

# NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> Certification: Day 1

## Student Manual



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# Introduction

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The revision of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) e-PRO® certification program would not have been possible without the feedback of its subject matter experts (SMEs). NAR and Social Media Marketing Institute (SMMI) express gratitude and appreciation to the following for their commitment and participation in the development process of this certification program:

- > Todd Carpenter, NAR, Chicago, IL
- > Brian Copeland, CRS, GRI, ABR®, e-PRO®, Village Real Estate Services, Nashville, TN
- > Nobu Hata, e-PRO®, NAR, Chicago, IL
- > Robert Reuter, NAR, Chicago, IL

We would also like to thank and acknowledge the Social Media Marketing Institute Advisory Board for their assistance in the development of SMMI's Certified Social Marketer (CSM) course, which led to the revision of NAR's e-PRO® certification program.

This revision of this program is dedicated to the memory of Sheila L. Lublin, who was instrumental in the creation of the Social Media Marketing Institute and continues to inspire us today.

# WELCOME

Welcome to NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certification program. e-PRO<sup>®</sup> is the only technology certification of its kind to be officially recognized, endorsed, and conferred by the NAR.



This program serves as the benchmark of technology expertise for today's real estate professionals. REALTORS<sup>®</sup> with this certification demonstrate:

- ☑ **Excellence** in adopting, implementing, and promoting technology best practices
  
- ☑ **Ethics** with a commitment to use technology in a fair and responsible manner
  
- ☑ **Professionalism** by completing this program and keeping one's technical knowledge and skill sets up-to-date

More than 30,000 REALTORS<sup>®</sup> are e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certified.

## HOW TO EARN NAR'S E-PRO<sup>®</sup> CERTIFICATION

The steps for earning NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certification are straightforward. Use Figure I.1 as your checklist as you seek NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certification.

**Figure I.1: Checklist for Earning NAR's e-PRO® Certification**

PART 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	Be a member in good standing with the NAR or NAR cooperating international association	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The final exam is closed book and consists of 30 multiple-choice questions.</li> <li>The required passing score for the final exam is 80%.</li> <li>From the day that Day 1 is held, students have 12 months to complete Day 2 Online.</li> <li>Note: Students <b>must</b> complete Day 1 before proceeding to Day 2 Online.</li> </ul>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete Day 2 Online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go to <a href="http://www.learninglibrary.com/RealtorUniversity">www.learninglibrary.com/RealtorUniversity</a> to register.</li> <li>The price of Day 2 Online is \$129 (USD).</li> <li>The final exam is closed book and consists of 40 multiple-choice questions.</li> <li>The required passing score for the final exam is 80%.</li> <li>When students enroll in Day 2 Online, they have 6 months to complete the course.</li> </ul>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete online application and submit a one-time application fee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online application is available through <a href="http://ePRONAR.com">ePRONAR.com</a>.</li> <li>The cost of the one-time application fee is \$110.50.</li> </ul>

When the NAR receives confirmation that you have successfully completed Days 1 and 2, we will e-mail you a link to the e-PRO® website with your login and password information. In addition, for U.S. members, we will update your profile in the National REALTOR® Database System (NRDS) to reflect that you are e-PRO® certified.

PART 2—ONGOING	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain active membership with the NAR or NAR cooperating international association	
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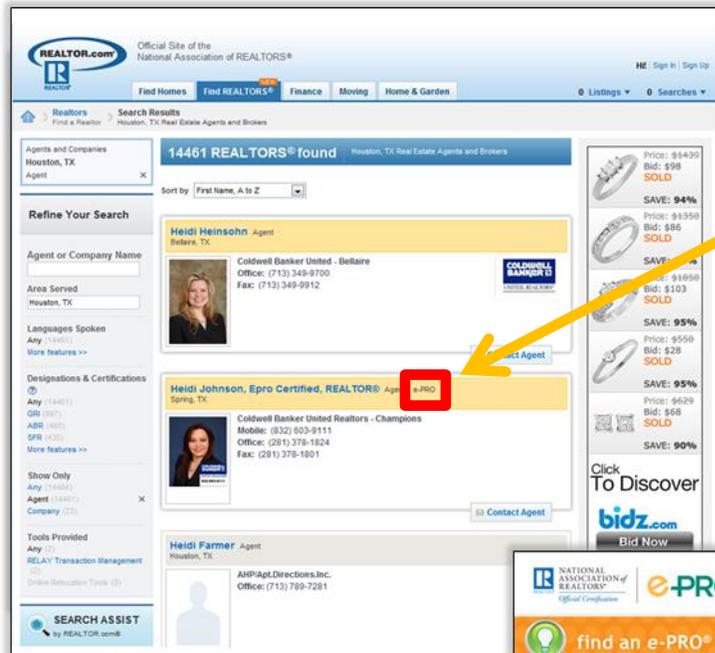
## Benefits

The benefits of becoming e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certified are multifold:

- > Usage of the e-PRO<sup>®</sup> logo and name
- > Differentiation at Realtor.org and the White Pages at Realtor.com
- > Customizable marketing materials
- > Online referral directory
- > Bi-monthly Newsletters
- > Downloadable certificate
- > Lapel pin available for purchase through the REALTOR<sup>®</sup> Team Store

For a visual representation of e-PRO<sup>®</sup> benefits, see Figure I.2.

Figure I.2: Visual Representation of e-PRO® Benefits



Differentiation as e-PRO® at White Pages at Realtor.com

Online referral directory



e-PRO® label pin



Customizable marketing materials

Networking with other e-PRO®s at Facebook and Twitter



## **NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> Certification Counts as Elective Credit for Other Programs**

Completing NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certification is a great way to get a head start on other designation and certification programs from the NAR. Students who successfully complete the requirements of NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certification and who are conferred the certification can use it as elective credit for the following programs.

- > Accredited Buyer's Representative (ABR<sup>®</sup>) designation
  - NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certification is an approved elective for the ABR<sup>®</sup> designation.
  - For more information, visit [www.REBAC.net](http://www.REBAC.net).
  
- > Certified Residential Specialist (CRS) designation
  - NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certification counts as 16 approved elective credits for the CRS designation.
  - For more information, visit [www.CRS.com](http://www.CRS.com).
  
- > Performance Management Network (PMN) designation
  - NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certification can be used to replace one PMN course credit.
  - For more information, visit [www.WCR.org](http://www.WCR.org).
  
- > Resort and Second-Home Property Specialist (RSPS) certification
  - NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certification counts as one elective course for NAR's RSPS certification.
  - For more information, visit [www.realtor.org/resort-and-second-home](http://www.realtor.org/resort-and-second-home).

# WHY NAR'S e-PRO® CERTIFICATION IS MORE RELEVANT THAN EVER

Technology has changed more in the last five years than it has in the last 50 years. It has fundamentally changed how people communicate in their day-to-day lives. The adoption of smart phones and mobile technology now enables us to be connected all the time, everywhere we go. The physical boundaries of time and space are now going away. As the saying goes: "If it's not on Facebook, it didn't happen."

Today's real estate professional needs to understand mobile technology and social networking skills as well as how to engage consumers using the wide variety of new communication venues. There is neither expectation nor desire for you to drop marketing and communication strategies that are currently working in your business. This course is designed to help you:

- > Understand the changes in consumer behavior and communication and
- > Integrate and utilize new technology to run a more effective and efficient business, which will ultimately help you:
  - Be more profitable
  - Have stronger, more trusted relationships with your clients and customers
  - Protect your license and your online reputation

# WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

## Day 1

The first day of the program will provide high-level Internet marketing and social media theory with practical suggestions for its implementation in a consistent manner. Although NAR's *Member Profile 2013* reveals that more than half of the members currently use social media,<sup>1</sup> most of our members are experimenting, with both positive and negative results from their efforts. Students will learn how to interact with their desired markets and to position themselves as trusted advisors and valued members of their online communities.

We will be studying the concepts of intellectual property, copyright, fair use, and plagiarism, as well as ways to protect the content you create. The tools available to real estate salespeople to market, brand themselves, and communicate with consumers are simple and easy to use, but like any tools, can cause damage if you're not careful. Students will learn where potential "land mines" are and how to avoid tripping them.

At the end of the first day, you will understand:

- > How and, more importantly, **why** interactive online strategies, including social media, were developed
- > How to use them responsibly in your business
- > For students who are social media and technology rookies, how to be prepared for an interactive online culture
- > For students who are already engaged in some form of social media interaction, how to craft an integrated business strategy

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<sup>1</sup> National Association of REALTORS®, *Member Profile 2013*, Chicago, IL.

Through instruction developed by the Social Media Marketing Institute (SMMI) on ethics, standards, site-specific protocols, reputation management, reputation measurement, and risk management processes, you will learn to engage with electronic tools in an ethical, effective, and productive manner that will positively impact your business. SMMI is a company that helps professionals and companies engage in social media and foster communication through open, honest, and consistent interactions between individuals and organizations.

You are going to get anxious to jump in and use social media tools during this class. BE PATIENT. Tools are tools; if you don't understand the rules and how to use the tools, the resulting impact can be far worse. Any mistakes you make in the online world are not only public, but also permanent. All of the people who are proficient and effective in using technology in their business do not use the same tools, or even use the tools they have in common in the same manner, but they all approach technology in the same way.

## **Day 2 Online**

On the second day of the program, available online exclusively through REALTOR® University, you will learn how to develop a social media strategy that is sustainable. You will also learn how to make yourself more mobile, more efficient, and more profitable by integrating technology into your current business.

We will address new or rich media (digital photos, videos, and audio files), operating an e-office using cloud computing tools, and a variety of free or low-cost Web applications to improve your business and enable you to work from virtually anywhere. We will talk about how you can organize your business to capture and convert consumer inquiries and direct them to the place where you tell them the “who, what, where, why, and how” of doing business with you. And we will talk about using social networks like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and others. The concepts discussed on the first day will help develop a more relevant understanding of the tools.

We will show you how to use the tools in an appropriate manner. You will learn best practices for utilizing social media as a business tool and how to facilitate your internal and external communication and marketing efforts. At the end of Day 2, you will be able to develop a comprehensive plan to implement a social strategy that allows you to reach your professional goals regardless of changes in software, hardware, or the online landscape. The goal is that you will have developed an approach for thinking about technology and how to use it to further your business while saving you money and time.

The self-paced learning modules in Day 2 include:

1. e-Strategy
  - Develop a Hub and Spokes strategy for your business to drive, capture, and convert potential customers and clients.
2. Content and SEO Strategy
  - Identify strategies for developing content.
  - Optimize your Hub so that consumers can find it on the Web.
  - Use analytics tools to measure consumer traffic to your Hub.
3. e-Office
  - Become familiar with cloud computing.
  - Learn how to use portable and mobile devices to do business anywhere, anytime.
4. Twitter and Foursquare (Microblogging and Geotagging)
  - Learn about location-based services and how they can help you engage with your chosen communities.

5. Rich Media

- Choose equipment to create still photos, video, and audio files to enhance your communication.

6. Technology Toolbelt

- Get up to speed on the latest hardware and applications.
- Identify hardware and applications that will enhance your business and make you faster, more efficient, and cost effective.

# 1. Connecting with the Modern Consumer

In this chapter:

- > Changing technologies, changing consumers
- > The crowded marketing space
- > The challenge of getting found
- > Reshaping how we think about marketing

## CHANGING TECHNOLOGIES, CHANGING CONSUMERS

Connecting with the modern consumer is about recognizing the ways technology has changed how the modern consumer digests content and communicates. It's also about recognizing how consumers have become marketing and advertising resistant.

Real estate professionals need to adapt their marketing strategies to overcome this resistance so they can connect with consumers and build relationships that are mutually beneficial. New communication channels need to be used in new ways to garner new results. Of course, using new channels for traditional types of marketing and advertising will not yield effective results. Real estate professionals need to learn how they can engage past, current, and potential clients and in so doing position themselves as trusted members of their online community and valued experts and advisors in their profession.

The ways real estate agents and other businesses have communicated with consumers have evolved a great deal over the last 100 years. We can divide this time span into three distinct periods, as shown in Figure 1.1.

**Figure 1.1: Differentiating Pre-Media, Mass Media, and New Media**

<b>Media Age</b>	<b>Marketing Scale</b>	<b>Marketing Reach</b>	<b>Marketing Tools</b>	<b>Consumer Access to Real Estate Info</b>	<b>Consumer Ability to Provide Agent with Feedback</b>
<b>Pre-Media (1900–1950)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One to one</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct</li> <li>• Local</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yard signs</li> <li>• Outdoor advertising</li> <li>• Direct mail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very limited access</li> <li>• Consumers relied on agents and brokerage firms for info</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback with agent's supervisor or shared opinions in local social venues</li> </ul>
<b>Mass Media (1950–2003)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One to many</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct</li> <li>• Local</li> <li>• National</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Billboard ads</li> <li>• TV and radio ads</li> <li>• Newspaper ads</li> <li>• Printed flyers</li> <li>• <i>Homes</i> magazines</li> <li>• Database lists</li> <li>• Static websites</li> <li>• E-mail campaigns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access</li> <li>• In 1990s, consumers could access info from websites of mortgage lenders, title insurance providers, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2000s, feedback shared with online communities</li> </ul>
<b>New Media (2003–present)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many to many</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct</li> <li>• Indirect</li> <li>• Local</li> <li>• National</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blogs</li> <li>• Social networks like Friendster, MySpace, and Facebook</li> <li>• Microblogs like Twitter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad access</li> <li>• Consumers do their own research for consulting professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback w/ friends on social networking sites</li> <li>• Consumers openly rate quality of agents at websites like Yelp</li> </ul>

# THE CROWDED MARKETING SPACE

With mass media marketing techniques, which are still employed today, each new form of one-to-many advertising creates “noise” in the advertising space, and each new effort adds to the noise created by the preceding technology. It’s practically impossible to drive more than 50 feet without encountering a billboard, bench ad, or banner, not to mention the commercials you’ll hear on the radio.

## Advertising Messages as Smog

In his 1997 book *Data Smog*,<sup>2</sup> David Shenk observed the increase in marketing impressions in the U.S.:

1971: Average American targeted by at least **560** advertising messages each day.

1991: The number of messages increased sixfold, to **3,000** messages per day.

In 2007, *New York Times* writer Louise Story reported that the number of advertising messages had increased to 5,000 a day,<sup>3</sup> and anecdotal information would have that number as high as 20,000 impressions per day. But we do not consider our experience as consumers as purposefully as we should. As shown in Figure 1.2, we are inconsistent in our actions because of the conventional marketing approaches we have been taught.

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<sup>2</sup> David Shenk, *Data Smog: Surviving the Information Glut* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Louise Story, “Anywhere the Eye Can See, It’s Likely to See an Ad,” *New York Times*, January 15, 2007.

**Figure 1.2: Analyzing Our Marketing Inconsistencies**

<b>As Consumers, We:</b>	<b>As Salespeople, We:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rely on digital video recorders like TiVo to skip commercials.</li> <li>• Subscribe to services like satellite radio to enjoy commercial-free music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy ad time on radio and TV and use infomercial shows on cable TV to reach consumers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain private telephone numbers and place ourselves on do-not-call lists.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach new salespeople to prospect by cold calling around new listings or sales.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Throw out junk mail without opening it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send out “Just Listed” and “Just Sold” cards, and other direct mail solicitations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use spam filters and delete unread e-mails to avoid ad messages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy e-mail lists and send out newsletters and e-flyers to consumers and colleagues.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement pop-up blockers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy online ads.</li> </ul>

## 1. Connecting with the Modern Consumer

Previously, the technology used to deliver our marketing and advertising messages was:

- > One way
- > Communicated asynchronously (not occurring at the same time)
- > Communicated in a broad, crudely targeted manner using billboards, mail, e-mail, etc.

Since your message was delivered in the medium you chose, in the manner you designed, at the time you scheduled, it showed little concern for the communication wants or desires of the consumer. This marketing approach is called ***interruptive marketing*** since the consumer's life is interrupted by your message.

Essentially, the message is shouted at the customer, with each new tool simply used to amplify the voice. As a result, marketers need to create a marketing funnel with a large number of attempts to communicate, so that a small number of people will notice the communication, a percentage of that small number will respond to it, and finally a small fraction of that percentage will contact you for your sales process to begin in earnest.

Consider the effectiveness of direct mail marketing. In 2012, direct mail campaigns that used letter-sized envelopes had an average response rate of 3.40 percent for a house list and 1.28 percent for a prospect list, according to the Direct Marketing Association.<sup>4</sup> That means that 97 people have to be interrupted to get three people to respond—*under the best of circumstances!*

Obviously, the funnel needs to be “fed” huge numbers of contacts in order to work, and as a result the cost of the leads generated this way is very, very expensive, without even considering the creative efforts needed to keep that funnel filled.

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<sup>4</sup> IWCO Direct, “2012 DMA Response Rate Report: Direct Mail Shows Well-Rounded Performance,” [www.iwco.com/blog/2012/07/11/dma-response-rate-report/#sthash.dolk2UYr.dpuf](http://www.iwco.com/blog/2012/07/11/dma-response-rate-report/#sthash.dolk2UYr.dpuf).

# THE CHALLENGE OF GETTING FOUND

Prior to the adoption of Internet data exchange (IDX) and virtual office website) VOW policies by our MLSs and the advent of listing syndication, consumers had little access to property data and real estate professionals were the gatekeepers of information about what was for sale and what had been sold.

In today's world, property data is everywhere. Within TREND MLS, for example, there are 1,000 IDX feeds, which feed 1,000 public-facing websites. In addition to those sites, some brokers and franchises syndicate the same properties to as many as 500 additional sites, not including the syndication of properties to portals like Zillow, Trulia, and Realtor.com. Since there are a finite number of consumers looking for property information and thousands of sites containing duplicate information, the real estate professional is really challenged to be found.

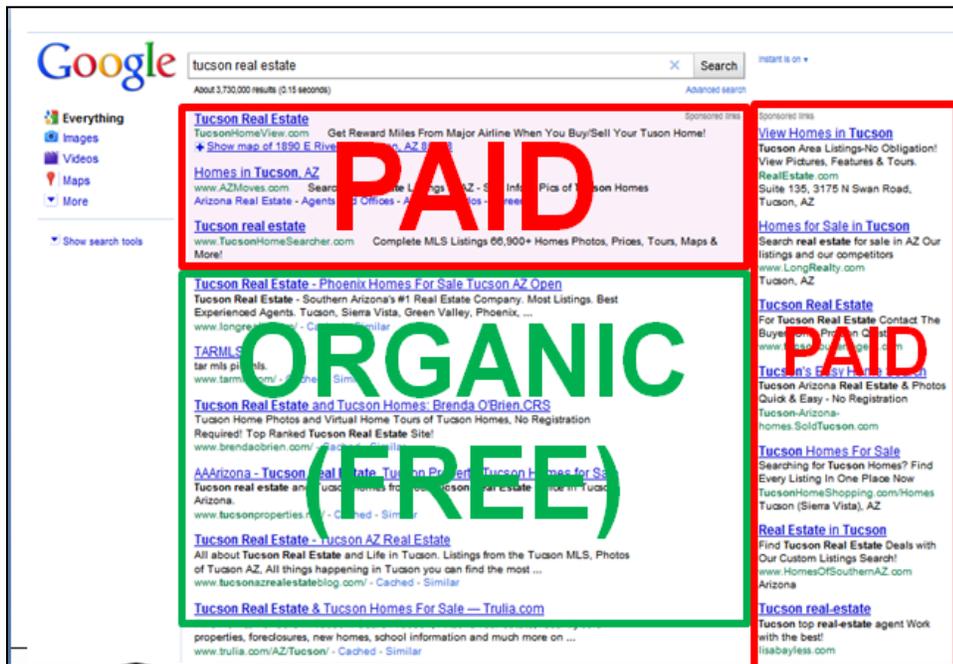
The sites of individual agents, with their feeds, not only have to compete with all other agents' sites, they have to compete with all company sites (which have larger promotional budgets), the national franchise sites (which have still larger budgets), all regional sites, and the real estate portals like AOL, Yahoo, Realtor.com, Zillow, and Trulia. This challenge forces us to think about search engine optimization (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM).

Efforts to make a website organically place or rank higher are called SEO. At Google, for example, organic placement relies upon the relevance of the content to the search phrase and the results appear in the center of the browser window (Figure 1.3).

Paying to have your website placed is called SEM. Using Google as an example again, the paid placement results in Figure 1.3 are located at the top and right side of the browser window.

## 1. Connecting with the Modern Consumer

Figure 1.3: Organic and Paid Placement at Google



Search engines depend on sophisticated algorithms to generate relevant organic responses to consumer searches whereas website owners and SEO experts manipulate specific website variables—URLs, titles, content, key words, and links—to “tilt the field,” that is, get their websites to rank higher.

Because learning how to maximize the organic placement of your site typically requires a high degree of technical expertise and considerable time, real estate agents hire SEO experts. Generally the work of SEO experts is not guaranteed, and because SEO efforts take time, agents typically make a considerable investment before seeing results.

And while SEM (also called pay per click, or PPC) has the advantage of providing immediate results, the benefit of the paid placement disappears as soon as you stop paying for it. Additionally, many consumers, being advertising averse, ignore paid ads.

# RESHAPING HOW WE THINK ABOUT MARKETING

## Permission-Based Marketing

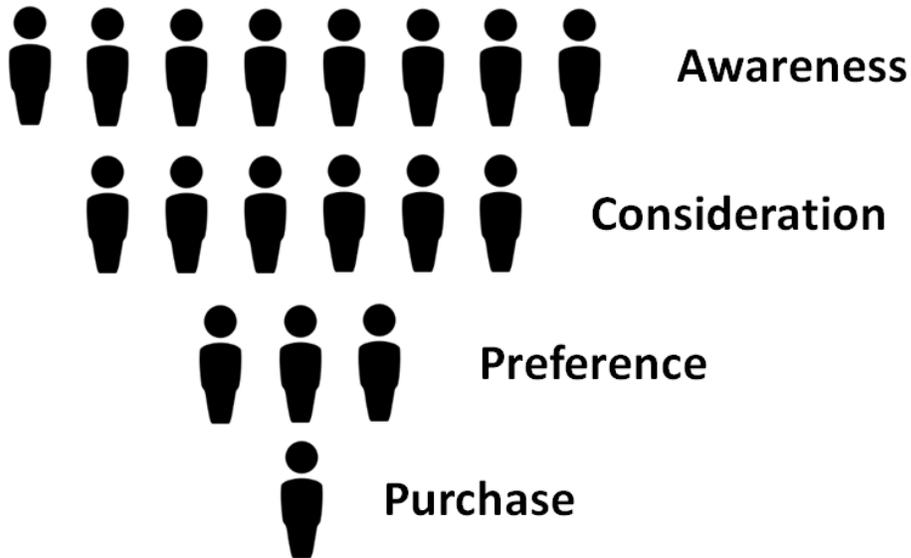
In 1999, Seth Godin wrote a book called *Permission Marketing: Turning Strangers into Friends, and Friends into Customers*.<sup>5</sup> Also called relationship marketing, this type of marketing inverts the many-to-one equation of interruptive marketing and makes it a few-to-many equation requiring substantial effort and expense to reach a small return.

In permission-based marketing, rather than creating an interruptive marketing funnel (as demonstrated in Figure 1.4), we create a top-down pyramid in which marketers interact with a small number of people and engage in meaningful dialogue with them, as shown in Figure 1.5.

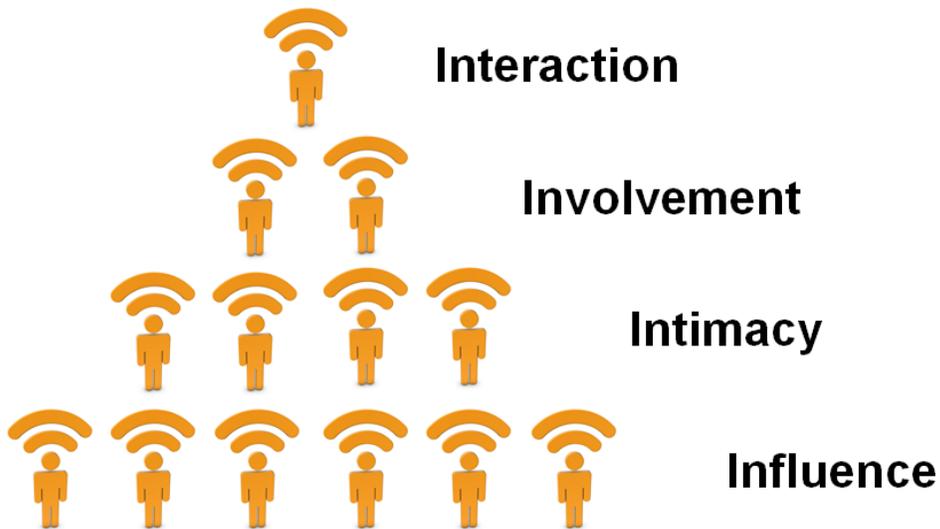
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<sup>5</sup> Seth Godin, *Permission Marketing: Turning Strangers into Friends, and Friends into Customers* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999).

**Figure 1.4: Interruptive Marketing**



**Figure 1.5: Permission-Based Marketing**



As relationships deepen, our community grows from individuals who want to hear our message—whatever that may be. We create involvement, then intimacy, and finally influence. As we create advocates and relationships for our business or service, we are not only making friends with potential customers, but also meeting our friends' friends and growing our sphere of influence and potential market. This is key to your e-marketing efforts. The permission can also come in the form of opting-in to your marketing, which accomplishes two things:

1. Your community is receiving valuable information on topics it has a genuine interest in.
2. You have a distribution list made of quality leads who are specifically interested in the services you provide.

With permission-based marketing, consumers are saved from awkward intrusion to their lives. Consumers obtain information on the topics they want in a format they prefer.

## ***The Cluetrain Manifesto***

In 1999, authors Christopher Locke, Rick Levine, Doc Searis, and David Weinberger asserted new marketing assumptions with their text, *The Cluetrain Manifesto*.<sup>6</sup> They noticed the conversations taking place online and created 95 theses, which they believed clearly defined the new realities of marketing. The first of these theses was “Markets are

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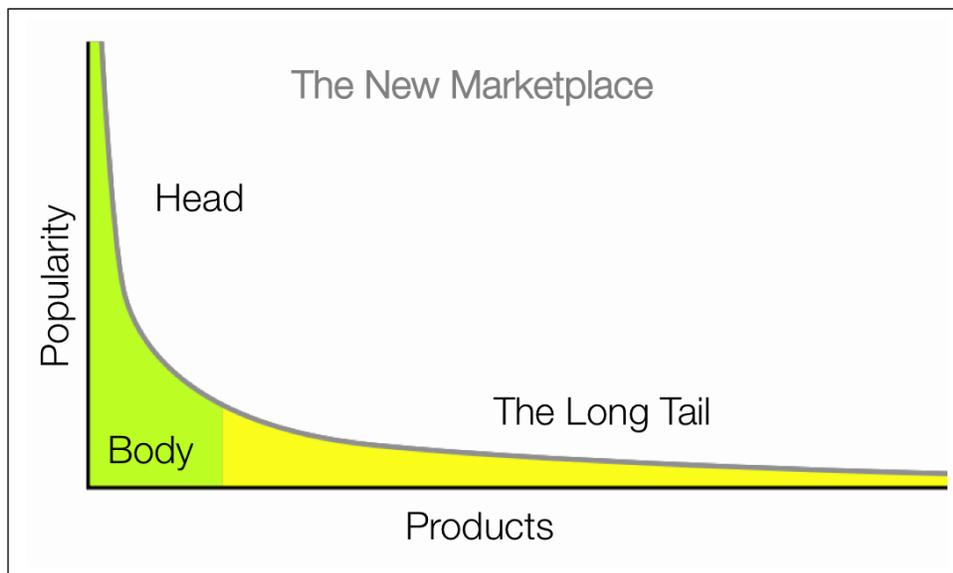
<sup>6</sup> Christopher Locke, Rick Levine, Doc Searis, and David Weinberger, *The Cluetrain Manifesto: The End of Business as Usual* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2000).

Conversations.” Now, instead of niche markets, we can talk about targeted conversations. And the conversations are happening every day everywhere in the world. An incredible amount of small communities are online and members of those communities are talking about their interests and what they care about, providing you an opportunity to find them and connect with them.

## The Power of the Long Tail

The third piece of the puzzle fell into place with the 2006 publication of Chris Anderson’s book, *The Long Tail*.<sup>7</sup> This text explained how the economics of the online world allowed the cumulative value of small communities (or low-demand markets) to outweigh the benefit of large communities (or high-demand markets) (Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6: Visualizing the Long Tail



According to Chris Anderson: “The theory of the Long Tail is that our culture and economy is increasingly shifting away from a focus on a relatively small number of ‘hits’ (mainstream products and markets) at the

<sup>7</sup> See Chris Anderson’s blog: *The Long Tail*, [www.longtail.com/the\\_long\\_tail/about.html](http://www.longtail.com/the_long_tail/about.html).

head of the demand curve and toward a huge number of niches in the tail.”

Anderson noted: “We are turning from a mass market back into a niche nation, defined now not by our geography but by our interests.” Calling the head of the graph the “bestseller bin,” and the tail the “infinite aisle,” Anderson quotes former music industry A&R Kevin Law who bluntly stated: “The biggest money is in the smallest sales.” This has led to the birth of hyper-local and other niche marketing strategies.

In the past, real estate agents who chose to work niche markets successfully adopted this type of strategy. Allan Domb, CRS, won national recognition as a high-value salesperson and created a highly successful company by choosing to specialize in only five condo buildings in Center City Philadelphia when buyers in that city were unfamiliar and somewhat uncomfortable with condominium ownership.

## PRACTITIONER SPOTLIGHT

### Allan Domb, CRS

- > Allan Domb, CRS
- > Allan Domb Real Estate
- > Philadelphia, PA



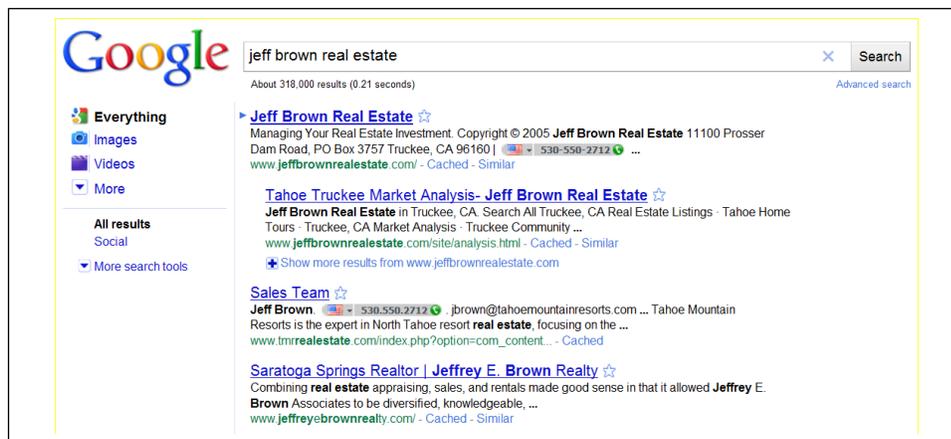
“We handle over 80% of the luxury condominiums in our farm. We want to become a one-street specialist, and become the very best on that street so that people will seek us out. That's the key.”

Source: Top Real Estate Strategies, Interview with a Top Producer: Allan Domb,  
<http://toprealestatestrategies.com/issue4.php>.

## 1. Connecting with the Modern Consumer

People who seek to connect with individuals who have specialized real estate needs can create an effective online strategy so they can be the real estate specialist when community members have a real estate need. A great example is Jeff Brown of San Diego, a real estate investment specialist and an active blogger. Jeff is faced with the challenge of a fairly common name (a search for “Jeff Brown real estate” delivers approximately 318,000 results, as shown in Figure 1.7).

**Figure 1.7: Search on Google for Key Terms  
“Jeff brown real estate”**



But when you search for “Jeff Brown real estate investments” (Figure 1.8), Jeff and his specialty show up as four of the top five organic results on Google—out of 1.9 million results.

**Figure 1.8: Search on Google for Key Terms  
“Jeff Brown real estate investments”**



Understanding these shifts is crucial for forward-thinking real estate professionals. Where traditionally salespeople and agencies battle over a neighborhood or a town, claiming to be “the best,” “Number 1,” the “Top Agent,” we now can:

- > Look for market segments that aren't necessarily bound by geography.
- > Make the members of that community our evangelists.
- > Build our referral base by concentrating on a high-return, niche market.

Traditionally, geography has defined the boundaries of our market. Agents would advertise on local billboards and in newspapers and magazines because the cost of advertising to a larger market was prohibitive. That is no longer the case. The Internet allows agents to advertise to a national audience for free or at a relatively low cost, and therefore agents can tailor their messages to consumers differently. This allows us to exploit the Long Tail and receive the benefit of the small communities as we discussed earlier.

If, for example, we are passionate about contemporary jazz, we can connect with people all over the world who share our passion. And by interacting with them in pursuit of our mutual interest, we create a relationship. Then, if they or their family or any other member of the group has a real estate need, they would naturally seek out our help.

## 2. The Social Media Revolution

In this chapter:

- > What is social media?
- > Identifying and engaging online communities
- > The social pieces of social media
- > Increasing the quality of your relationships

### WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

The term “social” is the newest catchphrase and its use is ubiquitous. There are *social* fantasy football applications and *social* weight-loss networks. If you hope to gather feedback from friends about an idea, you might *socialize* it. In practical terms, however, what does it mean for media to be social?

***Social media*** can be defined as primarily Internet and mobile-based tools for sharing and discussing information among humans.

With social media, users can foster real-time, real-life interaction. Social media includes different categories of websites like social networks, social bookmarking sites, social messaging sites, livestreaming sites, and file-sharing sites. See Figure 2.1.

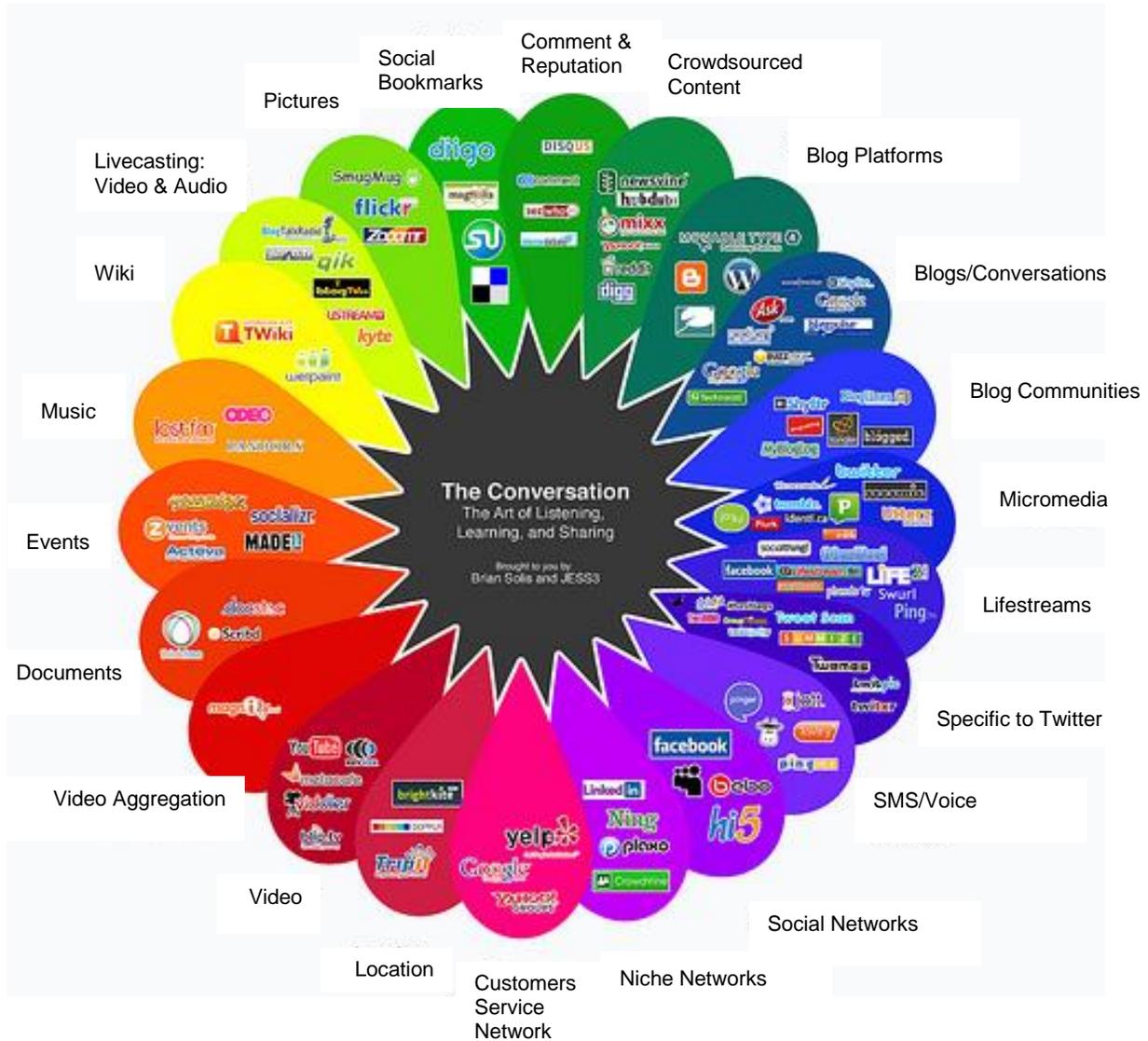
**Figure 2.1: Types of Social Media Sites**

Category	What Users Do at These Sites	Examples
Social networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share thoughts, activities, interests and events, and locations with others in their social network.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook</li> <li>MySpace</li> <li>LinkedIn</li> <li>Foursquare</li> <li>Blip.fm</li> </ul>
Social bookmarking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage and share links to articles and resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digg</li> <li>Reddit</li> <li>StumbleUpon</li> <li>Squidoo</li> </ul>
Social messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exchange brief written, audio, or video messages with others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Twitter</li> </ul>
Lifestreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aggregate and share their online social streams in one location.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friendfeed</li> </ul>
File sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute or provide access to electronic files they have created, such as photos or audio and video files.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flickr</li> <li>YouTube</li> <li>Vimeo</li> <li>Slideshare</li> <li>Scribd</li> <li>Pinterest</li> <li>Instagram</li> <li>Tumblr</li> </ul>

## 2. The Social Media Revolution

In the online world of many-to-many communications, social media sites like those identified in Figure 2.1 foster contact, connection, and most of all, communication. Brian Solis, a marketing and PR professional in the San Francisco area, created an infographic (Figure 2.2) illustrating how various social media outposts facilitate conversations. You can see the places where we listen, where we curate content, where we create content, and where we network.

**Figure 2.2: Social Media and the Conversation**



Source: Reprinted with permission of Brian Solis, *The Conversation Prism*, [www.theconversationprism.com](http://www.theconversationprism.com).

In recent years, consumer adoption of social media technology has reached critical mass. Consider the following statistics:

### **Adoption by consumers**

- > As of September 2013, Facebook reached 1.19 billion monthly active users.<sup>8</sup>
- > Launched in 2010, Pinterest now has 70 million users. Not surprisingly, Pinterest has surpassed Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit, and Google+ for referral traffic.<sup>9</sup>

### **Adoption by professionals and businesses**

- > LinkedIn has 259 million professionals worldwide, including all Fortune 500 companies.<sup>10</sup>

### **Amount of time consumers spend at social networking sites**

- > In the U.S., adults aged 18-64 spend an average of 3.2 hours using social media each day.<sup>11</sup>

### **Number of communications generated each day**

- > Twitter users generate an average of 500 million tweets each day.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "Facebook Newsroom Statistics,"

<http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=22>.

<sup>9</sup> "Pinterest Drives More Traffic to Publishers Than Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit Combined," <http://mashable.com/2013/10/15/pinterest-referral-traffic/>.

<sup>10</sup> LinkedIn. "About Us," <http://press.linkedin.com/about>.

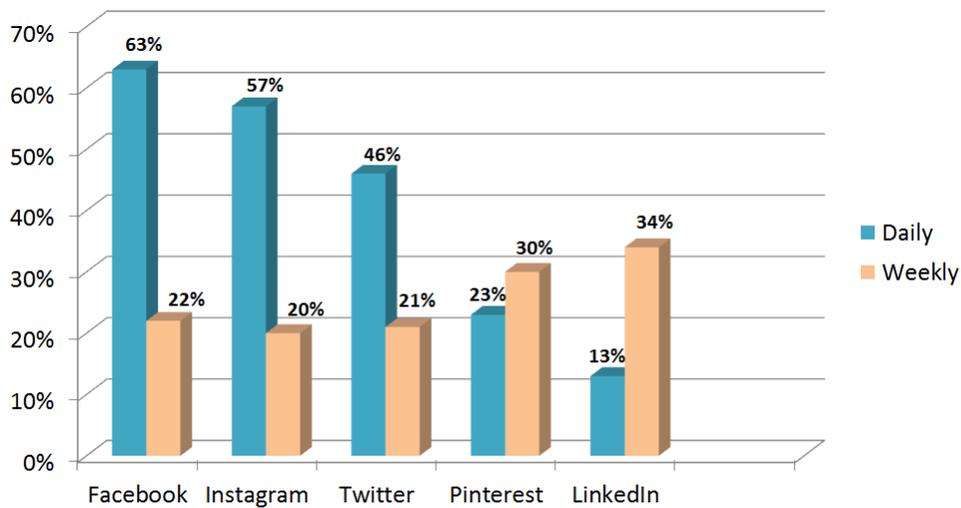
<sup>11</sup> "Social Networking Eats Up 3+ Hours Per Day For The Average American User," [www.marketingcharts.com](http://www.marketingcharts.com).

<sup>12</sup> "About Twitter, Inc.," <https://about.twitter.com/company>.

## 2. The Social Media Revolution

Pew research conducted in 2013 found that Facebook and Instagram had higher levels of user engagement than the other social networks studied (Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn) (see Figure 2.3). Nearly two-thirds of Facebook users report using the site daily. Of that number of users, 40% use Facebook multiple times each day. Less than a quarter of Pinterest users and only 13% of LinkedIn users visit the sites daily.

**Figure 2.3: Frequency of Social Media Site Use**



Source: Pew Research Center, "Social Media Update 2013," [www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Social-Media-Update.aspx](http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Social-Media-Update.aspx).

# IDENTIFYING AND ENGAGING ONLINE COMMUNITIES

The breadth and reach of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter allow real estate professionals to completely rethink the ways in which they prospect for clients. Using social media, real estate marketing farms are not necessarily geographic (e.g., “I am your Atlanta real estate expert!”), they can be demographic or interest driven (e.g., “I am a real estate professional who specializes in the Buckhead neighborhood and who is passionate about the restoration of historic homes and collecting 19<sup>th</sup> century American Victorian furniture.”)

When identifying your online community, don't restrict yourself to finding former clients and their friends and family members. Do think about other people you connect with. Look for people already in your community. For example:

- > Are you a photography buff? Consider finding a photography group at Flickr.
- > Do you volunteer your time helping others? See if you can connect with other volunteers online.
- > Do you serve on your school board? Check if there is a group at LinkedIn or on Facebook. If not, create one!
- > Are you an avid gardener? Think about finding or creating a Facebook group where you and other gardeners can share tips and resources.



## EXERCISE Who Is Your Target Online Community?

Identifying your target online community is essential for real estate professionals to be effective in their e-marketing efforts. Working on your own or in groups, answer the following questions:

1. Who are the people you want to reach?

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2. Do you already know them?  Yes  No

3. Are they a new demographic for you?  Yes  No

4. What are their interests?

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5. What are their concerns?

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6. Where can they be found, both online and offline?

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7. What are three actions you can take to put yourself in front of them online and offline?

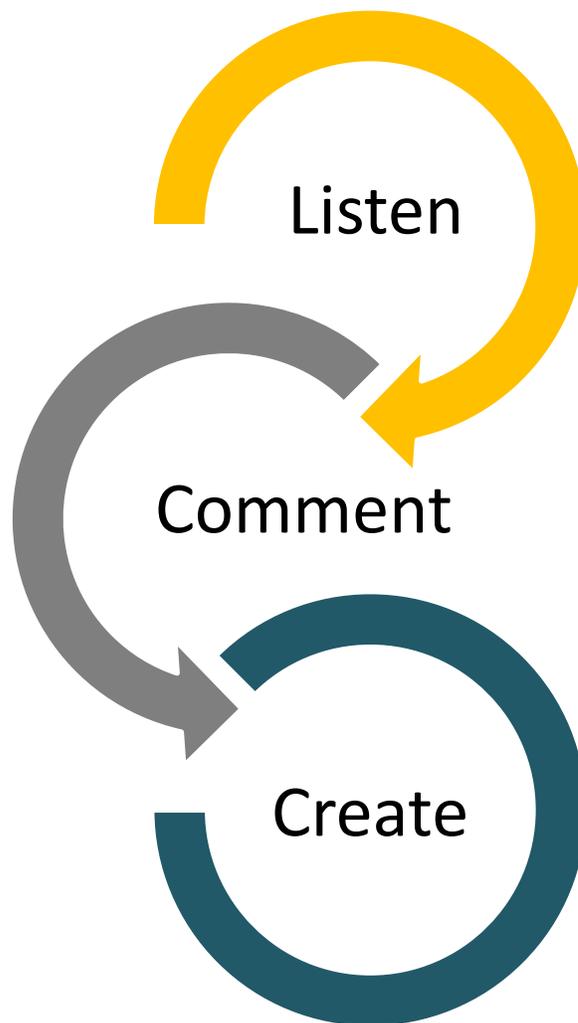
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Once you've identified your online community or communities, the next step is to engage members of those communities. Real estate professionals who wish to engage others thoughtfully, effectively, and successfully should consider the following rules: (1) Listen, (2) Comment, and (3) Create, as demonstrated in Figure 2.4.

**Figure 2.4: Rules of Engagement**



## 1. Listen

As always, the key to successful communication begins with listening. Using the sites we mentioned in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, observe, monitor, and learn. Oftentimes, people refer to “lurkers”—those who simply observe and who do not voice their opinions or create content. However, lurking is not necessarily a negative activity. The best ways to learn rules of online conduct—the social contract, which we’ll discuss later in this chapter—and become familiar with the personalities and players in a given space are to watch and listen.

## 2. Comment

After you listen for a while, you’ll begin to feel more comfortable in the community, and may begin commenting on the content created by others, continuing (and sometimes starting) the conversation. This allows you to build rapport, establish knowledge, and introduce yourself to the community. In blogging, this is particularly important as you can use the actual commenting section to become part of a particular blog’s community. Participating in Facebook groups or commenting on someone’s “pins” on Pinterest are all valuable forms of commenting.

## 3. Create

Now you’ve listened and are ready to get involved. The next step is really about you finding ways to establish yourself as a source of valuable information to the community. You could be sharing relevant, timely news you’ve found, offering advice or even commentary on different subjects. With each piece of content you create, you build your reputation, establish your expertise, and earn trust. Consistency in your messaging and delivery is key.

When thinking about your potential listeners, ask yourself the following:

- > How often they can expect fresh content?
  - Remember you are setting expectations here, so don't overpromise.
- > What options do they have for content delivery?
  - Do they have to go straight to the source?
  - Can they subscribe?
  - Get e-mail updates?
- > What types of content can they expect on different platforms?
  - For example, if you are a blogger, your blog may contain more commentary and market information, whereas on Facebook you're sharing more local news stories and information. While your readers may cross over from one platform to another, you're creating an expectation and your audience is becoming more familiar with where information can be found.

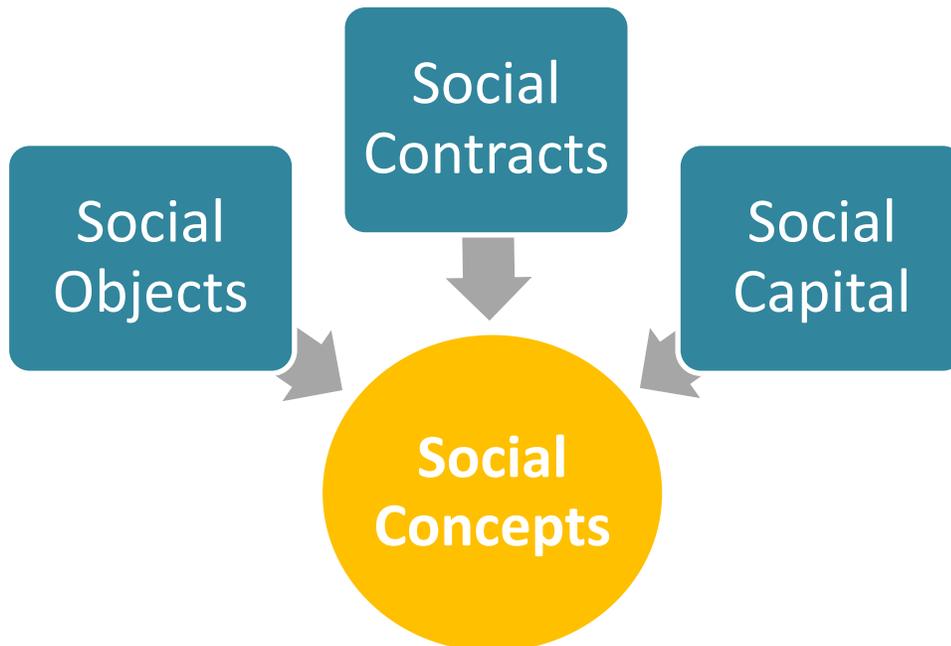
Keep in mind that *every action you take* affects your reputation because your actions shape how people see you. With traditional marketing, we're accustomed to shaping the image we want others to see and we have no immediate feedback. With social media, the feedback is almost instantaneous. We know how people see us because they're commenting on the content we create. We can take that feedback and compare it to how we see ourselves—creating insight and the opportunity to adjust our message much quicker.

# THE SOCIAL PIECES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Successful social media engagement comes from building relationships with people and having them care about you, sharing in your successes, and sympathizing with your setbacks. To accomplish that in a thoughtful manner, we need to understand what binds people together, what the terms of the relationship will be, and how we make ourselves valued to the community and its members. To do that, we're going to work with three social concepts as shown in Figure 2.5:

1. Social objects
2. Social contracts
3. Social capital

**Figure 2.5: Understanding Social Objects, Social Contracts, and Social Capital**



## Social Objects

Social objects are the connectors in the online world. They are the places where our lives coincide with the lives of the people with whom we want to interact. Social objects also will be the first topics of conversation.

A social object is anything two people have in common that they can talk about and bond over. It could be a sports team, a favorite food, a place you grew up, or the high school you attended. It could be living in the same neighborhood or having children in the same school or a preference toward a type of music. It might even just be the same opinion in a discussion, but it *is* a common interest.

Some social objects are simple, like a shared movie, book, or television show. Some are more complex, like attending the same high school or college or working in the same company. These social objects have layers of relationships and common experiences within a larger social object.

The more complex the social object, the more handles you have for discussion. Because you had a common experience, you relate to one another. The emotional impact of the object may also come into play. For example, if you have battled an illness, suffered a trauma, or achieved a great success, the emotional impact of that social object creates a strong bond and a common ground for discussion. This common ground is the beginning of a relationship. Think about how you connect with a potential client. Finding some common ground always puts both of you at ease and can predispose people to like you and trust you, thus giving you an opportunity to exert influence. If you own a home, you have the social object of the home-buying experience with your client.



## EXERCISE What Are Other Social Objects?

As students in this class, you have three social objects in common: (1) you are real estate professionals, (2) you are interested in technology, and (3) you are working toward NAR's e-PRO<sup>®</sup> certification. However, what other objects do you share? Working in groups:

- Ask one member to keep a record of the social objects you discuss.
- Track the social objects shared by members in your group.

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## Social Contracts

In the social media revolution, the term *social contract* refers to the unspoken, unwritten, unilateral set of rules each of us creates for our engagement on social media sites.

Participants on social networking platforms have their own set of rules by which they conduct themselves. For example:

- > Some people will only become friends with people they know.
- > Others will have a looser social contract and will “friend” anyone they can.
- > Some people talk about religion and politics.
- > Others will avoid those topics resolutely.

You have to decide which parameters work best for you while recognizing and respecting the boundaries of others. While this can be difficult due to the unstated nature of these rules, and it can sometimes be difficult to perceive exactly where those lines lie, it's always best to err on the side of caution and civility.

## Social Capital

Social capital is the currency of not only the social media world but also the physical world. It is what makes us predisposed to like or dislike people we meet. Though you may not have thought about it in an analytical manner, you see it in every interaction you have with people in your community.

Simply put, the things we do for others build social capital; when we ask for things from others, we spend social capital.

## 2. The Social Media Revolution

You have to earn social capital before you spend it. Most people have a favorite aunt, the one who always brings something when she comes to visit, always has an encouraging word for you, and always seems to do the right thing. And most people all have “that” cousin—the one who always wants to borrow tools, books, money, or *something*, the one who never remembers your birthday but always makes a point of reminding you when it’s his or hers. We would do anything for the aunt, willingly and happily, no matter how difficult, while any request from the cousin, no matter how small, is just plain irksome. We all have friends who constantly do things for others, and friends who are “takers,” constantly holding out their hands. Which friend are you more likely to do a favor for? That’s social capital at work.

Online, the impact of a request, which is public, permanent, and can be read not only by your sphere of influence but also by your sphere’s sphere and so on, means that your social capital is even greater. That’s why it’s so important to “give” to your selected community without asking for anything in return; it allows you to build social capital, which builds your reputation, creating trust, which in turn leads to influence.

Providing information, sharing resources, or even providing moral support are important ways to contribute and build social capital. For example, if your community is concerned about the impact of high property taxes, as a real estate professional, you might provide information on the assessment process and the tax appeal process. You also might direct your community where to find further information—such as links to appropriate municipal and/or county websites. People value thoughtfulness and generosity of spirit. Participation in the community and addressing the needs of that community and its members, without anticipation of repayment or obligation, build social capital by showing how important the community is to you. In return for your regard and concern, the community increases its regard for you.

Accumulating social capital is like building a savings account. Every online action builds or withdraws social capital, and accumulating a substantial amount of social capital takes time and thought.

## INCREASING THE QUALITY OF YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

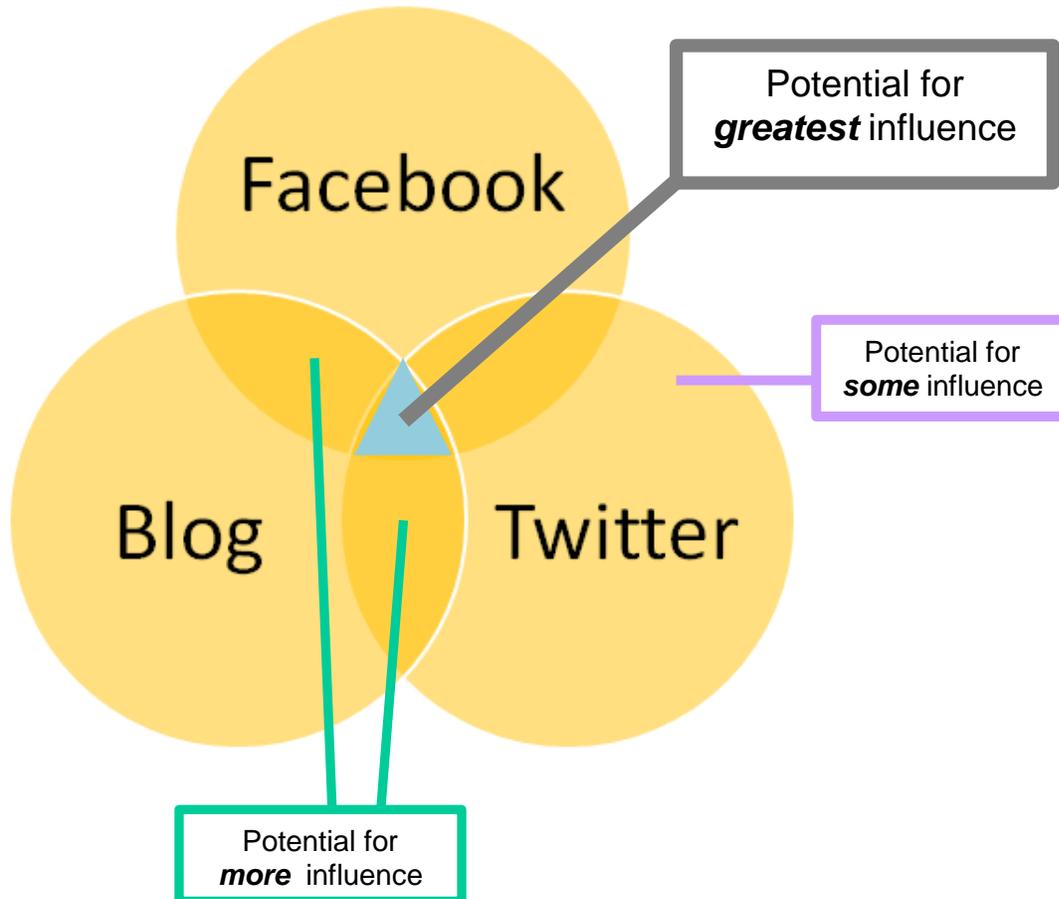
If you're a member of some niche communities, you may be the only real estate professional in those communities. As you build your reputation by becoming a valued member of a community, other community members will keep you in mind when they or someone they know is looking for the services you provide. The more you have in common with someone, the deeper your relationship with that person becomes.

For example, if you know someone because your children go to the same school, you might smile and nod when you see each other. If you also see him or her every time you go grocery shopping, you probably feel comfortable enough to say hello and talk a little. If you both are members of the same gym, your relationship may deepen to friendship.



The same holds true for the online space as well; the more places you're connecting with someone, the greater your influence will be. If you are friends with someone on Facebook, connected on LinkedIn, and being followed by that person on Twitter, you have a greater share of his or her attention and are therefore more likely to have that person click your links, look at your pictures, read your posts, and be aware of your activities (Figure 2.6).

**Figure 2.6: Understanding the Relationship of Connections and Influence**



## Now That We're Friends, What's the ROI?

A successful business has a balanced marketing strategy. As we explained in the Introduction of this course, this certification is not about abandoning all of your traditional marketing in favor of social media. So if you're doing something that works, keep doing it. But you should always be evaluating what marketing efforts are bringing you the highest return. Which efforts are bringing you the most leads or referrals? Those are the pieces of your marketing strategy that should be kept.

The modern marketing campaign is symbiotic with the intended audience; the content you create—blog posts,

website copy, brochure text—informs and empowers them, and the trust and influence you get from them are equally informative and empowering.

When we talk about ROI in marketing, most people think of return on investment, which is defined as:

“A performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency of an investment or to compare the efficiency of a number of different investments. To calculate ROI, the benefit (return) of an investment is divided by the cost of the investment; the result is expressed as a percentage or a ratio.”<sup>13</sup>

In the interactive Web, we now talk about a different ROI—return on *influence*.

Return on **Influence** (ROI) can be defined as the benefits to your business, which are derived from your influence with your online community.

Earlier the diagram illustrating how we grow our online communities shows us that the growth of the community itself can be a function of our online influence. The use of all of the social concepts is targeted at building this influence.

The measurability of social marketing efforts has been the subject of debate since businesses began using them. Measuring social media is challenging. The wide variety of tools and networks makes it difficult to develop a comprehensive view of the reach of social marketing efforts. There are a number of tools to help you measure followers, links, and impressions. The majority of these tools only measure one or two things; they do not help users see a complete picture of social marketing campaigns, particularly across a variety of different social platforms. The truth is that there are ways to measure influence—they're just not directly tied to money. Social marketing efforts are frequently used to

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<sup>13</sup> [www.investopedia.com/terms/r/returnoninvestment.asp](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/returnoninvestment.asp).

develop and enhance relationships or to create awareness, but the actual sales transaction occurs in a different venue. Social networks are a communication channel. Measuring the ROI can be akin to measuring the ROI of using your e-mail inbox. It is an essential communication channel, but not necessarily the vehicle to make a sale.

### **It's Nice to Meet You**

It's important to remember that your online efforts need to be enhanced by your offline efforts. If you are connected with people online, at some point a balanced strategy would be to meet them offline. In fact, without the offline meeting, business goals are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Consider viewing your entire online engagement as the prelude to your offline meeting. Like the precooked gourmet meals at the grocery store, taking them home and adding just a little warmth make them much better than they would be if you took them home and ate them "as is."

The simplest way to connect with your online community in face-to-face offline situations is to attend existing events promoted by others on their Facebook pages, in their tweets, and on sites like Meetup.com. But if you want to direct the offline conversation you might choose to create your own offline encounters.

There are a number of ways to create offline encounters.

1. You can attend local meetings of your group—whether it's a hobby group, a civic group, or a sporting event.

2. You can create events, but their purpose should be consistent with your community's interests.
  - Meetup.com, a service famous for facilitating offline events, is filled with investment clubs, home buyer or seller seminars, and other sales-oriented groups.
  - An important note: Be sure **NOT** to use events as a selling platform.
3. Do something spontaneous! For example:
  - Create a Tweetup (an informal, in-person gathering organized via Twitter) by telling people when and where you're going to be.
  - Attend a Tweetup.
  - By doing either of the above on a regular basis, you can create something as effective as the East Valley Friday Night event in the Phoenix area, which has grown from a meeting of a few people on a Friday night to an event with hundreds of people each week.

Once you've met the members of your community, you will have increased your social capital, created social objects in the time you spend together, and become the "go to" person for all of their real estate needs as well as those of their friends.

# 3. Reputation Creation

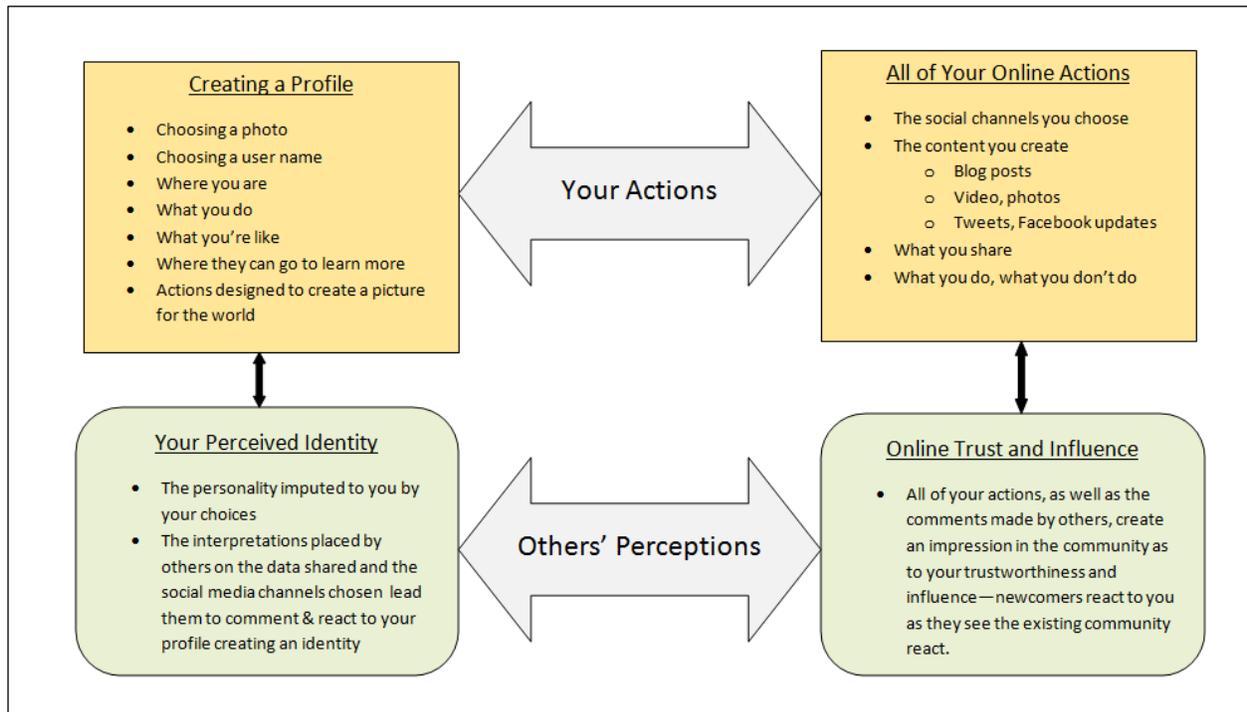
In this chapter:

- > Your online reputation
- > Choosing your name
- > Choosing your avatar/image
- > Creating your profile

## YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION

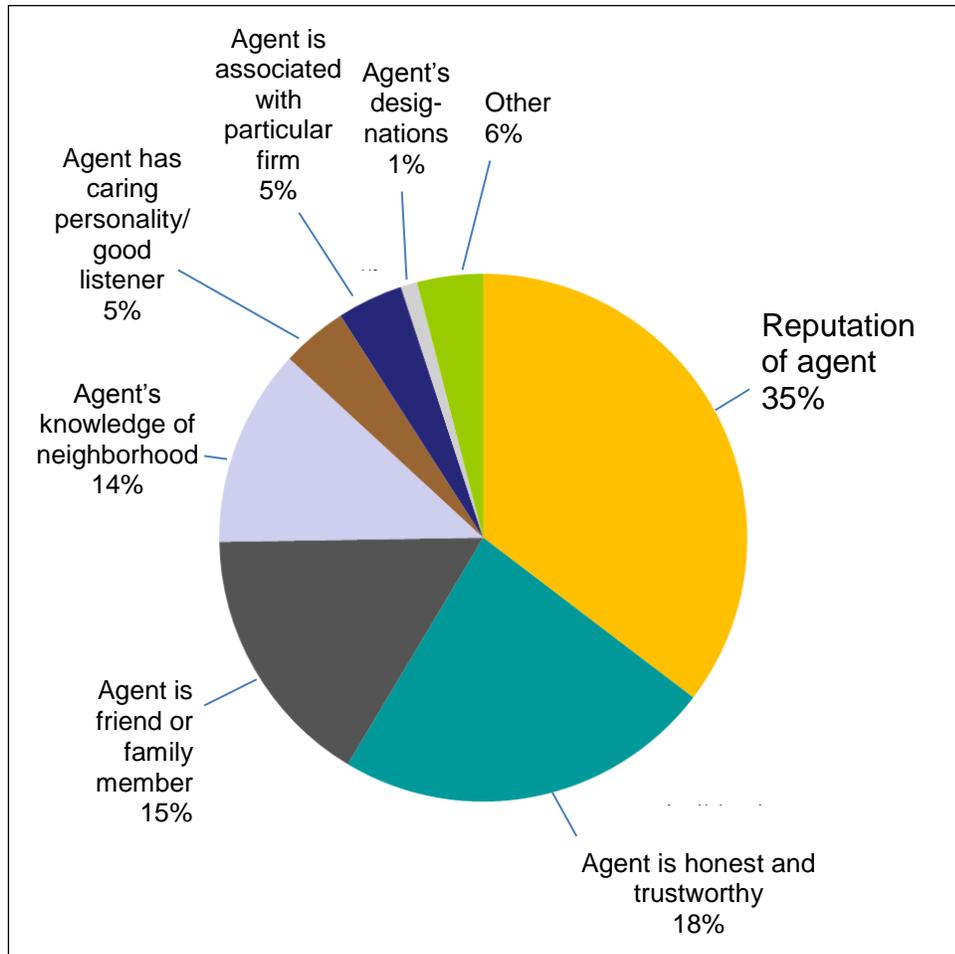
In the online world, everything—the social media platforms and communities in which you choose to participate, the profile that you create, the information you provide as a community member, and the avatar you select—generates a picture of who you are to the people in your online community, as well as those with whom you have not interacted. For example, as shown in Figure 3.1, what you share, what you do, what you don't do, and what others say about you and your actions contribute to your online reputation.

**Figure 3.1: The Reputation Cycle**



And let's face it, in the world of real estate, one's reputation matters. NAR's *2013 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers* shows that agent reputation was the leading factor—35%—for sellers when choosing their agent (Figure 3.2).

**Figure 3.2: Most Important Factor in Choosing a Real Estate Agent to Sell Home**



Source: *2013 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers*, (Chicago, IL: National Association of REALTORS®, 2013).

Creating a consistent profile is an important part of launching your social media strategy and making sure that you engage people in the manner you desire. The basics start with choosing your name and image.

# CHOOSING YOUR NAME

Choosing your name or handle is a very personal process, and there is no right way to choose one, as a brief glance at the most successful individuals in social marketing reveals. Because Twitter is the most difficult place to choose a handle, the following suggestions show how people active in social media have made choices to be found in that space.

## ***Use first and last name***

Chris Brogan	@chrisbrogan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media and marketing professional</li> <li>• Author of <i>Trust Agents</i> and other books</li> </ul>
Jason Falls	@jasonfalls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media and marketing professional</li> <li>• Nationally renowned speaker and blogger</li> </ul>
Brian Solis	@briansolis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public relations professional</li> <li>• Creator of the Conversation Prism graphic</li> </ul>

## ***Use pseudonyms***

Laura Fitton	@pistachio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public relations and marketing professional</li> </ul>
Laurel Papworth	@silkcharm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Zealand-based social media and marketing professional</li> </ul>
Tara Hunt	@missrogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media and marketing professional</li> <li>• Author of <i>The Power of Social Networking</i></li> </ul>

***Use shortened variants of first and/or last names***

Paul Chaney	@pchaney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media and marketing professional</li> <li>• Author of <i>Realty Blogging, The Digital Handshake</i> and other books</li> <li>• Member of the SMMI Advisory Board</li> </ul>
Teresa Boardman	@tboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. Paul-based broker and REALTOR®</li> <li>• Photographer</li> <li>• Member of the SMMI Advisory Board</li> </ul>

***Use first name***

Ines Hegedus-Garcia	@ines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miami-based broker and REALTOR®</li> <li>• Speaker</li> <li>• Member of the SMMI Advisory Board</li> </ul>
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If you have a unique name or nickname in the physical world, you should probably at least consider using it. Because the concept of personal branding has become so popular since its introduction in 1980, real estate practitioners have a tendency to gravitate toward pseudonyms that they feel are consistent with their brand. Using a pseudonym, company name, or franchise name as part of your handle affects your online identity and is something that should be carefully considered. You will need to change your handle if at some point your marketing direction changes or you move to a different brokerage. Due to the permanent nature of the content published on the Internet as well as the time and effort involved in growing your online reputation, either of the above could be quite problematic.

Using the name of a company or a franchise, and investing significant energy in creating a personal brand in the social media space would require you to cease using the name of the company or the franchise should you change companies or franchise affiliation. Even a merger or acquisition of a firm might restrict your use of a handle you spent a lot of time building equity in. So before you choose your handle, remember that you need to choose a name that you control. Your name or handle defines you to new acquaintances and should not limit you in their perception.



## PRACTICAL TIPS

### Choosing Your Twitter Handle

- > Use the name of your brokerage as part of your handle if it is **your** brokerage (you are the principal).
- > Don't use your brokerage if you are a salesperson—you may change brokerage firms.
- > As much as possible, keep your handle brief.
- > A long handle (e.g., @well\_built\_homes\_in\_Anchorage) actually limits your ability to use the tool. Twitter is only 140 characters per post (i.e., tweet), so a long handle will use up many of those characters.
- > Underscores in a name can be a real challenge.
- > Be in compliance with the usage of all trademarks, including the REALTOR® trademark, which we will address further in this chapter.

## Check Out Namechk.com

Namechk.com (Figure 3.3) is a website that helps you gauge the availability of your username or handle.

- > Go to [www.namechk.com](http://www.namechk.com).
- > Use variations of your username/handle as described previously and select “chk.”
- > If your username or handle is “taken” (already in use), it will be noted in red; if it is available, it will be noted in green.

**Figure 3.3: Determining Availability of a Handle at Namechk.com**

The screenshot shows the Namechk.com interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the handle 'kshort' and a 'chk' button. Below the search bar, there are links for 'Show Most Popular' and 'Sort by Name'. To the right, there is a brief explanation of the service: 'Check to see if your desired *username* or *vanity url* is still available at dozens of popular Social Networking and Social Bookmarking websites. Promote your brand consistently by registering a username that is still available on the majority of the most popular sites. Find the best username with **namechk**.' Below this, there are links for 'Blog' and 'About Us'.

The main content is a grid of 40 items, each representing a different platform. Each item consists of a platform icon, the platform name, and the availability status. The status is 'available' (green) or 'taken' (red). The platforms listed are: Google, hi5, eSnips, Jamendo, Facebook, newsvine, Snooth, brightkite, YouTube, bebo, ThisText, Virb, eBay, funnyordie, mibx, tipd, wikipedia, Gather, DailyBooth, Corkd, MySpace, Good Reads, PictureTrail, 12seconds.tv, Wordpress, Kongregate, diigo, CopyTaste, eHow, reddit, Blip.fm, Dropjack, twitter, delicious, Revver, WUAH, photobucket, Posterous, Families.com, Jaiku, Flickr, foursquare, blogTV, Picasa, LinkedIn, Viddler, FFFFFound!, Elgg.org, Hulu, plaxo, Soup.io, Odeo, Vimeo, Current, Aviary, Blogmarks, Blogger, Vox, Qik, AudioBoo, tumblr, Xanga, Tripit, rzye, ning, blip.tv, vi.sualize.us, Skribit, Digg, Multiply, Zoomr, Plime, Squidoo, Technorati, Shelfari, Bambuser, DailyMotion, SoundCloud, ibibo, claimid, LiveJournal, Livevideo, netvibes, Gnolia, Disqus, Tribe, Skyrock, YouAre, Etsy, Fotolog, Propeller, aNobii, iLike, behance.net, Faves, GRAZEit, Flixster, Netlog, authorSTREAM, and Yotify.

Source: Reprinted with permission from Namechk.com, [www.Namechk.com](http://www.Namechk.com).

## ***Protect the REALTOR® Trademark***

As members of the National Association of REALTORS®, you must be in compliance with NAR's policy on the use of the word REALTOR® on the Internet, whether in the choice of a domain name, a blog title, an electronic business card, or any other use in electronic communications.

Reprinted from REALTOR.org, here is a brief list of the principal rules affecting use of the REALTOR® marks in domain names:

1. The term REALTOR®, whether used as part of a domain name or in some other fashion, must be used with a member's name or a member's firm name.
2. The term REALTOR® may not be used with descriptive words or phrases. For example, Number1realtor.com, numberone-realtor.com, chicagorealtors.org or realtorproperties.com are all incorrect.
3. The term REALTOR® should never be used to denote an occupation or business. Do not combine words like "your," "my," "our" or any descriptive words or phrases between your name and the membership mark. JaneDoeMyRealtor.com and YourChicagoRealtorJohnDoe.com are examples of improper use.
4. For use as a domain name or e-mail address on the Internet the term REALTOR® does not need to be separated from the member's name or firm name with punctuation. For example, both johndoe-realtor.com and johndoerealtor.com would be correct uses of the term as a part of domain names and jdoe\*realtors@webnetservices.com and jdoerealtors@webnetservices.com are both correct uses of the term as part of an e-mail address.
5. The REALTOR® block R logo should not be used as hypertext links at a website as such uses can suggest an endorsement or recommendation of the linked site by your Association. The only exception would be to establish a link to the National Association's website, REALTOR.org, or its official property listing site, REALTOR.com.

The public has adopted the use of all lowercase letters when writing domain names, even those containing trademarks. Therefore, for purposes of domain names and Internet addresses only, there is an exception to the rule on capitalization of the term REALTOR® and it may appear in lowercase letters.

## CHOOSING YOUR AVATAR/IMAGE

Choosing your avatar (your image) to represent you is also something that requires more thought than may seem obvious at first glance.

- > Whenever possible, choose photos of yourself, not logos or an inanimate object. Remember, consumers want to be connected and friends with **people**, not objects.
- > Choose photos that are appropriate for the social media venue:
  - With LinkedIn, your photo should be professional.
  - With Facebook, your image can be less formal.
- > Regardless of the venue you choose, bear in mind that the photo you choose is the first impression that people have of you.

## CREATING YOUR PROFILE

Your profile should tell a story about you. It needs to be complete, so you need to identify who you are, where you work (paying attention to the license requirements of your state), what interests you want to share with your community, and what preconception about you may be created by someone reading those interests. (See Figure 3.4 for an example.) Whether you have room for 140 characters or 500 words, any online profile you create should always tell people who you are, where you are, what you do, what you're like, and where they can go to learn more.

Figure 3.4: Twitter Profile for Tony Lazzari



The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter profile for Tony Lazzari. On the left is a profile picture of a man in a suit. To the right of the picture, the name 'Tony Lazzari' is displayed in bold, followed by the handle '@TonyLazz'. Below the handle is a bio: 'Naperville|Empty nesting Dad|Realtor w/ an appetite for tech|acerbic wit at times|spiritual|road cycling|family|pizza|market stats intrigue me|verbal repartee.' and 'Naperville, IL <http://MyNapervilleHomesBlog.com>'. To the right of the bio is a 'Follow' button with the Twitter bird icon. Below the button, the statistics are listed: '14,439 TWEETS', '1,944 FOLLOWING', and '3,220 FOLLOWERS'.

Source: Reprinted with permission of Tony Lazzari, GRI, e-PRO®, [www.twitter.com/tonylazz](http://www.twitter.com/tonylazz).

## 4. Intellectual Property and Ethics on the Web

In this chapter:

- > Intellectual property
- > Copyright and fair use
- > Protecting your content and respecting others
- > Website and blogging policies
- > Blogging ethics
- > Social media land mines

### INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

In today's electronic world, most consumers believe that anything on the Internet that is not blocked from being copied is theirs to use in any manner they see fit. As widespread as this notion is, it is a severe misconception.

With real estate agents creating blog posts, digital photographs, and video and audio recordings, there are a number of issues that arise from the creation of such content without contracts or agreements in place to determine who has the rights to use and re-use such material.

***Intellectual property*** is the physical expression of ideas contained in books, music, plays, movies, and computer software.

While real estate professionals are not generally thought of as artists or authors, we do frequently create intellectual property. Every time we take a photo in a customer's house, questions regarding who owns that picture are raised.

#### 4. Intellectual Property and Ethics on the Web

- > Do homeowners own the photo of their property because you are taking the photo as their agent?
- > Do you own the photo because you took it?
- > Does the broker or does the company own the photo because of your affiliation with them?

Though there are guidelines for the creation of what is called “work product,” the independent contractor relationship as well as the existence of other contracts with buyers and sellers make this a less than simple question.

Knowing that the question can be raised should enable you to craft an agreement (with your attorney’s assistance), which determines who owns the work product when that photo is taken. In some companies, the listing contract spells out the relationship of the owner, the agent, and the broker, detailing who has the ownership of the intellectual property created. In the absence of such an agreement, if an associate were to leave a firm and there were bad feelings, the owner of the firm might insist that the photos remain with the company, even if the listing expired and was moved. As in any other business situation, a formalized agreement between the parties is perhaps the best way to address this issue before it becomes a problem.

## Plagiarism

Put simply, plagiarism occurs when you copy someone’s work and present it as your own. While plagiarism is not illegal, REALTORS® who are found to have plagiarized another’s work might find themselves in violation of Article 12 (the “true picture” article, which we will discuss in more detail shortly) because they are presenting less than a “true picture” in their communications.

Consider this example: Al, a real estate licensee, is excited to start blogging and wants to establish himself as the local real estate expert in his town. In researching information for his blog, he finds a detailed history of the town’s early settlers at a municipality.gov website. Because

the content isn't attributed to an author, AI copies and pastes the content to his blog without explaining that this is a section of his blog he didn't write. In this example, AI has plagiarized the content of another.

## Proper Attribution

To avoid plagiarism, you must provide proper attribution; that is, you must make it clear when you are using material or presenting an idea that you have not created. Guidelines include:

- > Any time you source someone else's words or ideas, that person **MUST** be given credit by you linking to his or her thought or quote.
- > Merely saying "I read this in *USA Today*" doesn't cut it; you must refer or link to the specific article.
- > When quoting someone else's material, writers are recommended to put their words in quotes or in block quotes.
- > In the U.S., there is legal precedence for use of content, but there is no law specifically stating how many words, characters, or percentage you may use before it is considered copyright infringement. The safest guideline is to source very clearly who created the content and where it is from via link.
- > If the owner of content requests that you remove the content, we would recommend that you do so immediately to avoid litigation. You may be able to find another source or another way to make the statement you need to make.

Providing proper attribution avoids the problem of plagiarism, but it does not give you **permission** to use someone else's creation, which leads us to the concept of copyright.

## Copyright

Copyright is frequently misunderstood, and since we are not attorneys, we are only going to provide you with the broadest understanding of the principles involved.

Copyright infringement is a legal issue. Copyright infringement occurs when works protected by copyright are used without consent.

It is a misunderstanding that registration is required to copyright. According to the U.S. Copyright Office: “No publication or registration or other action in the Copyright Office is required to secure copyright.”<sup>14</sup> Copyright is secured automatically upon creation.

As a real estate professional, you should assume that **everything** you see on the Web is copyrighted, unless you have reason to believe otherwise.

You should also assume that just mentioning the name of the creator of the content when reusing or reprinting the content is not sufficient. You need to have written permission, which is often granted as a result of a simple courteous request.

## Fair Use

Others may use works protected by copyright under the concept of *fair use*, which allows you to use portions of the work without asking permission of the owner. The U.S. Copyright Office defines the concept of fair use by explaining that “it is permissible to use limited portions of a work including quotes, for purposes such as commentary, criticism, news reporting, and scholarly reports. There are no legal rules permitting the use of a specific number of words, a certain number of

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. Copyright Office, “Copyright Basics,” [www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1.pdf](http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1.pdf).

musical notes, or percentage of a work. Whether a particular use qualifies as fair use depends on all the circumstances.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Copyright Office. “Fair Use,” [www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html](http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html).

Simply put, if you use small portions, you **may** be able to use parts of someone's work without asking permission. For example, a paragraph from a book might be used as part of a commentary; however, it is infinitely more preferable and far less dangerous to seek permission from the author.

## Requesting Permission

Practical tips for requesting permission are:

- > Make your request in writing.
- > Be specific about the content or image(s) you would like to use and explain:
  - Where you would like to use it: your website, blog, newsletter
  - How you would like to use it—for example, if the use is educational
  - How you will attribute the source of the content/image(s)

## PROTECTING YOUR CONTENT AND RESPECTING OTHERS' CONTENT

We've discussed that your interaction online means that you will be creating written documents, as well as photos, videos, and audio files. And you now know that by creating those documents, you will be creating content that has copyright. So now we need to discuss how to manage and protect your content. After all, it would be a little tough to call your attorney every time you want someone to share material you created or to hire an investigator to find people who have stolen your work.

Creativecommons.org is “a nonprofit corporation dedicated to making it easier for people to share and build upon the work of others, consistent with the rules of copyright.”<sup>16</sup>

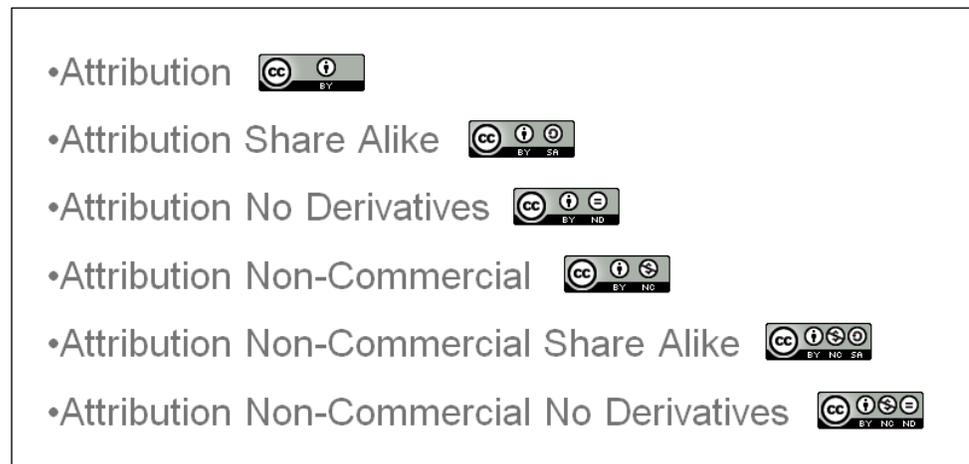
---

<sup>16</sup> CreativeCommons.org, <http://creativecommons.org/about>. Accessed January 3, 2011.

There are six levels of licenses available on the site—from “no rights reserved” to “all rights reserved.” The licenses are not made to replace copyright; they are made to work with copyright law in a wide variety of jurisdictions all around the world. The licenses are found on a number of other websites that contain content such as Flickr, Google, Wikipedia, Whitehouse.gov, and others.

The six levels of licenses, as described on the website, are shown in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1: Licenses Available from CreativeCommons.org**



Source: <http://CreativeCommons.org>.

Let's take a look at what the creative commons licenses would mean if you found a photo or graphic you wanted to use in your marketing or content creation.

### **Attribution**

You could distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon the graphic, even making something to sell as long as you credit and link to the original creator. This is the most accommodating of licenses offered in terms of what others can do with works licensed under Attribution.

### **Attribution Share Alike**

You could distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon the graphic, even making something to sell, as long as you credit and link to the original creator and share your graphic under the same terms. This license is often compared to open source software licenses. All new works based on yours will carry the same license, so any derivatives will also allow commercial use.

### **Attribution No Derivatives**

You can use the graphic, distribute, and even make something to sell with it as long as it is passed along unchanged and in whole, with credit and a link to the creator.

### **Attribution Non-Commercial**

You could distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon the graphic, but not make something to sell as long as you credit and link to the original creator. You don't have any other restriction on how you share it (for example, your derivative work could be "all rights reserved").

### **Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike**

You could distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon the graphic, but not make something to sell as long as you credit and link to the original creator, and share your graphic under the same terms.

### **Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives**

You can use the graphic and distribute it but not make something to sell as long as it is passed along unchanged and in whole, with credit and a link to the creator.

## **Internet Tools to Protect Your Content**

Try as we might, there will always be those who don't know the rules of copyright or choose to ignore them, and as a result, you need to know how to find your content and what to do when you find someone misusing it. With the Internet as large as it is, finding your content can be a daunting task, but there are a number of free tools for you to use to find people who have taken your content without permission.

### ***Google***

Once again we turn to the world's largest and best-known search engine, Google, to begin. You can search for a specific phrase from your post rather than the title since the first thing someone would change if they copy your work would be the title. This chain of words, called a statistically improbable phrase (SIP), is either a sentence or part of a sentence 10 to 12 words long that is unlikely to appear in just fashion and can be used by Google to find other instances of the phrase. Once found, you can easily review the works they're found in to determine if someone has stolen your work.

## Copyscape

Copyscape (Figure 4.2) is the Freemium model that has become so popular on the Web. The basic service allows you to search (and you can get a nifty banner warning others that your site is protected), but you need to sign up for a paid service (Copyscape Premium or Copysentry) to get the best services they have to offer.

Figure 4.2: Copyscape



Source: Reprinted with permission of Indigo Stream Technologies,  
<http://copyscape.com>.

Other tools include Plagium ([www.plagium.com](http://www.plagium.com)). Whatever service you choose, or even if you choose not to, somewhere on your site you should think about posting your policy about sharing content—or not sharing it.

If you do find someone using your content, there are two simple steps to take:

1. Contact the individual and politely ask him or her to remove the content (or give you proper attribution, whichever you prefer).
2. If the individual doesn't want to remove the material or give you attribution, you can report him or her to website hosts for a violation of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA).

If there is a question of when the material was published, you can go to the Internet Archive—a great resource for public domain material and the repository of “The Way Back Machine,” a web search engine for defunct websites ([http:// archive.org/web/](http://archive.org/web/)). This is not only a great place for researching information like this, but also a fun way to see the development of your favorite websites over the years.

## **WEBSITE AND BLOGGING POLICIES**

Website and blogging policies establish the ground rules for engagement in your space. They don't need to be complex.

- > They set expectations.
- > They talk about how you deal with problems.
- > They talk about how you deal with Flamers and Internet Trolls.
- > They talk about how you deal with spam.

A sample blog policy and Blogger's Code of Ethics can be found in the appendix, supplied courtesy of SMML.

# REALTOR<sup>®</sup> CODE OF ETHICS

The first version of the REALTOR<sup>®</sup> Code of Ethics was ratified in 1913, just five years after the NAR was created. Like the constitution, the Code is a living document, which is reviewed constantly and changed as needed to accommodate our changing business.

The adoption of Internet advertising created new concerns, and the Code was modified to meet them. Blogging, texting, and social networks created additional concerns, which have created additional response by NAR's Professional Standards Committee and volunteer leadership. As a result, you need to remember that your actions in every space, including the Internet, are always viewed as the actions of a member of the NAR.

The obligations of REALTORS<sup>®</sup> under the Code of Ethics are spelled out in the Articles of the Code, and clarified in the Standards of Practice. The two Articles of the Code of Ethics that have been recently modified to reflect the use of electronic communication by REALTORS<sup>®</sup> are Article 12 and Article 15.

Article 12 is called the "true picture" article because it revolves around our duty to present a true picture to the world in all of our real estate communications. It means that we have the obligation to tell the truth and not to stretch the truth even a little. In the online world that means a lot!

## **Article 12**

REALTORS<sup>®</sup> shall be honest and truthful in their real estate communications and shall present a true picture in their advertising, marketing, and other representations. REALTORS<sup>®</sup> shall ensure that their status as real estate professionals is readily apparent in their advertising, marketing, and other representations, and that the recipients of all real estate communications are, or have been, notified that those communications are from a real estate professional. (Amended 1/08)

This article requires you to make clear that you are a real estate professional in all of your representations. For example, in the opinion of the Social Media Marketing Institute, your status as a REALTOR® should be made clear, even in a non-real estate–related blog.

- Standard of Practice 12-5

REALTORS® shall not advertise nor permit any person employed by or affiliated with them to advertise real estate services or listed property in any medium (e.g., electronically, print, radio, television, etc.) without disclosing the name of that REALTOR®'s firm in a reasonable and readily apparent manner. (Adopted 11/86, Amended 1/10)

Put plainly, that includes the requirement that you tell people the name of your firm in everything that might be construed as advertising.

- Standard of Practice 12-8

The obligation to present a true picture in representations to the public includes information presented, provided, or displayed on REALTORS® websites. REALTORS® shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that information on their websites is current. When it becomes apparent that information on a REALTOR®'s website is no longer current or accurate, REALTORS® shall promptly take corrective action. (Adopted 1/07)

If you're going to put property information on your site, you have the responsibility to keep it current, which means changing statuses or removing the information as required. Also, this would apply to other information you would post on a blog or your Facebook page, or any other website you publish to. Once again, it's more important to print what you know rather than what you think, but in any case you need to clarify the difference between facts and opinions.

#### 4. Intellectual Property and Ethics on the Web

- Standard of Practice 12-9

REALTOR® firm websites shall disclose the firm's name and state(s) of licensure in a reasonable and readily apparent manner. Websites of REALTORS® and non-member licensees affiliated with a REALTOR® firm shall disclose the firm's name and that REALTOR®'s or non-member licensee's state(s) of licensure in a reasonable and readily apparent manner. (Adopted 1/07)

Like Standard of Practice 12-5, this includes the requirement that you tell people the name of your firm on every website that you control—a property website, a business card site, a blog, or a Facebook business page.

- Standard of Practice 12-10

REALTORS® obligation to present a true picture in their advertising and representations to the public includes the URLs and domain names they use, and prohibits REALTORS® from:

- 1) Engaging in deceptive or unauthorized framing of real estate brokerage websites;
- 2) Manipulating (e.g., presenting content developed by others) listing content in any way that produces a deceptive or misleading result; or
- 3) Deceptively using metatags, keywords or other devices/methods to direct, drive, or divert Internet traffic, or to otherwise mislead consumers. (Adopted 1/07)

You cannot steal information from other sites or manipulate listing information to make it appear to be yours or mislead in any other manner. Metatags are words that are embedded in a website, not readily apparent to the naked eye. You cannot use other firm names or keywords that are not an accurate reflection of your site to drive traffic to your site.

- Standard of Practice 12-11

REALTORS® intending to share or sell consumer information gathered via the Internet shall disclose that possibility in a reasonable and readily apparent manner. (Adopted 1/07)

You should tell people what you plan to do with the information you collect from them. This reinforces the need for a blog policy that speaks to that issue clearly.

- Standard of Practice 12-12

REALTORS® shall not:

- 1) Use URLs or domain names that present less than a true picture, or
- 2) Register URLs or domain names which, if used, would present less than a true picture. (Adopted 1/08)

You cannot use misleading website names; you also may not use misspelled domains to drive traffic to you. For example, advertising with a franchise name that you are not entitled to use like [www.franchiseposer.com](http://www.franchiseposer.com) would be wrong if you didn't have the right to use the name "franchise," which is distinguished from using a domain name that is neither misleading nor deceptive, such as [www.imnotafranchiseposer.com](http://www.imnotafranchiseposer.com).

Domain names that are misleading can involve the use of the term "MLS," misspellings of other company names, names of agents not associated with you, and so on.

You cannot knowingly or recklessly make false or misleading statements about your competitors, their business, or the way they conduct business. You are responsible for the comments made in the places you publish on the Web, and for correcting misstatements made by others about your colleagues.

Article 15 was also modified to reflect the realities of today's electronic world.

**Article 15**

REALTORS® shall not knowingly or recklessly make false or misleading statements about competitors, their businesses, or their business practices. (Amended 1/92)

Though the idea of not gossiping or being negative about our colleagues or competitors seems straightforward enough, the ability of other people to post negative statements about our colleagues or competitors on our blogs or other electronic communications that we publish led to these changes.

- Standard of Practice 15-2

The obligation to refrain from making false or misleading statements about competitors, competitors' businesses and competitors' business practices includes the duty to not knowingly or recklessly publish, repeat, retransmit, or republish false or misleading statements made by others. This duty applies whether false or misleading statements are repeated in person, in writing, by technological means (e.g., the Internet), or by any other means. (Amended 1/10)

This amplifies our need to refrain from using or allowing blogs to be used to make false or misleading statements. It includes a restriction about reprinting or quoting or sharing such stories using any electronic communication including our phones, Facebook, blogs, online bookmarks, Twitter, and so on. This does not limit the ability to criticize others as part of a blog or elsewhere if it is honest and not misleading.

- Standard of Practice 15-3

The obligation to refrain from making false or misleading statements about competitors, competitors' businesses and competitors' business practices includes the duty to publish a clarification about or to remove statements made by others on electronic media the REALTOR® controls once the REALTOR® knows the statement is false or misleading. (Adopted 1/10)

In other words, if someone says something about a competitor on your blog on your Facebook page, and you know that it is untrue, you have a positive responsibility to either remove the offending phrase or correct it immediately in writing on that site. There is no need for proof that it is untrue, merely a statement from our fellow REALTOR® to cause the correction or removal.



## EXERCISE Code of Ethics Violation or Not?

Working on your own or in groups:

- Complete the worksheet below and write in your answer whether or not the statement represents a violation of NAR's Code of Ethics.

	Y or N?
REALTOR <sup>®</sup> A discovered that his chief competitor, REALTOR <sup>®</sup> D, did not own the domain name for his company. REALTOR <sup>®</sup> A bought the domain name and uses it to direct traffic to his own website. (Article 12-10)	
REALTOR <sup>®</sup> H shares the names and e-mail addresses he gets from his website with local lenders, home inspection companies, and title companies. He notifies consumers in advance that he will be sharing their information. (Article 12-11)	
REALTOR <sup>®</sup> J is in competition with REALTOR <sup>®</sup> W for a listing. While perusing the "Rant and Rave" section of craigslist.com, J finds a highly uncomplimentary post from a consumer about W, which J knows is untrue. She forwards this to the sellers who are deciding between her and W. (Article 15-2)	
REALTOR <sup>®</sup> N has participated on a conversation regarding business practices of a real estate firm and found out that the information was untrue. He has not visited that conversation again and has stopped following it. (Article 15-3)	
REALTOR <sup>®</sup> V has her own business website. It displays her team name, her e-mail address, and pictures of V and her team, but does not contain the name of her firm. (Article 12-9)	

# SOCIAL MEDIA LAND MINES

Social media land mines are the less obvious pitfalls of using social media in your marketing efforts, but they are important nonetheless. Like real land mines, they are usually set off because someone tripped over them when they weren't looking. Generally they can be avoided by being thoughtful about what you publish, remembering that everything you do is public, and that everything you do has an impact on your professional reputation.

So here are few suggestions to avoid triggering those social media land mines:

- > As a licensee, you should always make sure that your company name and professional status are apparent on every electronic communication you make—to the best extent possible.
- > Be careful about posting information about your meetings with clients or other real estate professionals. You may think that not mentioning them by name is enough, but often information can be derived from someone's knowledge of your actions offline.
  - For example, if Brian, a buyer's agent, showed one of Cynthia's listings and commented on Facebook that his buyers were excited to write an offer on a home they saw last night and if Cynthia found out because she was a friend of one of Brian's friends on Facebook, she might be a tougher negotiator because she knows that Brian has really excited buyers.
  - Real estate professionals should encourage their clients not to share any information with friends and followers in social media spaces that might harm their negotiating position.
- > Don't complain, brag, or even talk about your client's reactions to property. You might be violating your obligation to keep their information confidential.

## Fair Housing

As real estate professionals we are all accustomed to thinking about fair housing issues in advertising, but we need to be sensitive to the same issues being raised in your online interactions.

#### 4. Intellectual Property and Ethics on the Web

Fair housing issues are legislated by:

- > The Civil Rights Act of 1866, which was the first legislation in the U.S. prohibiting all racial discrimination
- > The Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968), which legislated fair housing throughout the U.S. by prohibiting discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions, based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, and handicap (disability)
- > The Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in places of public accommodations and commercial facilities
- > Your state and local laws, which often increase the number of protected classes and thereby create broader coverage than federal laws

In addition, REALTORS® are obligated under Article 10 of NAR's Code of Ethics, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, or sexual orientation in providing professional services or in our hiring practices.

Keeping in mind that anytime we interact in social environments online we are still obligated by these laws and regulations. Answering questions on Trulia or Zillow, for example, could be considered advertising since your engagement there is obviously for business purposes. So if someone were to ask the ethnic or racial composition of an area and you were to answer, you might find yourself in violation of one of the above laws. Or if you were to create a Facebook page for your business and offered only community information, you would need to be sensitive about providing information that might be construed as biased.

Should you be writing advertising or promotional material for properties in your online interactions, you need to be careful to follow the same guidelines you use in print advertising, and since statements made by you in the online world are both published and permanent you need to be conscious of their interpretation as well. Remember, even your tweets on Twitter and your Facebook news feed are forms of publication.

## 5. Social Networks

In this chapter:

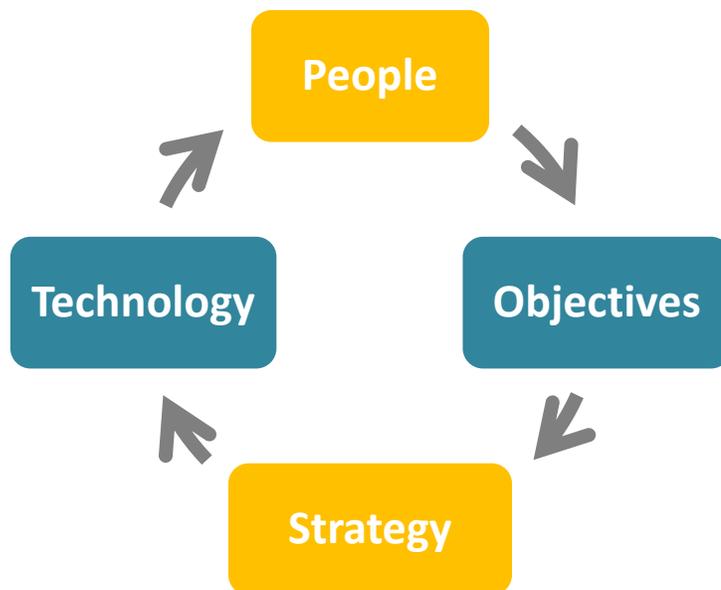
- > Creating your social networks
- > LinkedIn
- > Facebook
- > Twitter

### CREATING YOUR SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social networks seem like they're easy places to navigate and connect with people and communities, but the number of people who sign up for them and find them to be time-wasting efforts has to lead us to the conclusion that social networks are trickier than they appear. Staff at Forrester Research wrote a book called *Groundswell* that had at its core a simple acronym, POST, which stands for People, Objectives, Strategy, and Tools (Figure 5.1)<sup>17</sup>. Because this course is for real estate professionals, as opposed to large corporations where resources and goals are very different, we have made some slight changes to their original suggestions.

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<sup>17</sup> Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff. *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*, (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2008).

**Figure 5.1: Strategy for Social Networks**

## People

- Determine what group of people you want to reach in your social networking endeavors. This can be determined as geographic or demographic choices.

## Objectives

- Have a clear goal in mind. What is the result you want from your social interaction? Are you trying to listen to your community? Talk to them? Support them? Energize them to act in some manner?

## Strategy

- This has two parts to it in our world. What kind of content creation or curation will be involved and how will you achieve that, and secondly, how will you interact with the community after you have achieved that goal?

## Technology

- Decide which social technologies or channels will help you reach your desired market most effectively.

By integrating social media into your business, you not only engage in conversations but also:

- > Establish a reputation.
- > Build trust.
- > Create an opportunity for you to influence the decisions of others.
- > Create an awareness of your brand through appropriate communications about what you do.

So how exactly do we define a social network?

**A *social network*** focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others.

Social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups who are looking to:

- > Meet other people
- > Gather and distribute first-hand information
- > Share experiences about everything, including:
  - Gardening
  - Pet adoption
  - Cooking
  - Investing in real estate
  - Developing friendships or professional alliances
  - Finding employment
  - Business-to-business marketing

The topics and interests are as varied and rich as the people on these sites. Some sites have open memberships and anyone can become a member. You will find that once you have your own network of friends,

you will connect more with people with similar interests, as their network becomes open to you.

Social networking is a way of interacting with others online. The goal for anyone who networks is to meet and establish relationships with others. When you meet like-minded individuals, you'll see how easy it is to build a network. Everyone will have a focus outside of themselves, which makes for more creative exchanges.

# LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is a platform to give professionals visibility, connect with and help other professionals, and be helped by them. Although some people think LinkedIn is a sales tool, it is a networking platform to start and maintain business relationships. The consequence of building relationships on LinkedIn might be a sale but also a new job, finding a new employee, supplier, partner, or expertise.

LinkedIn can help you reconnect with current and previous colleagues as well as connect with professionals who are in your near future. LinkedIn is the equivalent of your online résumé and a business relationship directory. It is searched widely and frequently by people who want to review your business background and experience, and is the one social network where you place business first because LinkedIn is a business venue. Unlike Facebook or Twitter, your connections here are not “friends” or “followers,” they are “contacts” and they are organized by not only name, but also by company, location, and industry.

Start building your LinkedIn profile, as in other sites, with your e-mail database, but bear in mind the need to keep your connections here professional. If Twitter is a cocktail party and Facebook is the family picnic, LinkedIn is a networking breakfast. People expect you to be a business person in this venue and the conversations will center around information and topics discussed with colleagues, prospective employers, prospective employees, vendors, and business partners.

## Who's Using It

LinkedIn is the largest online business network website, with more than 259 million users in 200 countries and territories.<sup>18</sup> There are professionals from a variety of job levels as well as industries. LinkedIn is used by high-level, high-profile members. For example, executives from all Fortune 500 companies belong to LinkedIn. The average age of a LinkedIn member is 41, which, demographically speaking, differentiates it from social networking sites like Facebook. Members older than 45 years account for more than 31% of the LinkedIn user base. The number of user recommendations has increased 65% since the beginning of 2009.

The greater the number of connections, the greater the likelihood of higher personal income. An Anderson Analytics 2008 research study found that those with personal incomes between \$200K and \$350K were seven times more likely than others to have over 150 connections.<sup>19</sup>

## Getting Started

Practical suggestions for creating your profile are built in to the LinkedIn platform. Understanding the value of a complete business profile, the LinkedIn Website will walk you through every section of its online profile, and though the site allows you to skip sessions, unlike other platforms it will suggest that you "improve your profile" regularly.

When someone searches LinkedIn for the skills and expertise you have, that person sees your public profile. It has your photo, your name, and a headline that you write to describe who you are. Before he or she reads your summary, this headline needs to attract the eye of the reader. Immediately underneath are your current and past jobs, education, the number of recommendations you have, the number of connections you have, and the websites you added. Below the summary are your experience (the list of employers from newest to oldest, as in a résumé), the skills and expertise you claim, and then your education, honors and awards, and things you want people to contact you about. In the full profile, LinkedIn added endorsements, which, unlike the longer and more

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<sup>18</sup> LinkedIn, "About Us," <http://press.linkedin.com/about>.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson Analytics, "Not All Social Network Users Alike—Four Types of LinkedIn Users—Which Type Are You? November 5, 2008, [www.andersonanalytics.com](http://www.andersonanalytics.com).

formal recommendations in your profile, are actually solicited by LinkedIn when you log in, asking whether you endorse the skill or expertise claimed by one of your connections.

## Best Practices

### Be Choosy

- > Don't feel like you have to say "yes" to every request.
- > You can be selective in who you accept into your community—each connection is an implicit endorsement.

### Make Recommendations

- > Recommendations are powerful. The ability for LinkedIn members to make referrals is an important tool. How do you use it?
  - Recommend others you believe are exemplary in their jobs. They will often return the favor, but don't expect a recommendation in return. Be prudent when you make referrals of others that you can stand behind their reputation.
  - If you have completed a business transaction with a LinkedIn contact, ask that person to write you a recommendation. Recommendations can go a long way in helping fortify your online reputation.
  - Reciprocate the effort when a recommendation is written, if you're comfortable doing it.

### Engage in Groups and Discussions

- > Start or join groups and discussions that are relevant to your work experience. By posting comments or questions in these groups you establish your experience and expertise.
- > The "Answers" section is another great place to obtain recognition and build your reputation.

## PRACTITIONER SPOTLIGHT

Mike Bowler, Sr., e-PRO®



- > Mike Bowler, Sr., e-PRO®, GRI, SRES®
- > C B Hubbell BriarWood-Delta
- > Lansing, MI

### ***What advice can you provide real estate professionals who want to connect with consumers on LinkedIn?***

“It all starts with a complete, well-thought-out profile that contains a professional photo of you. I tell real estate brokers and agents that the résumé they have on LinkedIn is important and needs to be approached as if you are applying for a job, because you are. You wake up unemployed every morning as a real estate professional in need of new, fresh buyers, sellers, and investors to fill your pipeline of business. Your profile is the first impression; it’s a living document that constantly needs tweaking and updating with proper keywords, phrases and links to additional resources for your contacts and prospective online clients and customers.”

“Your profile should also provide a list of qualifications, experiences, and positive references from past clients. I have found the section providing recommendations to be the most powerful area of your profile. Positive words coming from a happy former client mean much more to those reading your résumé than anything you can provide. Focus your efforts in this section by choosing some key people to tell their story about you and your services.”

“LinkedIn also now provides a new section of your profile for others to rate your experiences, attributes, and skills. You also have the opportunity to add a slide presentation or video introduction that helps you differentiate yourself from other professionals. I could go on for hours here sharing the career benefits of LinkedIn, but you must start here to enjoy the fruits of what comes next, including Answers, Groups, and sharing the wealth of curated content you’ll find within this powerful media.”

# FACEBOOK

Facebook is a social network that connects people personally and professionally through connections, messages, photos, and videos. People are using information to share their lives and their interests with the people in their networks.

## By the Numbers

Facebook has literally changed how people communicate and interact within personal social networks. With more than 1 billion active users, Facebook claims that more than half of its active users log on to Facebook in any given day.

## Getting Started

Using the information on profiles already discussed, you are now ready to set up your personal profile on Facebook. When developing your Facebook personal profile, a helpful rule is: “Only display on your profile what you’d put on your desk.”

There are eight areas where you can edit and add content to your profile. They are:

1. Basic Information
2. Contact Information
3. Life Events
4. Work and Education
5. Relationship
6. Family
7. About You
8. Favorite Quotations

## Basic Information

In order to be found on Facebook, make sure some of your basic information is open to everyone. Consider having your hometown and interests open to everyone so friends can use those to connect with you. Certain information is visible to everyone because it's essential to helping people find and connect with you on Facebook. This includes:

- > Name and profile picture are visible to everyone so real-world friends can recognize you, and they are displayed when you write on someone's wall.
  - Note to parents: Be cautious of including your children in your profile photo unless you want your children's photos broadcast to the world!
- > Gender is public.
- > Networks are visible to everyone so you can see who else is part of your network (and will have access to your information) before choosing "Friends and Networks" for any of your privacy settings.

## **Contact Information**

- > Decide how much personal information you want to share. We recommend sharing websites, e-mail addresses, and public phone numbers.

## **Life Events**

- > Depending on how much information you want to share with your Facebook friends, add life events that are meaningful to you.

## **Work and Education**

- > Add your employer and education information.
- > Be as complete in your information as possible in this section as it increases the number of people with whom you can potentially connect.

## **Relationship**

- > Identify your relationship status.
- > Add any family relationships of people who are on Facebook.

## **Family**

- > Family members who are friends with you on Facebook will be listed in this section.

## **About You**

- > This section can be as broad or as specific as you like.

## **Favorite Quotations**

- > Do you have favorite quotations or sayings that you use often? This is where to include them.

## Privacy Settings at Facebook

Facebook gives you the option to share your content and to connect with others using different privacy settings (Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.2: Facebook Privacy Settings You Can Control**

What You Can Control	Available Privacy Settings
Who can see your future posts	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Friends <input type="checkbox"/> Only You <input type="checkbox"/> Custom
Who can send you friend requests	<input type="checkbox"/> Everyone <input type="checkbox"/> Friends of friends
Who can send messages to your Facebook inbox	<input type="checkbox"/> Basic filtering (mostly friends and people you know) <input type="checkbox"/> Strict filtering (friends)
Who can look you up by the e-mail you provided (when you established your Facebook account)	<input type="checkbox"/> Everyone <input type="checkbox"/> Friends of friends <input type="checkbox"/> Friends
Who can look you up by the phone number you provided	<input type="checkbox"/> Everyone <input type="checkbox"/> Friends of friends <input type="checkbox"/> Friends
If you want search engines to link to your timeline	<input type="checkbox"/> On <input type="checkbox"/> Off

The privacy section controls what information is shared with websites and applications, including search engines. Be aware that applications and websites you and your friends use already have access to your name, profile picture, gender, and other information you share with everyone.

It's important to know who can see the different elements on your page. As real estate professionals, we probably want to have basic contact information available to the general public to make it easy to contact us. Deciding how much other information you plan to share is a personal decision. If you have concerns about your personal safety, that can control who sees what on your page. Set your privacy settings according to your comfort level.

### **Adding Friends**

Facebook is a place to truly connect with everyone in your social spheres. It is appropriate to connect with any of your networks here—friends, family, business, and community. The Facebook News Feed allows you track the activities of your network in real time—what they're watching, reading, and who they're "friending."

Use your affiliations to create a strong community while maintaining valid connections. It is important to connect with "friends" from groups that you have some connection with and then communicate with them on topics that matter to them.

Consider connecting with the following people:

- > Former classmates
- > Clubs and other social organizations
- > Professional associations
- > Past customers

Follow these steps to begin adding friends on Facebook:

1. Start with people you already know.
2. From the search function in the upper left corner of the top navigation bar, use “My Friends” or “People I May Know” to grow your Facebook network.
3. Make it easy for people to find you.
4. Use your REAL NAME.
5. When adding someone, add a note introducing yourself.
6. Send a thank you note when someone has “friended” you.
7. It's OK to ignore friend requests, application requests, and group invitations—the inviting party will not be notified.

## The Numbers Game

With social media networks like Facebook, it is tempting to fall prey to the “numbers game” in which real estate professionals allocate a lot of time and resources in racking up the largest number of friends or fans. Is this time well spent? Consider the following:

Rather than play the numbers game, carry over what you already know about forging business connections. The long-term success of most professionals in the real estate industry is based on a well-established sphere of influence that includes key people who can deliver business opportunities through direct and referral business. These relationships are traditionally built by participating in small groups—places of worship, charities, schools, and clubs. To establish those relationships online, the same sort of intimate conditions need to be created.

To start, you must identify people with whom you want to network and then abate the noise from everyone else. Sure, connecting to 5,000 other real estate pros may lead to some relocation referrals, but most real estate is local. So focus on finding and networking with local professionals, business owners, community activists, and like-minded individuals.

## Content—What to Share and Not to Share

Facebook is a social network. According to Facebook's terms of use, you cannot use a profile as a place to market a commercial business. People who post listings on Facebook on a continual basis are spammers. Avoid blatant commercialism in your communications; it will be seen as a betrayal of the social contract. A recent study by the National Association of REALTORS® showed that only 1% of first-time and repeat home buyers found their home on a social network. There are many places home buyers are looking for homes. Social networks are not one of them. Don't spam your network.

When you begin to think about sharing content on sites/social media platforms, remember to focus on the relationship building. If you constantly send out market reports, but you don't talk and engage with the people in the area, you will be talking to a brick wall. As a reminder: Listen before you engage.

People want to have something in common with you, and it's easy to find using social objects. Start by listening to the posts and comments of your target market. After you listen, join in the conversation. Begin to comment on blog posts that interest you. The more you appear in their comment stream, the more you will be recognized. Bloggers will appreciate the fact that you comment on their work (and they are, after all, members and influencers in the community) and the "regular suspects" (people who comment regularly) will begin to see you as a colleague in the community.

With Facebook, let others see you for **you**. Share what's happening in your life. The things we are doing, the places we go, and our likes and interests are all things that connect us with other people.

Share photos you have taken. People love photos. They can be personal or they can be of your community. Photos are a great way to connect with your friends. Going to a local event? Bring your camera and share your photos!

Consider sharing interesting links or articles. Remember, this is your personal profile. The links and articles can be real estate related, but they don't have to be. Think about the type of people you connect with. What interests do they have? Share links your network might find valuable.

A great way to engage others on Facebook is to ask questions. Your connections on your personal profile are your friends and they have opinions too. Last but not least, acknowledge others. Has one of your friends done something great, written a great article, received an award, or launched a new business? Share it with your friends if it's relevant.

## **Best Practices for Engaging in Conversations on Facebook**

- > Listen.
  - See what updates occur on their wall, what things they like, what they are doing in pictures, what applications and games they play
- > Engage in conversations.
  - Comment, “like things,” poke them, engage in games (if you choose)
- > Establish a reputation.
  - Let them see who you are, share YOU as a person
- > Build trust.
  - Consistent, positive interaction and engagement builds trust.
- > Create an opportunity for you to influence their decision.
  - When people trust you, you can influence their decision making.
  - Create an awareness of your brand through appropriate communications about what you do.

### **Do:**

- ✓ Find and connect with your friends.
- ✓ Comment on other people's posts, pictures, and pages.
- ✓ Update your status regularly.
  
- ✓ Be genuine.

- ✓ Discuss your job. People are fascinated by it!

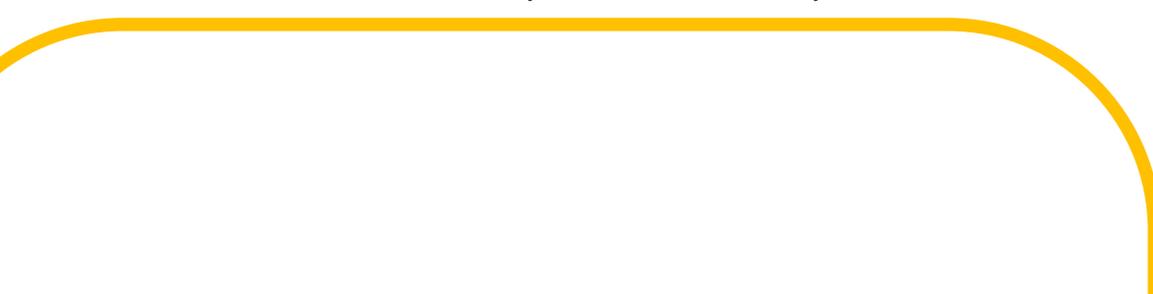
### **Don't:**

- X Be all real estate all the time.
- X Share every detail of your life. There is such a thing as too much information.
- X Invite others to connect with you without letting them know how you know them.
- X Discuss your clients or fellow agents in a way that could harm your transaction or your fiduciary and ethical responsibilities.
- X Set up your business with a profile page. Personal profiles are for people only.

## **FACEBOOK BUSINESS PAGES**

Facebook business pages allow you to create a presence for your business and promote it within the Facebook community. Facebook users can opt in to receive messages on Facebook about your business by “liking” your business. Those users have made a connection to the page by clicking the “Like” button on the top of a Facebook page, on a website that has the “Like” button embedded on it, or from the news feed story from another user who has checked the “Like” button. Facebook business pages can be used to share information and engage in discussions with fans.

Once your page is complete, you will want to let people know about it. As of this writing, you need 25 Facebook fans to get a custom Facebook domain. Until you secure a custom domain name, your Facebook page will have a long, messy URL. You will want to secure your custom Facebook name that is the best match for your brand as soon as possible. This will make it easier to share it. Consider making it similar to the custom domain name you have selected for your hub.



## PRACTITIONER SPOTLIGHT

Linda Davis

- > Linda Davis, CRS, GRI, SRES®
- > RE/MAX Home Team
- > Waterford, CT



### ***Can you share how you integrate Facebook with your other marketing strategies?***

“I launched my business page, Ledyard CT, in November 2009. My goal at the time was to have 100 engaged fans. My strategy was to create a page with a small group who were engaged rather than having a whole lot of fans. As a result, with the exception of about 10 invitations, I never sent out an invitation to the page. Today, I have 2800 ‘likes’ and most of those are members of the Ledyard community.”

“My blog ‘Simply Ledyard’ is the hub of my social media activity. I use my Facebook Page in conjunction with my Facebook Group, ‘The Ledyard Gales Ferry Community Forum,’ to drive traffic back to my hub. I do this by posting community related blog posts to the page and then sharing to my group. In addition, I promote a link to my page where ever the opportunity presents itself including in my email signature and promotional print advertising.”

### ***What kinds of things do you post at Ledyard, CT?***

“I rarely talk real estate on my business page. My page is all about the community. Photos or video always generate the most discussion. I even hold an occasional contest such as guess the amount of snow as measured on my deck. We have fun! I try to post at least 3 times a week.”

## Create a Vanity URL

Facebook allows you to create a vanity URL for either your Facebook business page or your personal profile. Go to [www.facebook.com/username](http://www.facebook.com/username) to get started.

- > Every profile and business page will be listed. You can create your own URL here. If it is already taken, create until you find one that works. Here are some basic guidelines:
- > Mirror your existing usernames or Web addresses that you currently use.
- > Be in compliance with NAR's Code of Ethics and REALTOR® trademark policies as well as state advertising laws.

## What to Share on Your Facebook Business Page

You do have something to say that is of value to buyers, sellers, and people in your community. Here are 10 content ideas for real estate professionals:

1. Links to your blog posts with brief updates on why the posts are relevant. Doing so drives traffic to your blog. What would you write about on a blog? Keep reading!
2. Photos and videos of your community.
3. Information/links to upcoming events or activities in your area. For example, share great hiking tips or news on upcoming festivals.
4. Share news articles—housing news, mortgage news, new rules and regulations. Your local newspaper, NAR, your state and local association newsletters are all great sources of content to share.
5. Community resources. Share information on new subdivisions breaking ground or the opening of a new store in your area.
6. Quick market statistics with your commentary.

7. Ask questions. And the questions don't always have to be real estate related. For example, Where is the best restaurant to go to for Valentine's day in your town?
8. Your local favorites such as restaurants, parks, local businesses, and so on. Include a link to their websites and a description of why a particular choice is one of your favorites.
9. Anecdotal stories about what is happening in the market. For example: multiple offer stories, big sales, hot new listings (Be aware of confidentiality and fiduciary responsibilities when posting.)
10. Your listings. Yes, your listings. Everyone says you can't post them, but you can. Don't you sell real estate? Tell a story about your listing. People don't want to know it is a three-bedroom, two-bath for \$450,000. Share the story about your listing that makes it unique—someone famous used to live in it, its location; its unusual hardwood floors. Make it interesting.

It's easy to overthink it. Content is all around you. As you find items or news of interest, save them in a notebook or a file so when you are ready to post on your page, you have ideas ready to share.

## Facebook Tabs

Facebook allows you to have “tabs” with different types of content. These tabs are basically a navigation system to allow visitors to see different pages of content within your Facebook page. These tab pages can be customized to match your branding. Unless you are comfortable editing html, you will probably need to hire a designer to customize your tabs. If you do hire someone to do customization, be sure that person will update your customized tab at zero or minimal cost if Facebook changes page layouts, as they recently did, otherwise your investment could be wasted.

You can direct viewers of your business page to a specific landing page. That means you can choose where the viewer lands when he or she first gets to your business page. This may help you increase the conversion of new visitors into fans. You may need to invest in some customization but your branding will be consistent on Facebook and your website. You can brand your Facebook page to look just like your website.

Note:

- > Business pages are visible to unregistered people and are thus indexed on Google.
- > When people “like” your business page all your posts end up in their news feed and your content is exposed to their community of friends.
- > Pages are used to establish long-term relationships with your fans, readers, or customers

Before you start sharing status updates, photos, and other media in the stream, make sure you figure out what your marketing strategy is going to be. It's very important to think systematically about what you post, as this information is what appears to users in their news feeds and typically generates the most conversation. Are you going to post only major news? Are you going to ask questions of your clients? Are you going to provide tips? If you update your Facebook page status on a regular basis, this creates a conversation. Remember if you don't attempt to sustain that conversation fans will stop paying attention to you. Using Facebook effectively requires active participation on your page that will be rewarded once you see online traffic for you start to grow and eventually, through more clients. But remember, while Facebook marketing is powerful, it costs time.

By using Facebook you'll have an opportunity to get to know potential clients in a very personal way. What starts out as a simple post can end up with dozens of comments. If you post stories on Facebook that link to your primary website aka your Hub, you can drive traffic to your hub. Building an active fan base on Facebook takes time and consistent interaction. Over time, it is important to pay attention to changes in your business as the result of Facebook marketing. This will allow you to better hone your marketing strategy on the site.

## Facebook Insights

Facebook Insights allows Facebook page owners to see statistics about usage activity on their Facebook page. They can be accessed by logging into [www.Facebook.com](http://www.Facebook.com) and then searching for Facebook Insights.

Facebook Insights provides a look at the number of people who “Like” a page and who are active on a page on a monthly and daily basis, and if those numbers are increasing, decreasing, or staying the same. You can also see the demographics of your visitors, and the number of viewers checking out each of your tabs. The metrics are updated on a daily basis.

## Applications

Applications can actually dramatically enhance your ability to manage your content and provide a compelling experience. These can also help you coordinate your efforts across many of your social marketing networks as part of your broader social marketing strategy.

Here are some applications to consider:

1. For page customization
  - a. Static FBML—If you want to customize your tabs to match your branding, you will need the Static FBML application. It allows you to use FBML (Facebook Markup Language) to customize the design and elements included in your tabs. You can use it to design your page to match other sites and to add apps, forms, and widgets.
2. To promote your blog—If you are a blogger, Facebook can be a great way to drive traffic to your blog posts. These applications make it easy to syndicate the RSS feed to your blog so that it auto-updates your Facebook page every time a new blog post is written.
  - a. Social RSS
  - b. Network blogs
3. Connect with Twitter. Some users want to be able to tweet and update their Facebook accounts simultaneously. These applications simplify it for you:
  - a. Twitter app for Facebook

- b. Selective Tweets
- 4. Connect with LinkedIn.
- 5. Share LinkedIn Details:
  - a. MyLinkedIn profile—This application allows you to share your LinkedIn profile information and company profile directly on Facebook.

Other cool applications:

- > YouTube for Facebook—If video is part of your business strategy, this application is essential for you to be able to share video on your business page.
- > Slideshare—The Slideshare app enables you to share existing presentations on Facebook. This could be a great way to share information to prospective buyers and sellers.
- > Podcast player—Podcast player enables you to share your own audio and video podcast in Facebook. Your fans can subscribe your podcast to iTunes and download your audios and videos to their iPod.

## Advertising on Facebook

One way to drive people to your page is to buy advertising on Facebook, using its self-serve system. You can very specifically target ads to various demographics, including country, state and city, gender, age, workplace, and much more. If you plan to advertise, wait until your page has regular content and interaction so that viewers who click through on the ads will be compelled to come back often.

# TWITTER

Twitter is a social network where updates are processed in real time. Twitter is incredibly simple to use. Twitter asks, "What's happening?" and users are given 140 characters to respond. Think of it like a 140-character text message that is open for the world to see. Your message is shared with the people who have chosen to follow you. If your Twitter account is not protected, anyone can follow you. You do not have to follow them back.

## How It Works

At first glance or even after the first few uses, many people don't understand the value and use of Twitter for their real estate practice. Twitter is a communication platform. You share status updates with the group of people who've chosen to follow you. At the same time, you're following (reading and listening to) the status updates of the people you've chosen to follow. Discussion then takes place around those status updates. Those discussions may occur in the public stream where anyone else can see them and participate or privately via direct message.

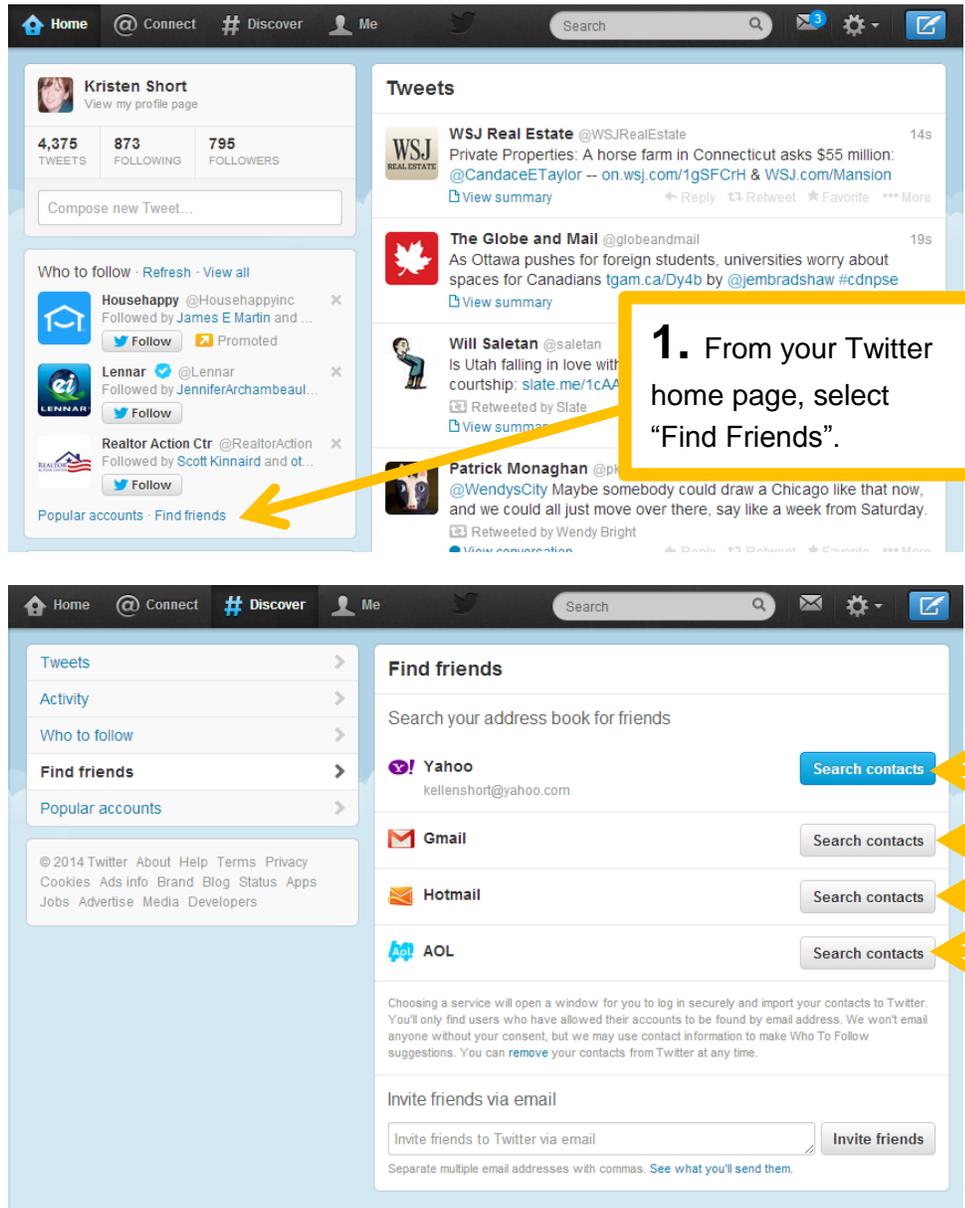
The open nature of the social network makes it very easy to communicate in real time with people in your backyard or around the globe. People use Twitter to update their whereabouts and activities, give opinions, and share pictures, articles and links with their followers. Twitter connects people, connects ideas, fosters relationships, and builds communities of like-minded people.

## Finding People to Follow

In order to listen and engage in conversations on Twitter, you need to find people to follow. (It is unnecessary to go in and follow thousands of people on the day you join Twitter.) Consider building the list of people you follow organically over time to build a quality list of people who provide content that is of interest to you. Strategies for finding people include:

1. Find your existing friends on Twitter (Figure 5.3). The reason why Twitter encourages you to connect with people from your e-mail client is to ease the burden of building your network from scratch.

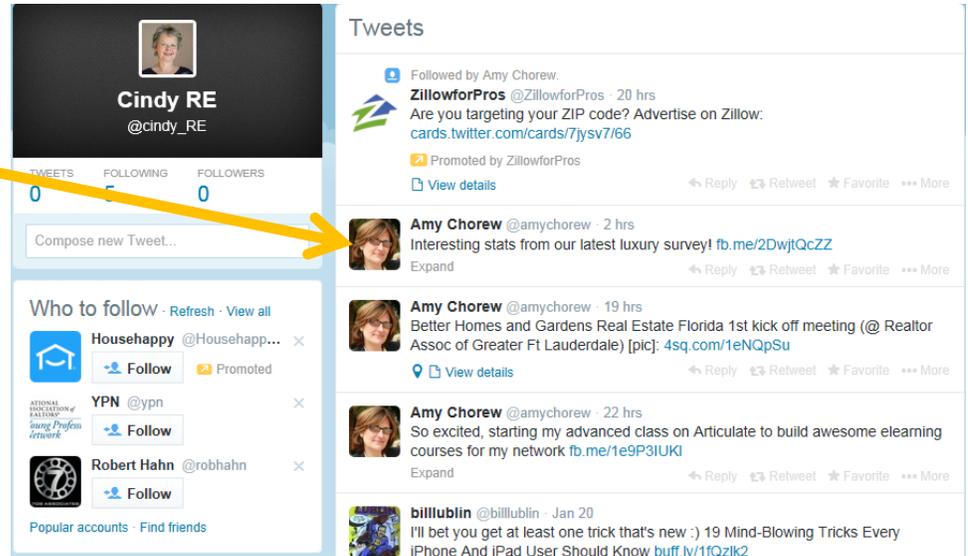
**Figure 5.3: How to Share Your e-Mail Contacts with Twitter**



2. Follow people your friends are following (Figure 5.4).

**Figure 5.4: How to Follow People Your Friends Are Following**

**1.** To see who your friends are following, click on his or her avatar. In this example, we will click on the avatar for @amychorew.



**2.** Select "Following". From there, you can choose to "Follow" as many people as you wish.



3. Consider following fellow REALTORS®, your REALTOR® board or association, and NAR (Figure 5.5).

**Figure 5.5: Suggestions on REALTORS® and REALTOR® Groups to Follow on Twitter**

**Authors of NAR's new e-PRO® certification—Social Media Marketing Institute (SMMI):**

@billlublin	Bill Lublin
@gingerw	Ginger Wilcox
@amychorew	Amy Chorew
@hallublin	Hal Lublin

**SMMI advisory board members:**

@AndyKaufman	Andy Kaufman
@mortgagereports	Dan Green
@ines	Ines Hegedus-Garcia
@PhxREguy	Jay Thompson
@JeffTurner	Jeff Turner
@housechick	Kelley Koehler
@mizzle	Mariana Wagner
@pchaney	Paul Chaney
@tboard	Teresa Boardman

**Subject matter experts consulted for NAR's new e-PRO® certification:**

@tcar	Todd Carpenter
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@nobuhata	Nobu Hata
@ypn	Rob Reuter

**NAR groups to follow:**

@REALTORS	National Association of REALTORS®
@NAR_Research	NAR Research
@RealtorAction	REALTOR® Action Center
@epronar	NAR's e-PRO® certification
@houselogic	House Logic
@realtormag	<i>REALTOR® Magazine</i>

## **Conversations on Twitter—the Basics**

Once you've begun to follow others, reading their conversations can be challenging: the text is littered with symbols, links are everywhere, people using "u" when they clearly meant to use "you." How does the everyday real estate professional make sense of it all?

Think of your Twitter feed as a giant social gathering. When you walk into the room, you hear a din comprised of several conversations happening around the room simultaneously. It's very difficult to follow one of the conversations, let alone all of them. Twitter's language and use of symbols allow you to navigate that din and find who and what you're looking for.

## 1. @ mentions

If you want someone's attention in a loud room, you might have to shout his or her name loudly enough for him or her to hear it—in that way, that person won't miss whatever it is you're trying to say (Figure 5.6). That's where the @ symbol comes in. Placing the @ symbol before someone's username accomplishes two things:

- Creates a link to that person's Twitter profile in your tweet; and
- Ensures that the person will see the tweet because Twitter notifies that person when he or she is “mentioned.”

**Figure 5.6: Using the @ Symbol When Mentioning Others**

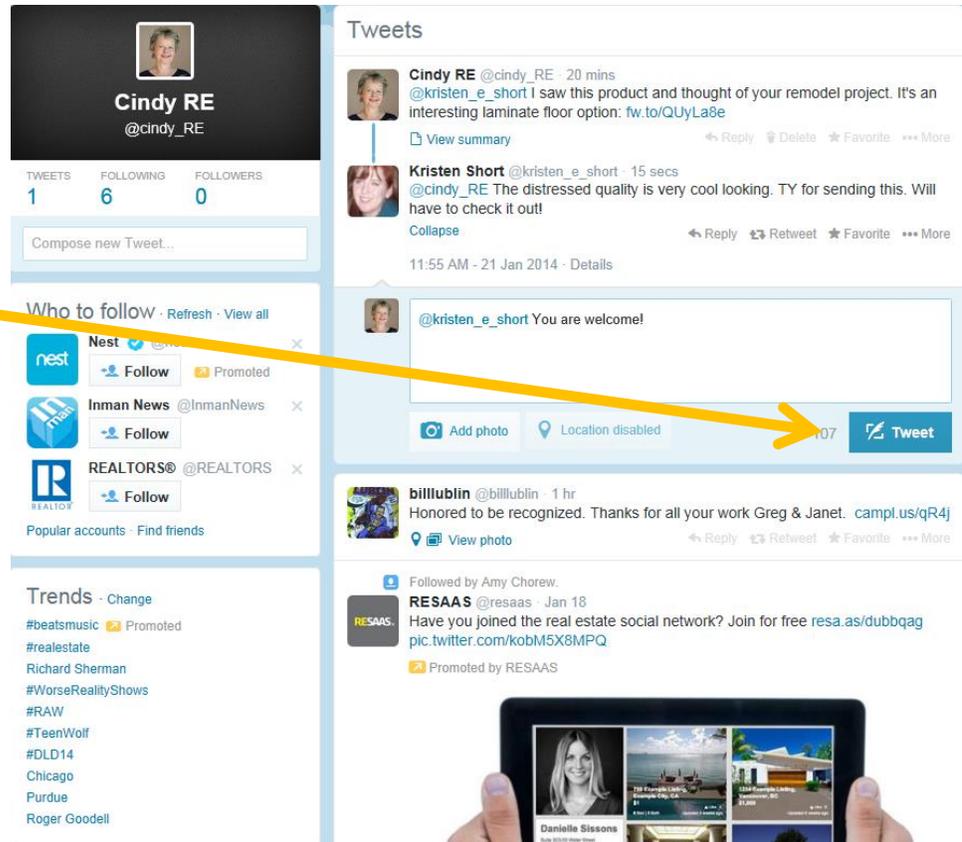
The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter profile for Cindy RE (@cindy\_RE). The profile header shows 0 tweets, 6 following, and 0 followers. The main content is a tweet from @kristen\_e\_short that says: "@kristen\_e\_short | saw this product and thought of your remodeling project. It's an interesting laminate floor option: <http://fw.to/QUyLa8e>". A yellow callout box with a yellow border points to the @ symbol and the username in the tweet text, containing the text: "In this tweet, Cindy tries to get Kristen's attention by putting the @ symbol before her user name." The tweet also includes a photo of a hand pointing at a tablet displaying real estate listings.

## 2. @ replies

Clicking the “Reply” button under a tweet automatically starts your next tweet, addressing whoever sent it (Figure 5.7). It also will allow you to follow a conversational string.

**Figure 5.7: Using the @ Symbol When Responding to Tweets**

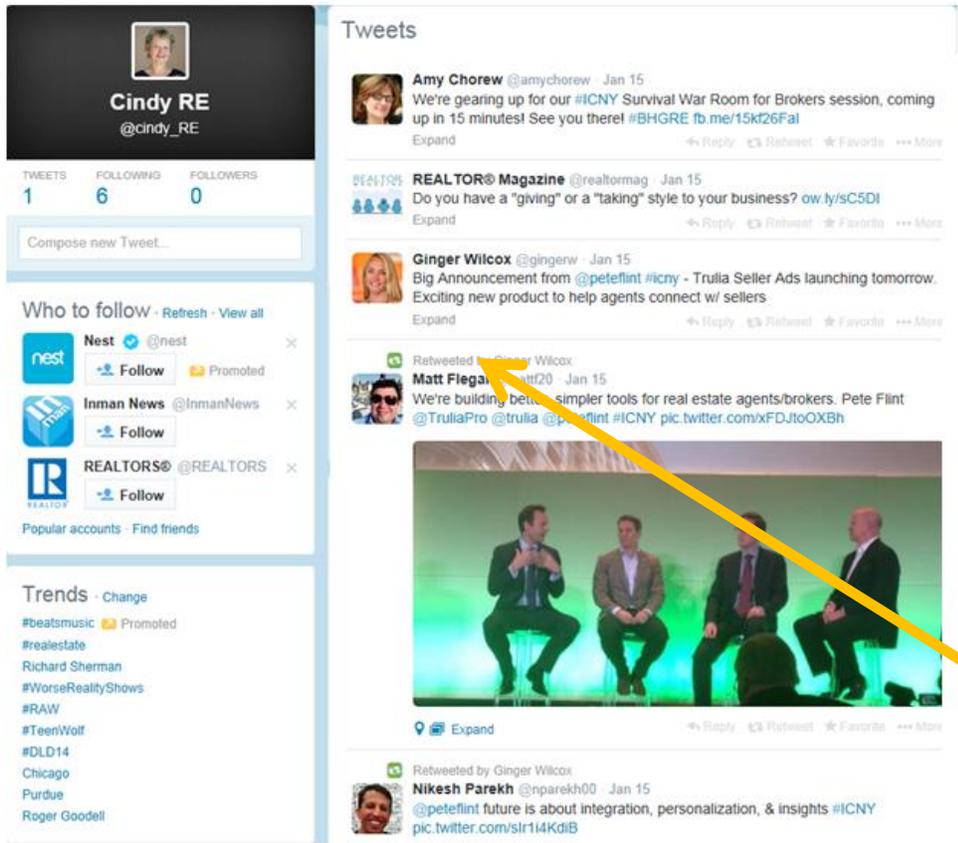
Cindy clicks “Reply” to add her comment and then “Tweet” to add it to the Twitter feed.



### 3. RT (retweet)

Sending an RT, or retweet, is the act of sharing somebody's tweets with people who follow you (Figure 5.8).

**Figure 5.8: Sending a Retweet**



In this RT, Ginger is retweeting Matt Flegal's tweet and photo with her followers.

#### 4. # (hashtag)

Are you confused when you see something like this on Twitter?

**Enjoying the #phillies game #mlb #openingday**

Fear not! Those are just hashtags, a way of organizing discussion topics, which makes them easier for Twitter users to search and find. Putting the # sign in front of a term makes it an easily searchable topic.

- When you're at a convention, using a hashtag for that convention (such as #NARAnnual for the 2014 NAR convention in New Orleans) makes it easy for you to see what's happening in the sessions you can't attend, find friends and colleagues, or even follow the convention remotely if you can't attend.
- Hashtags also unite conversations about a single topic, like #phillies (Philadelphia Phillies) #mlb (Major League Baseball) and #openingday (baseball's opening day). Hashtags might also cover trending topics in the news, like #healthcare or #americanidol. If you go to Twitter search you can actually see which hashtags are currently popular (note that some are hashtags, some are not).

## Do:

- ✓ Complete your bio with a link to your blog or website (the place where you ultimately capture and convert!)
- ✓ Start conversations.
- ✓ Find and connect with local users and/or people who fit into your target niche market.
- ✓ Share valuable information.
- ✓ Respond when people send you @ messages or direct messages. If you don't check Twitter daily, set up alerts to send you an e-mail or text message when people tweet you with a program like "Ttext Me."

## Don't:

- X Spam people by sending them @ messages to follow your links.
- X Use automatic direct messages. Many people will "un-follow" people if they receive an automatic direct message after they followed them with links to their sites.
- X Protect your tweets. Otherwise, how will you meet new people?
- X Talk only to fellow real estate practitioners.

## PRACTITIONER SPOTLIGHT

### Rogers Healy

- > Rogers Healy
- > Rogers Healy and Associates
- > Dallas, TX



#### ***Can you tell us how you use Twitter in your real estate practice?***

“I have 50 agents and I required them all to be on Twitter and Facebook. Twitter helps us get instant exposure for our listings, helps generate office buzz, and helps us reach clients.”

#### ***What is your advice for agents considering adopting Twitter as part of their marketing strategy?***

“Quit thinking about it and start doing it. It's not too late. It takes time to learn because it is a different language. Jump right in—don't ease in. The worst thing that could happen is that you make a mistake.”

“Start by listening. Start following smart people interested in the same things you are. Comment on their posts when possible.”

“Set up search alerts on topics of interest to you. Start finding people in those areas, follow them and interact.”

“Create your strategy and stick to it. Are you trying to connect to local business people? Find them and start interacting. Start a Tweetup breakfast or cocktail hour to meet face-to-face. Start posting content that is of value to this group.”

# 6. Monitoring, Measuring, and Protecting Your Reputation

In this chapter:

- > What are others saying about you?
- > Monitoring others
- > Measuring your online reputation
- > Protecting your reputation

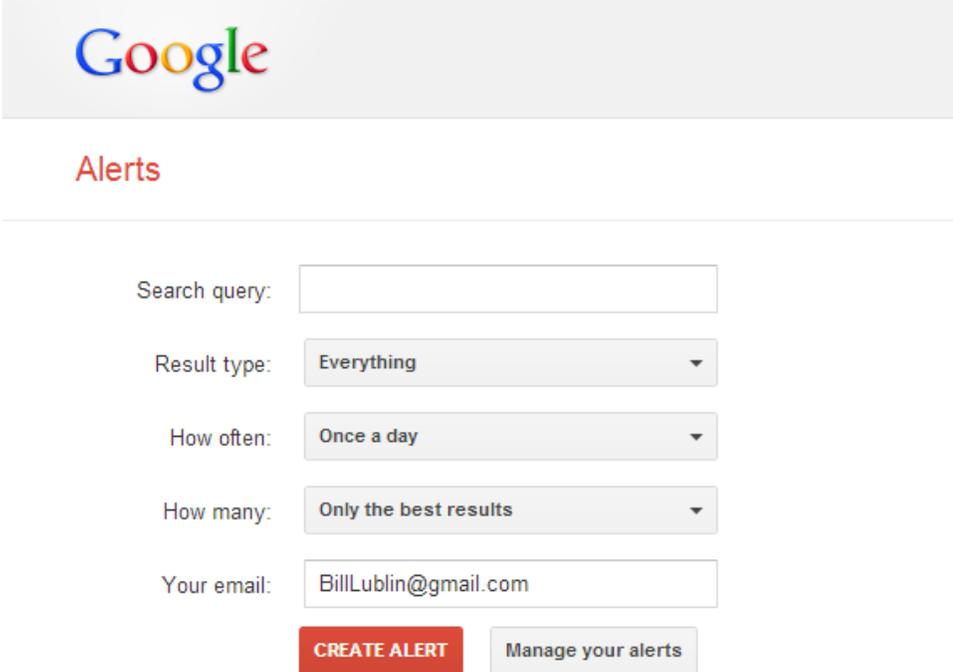
## WHAT ARE OTHERS SAYING ABOUT YOU?

In addition to your online activities at LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, more of your offline activities seem to find their way onto the Web. When you are in a public venue, whether having drinks or dinner or just talking to someone, you have the expectation that you can become part of someone's photo or video library. In addition, many of the tools we use for monitoring our reputation and our company's reputation are useful to search for topics of interest to our communities and our industry.

### Google Alerts

Not surprisingly, the search engine Google is where we start to search for mentions of our name or topic. Google has a "set it and forget it" function called Google Alerts (Figure 6.1), which lets you set up an automated search of Google that will send you an e-mail every time one of your search words is found by the search engines in any website or Web entry that is indexed by Google. This is one of the most effective ways to monitor your online reputation. You can set up alerts based on your company's name, principal's names, community, town, or any other topic that interests you. Google will also allow you to limit the searches by type.

Figure 6.1: Google Alerts



The screenshot shows the Google Alerts creation page. At the top is the Google logo. Below it is the word "Alerts" in red. The form includes a "Search query" text box, a "Result type" dropdown menu set to "Everything", a "How often" dropdown menu set to "Once a day", a "How many" dropdown menu set to "Only the best results", and a "Your email" text box containing "BillLublin@gmail.com". At the bottom are two buttons: a red "CREATE ALERT" button and a grey "Manage your alerts" button.

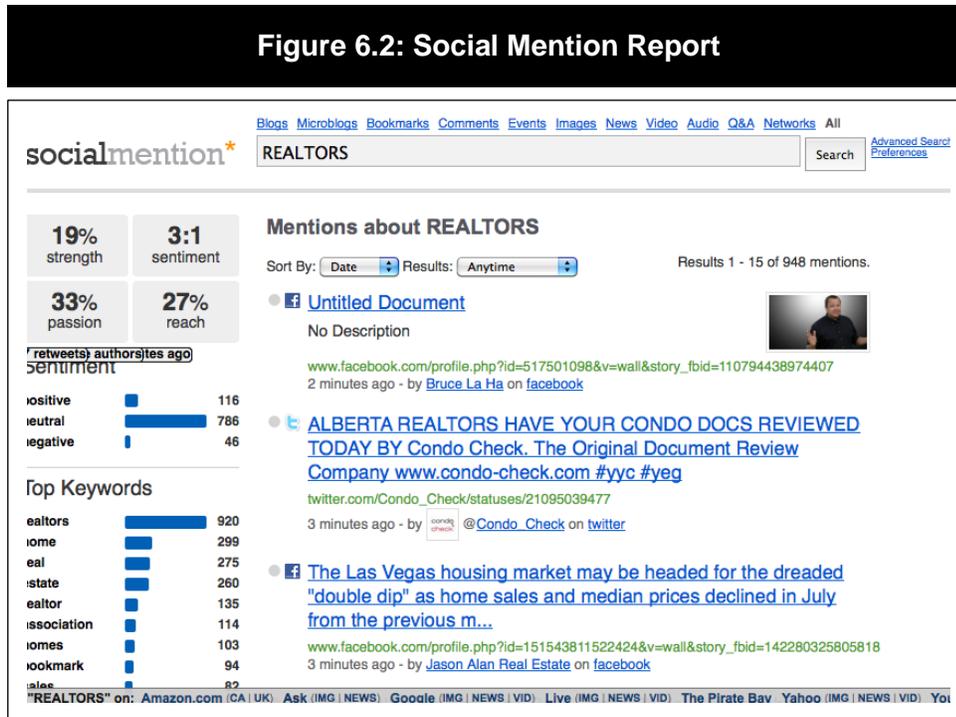
Source: [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts).

Go to [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts) to begin. You don't have to use a Google e-mail address or even have a Google account to use Google Alerts. You can just type your search terms as you would for a normal Google search, enter an e-mail address to receive the alerts, and click "CREATE ALERT." You can create up to 1,000 alerts in this way for a single e-mail address. To make sure you don't get a lot of items you're not interested in, use advanced search techniques:

- > If you use the plus (+) sign: +REALTOR® will only find REALTOR®, but not REALTORS®. The + sign must be placed before a word without any spaces in between.
- > If you put REALTOR® +yourtown, your search results will have both terms when they show up within 10 words of each other.
- > Using quotes limits your search to the exact item in quotes whether it is a word, a name, or a phrase. This is useful if you have a common name. Try "john smith" +"real estate" or your company name.

## Social Mention

Another alert tool that is specific for social media sites is Social Mention (Figure 6.2).



Source: Reprinted with permission of Social Mention, [www.socialmention.com](http://www.socialmention.com).

The reports on Social Mention, unlike the reports from Google Alerts, try to measure the reputation and determine the public sentiment toward the subject. Though the reliability of this type of software is not yet high enough to be discerning about its results, it's an interesting way to view the information presented. It also breaks down tables of keywords, users, sources, and hashtags that provide additional ways to view the data presented to you.

## Alternion

Alternion also checks out your connections, but this service is more bare-bones and has more limited sources of information, such as Twitter, Friend-Feed, and RSS streams you add. Alternion shows you what is trending among those you know and follow.

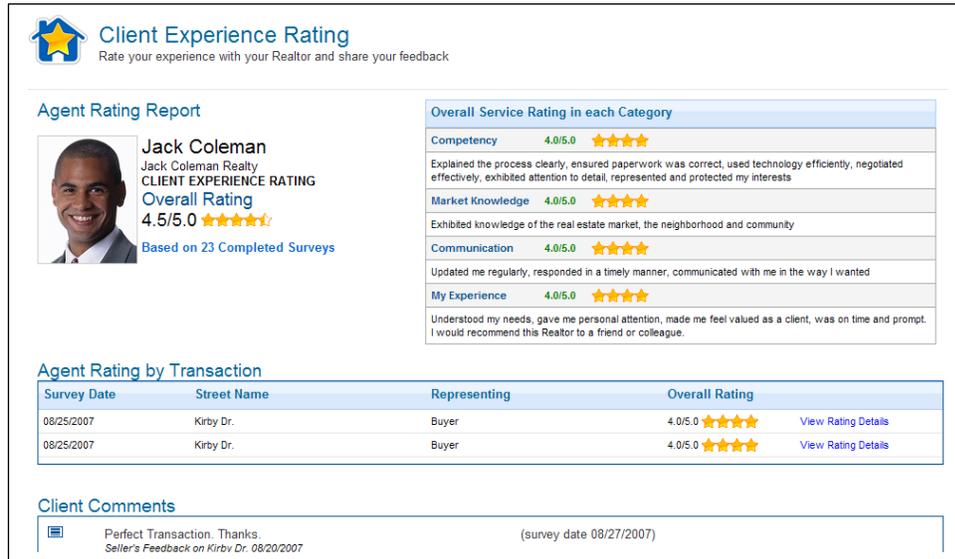
If these free tools don't provide a significant enough experience for you, or if you have needs for even deeper reputation monitoring with sentiment analysis, you can either pay for a service like Trackur, which offers several self-service search programs, or investigate services like Salesforce Marketing Cloud, where professionals help guide your continuing monitoring program.

## **Agent Rating Websites**

As you engage online, you will read and hear a lot about transparency—the need for openness in dealing with others since discussion on the Internet is unavoidable. The drive to transparency for companies and professionals comes at least in part from the consumer's ability to comment on and rate products and services on sites like Travelocity.com, Fandango.com and Amazon.com, and sites like Yelp.com, where hotels, movies, books, shops, restaurants, and other businesses are lauded and lambasted regularly.

The Houston Association of REALTORS® recognized this trend and decided to offer an online rating platform for consumers (Figure 6.3). Knowing that ratings would happen anyway, the association decided to provide a forum. As a result, the REALTOR® association is able to shape the information environment for members' benefit and build the credibility that drives traffic to the site.

**Figure 6.3: Agent Rating Report**



Source: Reprinted with permission of Houston Association of REALTORS®, Sample Rating Report, <http://members.har.com/Realtor-Rating-Program/default.cfm>.

Lest you think that you feel lucky to live in an area where agents are not rated regularly, you should be aware (as consumers are) that there are other privately maintained sites that rate real estate agents like [www.realestateratingz.com](http://www.realestateratingz.com), [www.incredibleagents.com](http://www.incredibleagents.com), and [www.homethinking.com](http://www.homethinking.com). With sites like these available to consumers searching the Internet, to some degree your reputation may be formed by others, and knowing what people are saying becomes of paramount importance.

## MONITORING OTHERS

Because so much of our efforts in social media revolve around our community, it is important to know where our community is active and what it is saying and doing. And as a businessperson, you want to deepen your relationship on every plane so that you become the trusted expert in real estate matters, making those in your community predisposed to choose you when the time comes to buy or sell a property. That makes it important to connect with your offline community online. For that there are a few ways to find and connect online with people that you have come in contact with outside your online work.

### Smartr

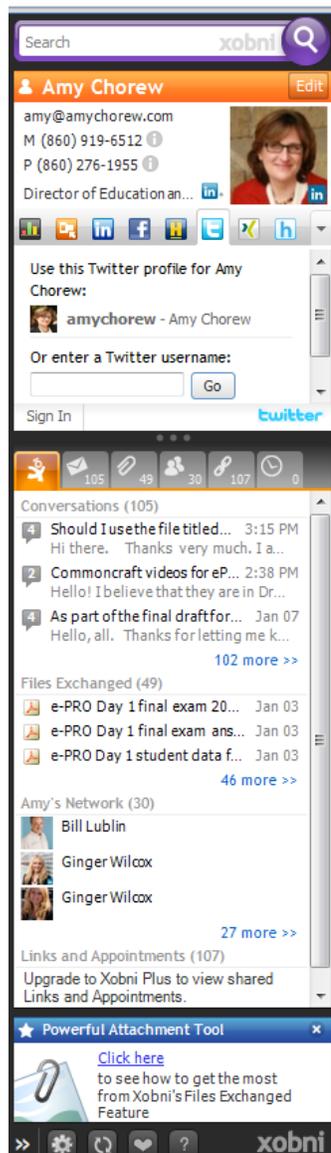
Smarr is a Gmail add-on from the makers of the product on the following page—Xobni. By simply adding Smarr to your browser (it supports Firefox, Chrome, and Safari), Smarr adds a “face” to your e-mail and shows you their profiles on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, allowing you to see their latest updates and tweets. It allows you to search by first or last names, access their social profiles, and see a history of your e-mail communications, showing contacts you have in common and the number of e-mails sent between you over a year.

Since Smarr is browser based, it works on PCs and Macs, allowing you to have the benefit of cross-platform utilization with whatever device is handy. The product also has smartphone apps for the iPhone, Android, and BlackBerry, which help organize your smartphone contacts.

## Xobni

Xobni (Figure 6.4) (inbox spelled backwards) was developed for use with Outlook, the personal information manager that is included in the Microsoft Office suite. Xobni organizes your contacts, tells you what their social connections are, ranks them, and allows you to make your newest e-mail contact more significant through a strong organizational design.

Figure 6.4: Xobni



Source: Reprinted with permission from Xobni, [www.xobni.com](http://www.xobni.com).

## Rapportive

Rapportive (Figure 6.5) is a program that works with Gmail (Google's free e-mail handler) and shows you the social connections of your e-mail correspondents. By hovering over the e-mail address you want to review, you can see who they are, what social media sites that e-mail address is connected to, and, by logging in, you can make notes about anything you wish. Since Gmail works within your Internet browser, that browser needs to be compatible with Rapportive, which is currently limited to Firefox, Chrome, and Safari.

Figure 6.5: Rapportive

buzz about help jobs install

# rapportive

Get rich contact profiles right inside Gmail.

Rapportive shows you everything about your contacts right inside your inbox.

[Add Rapportive to Gmail](#)

Free add-on for Firefox, Safari, Mailplane, and Chrome.

### You've got mail...

- Who is this?**  
See their happy smiling face.
- Where are they?**  
See if they're nearby, and arrange to meet.
- What do they do?**  
See their job, company and LinkedIn profile.
- What do my apps say?**  
See their activity in MailChimp and more.

### Now take action!

- Establish rapport**  
Mention shared interests and recent tweets.
- Grow your network**  
Follow them on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and more.
- Store thoughts for later**  
Leave notes on their profile.

Source: Reprinted with permission of Rapportive.com, [www.rapportive.com](http://www.rapportive.com).

# MEASURING YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION

It's only natural that after choosing our avatar and our handle, working on our profile, and working to connect with others in a meaningful manner, we will want to have some idea of what kind of impact we're having. Since much of what we're working toward is building relationships that develop into business, our measurement has to start with the impact we have when we interact with others.

There are several tools that can help measure our impact in different areas. None of them are overly accurate, since, as we said earlier, sentiment analysis on the Web has not yet fully matured, but they can at least indicate how our communities view us.

## HubSpot

HubSpot ([www.hubspot.com](http://www.hubspot.com)) has developed a marketing "grader" to measure the efficacy of your website and blog as well as your strength at engaging others with your social media accounts, which include Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Pinterest, and Xing.

With social media accounts, HubSpot's Marketing Grader tries to measure the power, reach, and authority of your marketing efforts. In other words, when you post on Facebook or when you tweet, what kind of an impact does it have? HubSpot's Marketing Grader can quickly identify the tweets that received the most clicks, the number of interactions your Facebook posts have fostered, and the growth in followers, friends, subscribers, and so on.

Hubspot is constantly developing new products, and the company is worth a visit to review and measure your efforts, but be patient, it takes time to make an impact in these venues.

## Online Identity Calculator

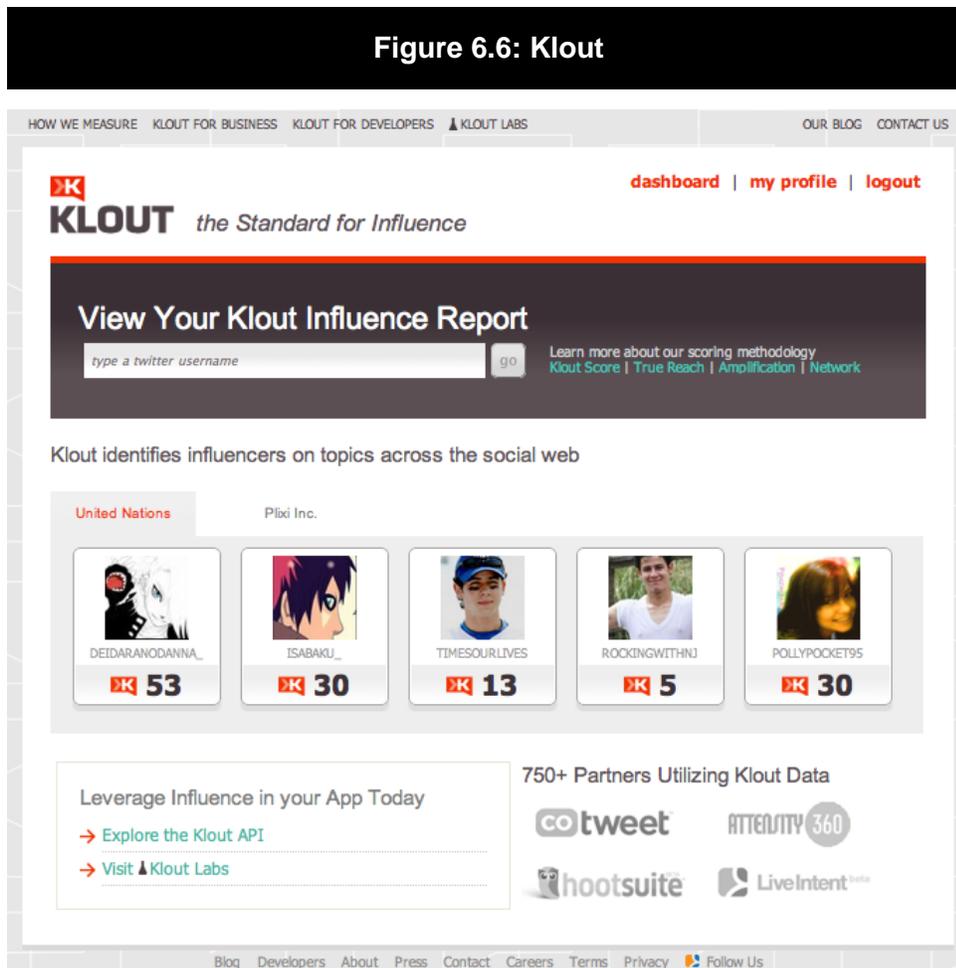
Another really interesting site for reputation measurement is the Online Identity Calculator ([www.onlineidcalculator.com](http://www.onlineidcalculator.com)), a site operated by William Arruda and Kirsten Dixon, authors of *Career Distinction: Stand Out by Building Your Brand*, who created the site to help people determine what they call their “Google Quotient.” By completing a slightly lengthy but relatively simple series of tasks and answering some questions, the site calculates your ability to be found on Google in the manner you desire. The questions are designed from their perspective as career coaches, so you’re asked about your age, job description, and so on, in this process.

After completing the tasks, a chart is generated that shows you to be anywhere from “Digitally Dissed” to “Digitally Distinct.” This is a little less specific than the efforts of the HubSpot products, but again, the mechanics behind it are arbitrary and created by a programmer trying to implement the thought process of two individuals, so we are unable to vouch for the methodology.

## Klout

Another popular site is Klout (Figure 6.6), which measures your Twitter influence in a variety of ways, including the likelihood that your suggestions will be acted upon. Like the other tools we review in this section, Klout needs to be reviewed and considered with a grain of salt. However, the principals of Klout have gone to some lengths to break down your interaction with your community, and Klout is a tool worth using. It can be somewhat volatile, so if you have reduced your activity on Twitter, expect your Klout score to drop fairly rapidly, though the analysis of your actions is still complete.

Figure 6.6: Klout



Source: Reprinted with permission of Klout, www.klout.com.

Whatever tools you find you like the most, we would suggest that you use a few of them and compare the results against each other to obtain the clearest picture possible of the impact of your social media efforts.

# PROTECTING YOUR REPUTATION

## Internet Trolls and Flamers

As carefully as you might try to monitor your online reputation, there are some people who delight in spreading misery through the world. Because of the relative anonymity of the Web, these people find “Internet muscles” that allow them to criticize without reason or attack without justification. You can't stop them from spreading bad messages by not participating, and the decision to engage or ignore needs to be made on a case-by-case basis, but let's first define trolls and flamers so that you can be best prepared to protect your reputation when you encounter them.

An **Internet troll** is someone who posts inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community, such as an online discussion forum, chat room, or blog, with the primary intent of provoking other users into a desired emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion.

**Internet Flamers** are those who engage in hostile and insulting interaction in discussion boards, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), Usenet, by e-mail, and on game servers such as Xbox Live or Playstation Network as well as video-sharing websites.

When you encounter either type of person, think long and hard about whether responding to them will relieve the issue or enflame it. If, for example, someone attacks you in a venue where there are few people to see, and you have a large following, think about whether you want to spread the “fight” to that larger audience. Often you can do the most reputation preservation by avoiding that type of fight and denying the small mind the opportunity to exhibit to a larger audience—allowing the issue to die a small death.

### **Online Conflicts**

Though it's never pleasant to get into an argument or fight with someone, if you do, you should enter the conflict as prepared as possible. The following steps are an outline for thoughtful participation that should help you prevail in most situations:

#### **1. Engage or Ignore**

As we discussed earlier, sometimes you need to decide if a specific challenge needs to be met or is best ignored. If the challenge is made by someone with a “small” Internet voice, in an arena that is not well travelled by others, it may be best to ignore the comments and move on. If, however, the need to answer a statement or challenge a statement to avoid its being the lead search result on Google, or a prominent article or blog post, then you need to take a well-considered and thoughtful response.

#### **2. Choose Your Battleground**

Decide where you want to make your response. You may not want to have the heated discussion in the venue where the attack started. Each social media venue has a different “psychological bandwidth” that determines the difficulty of engaging in that space. In other words, the boundaries created by the restrictions of the channel limit the ability of people to communicate clearly in that space. As a result, you may not be making the points you want to make in the manner you want to make them.

- On Twitter, for example, because you are limited to only 140 characters, you cannot even use your full vocabulary to establish thoughts or premises for your conversation.
- If someone were to post a comment on a blog or a forum or Facebook, you might be better served responding to the issues on your own blog and posting a link to your answer on the original space to direct traffic to your answer. By posting on your own blog, your blog policy can help limit certain types of responses, allow you to use images to help make your point, and denies the original site the traffic your response generates. In addition, you can outrank the original post on Google by allowing your point to be made before the opposing point is heard, modifying the impact that other post might have.

### **3. Don't Respond in Anger**

Friends don't let friends drive drunk, and they wouldn't let friends type angrily if they had the means to stop it. Whatever your initial emotional response to someone's attack, a calm and measured answer will read better than the emotional outburst that we all would like to make. Your writing will be more articulate, you are more likely to review your answer before posting or sending, and the calmer you are, the more responses will occur to you.

### **4. Rally the Troops**

When others support your position it is given even greater credibility by others. Just as a third-party reference validates your expertise, a third-party defense validates your position in the discussion.

**5. Don't Make It Personal (*Ad Hominem*)**

An *ad hominem* argument uses a personal attack on your opponent to distract the audience from the core of the disagreement.

However, that type of personal attack can easily be defeated by taking the moral high ground and refusing to engage in a contest of personalities.

**6. Avoid Opinion—Stick with the Facts**

Often, insulated from criticism by the anonymity of the Internet, people feel free to make statements without support or to write about what they think instead of what they know. By responding to the issues with facts instead of opinions, you make the argument objective rather than subjective and place your opponent in a position to either agree or to debate reality.

**7. Use Humor When You Can**

Sigmund Freud taught us that laughter is the non-aggressive release of hostility. All of us can think back to a time or situation in our lives when laughter defused an awkward or tense situation. Appropriate humor can be valuable, as long as your humor doesn't seem to denigrate the position or emotions of the opponent. Self-directed or self-deprecating humor works best here.

**8. Take It Offline**

It's difficult to read intent. Sometimes misunderstandings occur in text that are best resolved with an offline conversation, either over the phone or in person. As we mentioned earlier, sometimes a personal meeting defuses a situation that could have escalated in other circumstances.

As in any other part of your business, keep everything professional, articulate, and free of provocative language, and you will always maintain the professional, levelheaded reputation you have worked so hard to cultivate and maintain.

In conclusion:

- > Remember that everything you do on the Internet is in plain sight.
- > Remember that everything you do on the Internet is forever.
- > Remember that all of your actions become a cumulative picture of you—and that people's *perception* of you is *their* reality.

# Appendix

- > Sample Blog Policy from SMMI
- > Blogger's Code of Ethics from SMMI
- > Bibliography

# Sample Blog Policy from SMMI

## Policies and Information:

These policies are valid from the date of publication as noted above.

## Blog Policy:

This blog is written and edited by Author Name. For questions about this blog, please contact us at the e-mail addresses provided.

1. Opinions are ours and ours alone.
2. Nobody pays us to review anything.
3. If anybody does pay us to review anything we're still only going to give you our honest opinions. Frankly we don't expect anyone to come up with enough money to make us forget our basic principles. If someone does come up with that kind of money, we will have a celebratory post just before we close our business.
4. If someone pays us anything to write a review or a post, the resulting posts will be prominently disclosed as such within the sponsored post and/or post title.

## Comment Policy:

1. We believe Web 2.0 to be a conversation and as such, we encourage comments.
2. We believe that we should be civil when we write, and we believe that people who comment should also be civil.
3. Feel free to disagree, we enjoy different points of view, and we don't even mind if you're wrong about something—but whatever you do, do it in a civil manner.
4. Spam is not only an unusual luncheon choice, and a great skit by Monty Python, but an annoyance in the world of Web 2.0. When spam appears in comments, it will be deleted.
5. In addition to obvious commercial spam, blatant self-promotion and advertising will not be tolerated.
6. Personal attacks will not be tolerated and will be deleted.
7. Profanity will not be tolerated, and may be redacted at our sole discretion. That means we may modify a comment that contains profanity. We will try not to modify the intent of the writer, but if

you aren't articulate enough to make your point without profanity, it's not our fault. You should have paid attention in English class.

8. We do not infringe on the copyrights of others nor do we steal the content of others—and we won't allow others to do so here either. Any such material can and will be removed at our sole discretion.

#### Collection and Use of Personal Information:

1. We will not sell or release your e-mail address to anyone (though we could be compelled to do so by a court of law - and I can't even imagine what you might have been doing that would cause a court to do so, but shame on you anyway!).
2. We will not send you any form of marketing material unless you specifically request it.
3. All content is protected by U.S. copyright.
4. "Fair Use" allows for small portions of text to be used and quoted as long as there is a prominent link back directly to the original post URL.
5. "Scraping" this site and/or RSS feed and/or republishing content without permission is not allowed.
6. We believe strongly in the rights of creators to their intellectual property, and will aggressively pursue any and all remedies available under the law to protect our copyright and intellectual property. We have also committed ourselves to the higher education of our attorney's children, and therefore aren't worried about spending money on legal fees.

Source: Social Media Marketing Institute,  
[www.socialmediamarketinginstitute.com](http://www.socialmediamarketinginstitute.com).

# Blogger's Code of Ethics from SMMI

## Article I. Be Honest

- Section 1.01 Be honest and objective in gathering and reporting information.
- Section 1.02 When providing interpretations, assure that the reader is clearly informed that the conclusions reached and the opinions expressed are those of the author.
- Section 1.03 Differentiate between what you think and what you know.
- Section 1.04 Expose inaccuracies where you find them, even at the expense of your personal agenda.
- Section 1.05 Be clear.
- Section 1.06 Identify your position.
- Section 1.07 Distinguish between writing as an individual and writing as an employee, employer, agent, sponsor, or paid advocate.
- Section 1.08 Disclose business relationships you have with the subjects of your writing.
- Section 1.09 Disclose any financial benefits, rebates or kickbacks you receive in reviewing a product or service.
- Section 1.10 While such remunerations are not inappropriate, not disclosing them and the potential influence they may have had on your writing is inappropriate.
- Section 1.11 Disclose conflicts of interest, affiliations, activities and personal agendas.
  - (a) Don't provide favored treatment to advertisers and special interests because of pressure to influence content. Make those choices based upon your opinion and when exceptions are made, disclose them fully to readers
  - (b) Distinguish between advocacy, commentary and factual information.
  - (c) Even when writing as an advocate or providing opinion and commentary, don't misrepresent fact or context.
- Section 1.12 Distinguish factual information and commentary from advertising. Shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
- Section 1.13 Identify and link to sources whenever feasible.

- Section 1.14 The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- (a) Make certain that Weblog entries, quotations, headlines, photos and all other content do not misrepresent the facts.
  - (b) Assure that Weblog entries, quotations, headlines, photos and all other content do not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- Section 1.15 Never alter the content of photos without disclosing what has been changed.
- (a) Image enhancement or manipulation is only acceptable for technical clarity or artistic purposes and should always be disclosed.
  - (b) Label montages and photo illustrations.
- Section 1.16 Bloggers should never publish information they know is inaccurate.
- Section 1.17 If publishing information that is unsubstantiated or questionable in any manner, make it clear it's unsubstantiated or questionable.
- Section 1.18 Never publish confidential information without permission.
- Section 1.19 Always provide attribution for quotations, photos, videos or other intellectual properties.
- (a) As creative individuals, we should always honor the rights of those whose creations we utilize as part of our own work.

## **Article II. Be Responsible**

- Section 2.01 Treat sources and subjects as human beings deserving of respect.
- Section 2.02 Give consideration to the plight of others and show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by your content.
- Section 2.03 Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- (a) Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Section 2.04 Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort.
- (a) Pursuit of information is not a license for arrogance.

- Section 2.05 Recognize that private people have a greater right to privacy about themselves than do public officials and other public figures.
- (a) Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy. Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
  - (b) Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects, victims of sex crimes and criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.

### **Article III. Be Accountable**

- Section 3.01 Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Section 3.02 Invite dialogue with the public over your content and your conduct.
- Section 3.03 Disclose conflicts of interest, affiliations, activities and personal agendas.
- (a) Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence content. When exceptions are made, disclose them fully to readers.
- Section 3.04 Be wary of sources offering information for favors. When accepting such information, disclose the favors.
- Section 3.05 Expose the unethical practices of others.
- Section 3.06 Abide by the same high standards to which we hold others.
- Section 3.07 When confronted with inaccurate information, we have an affirmative obligation to expose those inaccuracies, even when it does not further our personal agenda.

Source: Social Media Marketing Institute,  
[www.socialmediamarketinginstitute.com](http://www.socialmediamarketinginstitute.com).

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