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Getting Started Is Not that Hard, Say Social Media Users

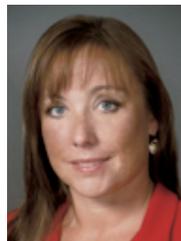


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By Steve Lewis

This is the second in a two-part series on social media. In our first installment, SIORs who use Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn described how these new networking vehicles led to greater business success. In this article, some experienced users talk about what it takes to get started.

If you're hesitant about getting started with Twitter, Facebook, or some other mode of social media networking because you're not very experienced with the Internet and you believe it would be "just too difficult," take heart: SIORs who have been involved with these networks for awhile say that you really have nothing to fear.



Facebook, and others take longer, depending on how complete your profile and information are."

"Twitter takes about three minutes to set up," says **Kristin Geenty**, SIOR, of The Geenty Group REALTORS®, Branford, Connecticut. "LinkedIn,



Bakersfield, California.

"It's not hard at all, as far as signing up and creating accounts," adds **Wayne L. Kress**, SIOR, First Vice President of CB Richard Ellis in



Chicago Title Insurance Company National Commercial Center, Cleveland.

"There's a learning curve with all new technologies, but all of these platforms make it fairly easy to get up and running," says **Mark S. Cook**,

“I had not the slightest clue about social media as a means of promoting my business,” adds Kress. “I began seeing it differently, though, by just playing around on Facebook—one message, one click, and out it goes to whomever I’m connected to directly...and possibly to whomever they’re connected to (that’s when I also learned about ‘degrees of separation’). Anyway, as a lark, I looked up Obama and was amazed to discover he had some 6.5 million fans. Again, one message typed out, one click, and out it goes to 6.5+ million people. *Pretty low-cost!*”

Finding Connections, Voice, Balance

No one is claiming the road is without bumps, however. For example, Kress, who has gone from Facebook to LinkedIn, and then to Twitter, says, “The first real task is to find friends/followers/connections. Then the job becomes posting regularly so people know you’re on it. Then it’s to ‘find a voice’ for how to use it for what you care about. For instance, I noticed that since Twitter imposes a 140-character limit, a very effective means of using it is to use about 100 of those characters formulating a ‘hook,’ then connecting a link to the rest of your story. That’s when I discovered the various online services that shorten URLs to 25 characters or so. I use www.bit.ly.com and sometimes www.tinyurl.com. For instance: Social Media 101...Why I’m Doing This, Anyway... <http://bit.ly/3ZOKvf>.”

“Another big balance issue with Twitter is tweets (messages) per day,” adds Geenty. “The optimum amount, according to various social networking publications, is four to six. I know people who do one a day or two a day and have hundreds of followers, but people who overload tweets find that their followers drop out because they are overloaded with meaningless information.”

Cook agrees. “The problem arises after it is up and running,” he says. “Trying to react to the fast-paced questions, comments, and other issues puts you at risk of saying something that might come back to haunt you. What seemed funny or clever at the time can be interpreted many different ways, especially by someone who may not have your best interests in mind.”



“You do have to learn some new language like hash tags, ‘re-tweets,’ and the like (Relax: Help with ‘Tweet Speak’ will be provided later in this article), but with a 140-character limit to any tweet, there is not much to learn, and you can be up and running quickly,” says Jeff S. Fredericks, SIOR, Senior Managing Partner at Colliers International in San José, California. “Getting a relevant following can take much longer.”

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—MARK S. COOK

“Getting to Know You”

Becoming adept at any one of these social sites, Fredericks continues, is somewhat like getting to know a new real estate topic. “My advice is to immerse yourself in whatever site you are setting up, at least for awhile,” he says. “Absorb as much knowledge as possible and practice enough so that it becomes second nature. As with anything else, you’ll become more comfortable by spending more time learning and using the application.”

Since there are “too many networking sites to count,” Fredericks issues the following warning: “Do not spread yourself so thin that you are unable to keep everything up to date and relevant. Also, when you set up an account, consider whether you want to separate your personal friends (and life) from your business associates. In my case, Facebook is where I share experiences with friends I have met cycling, through charities I support, and through other outside activities. For business contacts, I would rather connect through LinkedIn, Twitter, or through my personal blog on my Web page. (More about blogs later.)

“Finally,” he continues, “I would strongly advise that you do not say anything or share anything on your networking sites that you would not want your mother, spouse, boss, etc. to read or view. While there are certain levels of security available to users, the best practice is to maintain a high level of character at all times so that it’s never a concern.”

Kress adds these social media user tips:

- Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn are more than forms of communicating out; they are ways of being found by others who are looking online for help.
- Include key words and key phrases (e.g., “return on investment”) in your writing ... that’s how search engines find you.

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- Search engines are especially tuned into Twitter and LinkedIn.
- Monitor Twitter via www.search.twitter.com for conversations your target audience members are in...and weigh in where appropriate, and with value.

Can You Talk “Tweet Speak?”

Geenty offers some additional tips for using Twitter, including some handy definitions. “Twitter’s premise, like all Web 2.0 applications, is that it’s interactive,” she says. “Post 140 characters, and if your statement is titillating enough, people tweet back. Suddenly you’re at the virtual water cooler, or [you’re] Ashton Kutcher, with 3.3 million followers, leading the revolution.”

Followers are earned on Twitter, so being interesting and informative is key, she continues. “No one wants to hear only about your deals or listings,” Geenty notes. “But, before you worry about your content, you have to jump into the conversation and know the lingo, because Twitter has its own language”:

- Twitter is the site; tweeting the action and tweets are the messages.
- RT is a “ReTweet”— a message that you find so compelling or don’t want anyone to miss that you post it yourself, showing that it was originally posted by another user and indicating the twitter name of that user (using the @ sign).
- @ signals a reply to a post or possibly a ReTweet with attribution to the original tweet (like a footnote citing the source).
- Setting up an account takes less than two minutes. After going to Twitter.com pick a user name, enter your e-mail and a password, and you’re in.

- For real estate, the most useful aspect of Twitter is LoudTwitter.com, a free application that uploads your daily Tweets to your blog.
- TweetDeck is a consolidation service that allows you to easily follow conversations, topics, or people.
- Twellow.com and wefollow.com are aggregators for finding interesting people to follow. You may be one of them; add your name to them to increase your following.
- Most real estate professionals post links to hot news articles. TinyUrl.com and dozens of others condense long web link addresses into smaller ones so that the link takes fewer of your 140 characters.
- Twitpic allows you to post photos via Twitter.
- Tweet Listing is a real estate-specific Twitter application, but it is a fee-based service. It converts listing information into tweets.

Consider a Blog

Since the goal of getting involved in social media is to become known, liked, and trusted, says Kress, you can multiply the value of your tweets, postings, and your Web site by creating a blog (Web log). Intimidated? Don’t be. Just go to Google and search “creating a blog.” There are a number of free services that provide easy-to-follow templates. You just fill in the blanks, and you’re ready to go.

What do you put on your blog? Kress suggests the following:

- Post information of interest to your target audience.
- Some you can author; some can come from others (always attribute!).

- Be authentic.
- Be both professional and personal (don’t be afraid to share stuff about you and your interests).
- Be consistent...post regularly, no less than once per week.
- Be connected...post your stuff on all your social media sites.

To make the circle complete, Kress advises putting your name, photo, biography, and contact info on your Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn sites, as well as links to your other sites and to your Web/blog.

“Be thorough in completing each feature about yourself, your offers of help, and your personal interests,” says Kress. “Use Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn to drive traffic to your Web/blog, along with e-blasts.”

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1100 Burlington Pike	477,862 SF
1500 Worldwide Blvd	300,000 SF
8145 Holton Drive	268,525 SF
100 Precision Drive	234,400 SF
101 Clark Boulevard	232,000 SF
2055 Global Way	207,000 SF
4440 Muhlhauser Road	180,000 SF
990 Reading Road	142,508 SF
5404 Duff Drive	113,600 SF



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