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## **Social media solutions that jumpstart referrals and web traffic**

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Chances are you use social media sites, like Facebook, Twitter, and/or LinkedIn, to network with colleagues and connect with friends. But are you using these platforms to their ultimate advantage for your real estate business? Social media marketing is a proven method for increasing referrals and driving traffic to your web site.

Think of each of your social media accounts like a spoke on a bicycle wheel, pushing leads to the hub - your web site. The key to expanding your fan base across networks is consistently posting valuable content with your followers' interests in mind, rather than simply promoting your current listings. According to Mashable.com, "While an occasional listing may be appreciated by your social media community, many experts advocate engaging your audience with industry knowledge and an expert perspective, rather than alienating users with useless information" ("How Real Estate Pros are Using Social Media for Real Results," June 28, 2010).

Hone your distinctive professional reputation by linking articles about buying, selling, or renting strategies in a down economy; posting statistics about local market inventory or conditions; and making your expertise evident by sharing local truisms, trends, and best practices. Remember to market yourself quietly and post only customer-focused information.

Offering incentives is another fan-boosting technique. These can be discounts for referrals and consultations, or recommendations and reduced rates for your partner vendors, such as home inspectors and title companies.

Online referrals often turn into offline purchases. Be sure to include calls to action and web links in your postings. This adds to their likelihood of being reposted by your fans, which builds your site's exposure and increases referral potential. Recent studies by Chadwick Martin Bailey and iModerate reveal that 60% of Facebook brand fans and 8 in 10 Twitter followers recommend their favorite brands to others offline (data published March 10, 2010).

By demonstrating an interest in your fan base via quality content and benefits that address their needs, they will reciprocate with on- and offline leads and greater web site traffic. If you prefer to have assistance with executing a social media strategy for your real estate business, contact an integrated marketing firm.

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