. If you're discovering missing information or new requirements when a deadline is approaching, your process needs attention.

04.

Systems

Make sure the entire process connects.

Why systems matter

Your brokerage probably relies on several systems to keep the business moving: transaction management, commission calculations, billing, payments, accounting, reporting, and tax preparation.

If information has to be re-entered manually, transferred between systems without being checked, or interpreted differently by different people, errors can creep in. And the more your brokerage grows, the harder those gaps become to manage.

The goal

Create a connected process where information moves accurately between systems, with clear ownership at every handoff.

? Ask yourself

Could you map how information moves from a closed transaction all the way through to your accounting, reporting, and tax records?

What a good system looks like

- ☑ A clear flow between transaction management, commission calculations, agent billing, payment processing, accounting, financial reporting, and tax and 1099 preparation
- ☑ A defined source of truth for each piece of information
- ☑ Someone responsible for checking that information transfers correctly between systems
- ☑ Errors and discrepancies are identified and resolved quickly
- ☑ Manual data entry is limited to the areas where it's genuinely needed
- ☑ Critical processes don't depend on one person knowing how everything works
- ☑ The process still works when a key person is absent

What to do next

- [ ] Start by mapping the journey of a transaction through your systems, from the initial transaction through to payment, accounting, reporting, and tax preparation.
- [ ] Note all “drop off” points where information becomes unclear or could go missing
- [ ] At each handoff, identify which system is the source of truth and who is responsible for checking that the information transferred correctly
- [ ] Look for points where information is being manually entered, copied, or reconciled (these are often the places where errors and delays occur)
- [ ] Document how errors are identified and resolved, and make sure someone *other* than the person performing the process understands how it works
- [ ] Finally, **test the process without its usual owner.** If everything stops when one person is unavailable, you've found a gap worth fixing!

The more your brokerage grows, the more expensive disconnected systems become. If you can't clearly explain how information moves through the business, it's worth mapping the process before the gaps become bigger.

05.

Staffing

Reduce your dependence on any one person.

Why it matters

Every brokerage has people who know how things work. The risk comes when one person is the **only** person who knows how something works. If one person's absence could bring an important part of your brokerage to a standstill, you've found a dependency worth addressing.

The goal

Build your team around processes that can keep the business moving, even when key people aren't available.

? Ask yourself

Which person's unexpected absence would cause the most disruption to your brokerage and what would happen if they were gone for 30 days?

What good staffing looks like

- Every critical function has a clearly assigned owner and backup
- Recurring processes are documented and easy for others to follow
- Someone reviews important work rather than relying entirely on the person who completed it
- Critical knowledge is shared rather than sitting with one person
- The team knows which tasks require specialist expertise and which can be handled through repeatable processes
- A new employee or backup could step into a critical process without having to start from scratch
- The owner isn't pulled back into daily administration whenever someone leaves or is unavailable

Strong operations don't eliminate key people, they make sure their knowledge isn't lost when they're unavailable.

06.

In-house vs. external support

Choose the right support structure for your brokerage

Some functions benefit from being close to leadership. Others require specialist expertise that doesn't make sense to hire for full-time.

The goal is to have the right level of expertise, capacity, and oversight without building unnecessary cost or creating another single point of failure.

The goal

Build a support structure that gives your brokerage the expertise and capacity it needs, at the stage it is in.

? Ask yourself

Are you using the right model for the stage you're at or simply continuing with the way you've always done it?

When deciding how a function should be supported, consider:

- **Volume:** How much work is there, and how consistently does it occur?
- **Specialization:** Does the function require expertise that's difficult to hire or maintain internally?
- **Strategic oversight:** Does leadership need to be closely involved?
- **Cost:** What would it really cost to hire, train, manage, and maintain enough internal coverage?
- **Resilience:** What happens if the person responsible leaves or is unavailable?
- **Flexibility:** Does the level of support need to increase or decrease as the brokerage changes?
- **Outside expertise:** Could external support bring knowledge and experience from other brokerages?
- **Leadership access:** How important is it for this function to sit close to the leadership team?

What to do next

- [ ] Start by listing the key functions your brokerage relies on and assess each one against the criteria above
- [ ] Don't assume every function needs the same model. See below for options you can consider!
- [ ] Calculate the true cost of internal support, including salary, benefits, training, management time, software, and the cost of maintaining enough coverage when someone is unavailable
- [ ] Then consider what you need the function to deliver. If it requires specialist knowledge, strategic oversight, or fluctuating capacity, an external or hybrid model may make sense. If it requires close day-to-day involvement with leadership or the wider team, keeping ownership in-house may be more appropriate
- [ ] Finally, review the model as the brokerage grows (the structure that works for a 50-agent brokerage may not be the right structure for a 500-agent brokerage)

Possible models include:



Fully in-house



In-house execution with external oversight



Outsourced execution with an internal owner



Fully outsourced



A hybrid model that changes as the brokerage grows



The strongest setup is the one that gives you the expertise, capacity, and oversight you need without creating unnecessary cost or dependency.

07.

Diversifying your business

Is your infrastructure ready for the next opportunity?

Why it matters

Adding more agents, opening another office, acquiring a brokerage, adding property management, or introducing new services can all create new demands on your accounting, cash flow, staffing, technology, compliance, and operations.

The opportunity might make sense for the business. The question is whether the infrastructure behind the business is ready to support it.

The goal

Make sure your operational foundation is ready before you add another layer of complexity.

? Ask yourself

If your biggest growth opportunity came along tomorrow, would your current systems, people, and processes be ready to support it?

What preparedness looks like

Before pursuing a new growth opportunity, consider what it will require across:

- **Accounting and reporting:** Can your existing systems track and report on the new activity separately and accurately?
- **Cash flow:** Do you understand the upfront investment, ongoing costs, and working capital the opportunity will require?
- **Staffing:** Do you have the people and expertise to manage it, or will you need additional support?
- **Technology:** Can your current systems handle the additional volume or functionality?
- **Compliance:** Will the new activity, location, employees, or services create additional registrations, reporting, or tax requirements?
- **Operational ownership:** Is someone clearly responsible for making the new operation work day-to-day?

07.

Diversifying your business

Common growth paths you can consider:

- **Adding more agents**
- **Opening another office or territory**
- **Acquiring another brokerage or franchise**
- **Adding property management**
- **Building relationships with developers or homebuilders**
- **Creating additional agent services or fees**

What to do next

Choose one growth opportunity you're considering and map out what it would require from the business.

- [ ] Start with accounting and reporting. Make sure you can track the new activity separately and understand whether it's actually profitable
- [ ] Map the cash requirements, including upfront investment, additional costs, and the time it may take before the new activity generates revenue
- [ ] Identify the people, technology, and operational ownership you'll need before launch, not *after* you've committed to the opportunity!
- [ ] Then check the compliance requirements. New states, employees, locations, acquisitions, and services can all introduce obligations that weren't part of the original brokerage
- [ ] Finally, sanity-check everything you've mapped out with someone you trust within the business. Ask them to identify any gaps you might not have considered

Finally, the infrastructure that supports a new opportunity needs to evolve alongside it. Build the above check points into a growth plan and set a point to review them after launch too.

Before you say yes to the next opportunity, make sure the rest of the business is ready to say yes, too.

Build Your Brokerage Operations Plan

Now it's time to turn what you've identified into an action plan. Start by identifying the three gaps most likely to cost your brokerage money, create unnecessary risk, or prevent your next stage of growth.

For each one, decide who owns it, what needs to change, and when you're going to do it.

My top three priorities

1 **The gap:** _____

Why it matters: _____

Next action: _____

Owner: _____ **Deadline:** _____

2 **The gap:** _____

Why it matters: _____

Next action: _____

Owner: _____ **Deadline:** _____

3 **The gap:** _____

Why it matters: _____

Next action: _____

Owner: _____ **Deadline:** _____

Your Brokerage Operations Worksheet

Use the table below to work through the core functions behind your brokerage. Ask yourself if each function works reliably, whether someone owns it, and what would happen if that person wasn't available.

Function	Current owner	Backup	Working reliably?	Main risk	Next action	Deadline
Agent billing						
Receivables						
Commissions						
Accounting						
Financial reporting						
1099s						
Technology						
Staffing						

A few questions you can ask as you complete the worksheet

- **Who owns this today?** Is that ownership clear?
- **Who is the backup?** Could the process continue if the primary owner were unavailable?
- **Is it working reliably?** Or does it depend on someone remembering to do something?
- **What's the main risk?** Money, time, compliance, accuracy, capacity, or something else?
- **What's the next action?** What is the smallest practical step you can take to improve it?
- **When will it be done?** Give the action a real deadline.

Get in touch with Nimbl

Arrange a free operations review.

If you've identified areas that need attention, but aren't sure where to start, we can help you work through them.

In your free 45 minute session we will:

Review and discuss the financial processes, staffing structure, technology, and operational ownership behind your brokerage

Help you identify the areas that need attention

Provide you with a prioritized list of risks and improvements (not a list of our services)

You can get started by booking your call with Dylan, our Real Estate Lead at Nimbl.



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