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5 trends in engaging real estate consumers

Winning the battle for attention in a new media world

BY GLENN ROBERTS JR.

NEW YORK -- Separating the art from the junk, realizing social media's value isn't necessarily about volume, telling stories, befriending tech geeks, and sharing your expertise are part of the new paradigm in building your business and brand, said Steve Rubel, a [tech and cultural trends guru](#) for public relations powerhouse Edelman Digital.

"There has been complete changes in the way companies need to operate that we've seen over the last several years," said Rubel, who spoke last week during the Real Estate Connect conference in a session titled, "The future of media, the Web and how you communicate your value to the marketplace."

Too many marketers are stuck on the notion of "how many Twitter followers, how many Facebook fans do we have?"

"Reach is important, but in some ways it's an empty metric," he said, and volume doesn't always equate to engagement. "The likelihood that they will see your content is tiny; the likelihood that they will (interact) with (your) content is even less."

The reality is that people need to hear something about three to five times, from three to five different sources, for it to stick, he said. He refers to this trend in rethinking consumer engagement as "attentionomics."

A second trend to tap into: digital curation.

"Online, there's a lot of junk and there's a lot of art. There's going to be a need for people who can separate art and junk and to find stuff that's meaningful to you that is of value.

There will be digital curators in every niche on the Web, he said. "The idea here is to own your zone, know what you can be a curator around. Identify that underserved niche. Make curation social and collaborative."

Using the example of online real estate company Trulia, which he said is an Edelman client, he noted that one woman has answered more than 10,000 questions on its Q-and-A platform, Trulia Voices.

Another trend is to work more with tech developers. "They are the innovators. They are the ones creating the most value. Developers are, at their heart, content creators, and there's a huge army of them from around the world," he said. "Developer engagement is going to be an important way for you to create value."

By building mobile apps or other tools, such as application programming interfaces -- APIs are tools that aid programmers in adopting and adapting your tech creations -- "you hedge your bets by becoming parts that other people can use in their own applications and creations," Rubel said.

And if you don't create your own tools, "you can look for something and adopt that" for your own business purposes.

Becoming a storyteller is also an important aspect of marketing today, Rubel said. "Technology is always going to advance the art and science of storytelling," he said, adding that storytelling "is one of the most powerful ways for you to connect with an audience, whether it's in print, online, mobile or social media, or all the above.

"Equip your employees to tell their own stories," he advised, and content can be specially crafted to suit each venue.

A fifth trend to be mindful of: thought leadership. "There is a lot of content and a limited amount of time and attention. That's a theme that is evergreen that we're going to be contending with for decades. There is a need for thought leaders to stand out," Rubel said.

He noted that people are seeking subject-matter leaders in a range of topics. Identify and build your own hub of expertise and experts, he suggested, and listen and "engage in conversations, as warranted. Curate yourself. Think about how activating thought leaders in media can drive what you're doing," Rubel said.