





# UP YOUR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

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BY RACHEL ANTMAN

More than 3.8 billion people worldwide use social media, spending an average of 114 minutes per day on these networks<sup>1</sup>. It's safe to assume, then, that daily users include potential clients. Through effective social media programs, you can attract their attention. But unless you choose the right channels and the right content, you could also waste significant amounts of time, money, and energy, with little to show for it. How can you ensure that your efforts are worthwhile? Several SIORs who have had success with social media offer advice and insights:

## START WITH A STRATEGY

"Without strategy, execution becomes aimless," says Robert Thornburgh, SIOR, regional president of Kidder Mathews in El Segundo, Calif. "So many industry professionals make the mistake of blindly jumping into social media marketing without a plan in place." He recommends that brokers embarking on these programs ask themselves why they're on social media and which platforms reach their target audiences. His prescription for people who can't answer these questions is "to take a

step back and develop your short and long-term strategies."

Observation is one form of a step-back. Adam Kaduce, SIOR, senior vice president of R&R Realty Estate Advisors in West Des Moines, Iowa, suggests watching what other people are doing—especially people who are influential on social media platforms. When he started exploring social media, he saw many people posting interesting articles. He followed their example by sharing articles, "liking" content, and commenting on others' posts.

Eventually, plans can become more specific. These days, Kaduce's marketing team develops a calendar with different monthly themes and determines how social media can support them. The team of Christopher Masino, SIOR, president of Masino Commercial Real Estate Services in Temecula, Calif., addresses social media in bi-weekly marketing meetings while also adhering to a written strategy.

## SO MANY PLATFORMS, SO LITTLE TIME

LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are just a few of the platforms available. How do you know which ones are right for you? For some

SIORs, it's a matter of trial and error. Street Jones, SIOR, principal of Rich Commercial Realty in Raleigh, N.C., recalls that his firm made its decisions based on the kinds of content it created along with the level of engagement from clients and connections. Consequently, the firm discontinued its Twitter account and focused on Instagram as its primary platform, supplementing it with the company blog, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, and Google Reviews.

In contrast, the social media program of Doug Murray, SIOR, vice president of Colliers International in Burlington, Ontario, concentrates on Twitter and LinkedIn. For Masino's team, the top platforms are LinkedIn and YouTube. Clearly one size—or one social platform—doesn't fit all.

## THE RIGHT MIX OF CONTENT

The process of trial and error also applies to content development. As Thornburgh notes: "Establishing your brand doesn't happen immediately. It takes time, sincerity, and effort to develop a social image that properly reflects your voice. Much of this lies in deciding what and what not to publish."

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Murray agrees. He warns that "There is no cookie-cutter post that will work for everyone across the board."

Many SIORs have found success with a mix of professional and personal posts. According to Jones: "Not everyone wants to see personal content all the time and not everyone wants to see professional content all the time...it has to be a mix in order to impact a broader audience." Nevertheless, he's discovered that the best performing posts include personal details about his team and photos of their activities at work and at home.

That discovery aligns with the experience of Wills Elliman, SIOR, senior managing director at Newmark Knight Frank in Wilmington, Del. Every year, he posts about his recovery from a 2013 heart attack, and every year, those posts elicit far more commentary than his business-related posts.

In recent years, one form of content has been growing in importance—video. "Video is becoming such an integral part of commercial real estate," says Masino, who observes that video and virtual tours have gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic. But the benefits of video extend beyond periods of lockdowns. Kaduce's team, for example, developed a video campaign called #AskAdam in which he answers questions about commercial real estate. The videos, he reports, generate high levels of engagement, and they don't take much time or equipment—an iPhone generally suffices.

## MEASUREMENT

One of the greatest advantages of social media is analytics. You can easily measure how many people clicked on your content, responded to it, or visited

a website linked to a post. This kind of information plays an invaluable role in helping you determine which platforms and content are most effective. "It's absolutely essential to use analytics to gauge your performance and make necessary tweaks," says Murray. "There is no better way to get to know your audience than by measuring the productivity of your marketing. We are constantly iterating upon our strategy based on monthly performance reports."

## ROI

The major downside of social media is time. "The work is certainly underestimated," notes Murray. "Taking on social media is no easy feat and it requires a lot of effort." There are ways to minimize the time commitment, however. Murray's team automates much of the process through Hootsuite, a social media management platform. Elliman engages a virtual assistant who scours the news, alerts him to interesting articles, and drafts posts for his review.

Don't expect immediate results, either. "You have to have realistic expectations," says Kaduce. "On the day you start using it, you're not going to have 15 leads drop in your lap." But he and other SIORs believe that the ROI of social media programs is high. "Working on social media is just like networking in a room full of industry leaders," says Thornburgh, "just far more efficient." According to Jones, "Social media is a positive, consistent, and relatively inexpensive way to stay on people's radars." Murray views social media platforms as "omnichannel marketing powerhouses" that help generate leads, expand client rosters, and close deals.

Trial and error, combined with analytics, can guide brokers unfamiliar with social media platforms. "Don't worry about perfection," suggests Elliman. "If you try to get everything perfect before you do your first post, you'll never have your first post." Masino agrees. "Get your feet wet; just do it," he urges. In his opinion, social media is the future: "It helps you be relevant in an increasingly digitized world." ♥

1. "Social media – Statistics & Facts," Statista, May 19, 2020.

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