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Going mobile: Mobile marketing strategies

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It's evident that smartphone usage is on the rise - simply try to count the number of people you see on an iPhone or Blackberry while walking a city block or eating out. The popularity of these devices translates to 73.3 million U.S. smartphone users so far in 2011, according to eMarketer. Recent studies by Chadwick Martin Bailey and iModerate Research Technologies have found that smartphones are becoming a key component of consumer research, assisting in pre-purchase decisions and even shopping. This is great news for real estate brokers and agents seeking to increase the visibility of their businesses and individual listings in real-time.

What is mobile marketing, anyway? Major real estate companies are currently using and implementing mobile marketing strategies, which are defined as any promotional activity created specifically for cell and smartphones. The most common strategy employed is delivery of sophisticated text messages (also called SMS messaging) that are brand-specific, tailored to each individual listing, and formatted based on the type of device receiving the message. For instance, EXIT Realty has the technology to send a link to a mobile-formatted listing web site that offers video and audio capabilities for smartphones, while sending photos and simple listing details to more basic cell phones.

Mobile marketing also includes search engine marketing and display advertising tailored to handheld devices. New technologies emerging for mobile marketing include location-based service (LBS) and GPS messaging, which send geographically-specific marketing messages to smartphone users. Between 2009 and 2014, U.S. mobile advertising spending will increase six times and will hit almost \$2.55 billion.

Text away! For those realtors just beginning to integrate mobile strategies into their marketing plans, a text message marketing system should be the first step. Use Mobile IDs (or text codes) for each listing, and include them on every listing piece, like For Sale signs, direct mail, and online advertisements. This will drive prospective buyers to text the code in order to immediately receive property details on your web site (or a site tailored to the property). This will also help you capture their phone numbers for rapid follow-up on their inquiries.

Smartphone real estate applications (apps) are also available to make agents more competitive. From offering property tour recaps for clients and providing financial analysis calculations, to gathering client feedback and using GPS coordinates for property searches, the number of real estate apps is growing steadily. In the July 2010 edition of REALTOR Magazine, Michael Antoniak suggests that agents become familiar with the most helpful real estate apps and assist clients with using them - and/or include a list of their recommended apps on their web sites.

As it is a relatively new strategy, mobile marketing can be challenging to tackle alone. If you find you require assistance with jumpstarting your mobile marketing plan - or in implementing a text message marketing system - contact an integrated marketing firm.

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