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## **The New Business Boon: Social Media Marketing**

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Social media has revolutionized the digital world. Originally designed to help people connect and build online communities, social media has evolved to become an integral business marketing strategy.

Social media marketing produces leads, increases website traffic and awareness, and promotes new business partnerships. According to Michael Stelzner's Social Media Marketing Industry Report: How Marketers Are Using Social Media to Grow Their Businesses (March 2009), 81% of all marketers surveyed reported their social media efforts have generated exposure for their businesses.

By using social media tools like blogging, social networks, and social bookmarking, real estate and construction professionals can interact with considerably more people than through their websites alone. Professionals should focus online marketing efforts on producing quality content to engage participants, serve as a valuable resource, and build relationships. Content can be posted simultaneously on business websites, blogs, and branded profile pages on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

If agents harness social media to provide assistance and education, business will follow. According to realestateblackbook.com's Peter Kolat, "...you need to be a servant - help people out, provide great advice and minimize the amount of selling. People use social media to get away from selling" (August 4, 2009).

Social media can be a powerful medium when used as part of an integrated marketing strategy. When combined with online efforts like search engine optimization and ad placement, social media marketing can transform an agent's web presence and increase lead generation and sales figures. Offline strategies, including press releases, direct mail, advertising, and sponsorships, should also be considered as part of a comprehensive marketing plan.

An integrated marketing firm can design and execute the most effective marketing plan, strategy, and policies to ensure both online and offline efforts deliver the laser-sharp messaging that will generate real estate leads and increase business.

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