

social media & real estate: the do's and don'ts

A crash course on the top do's & do nots in real estate

Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram; it's a minefield out there. The novice social media user can get themselves into all kinds of trouble, but there's no getting away from it; social media is here to stay.

So if you haven't already, it's time to master the mysterious arts of retweeting, status updating, hash tagging and liking, and put a social strategy in place for your real estate business.

DON'T: Pretend social media doesn't exist.

It can't be ignored. Neglect to build a social media presence and you risk creating the impression that you and your business are out of touch. You don't need to have a profile on every site and you don't need a million followers, but you do need to build a platform and find an engaged audience. If you're not doing it, you can bet your competition is.

DO: Position yourself as an expert

Your social media channel is a chance for you to display your expertise and establish credibility. Share information that's interesting and relevant to build your reputation as a property expert. Social media is increasingly important to SEO, and done right will help drive traffic to your website and listings.

DON'T: Spread yourself thin across multiple platforms

Figure out where your target audience is and set up a profile on the right site. Facebook and Twitter are the obvious places to start, but LinkedIn is a useful networking tool, while Pinterest is great for sharing quality images of your listed properties. Google+, while increasingly important for SEO purposes, is still a bit of a ghost town.

DO: Inject some personality and fun into your brand

Your social media platforms are a great way to take control of your reputation. They allow you to be responsive and spontaneous, so you can shape how others perceive you. How you present yourself and engage with fans and followers will have a lot of influence on how current and potential clients view your business.

DON'T: Retweet compliments or beg for likes and shares

Have some dignity! It's tempting, when you're struggling to build a following, to ask people for likes and follows. Resist. You don't go around begging people to like you in real life; don't do it online. And on Twitter, don't retweet compliments – or know every time you do, other users are rolling their eyes. Build a following by sharing interesting content and engaging with other users.

DO: Mention social media in your other marketing materials

Include call-outs to your social media presence in your newsletters, email signatures, brochures and magazines. Spread the word and make sure all your customers know where to find you.

DON'T: Obsessively self promote

Your social media profile needs to be more than just a long stream of sales speak, blatant self-promotion, and links to your listings. People aren't on Facebook or Twitter to be bombarded by advertising; engage in a real conversation. Do more than just spew news and updates about your own business. Share information about the market, link to your blog, share other people's content, and answer questions. Authenticity wins online. If you're genuine, people will want to engage with you.

DO: Update regularly and respond quickly

A Facebook page that hasn't been updated since 2011 or an account that only tweets every couple of weeks is pointless – you might as well give up altogether. Your social media profile should be maintained on a daily basis. Set up notifications so that if users ask questions or make complaints, you can respond as fast as possible.

DON'T: Put all your eggs in the social media basket

We've spoken about this in the past – don't over-dedicate time and resources to social media. It's part of an overall marketing plan and plays a role in brand building, but social media doesn't replace other forms of marketing. Done right, social media will help you take control of your brand and online presence. But it's unlikely many of your listings are going to come via social media, so focus your energy where it counts.

DO: Include calls to action

Make sure your tweets and status updates inspire people to do something, as with every other element of your marketing mix. Ask for feedback and comments and encourage people to get involved with your business in some way.

DON'T: Get controversial or engage in fights

Be professional and avoid confrontation. Your professional social media presence is not the place to share views on controversial topics – it might get you attention, but it won't be the right kind. When unsure, play it safe and avoid contentious issues. If you receive angry comments or negative feedback, deal with it privately, away from the very public glare of social media, by inviting the upset party to call or email you.