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Creating a Following

by Julie Escobar



In Step and Under the Hat of Top Agent Virginia Munden

There's much to be made these days of how to genuinely create a following, a unique online presence and how to turn that following into business and clients you can count on. In researching answers to the questions on that topic, I caught up with Ontario real estate power player (and shoe aficionado) Virginia Munden to learn some of her tricks of the trade.

Come join me for a little Q & A!



Q: Hey Virginia – great to finally talk to you live! It's been fun following you on Facebook. You're certainly a social media strategist and clearly a fearless fashionista – tell me a little more about yourself if you would.

A: No problem! My husband Wayne and I live in Oakville Ontario with our three very busy children.

Prior to joining my current company, for 12 years, my husband Wayne and I achieved tremendous success under the MUNDENHOMES brand. We were consistently in the Top 10 in Oakville and Top 4 in our office and some of the first agents to use full color photos on all of our business collateral to drive our

brand. We decided to redefine our business and focus on creating a new real estate movement so we surround ourselves with key players and partners and we believe that, coupled with our new branding has been the key to our success. Understanding that choosing the right brand and broker was pivotal to what we wanted to accomplish, and we are the Number One Team to date! My sixteen year old introduced me to the power of social media, and now that has become a major component in our OUTSIDE the box means of doing business. Up to the minute technology, providing OUSTANDING customer service and adhering to the highest possible STANDARDS is our strength. Spending time with family and friends is so important too and real estate is always a topic of conversation wherever we go, even if it is at a hockey arena or football field we are always motivated to share our passion for real estate with others! It can't get any better than that!

Q: You've got such a terrific online presence and quite the following. What do you attribute that to?

A: Interesting question! I'm a firm believer in the power of magnetism and I think I've built my online presence because of my vision. I am who I am and I don't try to be something or someone different. That's important. Your ability to engage with and in social networks can be very powerful. From Realtors, friends, family, partners in business, clients, to those who are just curious. It's fun getting to know what makes people tick, communicate and engage and I think allowing your passion for the things you love to shine through helps make inspire that interaction.

Unlike a lot of agents, I don't post real estate statistics or listing information. In my experience that was never a catalyst for people to engage. Instead, when I focused on the things that are unique about us and what we're passionate about, everything exploded. For example, I'm very visual, so many of my posts are photos, bright colors, and eye-catching graphics. If I do post a real

estate related item, it usually has to do with color and design and making a connection.

Sometimes I post photos of my children or of events, their successes in sports or school or quirky things happening in my home. People can relate to the story and they engage and tell me about their relationships or successes of their children...we are all going thru similar things in life...it's good to get feedback and hear other stories...it's INSPIRING!

I also love to learn, and my greatest source of power and ideas today comes from Social Media. I take time to post comments and leave personal messages on my friends' walls as well. When you take time to care for others it comes back to you. For example, I posted a comment recently on a friend's post, and she sent me a message telling me how thankful she was that I took the time to do so, and then went on to tell me how I inspired her while she went through a cancer battle with her son this past summer. She and her son used my California vacation photos as their 'virtual vacation.' I loved that! My best advice is to find your passion, engage, learn and love every minute of it!

Q: Love your 'can do' attitude and positive energy. How does that help you continuously succeed and how do you think other agents can adopt those qualities easily and begin to maximize their own potential?

Well that is not an easy one to answer! I always say, if you are comfortable, then you need a change! Light the fire from within, not from under! I think my can-do energy is inspired by my kids — all high achievers and competitive. I want to be that same way. I also keep my dad's words in my head. He regularly says to me "Always do your BEST and whatever you do—do it with passion."

We all want to be successful, and I believe that success starts with fuelling and sharing your passion. It's the fastest way for people to connect with you. And lose the negative! Think YES, not NO and CAN, not CAN'T.

Agents have to stop worrying so much about the TRANSACTION and start developing RELATIONSHIPS with others. Start with your family, that's key. Then add friend and clients. After all, relationships are what we base our future on. Get out there and network! I love meeting like-minded people. We meet for coffee or tea, to engage, share and inspire. It's time and money well spent. Consider that a newspaper ad may cost you \$250 and last one day. A \$4 cup of coffee (at least if you're at Starbucks) can be the foundation of a relationship that will last my entire career.

Q: You've got a unique style – how do you use social media to grow your brand and which platforms (FB, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) do you find yourself using most?

Personal Style is EVERYTHING to me! That is what makes people curious to learn more about me. It's important to me to always be true to myself and that shows in my style.

Social Media as FACEBOOK, TWITTER, LINKEDIN, FOURSQUARE, BLOGGER are what I use to engage online. However, I believe the most positive is the REAL SOCIAL Networking. Physically being out there, touching people's lives. Social media is a great tool to help you spread your message, but to really develop relationships you need to be out there proving yourself, getting to know people and letting them get to know you.

Q: Your best advice for agents new and experienced jumping into social networking to help differentiate themselves in today's market?

A: You know, there's no such thing as an experienced agent, not with the way things are changing in our industry. We need to almost re-invent ourselves daily and continuously evolve to work with changing times. Differentiate is a

great word too and I believe social media is a great way to get a message out to an audience. My best advice however for both new and experienced agents is FIND YOUR PASSION, create a vibe and deliver it while building relationships. Keep this in mind: The relationship will help you achieve far greater things in the business world...THE TRANSACTION WON'T

I would also tell agent who want to compete to network. And not just from behind the computer screen in social media! Get out from behind the Blackberry or laptop and meet people! Get out there and explore, share and learn amongst your colleagues. Stop building walls between agents and work together towards building a better marketplace. I also believe there's no more room for "Divas" in our business. You need to be a little more personal especially when developing relationships. We can no longer count on the attitude and statistics – no more of the "I'm number one so you have to list with me" attitude. You must deliver more.

Q: Thanks Virginia for sharing your story, insights and incredible energy! It's easy to see how magnetic your networking is given your genuine passion for both people and what you do. I appreciate the opportunity to work with you and hope we can connect again!

To reach Virginia, find her on FACBOOK @ www.facebook.com/virginiamunden or www.facebook.com/waynemunden or on twitter: www.twitter.com/virginiamunden. To learn more about how to grow your business, stay connected and fast track your goals, visit our blog at <http://blog.prospectsplus.com> or find me on Facebook at www.facebook.com/julieescobar or www.twitter.com/julieescobar! To your success! Take care and have an extraordinary month!