

“Get out of your comfort zone”



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Brought to you by the Builder Relations Committee of the Sales and Marketing Council of the Northeast Florida Builders Association and Lennar

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Q: What are the best 3 social networking sites for our industry?

There are many great social media sites available including Facebook, Twitter, ActiveRain, LinkedIn, Trulia, Ning, YouTube, Flickr and a plethora of others. If you are considering launching a social media program make sure to create your strategy first. Depending on whether your goal is to reach Realtors, potential homeowners, current residents or enhance your SEO (search engine optimization) efforts through the use of SMO (social media optimization), your approach will vary greatly. If you are looking to attract more potential buyers and co-op agents to your new home community, we'd recommend the following social media sites.

1. Launch a blog. While a blog is not a social networking site per se, it is the core building block for any successful social media program. A blog can be used to promote many facets of a new home community from the actual homes and amenities to incentives and special events. Blogs are a great way to capture new home Internet shoppers through search engines and expanded key words. Blogging allows you to cast a wider online net and send more buyers to your main Web site. A few examples of well-built and maintained blogs include <http://www.HighlandHomes.org/new...> and <http://www.HeronBayBlog.com>.
2. Set up a corporate page on Facebook. This social networking site provides a variety of ways to reach out to existing homeowners, Realtors and industry partners. Ask your Facebook friends to fan your corporate page. Promote your events, incentives and sales through your page. Once you have developed a Facebook following, you can use your lists of fans for more targeted marketing efforts including fun interactive Facebook contests.

3. Trulia is a social networking site, free listing service and a blog all in one. Utilize Trulia's social networking site to reach out to agents in your area and promote your upcoming events and specials through your Trulia blog. This site ranks high on Google, which means your posts will also show up in your SERP (search engine results pages).

Q: What is a creative message without appearing to push my services as a Realtor or Site Agent?

The most effective social media messages will be similar to the messages and information most sought-after by your buyers. Today's home buyers are interested in your community's location, homes and amenities; however, they may be more interested in finding out how to obtain financing and how to take advantage of the current tax and energy credits. Social networking is meant to be an interactive conversation. Listen to your buyers' questions and respond appropriately with thoughtful, useful information.

Q: How much time will I need to spend on social networking?

Plan to spend a minimum of 20 hours a month on social networking with at least half of this time spent posting to your blog. More intensive social media programs require more than 50 hours a month. Remember, "there's no such thing as a free lunch" definitely does apply on the Internet. Social media programs require a significant investment of time and, usually, money. A recent BusinessWeek article (<http://www.businessweek.com/tech...>) listed \$50,000 as the budget for an effective, two-to-three-month social media marketing campaign. Of course, it can be done for much less. Just remember social media is not free; your time is money.

Q: What is the benefit to me and my business?

Social media can increase your Internet presence, build brand, increase your SEO efforts, and best of all create a platform for you to engage with potential homebuyers as well as your current homeowners.

ROI for a social media optimization program can be evaluated through an analysis of your Web site's tracking report. Look for an increase in key words (the number of words people use to find the site through search engines), referring URLs (other Web sites that send traffic your way), increased traffic on the Web site, and ultimately, increased sales.

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