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3 basics of social media engagement

Build an online real estate following

BY BERNICE ROSS

Everyone says that you have to be on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The question is, "How are you converting your social networking activities into an income stream for your business?"

Eighteen months ago, at a National Association of Realtors conference, I was in the audience for a social media panel composed of five of real estate's best social media experts. When an agent stood up and said, "I'm on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, but how am I supposed to make money with them?" sadly, there was not a direct answer from the panel.

The crux of the problem

The real issue when it comes to social media and real estate sales is that most people have confused the technology platforms with the actual business of providing real estate services. Asking how you're going to make money on Facebook is pretty much akin to asking how you're going to make money with your cell phone or yard sign.

Social media is nothing more than a communication tool. The power of the social media, as compared to sending postcards, calling on the telephone, or door-knocking, is that you no longer have to build your database one by one. Using social media lets you build your database quickly and easily by being able to reach multiple friends and followers with a single post.

The challenge arises when agents approach their social networking activities as an advertising medium. They post information about their upcoming open

houses and new listings on Facebook profile pages even though the Facebook terms of use clearly state: "You will not use your personal profile for your own commercial gain."

The various social media platforms are nothing more than another way to connect with people in your sphere of influence. They also offer a more streamlined way of meeting new people. What many agents are missing is how these tools can be appropriately used to generate revenue.

Connection first

The way you use social media to expand your sphere of influence (i.e., your friends and followers) is the same way you would make friends with a new neighbor next door.

In other words, you wouldn't go over to your new neighbor's house, introduce yourself, and then ask if she would like to see your new listing. Instead, you would find out what you share in common and what she likes to do for fun. Where your lives intersect is the basis for a future friendship.

The same is true when using social media. Your goal is to connect with your friends and followers on a personal basis. To build strong connection, you must be genuinely curious and caring about the people you connect with using social media.

Establishing connection consists of three basic steps: curiosity, communication and commonality.

Step 1: Curiosity

Are you curious about the people you meet? Do you inquire about what recreational activities they enjoy? What hobbies they have? How about where they like to spend their free time? What is their favorite type of food? Avoid very personal questions until you develop rapport. Do your best to learn what matters to them and what gives their lives meaning.

Step 2: Communication

Communication implies a two-way conversation. Engage your friends and followers by asking questions and commenting on what they post. This is the quickest and easiest way to get to know them. The law of attraction says, "We attract who we are." The more the people in your database of friends and

followers feel that you are like them in some way, the more likely they are to do business with you rather than someone else.

Step 3: Commonality

The moment you say, "I've done that" or "I have eaten there," your shared experience or commonality forms the basis for building connection. People prefer to work with others who share similarities. You can observe this any time you have a party where new people meet. People will group themselves with those who share similar interests. The cooks and the sports enthusiasts always seem to find each other.

To make yourself more attractive to more people, stay up on movies, current events and sports. Take time to read major best sellers or business books. Know where to find the best ethnic food in town as well as the best-kept secret about where to shop. In most cases, a little bit of knowledge goes a long way in building connection.

There's an old adage that says, "You get what you give." When you give connection, you get connection. Connection ultimately forms the basis for all great business and personal relationships. Once people connect with you, you are no longer perceived as that "pesky real estate salesperson." Instead, you become "my friend" who sells real estate.

To learn more about how to be the agent your friends and followers hire when they're ready to buy or sell, look for our update.

Bernice Ross, CEO of RealEstateCoach.com, is a national speaker, trainer and author of the National Association of Realtors' No. 1 best-seller, "Real Estate Dough: Your Recipe for Real Estate Success." Hear Bernice's five-minute daily real estate show, just named "new and notable" by iTunes, at www.RealEstateCoachRadio.com. You can contact her at Bernice@RealEstateCoach.com or [@BRoss](https://twitter.com/BRoss) on Twitter.