



# THE NEW AGE OF REAL ESTATE COMMUNICATION

## A Real Estate Professional's Guide to Communicating with Social Media

**COLDWELL  
BANKER** 

Real Estate

By Lindsay Listanski

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*Lindsay Listanski* is the Manager of Social Media for Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. In her role, she is responsible for managing all of the **Coldwell Banker**<sup>®</sup> branded social accounts including Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram and Vine. She is also a daily contributor to the **Coldwell Banker Blue Matter** blog. Lindsay is a licensed real estate agent in New Jersey.

Lindsay has successfully guided the brand's social media presence that now ranks Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC at the top of the real estate industry according to such leading observers as *Klout and Kred*. Lindsay grew up with a passion for real estate fueled by her father who is currently the Branch Vice President of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in Livingston, NJ.

The views in this paper are her own and based upon her experience as a social media manager and SEO specialist, as well as various statistics and sources as set out in this paper.

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# INTRODUCTION

## The shift to “Digital House Hunting” is here.

In the past four years alone, real estate searches on Google have grown 253%<sup>1</sup> and according to a study conducted by the *National Association of REALTORS*<sup>®</sup> and Google, 89% of home shoppers are likely to conduct a real estate agent search during the buying process. Because the internet plays such a vital role in the home buying and selling process, a real estate sales professional’s digital footprint has never been more important.

Home buyers and sellers have a new tool in their arsenal called social media. Currently 90.5% of REALTORS<sup>®</sup> are using social media *to some extent*<sup>2</sup>; however the gap between power users and those who dabble is quite broad.

According to research conducted by Social Sales Specialist Jim Keenan, in 2012, 72.6% of salespeople who used social media for selling out-performed those who were not using social media. He also discovered 40% of those surveyed closed between two and five deals as a result of social media. Another 10% of respondents attributed their social media efforts directly to closing transactions.<sup>3</sup> From this research it is clearly evident that sales professionals who are taking the time to integrate social media into their daily sales efforts are seeing notable benefits.



Real Estate

From my experience, I am not here to tell you to master every social network known to man. I certainly have not, but integrating social media into your marketing mix can lead to better relationships and provide a new source of leads. Whether you want to believe it or not, social media is important and it is not going away.

Social media can be a scary term or one that you are just plain sick of hearing. Here is the good news, social media is actually something you’re already fluent in. It is being the same person you are offline and instead of speaking your words, you are typing them instead. It is about sharing stories and experiences and interacting with people. That is nothing new. There are just new ways of doing it.

I know what some of you may be thinking...

“Social media is for those techie youngsters that would rather sit in the corner staring at their phone than actually talking to people.

“It is not for me.  
I am old school.  
I am a real estate agent.”

Really?!

In this white paper you will learn the various ways to engage in social media and make it work for you.

## The Big Five: Where You Can Tell Your Story

Social media is evolving rapidly. With new platforms emerging each year and major changes to the ones already existing, it can be difficult to keep up. There are five major platforms which we refer to as “The Big 5,” four of which will be covered in this white paper.

Because we believe in the power of video, we have a separate white paper dedicated completely to YouTube called *Generation V: The Dawn of the Video Era*.

### THE VALUE OF “THE BIG 5” (IN A NUTSHELL)

- 1 FACEBOOK:** Ability to connect with your personal and business sphere of influence on an individual level. It allows you to share who you are which builds trust and allows you to monitor lifestyle changes of your sphere.
- 2 TWITTER:** Ability to speak outside your sphere of influence in real time. It may be more difficult to see an immediate impact on Twitter. It takes time and patience to build an attentive audience. However, unlike other platforms, you are limited to only including 140 characters of copy which means creating content takes very little time.
- 3 PINTEREST:** Traffic driver. It can drive leads to your website, blog and other social networks.
- 4 INSTAGRAM:** Ability to tell your stories through pictures in an open social environment. Think of it as a photo-driven Facebook.
- 5 YouTube** (*see Generation V*)



GET STARTED:  
YOUR SOCIAL FOUNDATION

# GET STARTED: YOUR SOCIAL FOUNDATION

If you were out with a client showing a home and noticed the foundation had cracks all over it, you probably would tell your client to run because you know, better than most, just how important a good and strong foundation is. Social media is no different because a strong foundation is crucial to success.

Once you have made the decision to start using social media the first thing you need to ask yourself is “what am I hoping to gain from using this communication tool?”

Instead of signing up for every new social media website that emerges, stop and ask yourself:

- 1 What can I achieve by using this?
- 2 Who is my target audience?
- 3 Can I make the commitment to actively use this platform?

It is imperative that you have clear intentions that are compatible with actions you can realistically take. By methodically strategizing you will build a strong foundation for your social media strategy.

## Wondering why this matters?

According to the 2012 annual technology market survey conducted by Eurocom Worldwide, “Almost one in five technology industry executives say that a candidate’s social media profile has caused them not to hire that person.”<sup>47</sup> Wondering why you should care about this stat? **Google Yourself.** Everyone has done it, so do not feel embarrassed. Chances are if you are using social media sites, your social profiles appear on the first page of results. This of course means if a prospective client is searching for information about

you they are bound to stumble upon these results. This makes it of vital importance to have each of your accounts active, branded and professional.

## Building Your Foundation

### Here is Your Immediate ‘To Do’ List

- 1 Sign Up (Choose your preferred social media platform)
- 2 Fill Out the “About Section”
- 3 Upload a Picture

### **Signing Up**

Do you need to sign up for all the aforementioned “Big Five” platforms?

NOPE!

Yes, I know that is shocking coming from a social media manager.

If running all of these accounts sounds like something that will make your head spin then trust your gut and start slow. It is far worse to create a profile and leave it alone only to collect virtual dust than to have no account at all. Remember, this may be your first impression with a potential client. Don’t allow your first impression to be based on a social profile that hasn’t been updated in months.

Pick one platform and go for it!

If you are just getting started, **Facebook should be your first stop.** With 665 million daily active users, it is the most heavily used social media site which means you can bet your clients are using it.<sup>5</sup> In fact, 67% of adults use Facebook.<sup>6</sup> Once you get comfortable with Facebook you can begin trying out other platforms.

Now you may be thinking, should I create a Facebook profile (as me) or a business page. Excellent question, please refer to page 31.

## Choosing a Profile Picture

Thou shall not be an egghead.

Ok, social media commandments do not actually exist but there is nothing worse than having a creepy gray shadow of a head (Facebook) or possibly worse an egg (Twitter) as your avatar.



Choose a *recent* professional looking photo and upload away. Note: Professional means a picture you would feel comfortable with a prospective client seeing as profile avatars often turn up in Google image results.

## About Section

The about section is the first “story” you are sharing about yourself and one can tell a lot about you just from the few words you piece together to describe who you are and what you do. As you write your description think about **how** you will be using the platform and **who** you are trying to attract.

## The Real Deal

With the power of Google and popularity of social media, there is a strong likelihood that a potential client's first impression will be made without you even knowing it. It could mean the difference between someone connecting with you or choosing someone else.

Here are some social media profiles from people within the **Coldwell Banker®** network that have done an excellent job of setting up and maintaining their page. By doing this they are ensuring their digital "first impression" is one they can be proud of.

## FACEBOOK



### Christophe Choo *Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, Beverly Hills*

As a Coldwell Banker Previews International® Broker, Christophe does a fantastic job of branding himself as a luxury specialist. From the photos he chose for his profile and cover photo and the content he shares you can instantly tell he has a passion for the finer things in life.

## TWITTER



### Matt Case *Coldwell Banker Schmidt, Grand Rapids, MI*

In just 19 words you know what Matt does, what company he is with, that he is a family man who has fun and has a clear sense of humor.



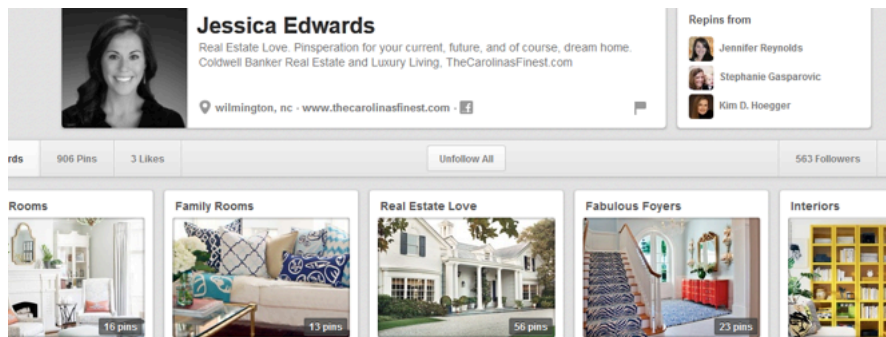
### Steven Bastian *Coldwell Banker Residential Real Estate, Coral Springs, FL*

Steven not only includes his professional experience but also shares that he is bilingual. He offers up his passion soccer and technology as well which would help him connect with potential clients who share similar interests.



**Pam McCoy**  
**Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, Folsom, CA**  
 Within moments you can see in addition to being a REALTOR®, Pam is a health conscious grandma who has an optimistic outlook on life.

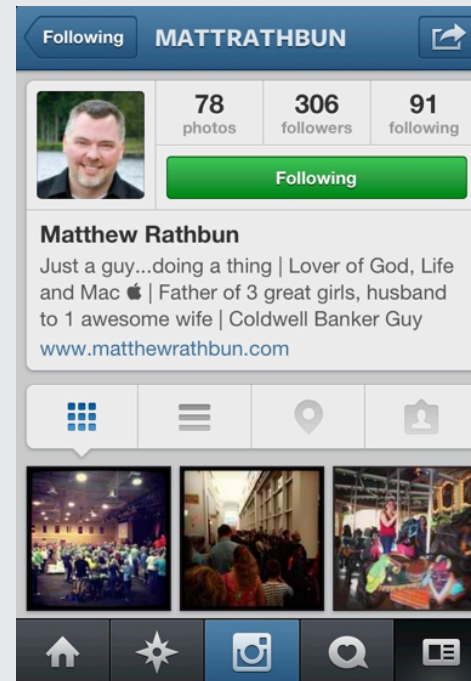
**PINTEREST**



**Jessica Edwards**  
**Coldwell Banker Sea Coast Realty, Wilmington, NC**  
 Jessica has leveraged her Pinterest account as a way to showcase her eye for style and design. She speaks to those who are currently in the market as well as those who are in the “dreaming phase.” She also uses her Pinterest account as a way to paint the tapestry of who she is through images.



**INSTAGRAM**



**Matt Rathbun**  
**Coldwell Banker Elite, Locust Grove, VA**  
 Matt does a nice job of keeping it simple. Instagram tends to attract a younger demographic and Matt keeps it loose and fun with his simple profile description.

**BONUS TIP:** For Your About Section: If you are on LinkedIn you can include a shortened URL linking to that profile to drive people to your professional resume.

Your digital footprint should be integrated into all elements of your branding. Once you are comfortable with your social media presence, identify yourself as a socially savvy sales professional. Include links in your email signature, LinkedIn profile, and include social icons on your business card. Leveraging social networks is a differentiator in the real estate industry and can give you a competitive advantage.





SOCIAL MEDIA + REAL ESTATE =  
A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

# SOCIAL MEDIA + REAL ESTATE = A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

Relationships are the only path to build a sustainable real estate business. Like medical doctors, real estate agents are “always on call.” They are constantly sought after for their expert advice. Instead of a parent “inviting” you to look at their kid’s rash, you are questioned about current market conditions at social gatherings, your kid’s basketball game and even the supermarket. Let’s face it...you are a walking, talking, computer-using lead machine.

Real estate affects everyone and because of that you are expected to be on your game at all times. People who own a home always want to know how much it is worth, neighbors want to know how much the house around the corner is listed for, and renters want to know when it makes sense to jump into homeownership.

Social media allows you to showcase your skills to a massive audience on a daily basis. While other forms of traditional marketing can be extremely effective, there is no denying the power of social networking.

## Social + Media = You sharing your life!

They call it social media because it is **social**. The beauty of this amazingly powerful communication and marketing tool is the ability it gives sales professionals to stay in touch with their book of business in the most affordable and time efficient way. They call it **media** because we all share content.

## It is Not Just for Kids

Thinking back to the inception of Facebook in 2004, Mark Zuckerberg originally intended “The Facebook” to be a platform for Harvard students to socialize online. It quickly grew beyond Harvard to various other universities and eventually became open to anyone over the age of 13.

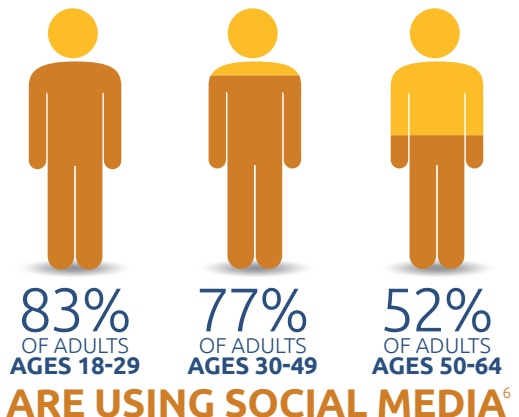
With 1.1 billion monthly active users as of March 2013<sup>7</sup>, Facebook has evolved into the most popular social platform for people to connect with those most important to them. Similarly in real estate, these are the same people with whom you want to be connected.

Many professionals are deterred from including social media into their business as they feel their target demographic is not using social media frequently or at all. To the right are some statistics to dispel that common misconception.

When you think about it, this makes complete sense. Although it is natural for younger digital natives to embrace social media, they are not really the group that needs it because they are connected at all times. It is for people who have been out of college for years, who are working and do not have time to connect all day in person or on the phone who can receive

the biggest benefit social media offers. This holds especially true for real estate professionals who thrive on referral business and understand the financial benefit of “staying in touch.”

So this is why we feel social media was MADE for real estate professionals. Next, you will learn who to connect with.



This age range covers everything from first time buyers to empty nesters.



**TWITTER'S**  
fastest growing age demographic is **55 to 64 year olds.<sup>8</sup>**

The most popular age group on **PINTEREST:<sup>9</sup>**  
**25 - 34 YEAR OLDS.<sup>9</sup>**

Can you say  
First Time Home Buyer?



## THERE ARE SIX MAJOR REASONS TO ADD SOCIAL MEDIA INTO YOUR MARKETING MIX.

- 1 It is completely free (Who doesn't love free?!)
- 2 It is relatively simple to use
- 3 It has become an accepted norm of business communications
- 4 It gives you better control of what potential clients searching for you online will find
- 5 It allows for constant **two-way** conversations
  - Unlike traditional print marketing, social marketing encourages dynamic conversations. Listening is a major part of the equation.
- 6 It is measurable (likes, comments, shares, retweets, repins, etc.)
  - This allows your strategy to be agile in real time.

# FRIENDS AND FOLLOWERS

## Who Are They?

What is the first thing they teach you in real estate school? From my experience it was identifying and building a sphere of influence. These are the people who ideally will become your customers and refer you to friends and family.

With that said, real estate and social media are a lot alike. Your real estate “Contact List” is the lifeblood of a successful business and primarily fit into the following three categories:

- Family
- Friends/Acquaintances
- Colleagues

When you join a social media network you friend/follow:

- Family
- Friends/Acquaintances
- Colleagues

They are identical. It is amazing how many people we meet and enjoy over our lifetime but then find it almost impossible to keep up with all who are important to us. Connecting virtually is the next best thing and it all starts with the people we know in our everyday life.

While social media is the most time efficient way of keeping current with many of these people, it is also a way for others to see what you are doing and stay connected with you. In fact, according to research conducted by CREOTIVO, 40% of people socialize more online than they do face-to-face.<sup>10</sup>

## Privacy Please

Social media has created a desire, for many, to be connected at all times. We have created a world where sharing what you eat, your plans for the day, and who you will be hanging out with is the norm. Whether we like it or not, we have created a world where we are expected to share.

For some, this of course is uncomfortable, and we recognize this factor. For others it has become a way of life. The world is our stage and our followers are the paparazzi, with a front seat row to the intimate details of our life.

So how does one approach using social media to benefit their business while still preserving some personal privacy? Set up boundaries and stick with them. Realize that each social media platform is meant for a different purpose but realize that as a real estate sales professional, the more connected you are the greater potential there is to find leads and create opportunities for referrals. Also it is critical to understand just as you would hope someone respects your desire for privacy, your clients feel the same way.

## Some thoughts:

- In general, Facebook is viewed as the most private social networking site. While you may think it is a good idea to start friending potential clients, it is better to create a relationship offline, prior to creating one online. Conversely, don't feel like you need to accept a friend request from people you have never met in real life. Protecting yourself and staying safe should be your number one priority at all times.

- Twitter is an open community. While you can “protect your tweets” from being read by those you haven't pre-approved (accepted a friend request) you will be missing out on the biggest benefit Twitter has to offer, which is the opportunity to build a network that has the potential to be global.
- Pinterest and Instagram are also open communities. If you use public settings, realize that anything you post can be seen by anyone. Thus, if you want to keep pictures of children, home, etc. private, it is best to post these pictures elsewhere.

It all comes down to comfort level. You wouldn't give private information to a stranger in person, so we recommend that you don't do it online either. For more information on privacy check out the FAQ section at the end of this white paper.

## Growing Your Following

Once you are comfortable with setting up your privacy settings it is time to become a social butterfly!

The average Facebook user has 229 friends.<sup>7</sup> If you were to set a goal of adding just 5 new people a day on the social network of your choice, you would reach this number in less than 2 months. Adding these friends takes less than 10 minutes a day and could make a significant impact on your business.

Stuck on identifying who to follow? After friending your initial group of contacts, take a look at their friend/follow list and look for mutual friends.

As you grow your following, your message will reach a larger audience thus giving your message a better chance of being amplified across social networks larger than your own.

Remember, quality over quantity. People often have the misconception they need 1,000 friends or their efforts are wasted. The key is ensuring that your audience, regardless of the number, is highly engaged. Tracking this is simple and is covered in the engagement section on page 28.

## The Power of Social Networking

*Kim Colaprete* and her partner *Chavi Hohm* formed *Team Diva*. This power real estate team, part of Coldwell Banker Bain in Seattle, Washington, are committed to social media excellence and fully understand the importance of social networking. They have been recognized on Inman News' list of 100 Most Influential Real Estate Leaders in 2013 and are part of the Top 100 Individuals with the highest Klout scores in real estate according to the Swanpoel Technology Report.

In the past six months, Kim and Chavi (*@SeattleDivas*) have received 3 referrals directly from Twitter which turned into actual sales. This is a common story being told by sales professionals using social media and Kim attributes it directly to the trust she and her partner have built by simply being authentic on the array of platforms they are using.

"We are the same people offline as we are online and people appreciate that. We share our lives with the people we connect with and because of this authenticity we build trust with our connections. Simply put, what we do online makes people we have never met offline comfortable sending us referrals because they see how we comment, react to others, and conduct ourselves on our social media channels." –Kim Colaprete

The trust and confidence built from following someone's social stream is important to building a referral network which leads to the next important topic; collaboration.

## Collaboration is Key

One group of social media professionals that has learned to leverage the power of their social network is "*The New Wave Group*" in Miami, FL. The New Wave Group works out of the Coldwell Banker Residential Real Estate office in South Beach and is managed by Nancy Corey. The group bands together not as an official "team" but as a group of agents learning and collaborating with one another with the goal of building up each other's business.

This exceptional group of young professionals does amazing work in their market because of a synergistic concept called "Social Media Hot Spot."

Danny Hertzberg, a member of the New Wave Group, describes it as "the 21st century version of a broker's open virtually mixed with an open house. It uses collaborative efforts to harness the power of the group's

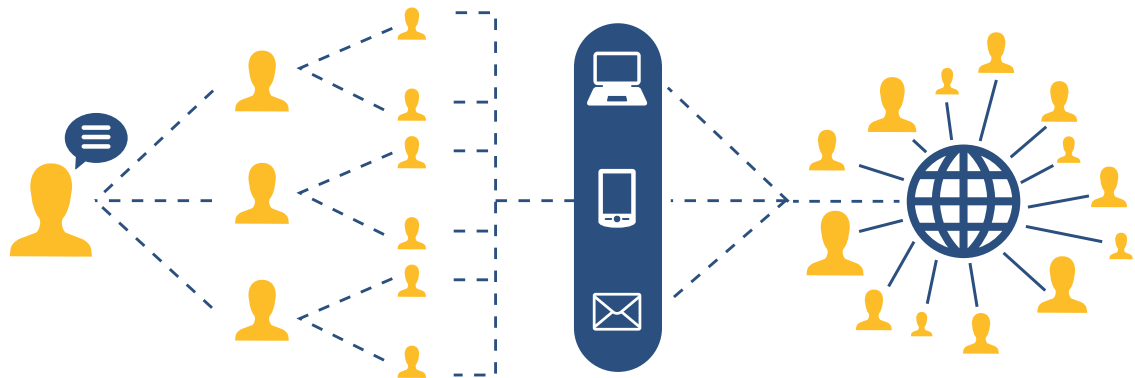
social networks. Within 10 minutes, a group of 15 agents can expose a listing to an audience of over 15,000."

This interesting and creative way of approaching the real estate business is the future of real estate. Not only does it provide amazing exposure for a listing but Danny confirmed it is simply wowing clients during listing presentations.

## Here is how it works:

Starting on Facebook, a member of the New Wave Group takes a photo or group of photos at a listing. The entire group then likes and or comments on the photo. The property is then exposed to their entire social network through the social actions of liking, commenting, and sharing. Then they transition their efforts to other social platforms including Twitter and Instagram. By doing this the group gives the listing quick exposure to a mass audience which in turn creates an amazing amount of chatter.

This amazing idea can be duplicated in any area of the world and it all starts with interoffice collaboration.





YOU'RE INVITED TO  
THE DIGITAL COCKTAIL PARTY

# YOU'RE INVITED TO THE DIGITAL COCKTAIL PARTY

Think of the social media space as the world's largest cocktail party. There are millions of conversations going on, stories being told and new people to meet at any hour of the day.

Forget the online component of this party for a moment. When you are at a social gathering, what are some normal topics you discuss? Most likely they include your family, likes, dislikes, what you do for fun and interesting stories about work. Sharing stories is what attracts people to develop relationships.

If you share information and stories the way you would at a social gathering in the same way you do on your social networks, you will become a social media master. Unfortunately, some see social media as a megaphone for sharing listings and not much else. This is a mistake and has a limiting effect on your ability to use social media for your business.

With social media, the line between marketing and authentic communication can begin to blend as one. The key is finding a balance. Be a human...not a work drone. As long as you maintain a balance between what you share regarding your work and personal life people will enjoy connecting with you.

You probably would never walk up to someone at a party and say, "Gee, you seem like the perfect person for the 4 bedroom, 2.5 bath I have listed at 123 Main St." If you did they might think you were obnoxious, like a telemarketer that disrupts a conversation you are having at dinnertime. Do not be that telemarketer, because you will get the dreaded defriend or block button thrown at you. Conversely, do not be a wall flower. Social media is about sharing. Standing off to the side is not going to help you find leads or stay

in touch with past and current clients. The more you engage, the faster your online network will grow.

It is a good idea to review your content every so often for self-evaluation. Ask yourself, based on what you share, "Would I want to be my friend?" Is your content fun, authentic, educational and entertaining or is it all self-serving marketing messages?

## Working the Room at the Party

Being active on social media could potentially open up doors to new leads beyond your inner social circle like it did for *Lesley Stoneham*, with Coldwell Banker Cornerstone Realty, Brokerage in Orangeville, ON.

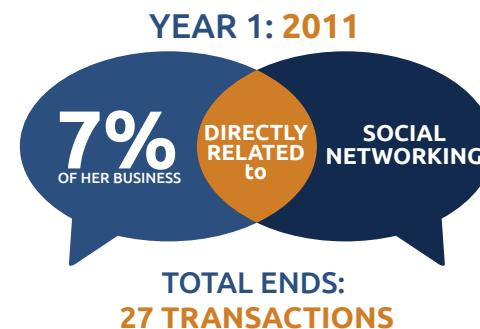
Lesley approaches social media communications just as she would at an event. She shares interesting stories about her day, interests, dislikes, and when appropriate, her job. By offering up interesting content on a daily basis Lesley has not only strengthened her relationships with friends and family but she has seen a positive impact in her business.

Lesley explains, "My first transaction was from Facebook. I created a work Facebook account once I was licensed and added friends, family, and acquaintances. Within one day, I received a message from an acquaintance explaining that she and her husband were looking to purchase their first home. They had reached out to a few local agents and had a poor response time. Through Facebook I immediately responded, we went out that weekend and by Monday they had purchased their first home."

This is not her only success with social media. She has seen significant increases in her business as a direct

result of her Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube activities year over year.

Lesley said, "Out of the 15%, 13% related directly to Facebook, whether it was a private message or expressing interest and commenting on a listing picture I posted. 2% of Year 2 sales leads were directly from YouTube, the clients saw my video and contacted me. In total, 78% were listings taken and 22% were buyer.




According to Lesley, the 7% relates directly to initial contact made via **Facebook**. One of her transactions was a result a **YouTube** video catching a consumer's attention. The consumer then used **Facebook** to connect with Lesley.



# EXAMPLES OF LESLEY'S POSTS

## Showing off a sale:

 **Lesley Stoneham Coldwell Banker**  
May 15 near Orangeville, Ontario 📍

Installing the sold sign with my little helper!



## Congratulating her buyers:



## Positioning herself as a Coldwell Banker Previews International® Property Specialist:

 **Lesley Stoneham Coldwell Banker**  
April 19 near Woodbridge, Ontario 📍

Luxury is our middle name. Had a great time at the Coldwell Banker Previews networking event. — with Mariana Cowan and 2 others.



While she does a good job of sharing what goes on in your work life, Lesley also shares stories about her personal life which allows her clients to connect on a personal level.

## Showing off her sense of humor

 **Lesley Stoneham Coldwell Banker**  
May 16 via Facebook for BlackBerry 10 📍

Throwback Thursday! I should bring these bangs back.



Lesley makes having social media success look easy. It is important to note that there is no “magic social media” button. Her accomplishments could not be made without putting in the work behind building up her audience, actively engaging and knowing when to bring the conversation “offline” to close the deal.

# IT IS ALL ABOUT ENGAGEMENT

Social media platforms are like empty boxes. It is what you put in them that matters.

Content should be the backbone of your social media strategy. However, listening to your connections is just as important as sharing. The more responsive you are to your connections, the more responsive they will be with you. That is how strong relationships are formed.

There is no right answer or statistic on how much you should engage but just know this: the “like” (Facebook) and “retweet” (Twitter) buttons are extremely powerful. It is like giving someone a “high five” for being interesting. It would be wise to make sure you use both of these buttons every single time you sign into your account. Take it a step further by sharing and commenting on content you find interesting.

The key to using social media for real estate is timing. It is your job, at the appropriate time, to remind people you are a real estate professional in a way that fits into the organic flow of conversation. By doing this you will create top of their mind with your sphere of influence.

## The Reactive Approach

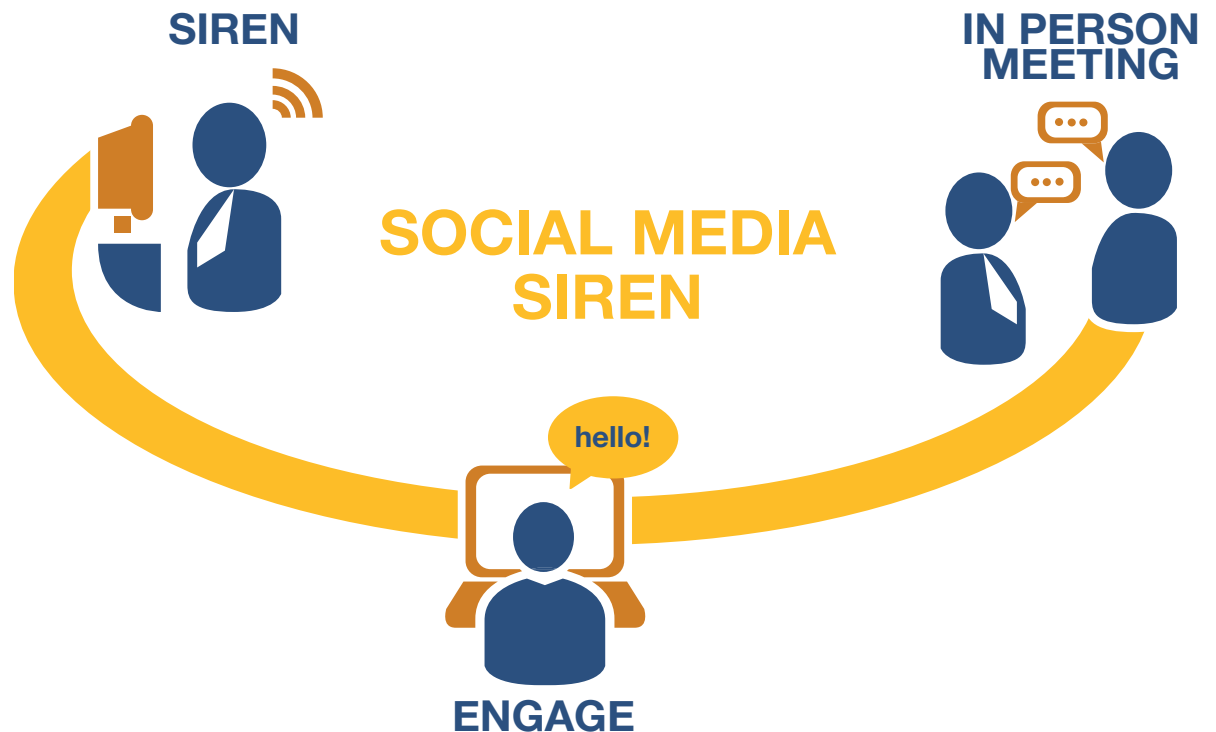
80% of social media users prefer to connect with brands through Facebook.<sup>11</sup> As a real estate professional, you are your business. People expect to connect with you on social media platforms so it is important to stay on top of conversations that could drive new leads.

It is amazing what people share on their social networks. Personal information is willingly shared through status updates, tweets, and photos on a daily basis. When they connect with you on social media, they are connecting with you the real estate agent.

After connecting with a current or prospective client on a social network it is important to stay in touch. By engaging them continuously, you will nurture your relationship on a personal level and have an easier time opening the door of opportunity when the timing is right.

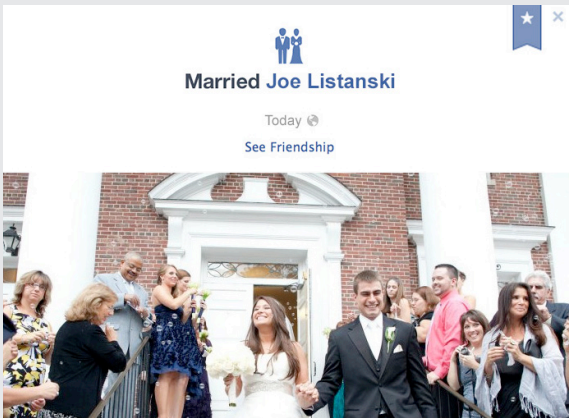
People share things because they WANT a response. Sadly, many companies make the mistake of missing out on these conversations. In fact, 56% of customer tweets to companies are being ignored.<sup>10</sup> Do not make the same mistake!

Imagine a social media siren inside your brain that sounds the alarm when you come across lifestyle keywords and phrases. The keywords tell you when it is time to engage with your client during an important stage of their life.





## Examples of “Lifestyle Triggers”:



### A BRIEF LIST OF “LIFESTYLE TRIGGERS” YOU SHOULD ALWAYS BE SCANNING YOUR SOCIAL STREAM FOR:

- Engaged, Married, Divorced
- Having a baby
- New Job/Relocating
- Retiring
- And of course the obvious, I want a new house!

When you see this type of post pop up in your stream, your “siren” should sound and you should engage with the person who wrote it. Do this by congratulating, empathizing, whatever may be the appropriate response. Basically just let them know you care and are listening.

Next is the most important step. Take the conversation OFFLINE and pick up the phone or meet in person to discuss what their plans are for the future. When you hear real estate professionals saying how much money social media makes them, THIS is what they are talking about.

## The Proactive Approach

Being proactive on social media means telling your story in an interesting way. Think about people who tell good stories. What is it about their style that pulls you in?

### KEYS TO GOOD STORY TELLING:

- Entertain
- Educate
- Speak with enthusiasm
- Get the audience involved
- Give enough detail while keeping it brief
- Make others feel like they are important, even if they are just one amongst a crowd

These traits are just as important on social media as they are in person. The biggest challenge is reminding people you are in the real estate industry without constantly saying it. There are infinite ways of doing this and the next section “Tell Your Story” covers common scenarios and how we suggest handling them. (Remember there really is no right or wrong way)

A light blue ribbon graphic with the text "TELL YOUR STORY" centered on it. The ribbon is folded at both ends, creating a 3D effect. The text is in a white, sans-serif font.

TELL YOUR STORY

# TELL YOUR STORY

Storytelling is not new. It has been around for thousands of years. From famous childhood fairytales to stories about our heritage and important events, stories are the lifeblood of society.

Without stories people wouldn't know who we are or where we came from. They make us who we are and can be an important part of building trust with clients.

For the purpose of this section, the focus will be on Facebook and how you can make it really work for you. This is the content you can seed in with the other type of content you share that does not relate to work. Many of these ideas can be modified for other social platforms including Twitter, Google+, and more.

## DO'S AND DON'TS: SHARING LISTINGS

### Do

- Focus on one or two features of the house that really stand out
- Include a link (from brand site, MLS, blog, etc.)
- Include a photo of the house (exterior, room, etc.)
- Keep the description of the photo brief
- Make it interesting
- Engage your audience. (Have them guess the listing price, give their opinion on decor, etc.)

### Do Not

- Share a link without sharing what is important or interesting about it
- Focus only the financial aspect of the home
- Give away too much. Give just enough information to get someone interested to click through.

To effectively communicate your value as a sales professional you must use social media to accomplish three things: show who you are, show what you know, and show that you care.

## Scenario One - Posting Listing

Sharing listings on social media is beneficial because of the mass exposure it gives to the home and also gives you a competitive advantage over other agents who aren't using social media in their marketing mix.

When posting a listing on social media, focus on what is emotionally appealing about the home. It may be nice that a home has all new electrical wiring or a new roof but it is not going to grab someone's attention like a photo of a room with natural light pouring into it or one of a lush green backyard will.

Sharon Steele, a sales associate with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in Westfield, N.J., consistently does a fantastic job of reminding her friends on social media that she is a passionate real estate agent without essentially yelling "Hey I am a real estate agent! Let me sell your house!"

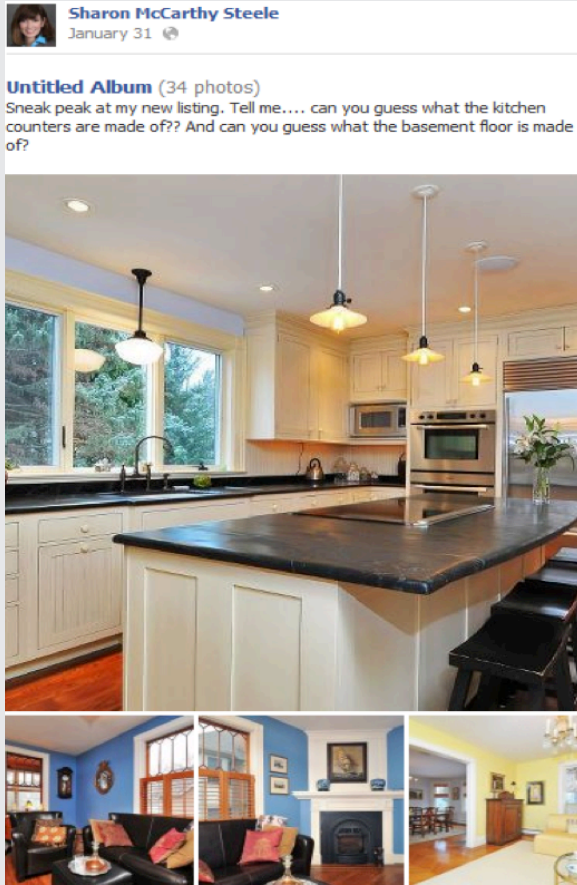
"The biggest benefit of consistency for me has been the ability to share my individual stories, along with those of my community, and deliver my personal branding honestly and authentically in a much faster time frame than ever before," Sharon said. "It has provided a platform to engage with people on a sincere personal level before I ever have to discuss my ability as the ideal candidate for whatever their real estate needs may be."

## Examples from Sharon's Facebook page:



Does Sharon say what she does? No. Can we figure out what she does? Absolutely. Sharon does a great job of reminding people she is in real estate without disrupting their social feeds like an annoying telemarketer.

## Examples from Sharon's Facebook page:



Sharon also created a Facebook album to showcase her listing and asked engaging questions to get her audience involved:

## Scenario Two - Post About Success

It is human nature to want to share information about yourself. Harvard researchers Diane Tamir and Jason Mitchell conducted a study on self-disclosure which indicates “40% of speech output is solely for informing others of their own subjective experiences.”<sup>12</sup>

Naturally, this holds true for online conversations as well. Social media makes it easy to scream from the top of a virtual mountain about how great you are. In fact, Mor Naaman, Jeffrey Boase, and Chih-Hui Lai of Rutgers University discovered that 80% of social media posts to Facebook, Twitter and others amount to “announcements about one’s own immediate experiences.”<sup>11</sup>

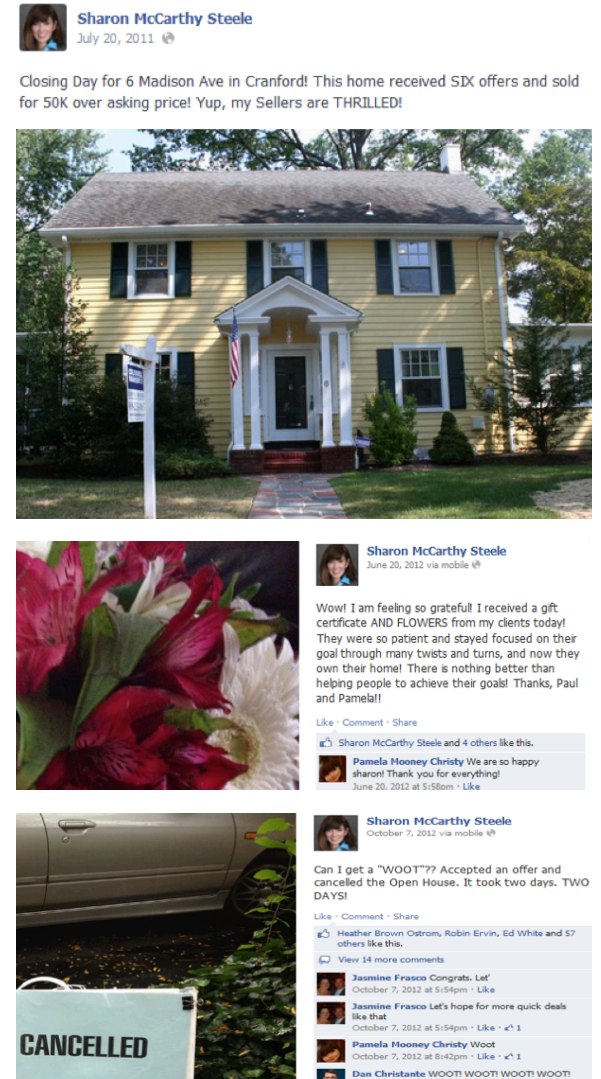
We love ourselves, we really do and that is fine...to a certain extent.

People want to work with people who are passionate, take pride in their work, and truly care about their clients. Therefore, you can be promotional, kind of like a virtual cheerleader, just don’t go overboard.

Aiding someone in their journey toward achieving home ownership is incredibly rewarding. It is the human and emotional elements of this profession that make it so special.

Calling someone to tell them they won the bid on their dream home and handing the keys over to first time home buyers are just two of the many amazing things that sales professionals get to experience in their career. So, go ahead and share the special moments that define your career and touch you.

Again, Sharon Steele does a great job of showcasing her talent by posting photos of successful transactions and happy clients.



Ashley Houseman, an associate broker with Coldwell Banker Morris Realty, Inc. in Punta Gorda, FL consistently shows her support for her clients during the home buying and selling process. By doing this she is showcasing her strong relationship skills that make her business so successful.

**Examples of Ashley's Facebook Posts:**



**Scenario Three - Be the Neighborhood Expert**

Location, Location, Location. This is not one of the most popular phrases in real estate for just any reason. Real estate professionals recognize the significance location plays for both buyers and sellers and the importance of immersing themselves within those communities.

Agents are connected. They know everything a community has to offer and this knowledge, when used the right way, is a powerful social media resource.

While it is of course important to possess expert knowledge about homes, it is of equal importance for you to provide information about the home's surrounding community.

Here are some examples from the **Coldwell Banker®** network:

**Matthew Parrot  
Coldwell Banker Parrott-Venuti  
Real Estate, Geneva, NY**

Matthew provides his opinion on a hotspot in his local market **AND** tags the official Finger Lakes Facebook page so that his content is shared on their page as well.



**Christophe Choo  
Coldwell Banker Residential  
Brokerage, Beverly Hills**

Christophe invites his sphere on a virtual driving tour of Beverly Hills. This gives Christophe the chance to show off his personality while educating clients about his market.



**IDEAS TO GET YOU CONNECTED**

**What is it like to live in your community?**

- Where is the best spot in town to get pizza? What about a place to go for a romantic date night?
- Which stores have the best deals?
- What kind of festivals do community members look forward to each year?
- How are the sports teams? Does everyone pack into the local football stadium for Friday night football?

**How are you involved in your community?**

- Are you an active member of the PTA?
- Do you host any charity events?
- Do you participate in a 5K for charity each year?

**What does your community look like?**

- Are there parks that have breathtaking fall foliage?
- Is there a hidden gem that no one knows about?



PICTURE SUCCESS:  
SHOW THE STORY OF  
YOUR WORLD

# PICTURE SUCCESS: SHOW THE STORY OF YOUR WORLD

From the time we were children, when someone showed us one book with pictures and one without, a majority of us would lean toward the one with pictures. Why? Because studies show that an estimated 60% of us are visual learners who process information predominantly with our eyes.<sup>14</sup> Photos, therefore, are an incredibly powerful tool.

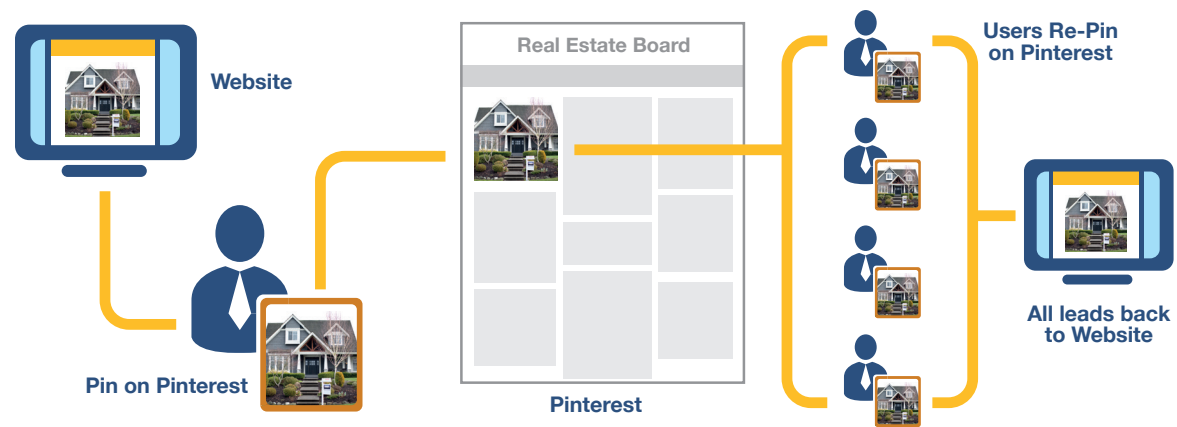
If you are one of the 129 million Americans who own a smartphone<sup>15</sup> then you have the power to share photos on the go. Sharing photos online has never been easier and has become a major part of social media content. On Facebook alone, 300 million photos are uploaded every day.<sup>16</sup> On Twitter, 36% of tweets include an image.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the amount of photos being shared, Instagram and Pinterest which are social networks dedicated to photo sharing, have solidified their place in the social space.

## Pinterest

Pinterest is changing real estate and how we think about our homes and is quickly replacing décor magazines as the go to place for inspiration. One of the greatest joys of home ownership is making your house a home. Pinterest has become a go to destination for inspirational imagery related to do-it-yourself projects as well as design and décor ideas. This is, of course, is called “Pinspiration.”

Pinterest is a site which can be used on desktop or mobile devices and allows users to share and organize photos and videos on virtual bulletin boards. Photos and videos are called “pins” and when shared (pinned) are attached to “boards.”



Boards are an organized group of pins associated with a theme or topic. A pin can be uploaded directly to Pinterest from your image library or camera roll or shared from a website. When shared from a website, a pin becomes automatically linked to the url from which it was posted. This means no matter where the pin appears on Pinterest, whether it be on your own board or shared (repinned) by another person onto their own, it will always lead back to the original source it came from. This is called the source link.

As a Pinterest user you should have two goals; getting your images/videos repinned and driving traffic back to your site.

In order to achieve these goals your photos should be aesthetically pleasing and be “findable.” Unlike Twitter and Instagram which thrive on hashtags, Pinterest users search for photos in a way similar to Google searches. Keywords and pin descriptions are very important.

## PINTEREST STATISTICS

**70 MILLION** users  
(15% of internet users)<sup>18</sup>

**#4** web traffic driver  
(up 300% from Sep '12 to Jan '13)<sup>18</sup>

**14.2 MINUTES**  
average time spent on  
Pinterest per visit<sup>18</sup>

**28.1%** of Pinterest users have  
an annual household income of  
\$100,000<sup>19</sup>



Real Estate

Of course, one of the most popular ways to leverage this platform is to share home listings. Here are some suggestions to make your Pinterest account help your business.

- 1 HIGH QUALITY IMAGES** It is no secret, great pictures sell homes. Pinterest is a visual site, make your photos stand out from the rest.
- 2 INCLUDE LISTING PRICE** Pinterest pins with prices get 36% more likes than those without.<sup>20</sup>
- 3 INCLUDE THE TOWN AND STATE** It is common to search for hyper local information on Pinterest. This will increase the chance of potential home shoppers finding it.
- 4 PIN FROM THE WEB** Pin the listing from the site it came from rather than uploading the picture and describing it. Pinterest is the 3rd largest web traffic driver. Take advantage of this!<sup>20</sup>
- 5 OPTIMIZE DESCRIPTIONS** The words you use to describe a pin relates directly to how the image will be found. Think of it as a teaser. Mention color, décor, and design terminology along with common adjectives as this is what the end user will be searching for.  
**EXAMPLE:** The master suite bathroom of this home feels like a spa with a luxurious glass enclosed bathroom featuring both an indoor and outdoor shower. Sea Lane Dr, Malibu, CA Listed at \$1,300,000.
- 6 TEST THE WATER** One of the greatest benefits of social media is nothing is set in stone. This allows for trial and error at no cost. Try a variety of descriptions, pin at different times, and always measure your results.

There are countless ways to use Pinterest as a sales professional and as with any other site sharing listings is just one piece of the strategy puzzle. Here are some additional ways to use Pinterest:

**CREATE COMMUNITY BOARDS** - Pinterest is another tool which can demonstrate your expertise in the markets you represent. Showcase the culture of these areas by pinning places, events and things to do. Create boards that include fun things to do in town for date night, for families, things to do on a rainy day, etc.

**PAINT A PICTURE OF WHO YOU ARE** - A pinterest account does not have to be dedicated only to work. By creating a board which include interests and hobbies, potential clients can get a sense of who you are and possibly connect on a more personal level.

**EDUCATE YOUR CONSUMER** - It can be difficult for consumers to navigate through the home buying or selling process, especially as a first timer. It is your job to educate consumers so they are equipped with tools and knowledge to help make good decisions. For this reason, you may want to create a board dedicated to real estate resources specific to your market. Common pins include infographics (graphic visual representations of information, data or knowledge), blog posts and industry news.

**WORKING WITH A BUYER** - It can take several meetings with a new client to fully understand their preferences. Make the home search fun by browsing Pinterest together. Work with your buyer to create a “dream home” board with photos and pay close attention to their taste regarding architecture and design. This can eliminate guesswork and provide excellent insight while making the process hands on.

**WORKING WITH A SELLER** - Every home has a story. Give your seller the chance to tell how it feels to live in their home by choosing a few of their favorite rooms and explaining why they love it. For example, if they enjoy a certain room because of the beautiful view it gets every night at sunset, pin that room and include an excerpt from the seller. This adds an interesting emotional element and shows the seller that you are thinking outside the box.

## Instagram

Instagram is a free mobile application (iPhone, iPad, Android) which allows users to instantly share their life through photos on a variety of social platforms. This is important as it can help create visually interesting content for your Facebook and Twitter accounts. Unlike traditional pictures snapped on mobile devices, Instagram offers a variety of “filters” which allow users to quickly modify the color treatment of their photos. Similar to Twitter, hashtags are used to categorize photos which allows a broader audience to find the photo.

## INSTAGRAM STATISTICS

**100 MILLION** monthly active users<sup>21</sup>

**40 MILLION** photos per day<sup>21</sup>

**8500** likes per second<sup>21</sup>

**1000** comments per second<sup>21</sup>

**40%** of brands have adopted Instagram for marketing<sup>21</sup>



Real Estate



Are you wondering how real estate fits into the big picture? Below are some of the hashtags being used that relate to your industry.

Like all other social media sites, the more effort you put in, the better results you can expect. Just as one would use Facebook and Twitter to communicate in a proactive and reactive manner, the same rules apply with Instagram. Being active, whether it is posting photos or engaging with others is key.

### The Proactive Approach

Instagram is a great way to show off a property and interesting elements of your business in a fun and creative way. This content creation app provides the ability to reach mass audiences because of the nature of hashtag usage. This means that the story you tell is just as important as the photo you are sharing.

By choosing the right hashtags to accompany a photo, one can improve their chances of being discovered by people outside of their immediate social sphere who are looking for those same words.

Aside from the hashtags above, more specific and hyper local hashtags can lead to possible interest for those who are browsing information about a community or event.

### POPULAR REAL ESTATE & "HOME" HASHTAGS (JUNE 2013)

- #home 17M+
- #housing 27K+
- #house 6M+
- #homeowner 21K
- #newhome 167K+
- #househunting 15K+
- #realestate 143K+
- #firsthome 12K
- #realtor 34K+
- #realestateagent 5K+

To the right is a side by side example of how local hashtags can improve a description and how it can hopefully draw in a wide audience:

**NOTE:** In certain cases, like sharing a listing, an image is more captivating with multiple photos combined into one, like the one above. A photo of an entire house is nice, however showcasing key features or rooms in the same photo is often better. Diptic (to the right) and Picstitch are mobile applications which allow users to quickly combine multiple photos into beautiful works of art. These apps were made for creating photo collages and work seamlessly with Instagram. Once the image is created it will allow you to share directly to your Instagram account.

### The Reactive Approach

Similar to Twitter, Instagram is an open network in which the majority of users do not make their profiles private as it would defeat a major purpose of the site. Because of this, there is an opportunity to connect with members of a community based on the hashtags they use.

So how do you effectively interact on Instagram? Not by leaving invasive sales pitches as comments. Instead, like their photo, perhaps leave a comment, and begin following their account if you find their photos interesting. This could lead to them returning the favor and possibly connecting with you. By initiating contact people will be more likely to return the favor.

By making this reactive behavior part of your routine, you will have a greater chance of growing your own following and generating more exposure for your profile and photos.

### OK Description



coldwellbanker Amazing Home \$6,497,000 #realestate

### Excellent Description



coldwellbanker This is a #California dream! Listed at \$6,497,000 this #PalmDessert home is the perfect combination of #luxury and #elegance

## New to Instagram

In June 2013, Instagram announced video integration. This is an additional way to share your stories in a visual way. With this new feature you are able to create videos up to 15 seconds long and apply color filters to give it an extra creative look.

Here are just a few ways you can use this new feature to your advantage:

### For Listings

- Give a quick tour of the home
- Have the homeowners explain what makes their house their home (or let their kids do it, with permission of course)

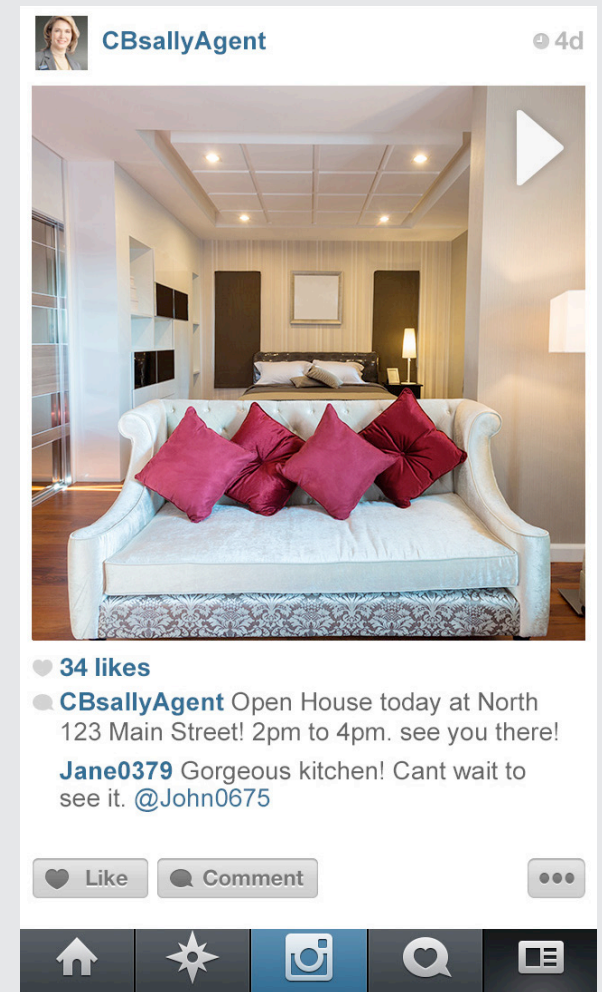
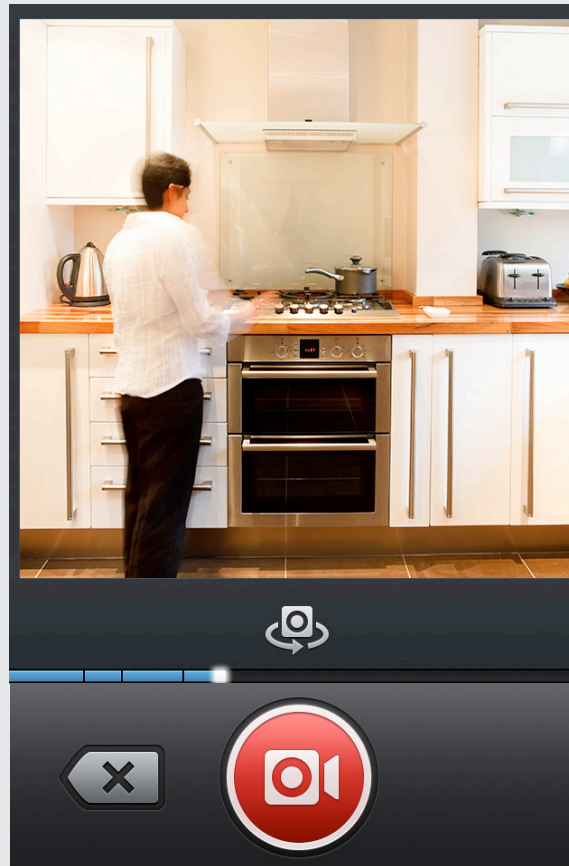
### Local Knowledge

- Conduct 15 second interviews with local store owners

### A Day in the Life

- Capture special moments that make you love your job. Things like handing over a set of keys or putting up a sold sign show you care AND you are successful in helping clients.

## Using New Instagram Video for Listings:





MEASURING YOUR EFFORTS

# MEASURING YOUR EFFORTS

As you get skilled in social media you will realize one of the benefits is the ability to measure everything you do.

By tracking your efforts you will get a good sense of what your audience likes and dislikes, which will allow you to tailor your content. If you want to take it a step further compare these results against some of your competitors.

The following are metrics and tools which can help decipher the impact and success of your communication efforts:

**FACEBOOK:** On a *personal page* you should track the amount of likes, comments and shares your posts get. On a business page pay attention the “People Talking About This” number.(found next to # of page likes) This is commonly referred to as PTAT.

To get the “engagement score” of your business page, use the PTAT divided by the number of your likes. Again, compare this to some of your competitors to get a gauge of how you are doing.

**TWITTER:** Retweets, mentions, and replies are the keys to measuring success on Twitter. A retweet is when someone repeats what you have tweeted on their own feed. A mention is when someone includes your username preceded by the @ symbol. A reply is when someone replies back to a tweet you wrote using your @Handle.

**PINTEREST:** Repins and comments are two ways of tracking success on Pinterest. If you are a blogger you can also measure the amount of content being shared from your site by typing in [Pinterest.com/source/\(your url\)](https://www.pinterest.com/source/(your url)).

**INSTAGRAM:** Likes and comments are the only two things measurable on Instagram. To like a photo all one has to do is double tap the image.

**SOCIAL INFLUENCE:** Influence is defined as the ability to drive action. In regard to social media it is the ability to get someone to respond or share. There are two leading platforms that measure social media influence which can give you a sense of how you stack up against others in the industry. These sites are Klout.com and Kred.com.

Keeping track of engagement metrics over time will enable you to develop a benchmark for success. If you notice something you posted was well received, analyze why it happened and try to duplicate your efforts. Conversely if something underperformed, perhaps tweak it to improve the way it is received.

Think of the above metrics as a barometer of how you are doing. We’ve all been in social settings where we’ve nailed it by participating actively in a discussion and connected with a group. It feels magical and we always try to duplicate it. By tracking your efforts, you will quickly learn the most effective way of communicating with your audience.





I AM HOOKED. TELL ME MORE!?

# I AM HOOKED. TELL ME MORE!?

If you have made it to this section I assume it is safe to say you are hooked on learning how social media can help your business. Cheers to you!

Because social media is evolving even as you read this, it would take another one hundred or more pages to cover all the existing and emerging platforms worth exploring. To keep it short and simple, here are three more:



## Google+ (you may also see it appear as G+)

Google Plus has become the second largest social networking site in the world, having surpassed Twitter in January 2013.<sup>22</sup> It started with a big bang as Google+ was originally an “invite only” social network.

While there are many layers to Google+, there are three major features that you will want to check out.

**STREAM:** This is where a user sees updates from their “circles.” It is similar to a Facebook newsfeed because it includes photos, videos and updates in real time. Instead of liking a status as you would on Facebook, you would +1 anything you like. Like Twitter and Instagram, hashtags are also used on Google+ to help with organizing and finding content.

**CIRCLES:** Circles are friends organized into groups. Default circles include family, friends, acquaintances and following (people you don’t know personally). As an agent, it would be ideal to have circles which include colleagues, competitors, past clients, current clients, prospects, etc. Unlike other social networks, circles allow you have a stronger control over who sees what because each status update requires you to select which circles can see it.

**HANGOUTS:** A place where you and your circles can video chat. This is a great tool for office meetings and video chatting with multiple parties, especially those who are relocating and may not be able to meet face-to-face. All you need is a camera and you are good to go!

Why should you care about Google+? Well, it is a social network owned by the most used search engine in the world. Needless to say Google+ profiles index high when someone is looking for you.



## Vine

This is one POPULAR mobile app...in less than four months since debuting, Vine, which allows you to make six second videos, has become the most downloaded free app within the iOS app store.<sup>23</sup> But does it have real estate appeal? You bet it does!

## 4 Ways to Use Vine for Real Estate

- 1 Show your listing in 6 seconds (this will force you to focus on what is truly captivating about the listing)
- 2 Show why someone would love your community in 6 seconds (show people, places and things)
- 3 Sell yourself in 6 seconds. Tell what makes you a great agent.
- 4 Have your clients make a video. A creative testimonial is a great way to capture their joy of working with you.



## Foursquare

Foursquare is a location-based mobile application that allows you to “check in” at a venue. Check-ins can be shared on Facebook and Twitter.

Once you check in you can leave a “tip” that others can read when they check in at the same place. For example, “Make sure you try the Lasagna at this joint...tastes just like grandma’s!” or “Long waiting list? Grab a seat in the bar section, same menu and quick service.”

As a real estate agent, this is a great way to get your name around town and show off your local knowledge. By the way, it is also a great way to find deals and promotions in your area.

# FINAL FAQ

This white paper covered a tremendous amount of information which means you MUST have questions. Here are the eight most frequently asked questions that I have been asked along with my answers.

## 1 What exactly is a hashtag?

A hashtag is a word or phrase (without spaces) prefixed with the # symbol. Example: #Hashtag

Hashtags are a way of “tagging” a photo or message so that others can find it. Because social media networks have such large communities it is a way to help others find and follow conversations that interest them.

## 2 Can I hire someone to manage my social media accounts for me?

No. Hiring someone to manage your social media communications is like hiring someone to speak for you. Now don't get me wrong, there are plenty of talented social media consultants who can help with strategy but to take a quote from Dr. Suess, *“Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than You.”*

## 3 Should I have a Facebook “friend” page or “business” page?

As a real estate professional it is your job to have friends. The more friends you have, the better your business. I believe one could have both but it is important to start with a friend page because it allows for you to see what your network is talking about. A business page doesn't allow you to monitor your friend's activity which removes one of the greatest benefits social media has to offer.

Should you decide to create a business page, it shouldn't be a dumping ground for listings or a bragging board. Social media is about giving. Instead, create something that is valuable to the people in your community. A fantastic example of this is [facebook.com/365CranfordWestfieldNJ](https://www.facebook.com/365CranfordWestfieldNJ).

## 4 What should I post/Where can I find content?

Aside from the ideas in the “tell your story” section, check out the **Coldwell Banker**® blog “Blue Matter” for shareable content. (Full disclosure: I am a contributor)

Other great resources

- *Zite*: A personalized magazine where you can get customized content for sharing.
- Inman News
- Your local company
- National and local media. (set up google alerts!)
- *REALTOR*®Mag

## 5 How should I use privacy settings?

Privacy settings are a personal choice. It is up to you to decide how comfortable you are with people finding you online and seeing what you share. Just keep in mind, the stricter your privacy settings, the less likely people are to find your content. As a general rule, Facebook tends to be a more private platform than the others which thrive on open communities.

## 6 How much time should I spend on social media per week?

Social media should not take up all of your free time. However, the more time you spend creating engaging posts and interacting with your community, the more business you will get from your efforts. Start with 5-10 minutes a day and adjust as you see fit.

## 7 When can I expect results?

Patience grasshopper. Social media success DOES NOT come overnight. If you are consistent, authentic, and engaging, the results WILL come. This is a long term commitment. The great thing about social media is that it strengthens your relationships with your clients and peers.

## 8 Can I friend you?

Absolutely! I thought you would never ask! My favorite place to chat is Twitter. You can tweet to me at [@LListanski](https://twitter.com/LListanski).



## CONCLUSION

Social media is an amazing tool that can help you strengthen relationships, prospect for and generate leads while providing a competitive edge in an industry where relationships are everything.

Some may challenge the value of social media by asking what its return on investment is. Those who ask that are simply missing the point. The investment of time returns better quality of relationships because of the trust one gains from allowing someone into their life. The true question should be, what is the cost of ignoring these emerging and incredibly powerful networking tools?

By now you have probably realized there is no secret sauce for social media success. Remember, you are already fluent in social media. Take it slow, be yourself, and have fun!



Lindsay Listanski  
Manager of Social Media  
Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC



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