

Using social media in property sales

The key to social media is to understand that this way of interacting is fast becoming a part of daily life. It is not a novelty or a gimmick, it's an extension of how and why people interact with each other. When planning digital strategy, this is the most important point of departure. Social media tactics need to be integrated into a broader marketing strategy, rather than treated as a separate element.

By [David Gibbons](#) 24 Mar 2011

1. **Start at the beginning:** A business must have a quality website in place that is user friendly and offers comprehensive property listings as well as other useful local information (see point 2 below). One needs to start here, long before 'tweeting' or creating Facebook pages. It's also crucial to make sure that the website is able to integrate with social media channels.
2. **Value-added content matters:** Information is what people are after, but it's a big mistake to think they're just looking for available properties and prices. Property transactions are complicated and if a brand or company becomes known as a reliable source of news, opinions and tips on subjects like taxation and tax incentives, law, property maintenance, trends and so forth, it will take up an important position in consumers' minds. The provision of such value-added content is an important tool, one that can really nurture relationships and that in the property business, is often the bottom line.
3. **Think regional and relevant:** Most people only buy or sell a house once every 7-10 years and practical property discussions are of limited interest in the intervening years. When people are ready to talk property, however, one must be the one they turn to, which means one needs an active relationship in place. This is historically why estate agents have always been very active community members and in the world of social media the same rules apply. Take a look at www.miamism.com, for example. It's a property website with everything you'd expect, but if you look carefully you'll also find the owner's popular Mojito cocktail reviews. By posting these video reviews (which are very popular in Miami, a Mojito-mad city) the agent is taking up an active, high profile position in her community - with obvious long-term relationship and awareness benefits. An active presence within community linkage websites (visit www.cultureclub.co.za for a good Johannesburg example, or www.meetup.com for an international example) will do wonders. Consider it the digital equivalent of joining the local golf club.
4. **Grow the farm - authentically:** As in the real-world property business, the notion of 'growing the farm' (maintaining an active community presence) across online and social media channels is very important. Be aware, however, that authenticity is key. One would never go to a dinner party and start dishing out business cards on arrival, and the online hard sell is equally foolish. Be very careful of blatant self-promotion to achieve coverage. Online or offline, when one is faking it, people can tell - and that's no good for business at all.
5. **Niche target:** New social networks and platforms are emerging every day. The art of digital property marketing is making sure that one's profile is prominent in channels that are meaningful to the business and the region. If one is operating at the high end of the market, a profile on www.linkedin.com (a linking portal for professionals) will serve well. Conversely, if one is working within a small rural area, it's a great idea to keep up a strong profile on the property comment boards of one's online newspaper.

Developing and maintaining a quality presence within geographically relevant channels is what should be aimed for, rather than mass coverage across the entire Internet.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Gibbons is the GM of business development at Korbitec/Property24.com

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>