

Social Media for Realtors

PART 1: Introduction to Social Media



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WEBSITES FOR REALTORS®

Foreword

Before the explosion of the internet, real estate marketing was a mostly pay-to-play business activity. In an industry where marketing plays a key role in driving leads and sales, you had to pay for everything, from news-paper ads, flyers, billboards, posters, newsletters, referral incentives, as well as things such as gifts and seasonal giveaways.

Real estate marketing back then required a sizeable budget, its effectiveness was hard to measure, and it was also time-consuming. It doesn't sound like great business practice now, in hindsight, but it was the game that most realtors played at the time.

Then social media was born, and everything changed.

With the arrival of new online platforms on which to do business, traditional marketing practices were turned on its head, and the playing field was leveled anew. This has proven to be especially true in real estate, and it has become critical for members of our industry to adjust to the changing of the times, and to welcome these new trends – or risk getting left in the dust.

With that in mind, we've put together this series of guides especially for you. It contains information on how to use social media to your advantage in driving your business, and we hope that you will find it useful in getting you on the path to online marketing success.

Best Regards,

Kye Grace
myRealPage.com
Director of Product & Service Development

Introduction

In this first chapter of our series, we will be introducing you to the concept of social media and how it works in general. We will also be providing you with information on how it can benefit businesses, and why it is important for realtors to start joining current social media platforms and establishing their professional presence within it.

What Is Social Media?

We often hear the term “social media” get thrown around these days, especially among the younger crowd, but what exactly does it mean?

By itself, it seems like a pretty vague catch-all phrase, but within context, it actually refers more specifically to online tools and platforms that allow its users to interact with each other and share information back and forth in real time. Usually, these interactions happen between groups of friends, families, colleagues, and/or acquaintances who all have accounts on a specific social media website, but it is also possible for businesses and brands to get into those interactions and take part in the overall flow of communication that’s going on.

Online Sharing, Then and Now

Anything and everything (and we mean EVERYTHING) can get shared over social media. Whether it’s photos, videos, stories, artwork, documents, information, opinions, reviews, or even by-the-minute accounts of events – no matter how major or mundane – chances are, you’d be running into any of these, at any given time, on any of the many social media platforms that exist at the moment.

You might be wondering, though, “So what makes it any different from me just putting up photos or articles on my website, like I always have?”

Quite frankly, the difference is huge. To illustrate, let’s think back to the early days of the internet.

Back then, to have an online presence, you needed to have your own website, and for this to happen, you had to pay for a host, a domain name, plus whatever other tools, bells, and whistles you wanted to include in it. You also needed the technical know-how to build, design, and operate your website, and in case you didn’t have it, you would have had to hire a webmaster to get everything up and running.

Once everything was set up, you’d fill it up with information about you and/or your business... and then you’d wait. And wait. And hope that someone would come across your website somehow, and decide to contact you. Occasionally, maybe you’d

have the opportunity to share the link to your website in a forum, or online group, or mailing list that you happened to be a member of, but unless that said forum or group actively gained new members regularly, you’d only be able to share links to your site to the same people over and over.

Those who DID visit your website would be able to look around and view your content... and then you weren’t quite sure what happened afterwards.

Maybe if they liked what they saw, they’d send an inquiry via the email address you listed, or maybe call your number. Or maybe they’d bookmark your website for viewing again later, and you’d never know about it. Or maybe they DIDN’T like what they saw and left, and again, you’d never find out what exactly made them leave in a hurry.

All the while, you’d be paying for your website’s upkeep, putting up content that you’re not sure if it’s something that people like seeing, or if anyone is seeing it at all, and simply hoping for the best.

Fast forward to now.

These days, anyone who has access to the internet, and basic knowledge of how to work a computer can start creating an online presence by simply signing up for an account on any of the social media sites we have at the moment... FOR FREE. On top of that, these sites were specifically designed to be easy to use, and within minutes you could have an account or a page that is dedicated to your product



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or service set up within literally minutes, complete with text, images, photos, contact information, and maybe even an online shop!

And remember when we mentioned earlier that just about everything gets shared over social media? Well it also holds true for whatever content you decide to put up on your business' account. Whether it's a product photo of your best-selling item, or a video of you demonstrating how to use your product, it only takes a few clicks for someone viewing your page to share it with almost everyone they know.

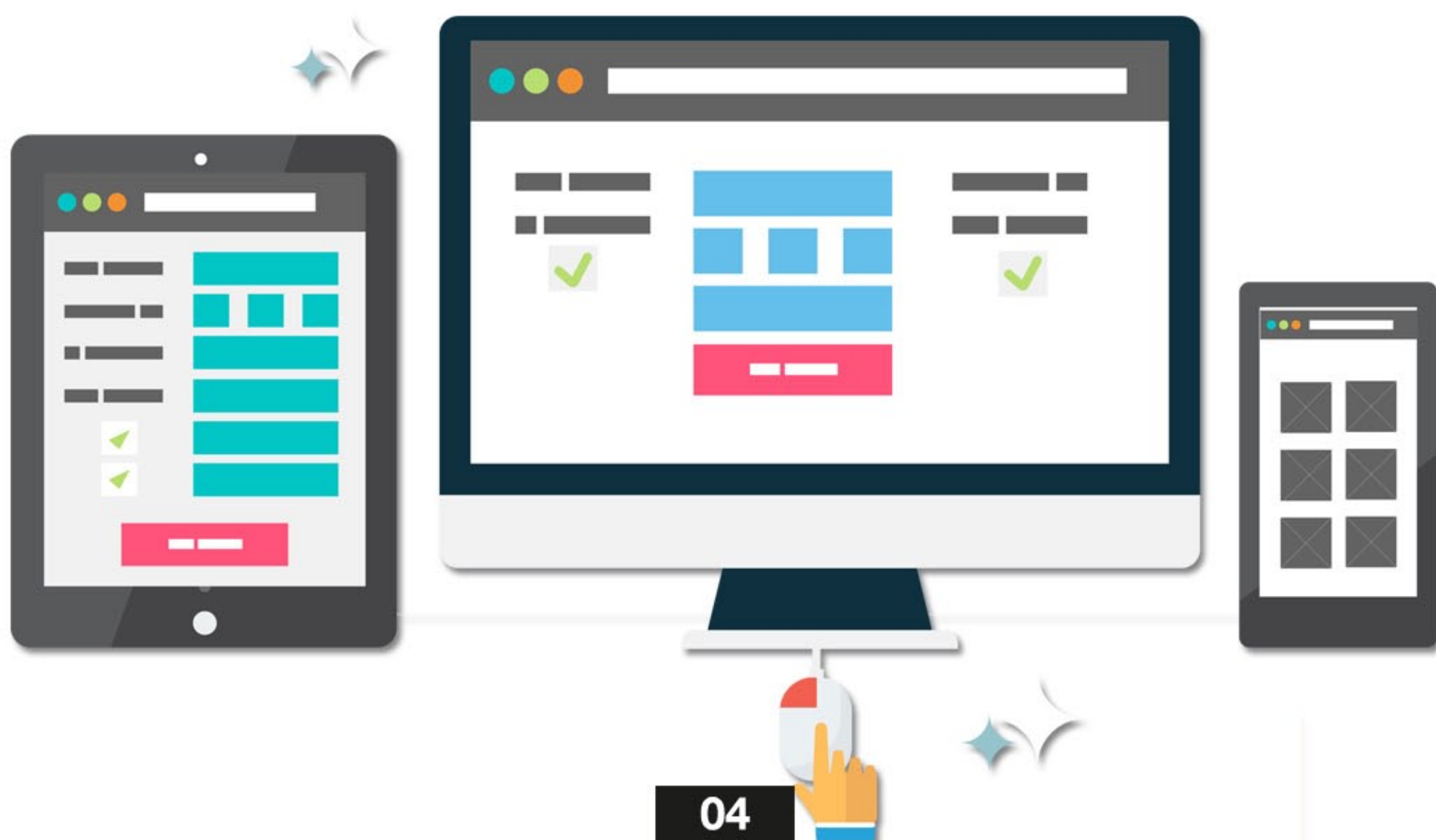
Another important difference between then and now would be the fact that over social media, viewers can now instantly let you know how they feel about that photo or video you shared with them, either by saying so in a comment, leaving a review, or clicking a button to indicate whether they like it or not. No more waiting and no more uncertainty!

In A Nutshell

So to sum it up, one could say that social media is:

- **A free, easy-to-use technology that allows one to create an online presence for your brand or business**
- **An instant, long distance communication tool between you and your target audience**
- **A useful tool for getting feedback for your products and content, as well as for gaining a better insight into the preferences of the people and consumers you would like to connect with.**

Of course, this doesn't mean that you don't need your website anymore (though there ARE small businesses out there that have been successfully operating using social media as their lone online point of contact). If anything, social media is a great tool to use in promoting your website, and much, much more.



How Can Social Media Help My Business?

While most people who use social media websites tend to do so mostly for updating and keeping in touch with family and friends, there is ample room in there for businesses and brands as well. This is mostly due to how the way people use social media has been evolving over the years.

Before, its usage mainly revolved around correspondence and the sharing of personal details, but later on, people discovered that they can also use social media to ask questions about others' experiences with certain products or services, to source items, to ask for referrals, and basically to find the things and information that they need.

Where there's a demand, there's bound to be a supply, and soon enough, businesses responded as they realized that they can meet the needs of these people by getting on the same online platform. It has since transformed into a win-win situation, as consumers can easily find what they want, and businesses can grow and flourish.

This trend continues until now, and it only looks like it's going to get even better as consumers rely on social media more and more for a lot of their needs and wants, and businesses are coming up with better and more creative ways to meet those needs.

Key Benefits

The following is a short list of just some of the many ways that social media can help your business.



Get found! Vast, FREE brand exposure via fast and easy sharing of content. Since it literally only takes a couple of clicks to share anything on social media, gaining exposure for your brand has become so much easier. A few people sharing your content or message to their own personal networks (which can number anywhere from a few dozen to a few thousand) can snowball really fast, and before you know it, your brand has been seen by thousands and thousands of people, and you gain exposure to new audiences ... all for free!

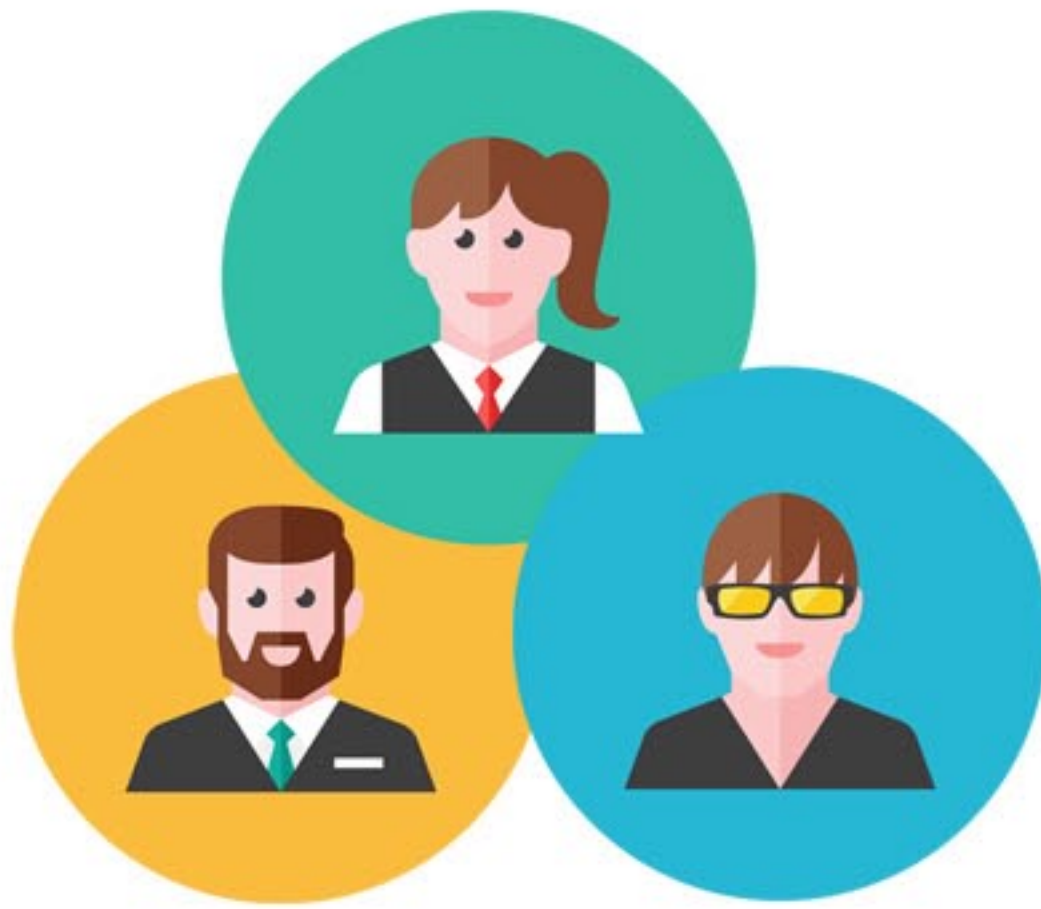


Instant feedback and customer insight. As mentioned earlier, there's no more waiting, and no more uncertainty over whether your product and content are good or not. You'll find out pretty much instantly if people want to see more or less of a certain thing, and you'll also discover consumer trends and habits. On top of this, most social media sites also offer free built-in analytics tools for business accounts, in case you really want to see the numbers for yourself. This information should make it much easier for you to adjust and determine the next steps to take with your marketing campaign, or maybe even your entire business model.

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Boost traffic to your website. As mentioned previously, using social media in combination with your website works wonders for driving business. From a few quick posts, you can easily bring audiences to your website where they can discover more details about your products and services. From there, they can either decide to transact, or at the very least, you can introduce them to resources and offers that can lead to them becoming quality leads that you can continue to foster in the future. Either way, opportunities for sales can only keep increasing!



Constant opportunities to directly interact with customers, and foster community and brand loyalty. In the past, just getting someone to stop and listen to a sales pitch (much less become an avid and loyal follower of your brand), could have been a harrowing task that took much time and effort just to gain any sort of foothold in. On social media, however, this becomes a much easier affair. By constantly engaging visitors and customers via content, replying to comments and messages, maybe even holding simple contests or polls, or posing questions for fun, the opportunity to directly communicate with them comes much more frequently. Through this regular interaction, you showcase your expertise, gain their trust, and later on, this can translate to sales and/or them becoming advocates for your brand.



All of these benefits for little to no cost. That's right. Back then, the marketing costs for running print ads, or renting billboards, or printing and giving out flyers and brochures could rack up to the hundreds or thousands of dollars. Over social media, however, you could still gain all the exposure you could ever want without spending a single cent. Believe it or not, but this is something that is certainly achievable with simply sharing creative and/or relevant content, as well as by proper engagement with your audience. Should you need a bit of a boost, however, there's no need to break the bank as you can still run paid ads over social media for as little or as much as you are willing to spend.

Conclusion

During the early days of social media, many people considered it to be a fad for teens that would simply disappear after perhaps a few months or so. This was about a decade ago, and while there have been perhaps a handful of social media sites that have come and gone over that ten-year period, the environment has since stabilized, and sites such as Facebook and Twitter to name a few, have proven their strength, longevity, and usefulness.







At this point, social media has more or less become a part of everyday living for almost everyone in the world. It has become as ubiquitous as that other supposed fad, the internet (as stated in a certain infamous article in the February 1995 issue of *Newsweek*...), and with more and more uses and functions being added to it on a regular basis, it looks like it's here to stay, and we better start learning how to use it.

So if you happen to be someone who has shied away from this technology for one reason or another, we are encouraging you to give it a shot.

The water's fine, and it's great for business.

*Next Chapter:
Part 2 - Speaking the Language of Social Media*



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