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Join the social media conversation

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Social Media is everywhere, even in commercial real estate. And the time is right for real estate professionals to join the conversation. It is becoming clear that if we are not listening to and partaking in dialogue about our industry, we will not be able to deliver superior value for our clients and customers. Whether you are a developer, broker, investor or legal counselor, you will be more informed and in-tune if you jump online and begin listening to and conversing with your key audiences.

To demonstrate social media's reach and impact and to clarify how participating in the web 2.0 conversation will benefit you and your company, Schneider Associates, in partnership with the New England Real Estate Journal, will publish monthly columns on important social media topics. We will share how we use new media in our real estate practice and explain the various online applications and players in the social media universe.

Schneider Associates is a full-service public relations and marketing communications agency that launches and sustains visibility for new products, services, companies and communities. We know from experience that dialogue and relationship building are the building blocks of all successful real estate transactions and interactions. Social media provides a framework for these important exchanges. Yet many real estate professionals are just now starting to embrace social media to help advance their initiatives.

Social media is all about listening to, creating and participating in conversations with your core constituent groups. The social media phenomenon is driven by web-based applications and fed by user-generated content (UGC). Developing programs that encompass a variety of online activities, including social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn), news and social bookmarking (Digg, StumbleUpon), blogging and micro-blogging (Twitter), video and photo sharing (YouTube), message boards, wikis, podcasts, RSS feeds and social media press releases, will enhance your communications efforts.

The important takeaway is that with a little work you too can use these powerful online tools to your advantage. They are easy to master, generally free of charge and can positively impact your real estate business in many ways, including:

- * **Reputation Management:** Thousands of citizen journalists write about the real estate industry every day. Posting on blogs and message boards, and commenting on news stories can wield significant influence. So use these Internet tools to track what people are saying about you and respond directly with "thanks" for positive comments, clarifications to combat inaccuracies, and action steps to resolve problems that could lead to damaging your reputation.

- * **Business Development:** The web 2.0 phenomenon is happening now. Millions of users post countless status updates to their social networks of choice to share interesting content, news, events and opportunities. Consider joining online communities like LinkedIn and Twitter and

developing networks of contacts to uncover new business leads and pre-empt the competition.

* **Coalition Building:** Social media helps users identify, mobilize and communicate with people who share their interests. At Schneider Associates, we use it to identify and reach out to people who support or can help drive our clients' projects and brands. So hop on Google Blog Search (blogsearch.google.com) or Yahoo! Groups and look for blogs about your company, project or industry, then reach out and join the conversation.

* **Market Research:** Don't pay for market research when you have a network of connections naturally interested in what you do. Discover trends in other real estate markets or get feedback from an unbiased audience. Social media users tend to be informed, engaged and eager to help. Try polling your Twitter followers to vet ideas for your business, or join The Real Corner (www.realcorner.com).

* **Reinforce Traditional Media Efforts:** Social media is an inexpensive and easy way to get more mileage from your media hits. Simply re-broadcast your best coverage on Digg or Twitter, blog about it or share it with your networks on Facebook and LinkedIn. You can also use new media to develop and reinforce relationships with traditional print and broadcast reporters.

We encourage you to join the conversation. Start by commenting below on what you think about social media, hitting us on Twitter (@SchneiderPR) or leaving a message on our blog (www.launchpr.com). We look forward to hearing from you!

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