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## **How to Make Video Work for Your Budget**



At the REALTORS® Conference & Expo in New Orleans this month, three agents with three different approaches to marketing shared their particular perspectives on how to incorporate video in their businesses.

Patrick Vernon Lilly, CRS, e-PRO, leads a team selling high-end residential property in Manhattan and Brooklyn. He told the audience that the last thing in the world he'd do is one of the most popular uses of video in real estate.

"If you're going to invest in a video, don't do a listing tour," Lilly said at the "Video is Worth a Million Words" session. Instead, Lilly keeps his videos at around one minute and 20 seconds, showing only a few select shots of his listings, interspersed with neighborhood shots and clips of him describing what he likes about the property and the area. "The video's not going to work if you can't tell a story."

Leigh Brown of RE/MAX Executive Realty in the Charlotte, N.C., area doesn't do listing tours either, but for a different reason.

"One of his videos is my whole commission check!" Brown joked. She told the audience her average listing price is \$226,000, and spending the hundreds of dollars that Lilly does on his videos would not be cost-effective. Instead, Brown spent around \$150 to create a video that helps consumers know what to expect from her and her team. "I try to draw people in with the experience they get working with me and my team. It's a way for them to see you are a living, breathing human being."

Raj Qsar, principal and owner of The Boutique Real Estate Group in the Orange County, Calif., area, does do video tours, and regularly goes over Lilly's prescribed two-minute video cut-off. But he agreed with the idea of needing to tell a story. He was inspired back in 2009 by a wedding videographer who excelled at telling the story of a couple's life together rather than just documenting an event. Qsar wanted to do the same thing to reach the hyperlocal market he serves. He called and asked the videographer to help him tell the story of his listing.

"It's a lot of work. ... That video took seven days to cut," Qsar said. He said the video took so long to finish that they had an offer before it was even ready for prime time. But he shared the video with the sellers

anyway, and got nine more listings in the area because other home owners in the area were impressed with his work. “They were floored. They sent that video to everyone in the neighborhood.”

Since that first “listing story,” he has used a full-time stager, purchased professional equipment, and hired a video crew to make listing stories a centerpiece of his marketing plan.

For the budget conscious, Brown said there are ways to market oneself without relying on professional equipment. She uses BombBomb to send video responses to online inquiries about her listings. Brown simply shoots video of herself using her smartphone, thanking prospects for contacting her and offering more information about schools and taxes in the area of the listing.

“They can find the easy stuff, but the consumer has no idea where to find information about schools and taxes,” she says. “That’s really jacked our conversion rate.”

Brown also noted that on-the-go video can help you solve problems that an e-mail or phone conversation would not be able to. She cited a weekend when she received an inquiry from a couple while she was with family at a girls’ softball game. Rather than having a conversation on her cell in a noisy environment, she put the setting to work for her, recording a video response that showed exactly what she was up to and telling the couple she would get back to them on Monday.

“They wanted to work with me. They didn’t even interview any other agents,” Brown said. “They said, ‘You got back to us quickly, but you did not interrupt your family time.’ They appreciated that.”

The panelists also shared mistakes they’ve made and how they learned the hard way to improve their processes. For example, Lilly learned early on to make adjustments to his narrative style to allow his true personality to come across.

“We started out with me writing out the copy and me reading it. That works for a lot of speakers, but with me it comes off as deadly,” he said. He asked his videographer to help him loosen up by goofing around and wearing Chewbacca wigs. “The videos are much more successful if I start out laughing, so I’m not coming across as this pretentious New Yorker.”

Qsar said one mistake he made early on was not preparing his sellers for the fact that video is not instant, especially with the longer-form videos in which he specializes. Now he sets up that expectation and will even drop a trailer before the video is fully produced to give a taste of what is to come.

Finally, there’s nothing more frustrating than spending a lot of time and money on a video that doesn’t get the expected exposure. Lilly suggested using YouTube over other video hosting platforms because it’s owned — and therefore indexed — by search powerhouse Google.

Qsar agreed, noting that practitioners should be sure to use the tagging functionality in the back end of YouTube to help Google understand what the video is about and where it was shot.

“There are specific tags and phrases you can use in YouTube [to describe the video],” he said. “Don’t be too general, because Google doesn’t like that. You keep doing that with every video, and Google is going to recognize it.”

Qsar also suggested e-mailing videos to specific marketing lists. Brown e-mails her video to agents so they feel more secure in referring clients to her team.

“They feel like it’s OK to talk to anyone on my team. I am the CEO of my team and I drive the bus, but I am surrounded by the best people on the planet,” she said. “Video helps you shape that.”

Regardless of how much to spend or what kind of video to shoot, the panel was in agreement that, if real estate pros are willing to take the time, video is worth it.

“It’s going to cost you more in the long term to not do video,” Qsar said. “Video will give you the most return of anything you invest in — if you do it right. Do it. Do it well.”