

Property online: how digital media is changing the industry

By [Debbie Reabow](#)

12 Feb 2018

The world isn't going digital - it's already there. Businesses without an online presence are fast fading into anonymity, and those who know how to work their digital platforms are reaping the rewards. While the property industry may be rooted in tradition, it's far from exempt from this technological revolution. In fact, the digital world is responsible for some of the biggest changes in the industry to date.



The last decade or so has definitely been an exciting time to be in property. We've seen online portals become primary sales tools, websites and blogs taking over as information and advice centres, and social media opening up a whole new level of conversation with our customers.

As a result, estate agents and real estate franchises have had to up their game on several fronts. The most obvious improvement is modern property photography, which she strongly believes can make or break a sale.

Online vetting

Buyers these days don't have time to visit a hundred different properties in person, so most will vet listings online before making any appointments. A property with too few images, or really bad images, is never going to make it past that first round. Poor imagery doesn't just reflect badly on the property, either. Both buyers and sellers judge agents by their online performance as well.

An agent who habitually posts subpar photographs is going to struggle to win mandates from sellers who have seen their work. Nobody wants their home to look less than its best online. Buyers also tend to prefer agents who showcase properties in the most professional manner. This is especially true with shared mandates, where the same property is photographed and listed by several different agents: buyers are going to choose the one with the best photographs, every time.

Of course, property photography is a specialised skill, which means many agents now use professional photographers whenever possible. The results are both artistic and evocative, and can include 3D tours and drone photography. Nonetheless, the importance of honest representation of what is essentially somebody's home is vital.

Skilled social media management

The human element is still very important, no matter how 'digital' the world has become. That's where we find social media platforms like Facebook can really shine – they let us reach out to people on a more personal level to share honest advice and information, and add value to our service offering without the traditional 'hard sell'.

Facebook is the primary social media platform for the Rawson Property Group, but it is active on Twitter and Pinterest as well. All these accounts require skilled management, however, they can be a double-edged sword.

Social media is an art. When you're putting a message out to such a wide variety of people and cultures, it's very easy to be misinterpreted and cause more harm than good. But if you're not there, if you're not engaging, you lose out on a really great opportunity. For us, the ability to share information that helps people make better property decisions is worth the risk.

While that risk does include the public airing of negative customer experiences, this is often, ironically, a very good thing. Twitter, in particular, is a great listening tool for finding out where our customers are having good experiences, and where we're falling short. This is so important for improving our service, and we're really grateful to be able to have these kinds of conversations that would have been a lot more difficult a few years ago.

For some agents, getting up to speed on social media and other digital platforms can be a daunting prospect. Polished communications skills and great photography aren't always enough to compete. Staying current and relevant is always a challenge, but it's also pushing our industry to be better, and to give our customers more. Digital media has already made the world of property more transparent and approachable, and I think that trend will continue as technology progresses.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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