

The Impact of Digital Media in Real Estate

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for graduation  
in the Honors Program  
Liberty University  
Fall 2022

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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**Abstract**

For decades, the real estate industry has relied heavily on traditional marketing methods such as print advertising and cold calling. Although these traditional methods are still used within the industry today, the expansion of the internet over the past few decades has resulted in agents shifting away from older school marketing techniques to digital methods of marketing. This thesis will examine several digital methods of advertising such as social media marketing, email marketing campaigns, web design, and video production. In addition, this thesis will explain why these are the most effective marketing tools and necessary for real estate agents to use in order to optimize their success.

*Keywords:* Real estate marketing, digital marketing, multimedia in real estate

### **The Impact of Digital Media in Real Estate**

The world is continuing to move in a more digitalized direction. Whether it be by increasing one's productivity or creating new networking opportunities, technology has revolutionized the way people live, including the way one does business. In a world that continues to expand its dependency on technology, businesses must have a strategic and expansive digital presence. The real estate industry is no exception to this, especially when real estate agents rely heavily on traditional marketing methods such as print, telemarketing, direct mail, and door-knocking to find new leads. These methods are still used today; however, top-producing agents are not relying exclusively on these methods. With the expansion of the internet and increasing usage of social media, real estate agents are finding new ways to use digital and social media platforms to generate new business and buzz around their properties.

A National Homebuying Survey was conducted in 1981 and found the most important rated information source in the home buying search, after real estate agents, was newspaper ads (National Association of Realtors, 2021). According to a similar report published by the National Association of Realtors in 2020, 93% of the homebuyers studied used an online website in their home search process, and 73% of these homebuyers used a mobile device or tablet in their home search process (National Association of Realtors, 2020). With these current trends, real estate agents must expand their digital presence through digital, social, and mobile technologies in order to meet potential clients where they are, establish an individual brand, and to distinguish themselves from other agents. In doing so, agents are likely to meet their goals and grow their businesses in new ways.

### **History of Real Estate Marketing**

Before analyzing the digital, social, and mobile marketing strategies being used in the real estate industry, one must analyze the traditional marketing methods being used by agents, and how these methods can be integrated into a digital strategy to create the most effective strategy for real estate brokerages today.

#### **Print Media**

The first of these traditional methods still being used are print advertisements such as flyers, postcards, and signs. Many believe a more digitalized world means there is no longer a need for print media, but this is not true. Real estate operates in the physical world and therefore will always require some sort of marketing that exists outside of the digital realm (Threshold, 2022). The use of yard signs and billboards can also still be used effectively when placed in high-traffic areas at the right time. One study found that over 70% of Americans consciously look at Billboards (Williams, 2009). Yard signs are essential to use when a home or building is on the market or coming soon, and they can also be integrated into the digital strategy by using a QR code or providing a link to a website or social media. Although they are harder to integrate into a digital strategy, billboards are also great to use to build brand awareness and advertise an agent or brokerage to as many people as possible in the targeted area.

#### **Direct Mail**

Direct mail and signs can still be used effectively in real estate, especially when taking advantage of automated platforms such as Post Grid, a direct marketing platform that allows businesses to send direct mail with a few clicks, just as one would for an email campaign. One

study revealed that 76% of individuals surveyed trust direct mail when making a purchase (Burstein, 2016). This is likely because direct mail campaigns can be done in a way that seems personal and individualizes the experience for the person receiving the mail. This is crucial for real estate agents to do because their business relies heavily on building relationships and trust with potential clients. Direct mail can also be effective in increasing traffic to a website or driving engagement on social media by integrating QR code technology into direct mail and sharing social media handles.

### **Cold Calling & Door-to-Door**

A final traditional marketing strategy that is still effective and can be integrated into a digital-first campaign is cold calling or door knocking. These strategies have withstood the test of time and are still one of the leading strategies that new agents use to generate leads, especially when coupled with digital, social, and mobile strategies. Although cold calls are only answered 28% of the time, of these answered calls, an agent could lead the potential client to a website, app, or social media page to further the conversation surrounding the buying or selling of their property (Bettencourt, 2012). Similar to cold calling, door knocking for leads provides invaluable face-to-face interaction with potential clients. Door-knocking builds rapport in a community, offers cost-effective results, and provided valuable in-person interaction.

### **Digital Marketing Strategies Used in Real Estate Today**

With over two million real estate agents with active licenses, agents must find new ways to distinguish themselves and their business from competitors in the industry (Association of Real Estate License Law Officials, 2022). The use of digital, social, and mobile marketing

platforms is key in doing this. Such platforms agents should use include the use of websites, blogs, social media pages, email marketing campaigns, video production, as well as sites like Zillow.com and Realtor.com. Failure to recognize and adapt to this shift toward a digital-first homebuying process will cause certain real estate agents and brokerages to drown in the competition. However, it is not enough for an agent or a brokerage to merely be on social media or have a website. They must implement an integrated marketing strategy that meets both their needs as a business while connecting with and meeting the needs of potential clients.

### **Websites & Blogs**

Although these traditional methods can still be effective in generating new leads and building brand awareness in a community, these strategies should not be used alone without integrating digital, social, and mobile technology into the overall marketing of a brokerage. Priluck (2017) argues that websites are “the most important piece of content” in a company’s communication strategy (p. 265). In the real estate industry, a brokerage’s website will serve as the home base for information about the brokerage and its agents, future, current, and past listings, contact information, and other important information that a client will need to be made aware of when using the brokerage’s services. Manko (2021) explains in an article that “Users want a website that is both intuitive and informative, while simultaneously providing an ultra-efficient search experience” (p. 1). Today, websites are essential in the home buying process being used by brokerages to communicate the exact services and listings they provide, since this varies depending on the brokerage and agent. Some agents may have an individual page on their brokerage’s website for their business or even a separate website all together, where they can

have to opportunity to interact personally with their clients, a skill that is needed to be successful in this industry.

When it comes to the actual web design, it is important to create an appealing site environment. According to an article by Zulkeflee (2011), "Visitors want a site that easily downloads, portrays accurate information, clearly shows the products and services offered, and is easily navigated" (para. 18). Like an in-store ambiance created by brick-and-mortar retailers, websites can set a firm apart by providing a pleasant online experience. A website should also be interactive. Research shows, "that 70% of a customer's journey with a small business now happens online in a 'self-service' capacity" (Standberry, 2022, para. 6). Digital customer interaction can be accomplished through integrating buttons, forms, and even by prompting the user to share information found on the website through an email or social media platform. A more interactive experience will provide information to the business about the users' interactions and increase referrals to one's site.

A website should also make the intangible, tangible. As mentioned previously, the first step many individuals take before buying a home or investment property today is to search online. Because of this, it is important for real estate brokerages to bring their listings to life through visual media, such as virtual tours or 3-D images before contact is made with the client (Zulkeflee et al., 2011). Visually, consumers want a clean aesthetic that is easy to process. According to an article by the Interaction Design Foundation (2022), "Humans are hard-wired for visual input, and users' first impressions typically form in 50 milliseconds" (para. 3). Because of this, it is vital that the website is designed in a way that is pleasing to the eyes of



potential clients. The same article goes on to mention how good aesthetics have a large impact on the user experience, resulting in more traffic, more time spent on the site, and a lower bounce rate.

Finally, websites are important tools for building credibility. It is important to understand, that “With a website, real estate agents reap these benefits: build awareness, generate quality leads, increase credibility along with brand, help buyers and sellers throughout their buying or selling journey, and full information control” (Huang, 2018, para. 11). Websites are a channel that provides the perfect opportunity to showcase a brokerage’s expertise and past achievements, in addition to showcasing important and relevant information.

### **Social Media**

Like websites, social media is playing a key part in the digital marketing efforts in the real estate industry. Just as many homebuyers are starting their home search online, many are turning to social media to search for homes that meet their preferences. Hashtags have played a role in allowing homebuyers to focus on specific styles, preferences, or locations (DiBugnara, 2020). Some of the most common platforms used by real estate agents today are Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. However, TikTok is also rising in popularity among real estate agents, as a tool to generate new leads and build a brand for themselves.

According to a report by TransUnion, the number of Gen Z homebuyers in the United States doubled between 2018 and 2019, and will continue to increase (TransUnion, 2020).

TikTok is also one of the most common social networks used by Gen Z individuals with 37.3 million Gen Z users making it a place real estate professionals want to be (Petrock, 2021). Social

media is effective in fueling traffic to an agent's website, raising brand awareness, creating a positive brand identity, building one's credibility, and starting conversations.

All social media content should do at least one of the following: promote one's business and service, educate consumers, be personal and engaging, or show passion and expertise. The content shared on social media should also engage with current followers by presenting a call to action or that prompts the audience to take immediate action. Some examples of this could be putting together a "This or That" challenge for followers to engage with through Instagram and Facebook stories. An example would be a series of story posts with two choices related to interior design styles, architecture styles, or investment strategies. Followers would participate in the challenge like a game by selecting which of the two choices they would prefer. This would also provide agents and brokerages with additional information on their target audience psychographics. Another way to spark engagement is by prompting followers to comment or share posts on their stories or by sending the profile or posts to a friend. What is important to understand is how each social platform is used and what type of digital content will generate the most success for one's business.

### ***Top Social Platforms for Real Estate Professionals & How They Are Used***

**Facebook.** Founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook was one of the first social media platforms that revolutionized the way people interact online. What started as an online space where friends and family can connect has also proven to be an incredible tool for businesses. Facebook has an estimated 2.91 billion monthly active users, with 2.75 billion of these being mobile active users (Meta, 2022). Most Facebook users are between the ages of 25

and 35 years (Dixon, 2022). For real estate agents, there are specific strategies to implement on this platform to achieve the best results and generate leads.

When it comes to setting up a Facebook business page, it is important to create helpful tabs such as “featured listings” in addition to the standard tabs each Facebook business page comes with. It is also important to include an eye-catching profile picture and to frequently update the heading photo. The heading could be used to highlight the homes one has for sale or recently sold. Finally, agents will want to include a strong biography that will be displayed at the top of their business page. This is the mission statement and summary of one’s business. A Facebook biography should match one’s business goals, list the services provided, and be on brand. Spur House Partners is a commercial real estate brokerage operating in New York City. The brokerage’s biography found on its website is as follows:

Located in Brooklyn Heights, Spur House Partners is a fast-growing, full-service real estate brokerage specializing in mixed-use and multi-family sales in New York City and outlying boroughs. Our experienced, professional brokers and staff are committed to adding value to our clients and helping them achieve optimal results!

(Spur House Partners, 2022, para. 1)

In this biography, the services provided by the brokerage, its location, and the company mission are clearly communicated. The characters in the biography section of a Facebook business page are limited, so it is important to keep the content clear and concise while also hooking the audience in.

For Facebook, the majority of an agent's or brokerage's page should be client focused. The content should be either informative or entertaining to the target audience. This could include listing updates, tips for first-time home buyers, promoting community events, and sharing positive customer reviews. The content should also build credibility for the agent or brokerage. Even with the opportunity to connect with established and potential clients, real estate professionals should not limit their online presence to Facebook. Many Facebook users are outside of the United States; therefore, it is vital to establish a real estate business on other platforms as well.

**Instagram.** Instagram is another platform that is crucial for real estate professionals to use to build a brand. Instagram is a photo and video sharing network where users can share photos or videos with a caption, story posts that disappear after 24 hours, or Instagram reels which are short 10-second to one-minute videos.

Instagram has over two billion monthly active users on Instagram and over 200 million businesses on Instagram (Aslam, 2022). The largest age group of Instagram users is those between 25 and 34 years (Dixon, 2022). This is an important platform for real estate professionals to use since the average home buyer in the United States is 33 years old, according to the National Association of Realtors (2022). Similar to Facebook, it is important to introduce oneself and the team in addition to writing an engaging biography. It is important to be personal and allow for one's personal brand to shine through.

Instagram can be used to feature current and future properties, highlight amenities and unique features of a particular home, and showcase industry insights and market updates. People want to work with successful people and firms. Instagram can be a place to showcase a team or individual's success. With Instagram also being a time-sensitive platform, consumers' feeds change often, and stories disappear within a day. Although this can cause issues, this also makes Instagram a great place to share time-sensitive information. It is specifically great for informing audiences about current prices, open houses, and other events. Instagram can be a very personal medium of communication. Agents should jump into this aspect of the platform by sharing content other than professional qualifications and updates on their business. Showcasing other details of a brokerage such as service projects or office pets makes the brand more personable and relatable to consumers.

Real estate can be quite daunting to first-time home buyers or those not familiar with the industry. Because of this, agents have an opportunity to educate consumers on the industry, which can lead to opportunities for agents to engage with eager audiences on Instagram, establishing themselves as trusted and helpful sources. When it comes time for those individuals to buy a property, a relationship has already been established. Overall, the content on Facebook and Instagram can and should be similar for agents. However, there is one major difference. In recent months, the Instagram algorithm has completely changed. Traditional photo posts and not getting near the engagement that they once would, no matter one's following. Instagram reels, which are short user-generated videos, are now the primary source of interaction and engagement

on the app. Instagram Reels are very similar to TikTok videos. Because of this change in the algorithm, businesses on Instagram will not see nearly as high engagement as if they were to post Instagram reels.

**TikTok.** Trends are showing that real estate professionals who are not in the business of content creation are going out of business. TikTok is “the social media platform with the most opportunities to ‘go viral’” (Simpson, 2020, para. 1). When it comes to users, 45.4 million of TikTok’s 800 million active users reside in the United States (Datareportal, 2022). Many compare TikTok to Instagram, but with videos as the main type of content rather than photos. There is no doubt that the platform is most popular with Gen-Z; however, it is growing in popularity among other age groups. The platform is excellent for anyone looking to target a younger audience; this could include first-time home buyers or investors. TikTok is also a great platform to use for agents looking to expand their business to a younger audience.

When it comes to content, TikTok differs from almost all other social media platforms in that TikTok users are looking for light-hearted yet educational content (Sales & Marketing Technologies, 2021). It is a great platform for agents in that it is easy to showcase knowledge and share market insights in a way that is easy to digest for those who are not familiar with the real estate industry. In sharing light-hearted, entertaining, and relatable content, consumers will grow a connection and trust with the agent behind the screen. TikTok does require time and energy to develop content; but, for agents looking to try something new and who do not mind experimenting with content, this could be a powerful tool for their business.

TikTok, users are looking for authenticity and actual faces behind a brand. Users want to see personal content made by agents and real estate teams that adds value to their lives. This could be walking users through a new listing or participating in a TikTok trend, with popular sounds as the background music. TikTok users are also looking for relatability (Sales & Marketing Technologies, 2021). Content that users can understand and relate to is the most crowd-pleasing and sharable. Buying, selling, or investing in real estate can be daunting, especially to a younger audience. TikTok sets up a perfect opportunity for real estate professionals to break down any barriers to new business by being real and sharing educational yet entertaining content with their target audience.

**LinkedIn.** LinkedIn has a reputation for being a straightforward and less flashy social media platform used by professionals. The platform has shown to be a great environment for real estate professionals to display their knowledge and relevance within the congested industry. Whether they are professional connections or potential clients, viewers should walk away from a LinkedIn profile feeling confident that the individual knows what they are doing. This begins with the setup. A strong LinkedIn profile should have a professional headshot and list all work, education, and volunteer experience. LinkedIn allows for a much longer “About” section than other social media platforms. This allows users to go in-depth on their experience, skills, and passions.

When it comes to generating leads on LinkedIn, agents should look to connect with both real estate professionals and professionals in other industries to grow their network. Another way

to generate leads is to join a wide range of LinkedIn groups. This is a great way to make new connections, engage in industry discussions, and target specific segments of one's target audience.

Content on LinkedIn should be meaningful and engaging, just as all the other social media platforms. As mentioned previously, LinkedIn is a place for one to show what they know through writing posts and sharing relevant posts. Just as with any platform, agents will want to make sure they are picky about what content they share. When deciding what to share, agents will want to remember that what they share is an extension of their brand and should be from a trusted and respected source (L'Eplattenier, 2022).

### **Email Marketing**

Email marketing campaigns are another powerful and effective tool used in the real estate industry. They have been shown to yield high returns, are easy to track, and are beneficial for any brand since most American adults regularly check their email. Email campaigns are believed to have returned over 50% higher than the return of investment of other digital marketing strategies (Priluck, 2017). Not only are they used to reach out to potential clients, but they can also be great for maintaining a connection with current and past clients by showcasing brokerage updates and more.

The first step in implementing any newsletter is to collect the email addresses of subscribers. There are a few ways to do this. The first is to promote the newsletter on all other media channels. Another way is simply by word of mouth when interacting with a previous, current, or potential client of the brokerage. A third way could be by providing a gift or free



resource on their website, such as a PDF Guide to buying a home in whichever city the agent is serving, in exchange for one's email address.

Once a strong base of email addresses has been developed, it is time to set up an account on a direct email marketing platform. When it comes to the content of the newsletter, it should have an intriguing subject line, provide value to the subscriber in some way, be engaging, and serve as an extension of the company brand. The newsletter could include promotions, advertise brokerage events, provide market updates, company updates, and listings, and should always end with a call to action for the subscriber to take, even if it is just to follow the agent or brokerage on other social media platforms.

### **Video Production**

A final method worth mentioning is video production. The use of longer videos to showcase the inside and outside of a property has been used for the past 15 years or so, but the use of short videos in real estate marketing, especially ones that are fit for a mobile device are just growing in popularity. These types of videos are key to a well-developed marketing strategy but are not mainstream within real estate currently. A study conducted by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (2018) revealed that mobile videos have a two times better click-through rate than photo advertisements. Video on mobile continues to grow as the number of people who consume videos on mobile devices is increasing. Based on research, there is no denying that mobile video can influence purchase decisions. This trend should not stop when it comes to real estate marketing efforts.

Brokerages and real estate agents can create video content that capitalizes on the uniqueness of their brand and the properties they list. The video content should also be produced with adaptive and responsive design, meaning individuals will have a pleasant experience with the video content no matter what kind of device they are consuming it on (Priluck, 2017).

Property videos should include the listing agent in the actual video where they can give a brief overview of the property and start to build a connection with a future client before giving them an official tour of the property. Consumers should feel as though they are at the property doing the tour with the agent. The reason for doing this is to sell the real estate agent's services, their personal brand, as well as the property they are listing. It adds a human connection that many real estate promotional videos lack today.

Longer, more detailed property videos should be posted to the company's YouTube channel and linked on other social media accounts and digital platforms. In addition to these, shorter, creative clips could be posted to Instagram Reels and TikTok. Some examples of these videos could be short property showcases, "A Day in the Life of a Real Estate Agent," "Market Updates," "Favorite Restaurants or Small Businesses in the Area," "Neighborhood Overviews," "Steps to Buy Your First Home," or an "Office Tour."

Consumers today are looking for more personable and relatable content. Video, unlike still photography or written posts, allows for non-verbal communication to translate allowing for a deeper and more sincere relation of information to consumers.

### **Drawbacks of Using Digital Media in Real Estate**

Although digital media and marketing strategies have proven to not only be effective but necessary for businesses to utilize, there are some drawbacks. The first of these is the initial learning curve. Many real estate professionals hire an individual or an outside company to manage their digital marketing efforts because the work is time-consuming and requires a great deal of knowledge, practice, and expertise. Not all agents or brokerages will be able to hire an individual or service to assist them in content creation and digital marketing management. These individuals, especially those who do not have a technological or marketing background, may be overwhelmed with the complexity and effort that is required to market a business on digital platforms. However, with time, research, and practice this can be overcome.

Many believe with the invention of the internet and digital marketing tools that businesses can explode when it comes to brand awareness and sales. Just as with traditional marketing methods, it takes time to establish a brand and a true connection with consumers. Especially in a field like real estate, it can take a lot of time to establish relationships with clients regardless of if the relationships begin online or in person. Real estate agents should be aware that establishing these long-term relationships results in more sales. With social media platforms and the ability for an individual or brand to go “viral” true, organic, loyalty takes time to establish. Establishing a strong, respectable digital presence takes consistency and time. There is also a lot of upkeep that is involved with digital and social media marketing. Agents will either need to set aside time to manage social media accounts, engage with consumers, and share valuable content, or they will need to hire someone to do so. Real estate professionals must

realize the necessary time commitment and either manage or reject that commitment (Barefoot & Szaboo, 2010). Simply posting mediocre content inconsistently and hoping to generate large amounts of promising leads will be a waste of time and resources.

Finally, a more expansive digital presence opens a business up to both more positive but also negative and public customer feedback. In today's digital age, information can travel at a faster rate than ever before. Social media platforms allow consumers to now act as advertisers or critics of a business or brand by sharing their own reviews with a large audience.

### **Building True Loyalty**

The way in which a company builds loyalty with its customers, employees, and partners has evolved across many industries over the years. Paharia (2013) explains the concept of Loyalty 1.0 which includes reward programs that are transactional, focus on the customer, and do not foster lasting loyalty built upon an emotional relationship. A huge problem with Loyalty 1.0 is that customers feel there is a high exit cost to leave a company for another, therefore the reason they stay is not that they are truly loyal to the brand. With Loyalty 2.0 things began to change. Through segmentation and personalization techniques, the loyalty experience was more direct to consumers through direct mail and email marketing (Paharia). These were effective and still are within real estate, but consumers are not engaging with these tactics like they once were. This is largely due to a cluttered marketplace with individuals constantly being bombarded with advertisements. Not much changed within the realm of customer loyalty strategies up until recent

years with the rise of Loyalty 3.0. Motivation, big data, and gamification are what drive this third wave of loyalty, all of which can be applied to the real estate industry.

The method by which companies establish customer loyalty has evolved greatly over the years. A long-standing tool used to strengthen customer loyalty is a loyalty program. Loyalty programs provide relevant rewards to consumers and bring consumers closer to the brand experience (Paharia, 2013). The most successful loyalty programs today go beyond providing customers with discounts and free gifts; they tap into consumers' values and emotions in order to build a long-standing relationship rather than a transactional one. These programs succeed because when implemented correctly, consumers develop an emotional connection with a brand resulting in more consumer referrals, higher consumer retention, more sales, and further brand advocacy (Paharia).

Consumers are now looking for engagement and a deeper connection to a brand or in the case of real estate, their agent. According to a study by Sprout Social (2021), when customers feel a genuine connection to a brand, they are 68% more likely to recommend a brand to a friend and 76% more likely to buy over a competitor. Real estate is a game of popularity and success depends on genuine connections with clients resulting in future referrals. Seeing these numbers, when an individual feels valued and deeply connected to a brand, customers remain loyal over time. People want to feel valued and connected in this world. The sooner a real estate professional can understand this and tailor their communication strategies to meet the needs of consumers, the faster true affiliate loyalty will be established.

## **Client Motivation**

Beyond building a connection with clients, agents must understand the deeper motivations their clients possess. In *Loyalty 3.0*, Paharia (2013) presents five intrinsic motivators that are universal across cultures: autonomy, mastery, purpose, progress, and social interaction. The first of these agents will want to focus on meeting their clients' desires to have a sense of autonomy. One way to ensure clients feel this is by educating them on the process of buying a property. In doing so, clients will feel informed and feel like they have control over the situation. A second client motivator agents should aim to meet is mastery. Paharia describes mastery as the "innate desire to be competent and get better at things" (p. 31). Homebuyers and investors will want to feel accomplished upon the completion of a sale. Agent messaging and communication should recognize this.

Rajat Paharia (2013) identifies human motivation as one of the two major forces that fuel *Loyalty 3.0*. The book defines motivation as, "internal and external factors that stimulate desire and energy in people to be continually interested in and committed to a job, role, or subject, and to exert persistent efforts in attaining a goal" (Paharia, para. 3). It is also important to define extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is, "doing an activity out of inherent interest or pleasure" while extrinsic motivation is, "engaging in an activity to achieve a separable outcome" (Broeck & Howard, 2021, para. 2). Within intrinsic motivation there are five intrinsic motivators: autonomy, mastery, purpose, progress, and social interaction (Paharia). Autonomy deals with an individual wanting control over their life. Possessing a growth mindset and a desire

to get better at things could indicate the master intrinsic motivator. The purpose motivator deals with an individual wanting to make a difference and produce purpose. Progress as an intrinsic motivator is like purpose. Individuals who experience this value small wins and want “recognition for good work” (para. 10). Lastly, there is social interaction as a factor of motivation. Individuals experiencing this kind of motivation are looking to connect and interact with a community of people. All of these motivations are universal across cultures and have not been taught (Paharia).

Paharia (2013) also discusses the concept of value as it pertains to what a company can offer its consumers. A company’s messaging and loyalty programs should be drawing individuals in by providing value to their lives. Individuals should feel as though they are missing out if they are not a part of the community surrounding an organization. If an organization and its loyalty programs do not bring value to its audience, then they will not be appealing. However, there is an additional payoff for a company’s loyalty programs. In the long run, loyalty programs increase customer referrals and retention, resulting in more sales and brand advocacy.

There are four points that make an excellent customer loyalty program. They are easy to understand, simple to join, provide relevant and desired rewards to the customer base, and bring customers closer to the brand experience (Paharia, 2013). There are five primary types of loyalty programs including points-based, tiered, paid, value-based, and omnichannel programs.

Omnichannel programs are on the rise and have shown to be highly effective. They focus more

on engagement and not just on customer transactions. Within this style of a loyalty program, brand experience is integrated with the customer experience across all channels, making it one of the most effective programs for companies to implement today.

Similarly, individuals will want to feel as though they are making progress toward something meaningful. Most individuals will only purchase a few homes in their lifetime, so the process is a big accomplishment and meaningful when they do so. A good real estate agent will acknowledge this and make sure their client knows they have made a big accomplishment. Finally, people want to feel connected to others and be understood. There are a few ways agents can meet this motivator in their clients. The first is to ensure they feel connected to the community they are looking to purchase a home. This can be accomplished by recommending restaurants, community centers, churches, and things to do in the area both in the heart of the home-buying process and after. Second, agents or brokerages can show their appreciation for their clients by sending them housewarming gifts, thoughtful notes, or in some cases, by throwing a housewarming party for their clients.

### **Storytelling**

A final way to build loyalty among clients is through storytelling. Stories can be powerful in building a meaningful connection between people. Storytelling builds memories. This can be put into practice in many ways. An agent could share client testimonials, their experience first buying a home, and more to create memories for their clients. Second, storytelling can act as a motivator. Sharing success stories with clients can motivate them in their



process of buying a property. Storytelling also makes digital content exciting to engage with, especially when shared in video form. Finally, storytelling builds relationships. Sharing stories in real estate makes way for agents to be vulnerable and relatable with clients and other agents. From there a deep bond can begin to form leading to long-lasting loyalty.

The world will continue to expand its dependency on technology; therefore, businesses need to have a strategic and expansive digital presence. The real estate industry is no exception to this, especially when success in the industry depends on relationships for strong leads and success. Traditional methods can still be effective today; however, top-producing agents are not relying exclusively on these methods. With the expansion of the internet and increasing usage of social media, real estate agents are finding new ways to use digital and social media platforms to generate new business and buzz around their properties. Real estate professionals must expand their digital presence through digital, social, and mobile technologies to meet potential clients where they are, establish a trustworthy brand, and distinguish themselves from other agents. In doing so, agents are likely to establish true, long-term loyalty among their clients.

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