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CIRE Magazine

Current Issue

CIRE Archives

Social media

Surviving Social Media

CCIMs share their strategies for managing an online presence.

by Rich Rosfelder

The Internet is a noisy place. Each month, Facebook users post more than 30 billion pieces of content, such as notes and photo albums, and billions of tweets resound through Twitter or compatible third-party applications. Add to this the unending chatter of blog posts, LinkedIn messages, and other social media content and the problem becomes clear: How can commercial real estate professionals attract an audience, develop a following, and, ultimately, grow and strengthen their network of potential clients and business partners amid the virtual cacophony?

"The first thing is to get in and explore," says Todd Clarke, CCIM, chief executive officer of NM Apartment Advisors in Albuquerque, N.M., who will teach a technology and social media course through CCIM Institute's Ward Center for Real Estate Studies this year. "See what others are doing, and think about how you want to define yourself." There is no one-size-fits-all social media strategy.

Go It Alone or Get Help?

As with any new business venture, the main concerns when creating a social media strategy are budget and staffing requirements. When **John F. Thiry**, CCIM, an adviser with NAI Commercial Partners in Lancaster, Pa., set out to establish his reputation as an industrial/office specialist and promote his services to his business peers through social media, he weighed these factors. "I did not want to spend thousands of dollars hiring a company to create my Web presence, and I did not want to spend an undue amount of time creating and managing that presence myself," **Thiry** says.

He decided to go it alone — at first. "It was more time-consuming to create than I expected, but the maintenance is manageable," he says. **Thiry** uses Twitter to drive traffic to his blog, lancastercommercial.com, and hired an assistant to craft blog posts and tweets. But he selects the content. "I aggregate information from CoStar, CCIM, and other sources that could be useful to my clients," **Thiry** adds.

In addition to increasing efficiency, third-party assistance helps commercial real estate professionals amp up their social media marketing power. Like **Thiry**, Nicholas L. Miner, CCIM, vice president, investments, with Commercial Properties in Scottsdale, Ariz., initially dove into social media on his own. He attended a few seminars but was unsatisfied with the traffic his social media efforts were generating.

Miner began working with his friend, Jack Smith, a social media consultant and founder of TheSocialLatte.com. Smith helped Miner tweak content to improve his pages' rankings in search engine results, a practice known as search engine optimization, or SEO. "Jack knew which technologies were available and how to implement them," Miner explains. "A person who knows the ins and outs is worth the money."

Benjamin LaFreniere, CCIM, of Quest Co. in Maitland, Fla., favors an in-house approach to social media because it gives company employees more control and allows them to respond more promptly to inquiries and comments. "Generally, our marketing director creates content, submits it for review, and then prepares it for posting on Twitter and Facebook," he explains. Quest Co. navigates the time/budget dilemma by relying on the skills of interns who have grown up on social media. The interns update content, monitor feedback, and suggest aesthetic and procedural improvements. "It's like second nature to them," LaFreniere says. "They bring a different perspective."

But CCIMs looking for cost-effective social media advice also can find a wealth of free expertise in the social media mavens' natural habitat — online. For example, Josh Riley, CCIM, program director at Jones Lang LaSalle in Cumming, Ga., started a LinkedIn group for corporate real estate professionals in 2007. With more than 20,000 members, "It's now the largest LinkedIn group for commercial real estate professionals, and members consistently provide input about what works and what doesn't with regard to social media," Riley says.



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Jan. Feb. 11

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LinkedIn to Las Vegas

by Brian Krueger

Coldwell Banker Premier Realty provides market intelligence and due diligence services for the acquisition of distressed residential and commercial assets largely through social networking. This focus maximizes our exposure and helps us establish a stable fan base.

Special Asset Solutions, the commercial arm of CBPR, has primarily utilized LinkedIn to promote commercial listings. Our LinkedIn group, Las Vegas Real Estate — Market IQ, was created in 2008 and is now the No. 1 LinkedIn real estate group in Las Vegas.

In the past year, we saw a quantifiable return on investment. One client, for example, purchased more than 700 residential lots through a LinkedIn group supporter and helped the client sell some of the finished inventory. In another instance, a client seeking distressed commercial assets who wanted to do a 1031 exchange for \$35 million was referred by a CBPR residential agent and LinkedIn group supporter. Our base continues to grow exponentially, particularly in Europe, China, and Australia.