

REAL ESTATE WEEKLY

March 12, 2018

How to get the most out of your social network



With the myriad of social technology available, real estate agents are leaning more and more how to use these tools to increase their brand visibility and seal more deals.

During the Real Estate Board of New York's Tech and Innovation Expo last month, a panel of brokers discussed the value that Instagram and Facebook brought to their personal brands.

"Instagram for me and my business is a way of updating everybody with what I'm up to," said Tal Alexander, a Douglas Elliman broker with more than 14,000 followers.

"I'm very careful with what I post, it's definitely curated, but it's very helpful and its been big for my business."



OREN & TAL ALEXANDER

There's no one-size-fits-all approach, but most of the panel recommended presenting your followers with a true representation of yourself.

Their formula breaks down to including snippets of your personal lifestyle and vacation photos, while also maintaining a steady flow of your work life.

For Chris Kann, an agent with The Corcoran Group, his Instagram began as a personal outlet for his vacations to Denmark and exploration of photography. 8,000 followers later, his feed has become a testament to his personal style that attracts buyers and sellers over the Internet.

While relatively new to Instagram, Compass Real Estate agent Danielle Lurie said it's best to show what you're passionate about. In her case, she broadcasts her photography skills and her obsession with the city she calls home to her 2,000 followers. "What I really post is my love for New York, I'm completely obsessed with the city and I'm in a love story with it every day," Lurie said.



DANIELLE LURIE

Ari Harkov with Halstead Property said he separated personal and work lives that are shown on social media. But he added the most successful posts on the team's Facebook page tend to feature his team when they're out in the field or working on a project, instead of the typical new listing.

According to Mallorie Rosenbluth, the expo's keynote speaker and head of social media for GrubHub and Seamless, consumers are more likely to go with a company or brand that has content marketing when making a purchasing decision.

She said that people should be providing quality content that is simple, scrappy, shareable, snackable or easy to digest, and scalable so that social media doesn't become a chore.

"If you're providing that, that's like a loyalty funnel of people who are going to make a recommendation, who are going to refer your services, who are going to come back for multiple interactions with your and your personal brand," Rosenbluth said.

The brokers noted that the deals that come from social media are few and far in between, but there's still value in promoting your brand.

But if brokers are looking to utilize their social networks for monetary gain, there are opportunities in referral networks instead. Oftentimes brokers will refer another colleague for a potential sale they've found and take a referral fee.

According to ReferralExchange's 2018 study, 42 percent of agents earn anywhere from \$10,000 to \$50,000 a year in referral fees. The study added that eight percent of the agents surveyed make more than \$50,000 a year and two percent earned up to \$500,000 from referrals.

The study showed that more agents are receiving referrals — around nine a year — and 83 percent of agents are part of a referral network.



PATRICK LILLY

Patrick Lilly, a licensed real estate broker with CORE, said he operates a broker to broker referral-based business where 35 percent of his new business comes from other brokers.

In using three different referral networks with Referral Exchange, Effective Agent, and Upnest, Lilly has earned \$20 million in sales that originated from broker to broker referrals in 2017.

"A referral coming from another broker, even though you pay a fee, is probably one of the best leads you can ever get," Lilly said. "Because you've been recommended by somebody and they're more likely to buy or sell."

When developing referral sources, Lilly advised that agents find where their feeder markets are. For New York City, the tri-state region of New York State, New Jersey, and Connecticut, could hold a great amount of opportunities.

And for those not on referral networks, Lilly recommended going out and developing real relationships by visiting the area or generating more personal visibility at conferences.

Louise Phillips Forbes from Halstead, said her referrals are generated the old-fashioned way, through word of mouth. Out of the 100 transactions Phillips may do, she said 10 or 15 of them are usually referrals. Last year, she made a little under \$80,000 alone on referrals.



LOUISE PHILLIPS FORBES

Her “sphere of influence” has yielded referral payouts up to \$40,000 and she’s often nabbing clients in Portland or the New York City rental market. In the \$40,000 deal, she said that she connected a poised buyer she knew to a specialist in an area she wasn’t familiar with.

“I’m not a rental broker on the lower end of the market, but I have a lot of people I’ve sold apartments to,” Phillips said. “And if I can put them in the hands of someone I trust, then I’ve done a great job.”

But it took a while for her to generate such a productive network offline. Phillips said she used to pick up the phone and call brokers from other firms to ask about open listings and the possibility of co-brokering them.

Whether you’re flipping through the rolodex or trying to earn more followers online, she said it was important to develop long-lasting relationships and the possibility of deals that could come along.

“I think every good broker should look at every single person they meet as an opportunity for a referral,” Louise Phillips said.