



Creating a Digital Media Strategy

Article by Mike Andrew

Last week during a webinar that I participated in I suggested that every real estate office should create a digital media strategy that covers at least the next 12 months. Technology is changing so rapidly for real estate agents and without a plan or strategy in place you'll find it very hard to keep up. I've had some agents talk to me about what should be in this digital strategy, so to help you let's go through the basics of what you should include in your document.

1. Web site SEO - First and foremost in my mind is having your web site search engine friendly. Local search queries continue to increase as does 3+ word keyword searches.

Yellow Pages book usage is decreasing and internet searches increasing, so that makes it vital that your site appears on the first page of Google. You need to also consider how your site performs, Google are planning to use site speed as a ranking factor and therefore how quickly your site loads will be a consideration. Image heavy sites without alt tags and optimising your pages for relevant keywords needs to be considered.

During the webinar, one industry specialist wrote a comment " Do you really think that principals or agents actually write their own copy?" No I don't, but they need to make sure that what is written on their behalf is search engine optimised and written for the web, not copied from a newspaper. Make sure that you get access to the coding on your site as well, you pay for it, you own it, not like I have encountered recently with one web company attached to the number one real estate portal, they have a very arrogant attitude to you the customer, so if in doubt walk away, there are plenty of web design companies that will help you.

Search Engine Marketing should not replace your web site SEO, use SEM wisely and don't double up, if you're on the first page or rank highly for a search term, don't waste money on AdWords, use them in areas that you don't rank, remember, Google ranks pages not web sites so you can effectively optimise each page on your web site for keywords.

2.Social Media - Include this into your 12 month plan, small business is lagging behind their big brothers in using and integrating social media into their business. Your customers have embraced social networking and it is becoming the trusted adviser, so you can't afford to neglect it any longer.

One of the reasons slowing the integration is a lack of knowledge about social media by small business owners, in my mind you are better to try and work with social media than to ignore it, so jump in and have a go. Plan it slowly and use the major sites such as Facebook and Twitter to start with, you can use this as your guide, **POST**. This stands for:

- **People** - What is your target market?
- **Objective** - What do you want to achieve from using social media?
- **Strategy** - How will you go about communicating with your customers? Status Updates, Coupons, Discounts etc
- **Technology** - What are the main sites you'll use to communicate your message? Facebook/Twitter

That at least will help you plan your strategy, also remember, Podcasting, Vlogging and YouTube are powerful tools in getting your message across, plus Google loves video, so use this to your advantage

3. **Blogs** - Create a blog and add it to your web presence, it allows you to add the personal touch to your on line marketing. ComScore's research indicates that blogs reach over 48% of the online population in the Asia Pacific region, social media 56.1%.

Blogs are a great way to communicate with your customers and are a great customer service tool, remember though you need to make sure that your content is fresh and relevant to the target market you are aiming at. Google loves blogs because of the constantly updated information they provide and will index them very quickly as well as give them a high ranking, sometimes even over a higher authority site. Wordpress provides a great platform for you to use and I'd recommend the self hosted option as you can use your own domain name and you have much more flexibility.

4. **Internet Marketing** - Make sure that you have your office details listed with Google business, use different keywords or categories so that you rank on different search pages in your area. Be very selfish with where your links go, you might think its great that your business comes up number one under a realestate.com.au listing in your area, but think where the customer goes when they click on the link, to you? no they go to the portal so make sure your web site ranks on that first page.

Audit your listing on the portals and start to implement good keywords in your copy, remember you're writing for the web not a newspaper, so think about how people search and what keywords they use. Get those from your own office, you have a wealth of information at your disposal, so ask your staff what words or phrases consumers use when they contact your office, find the most frequently used and start to weave those into your articles or listing copy.

Don't leave out of your listing valuable information, Google uses a completeness filter on Google real estate, so the more information in your listing the higher the rank, makes sense really doesn't it.

5. **Technology** - Make sure you stay informed on technology that impacts on how your customers find you, Augmented Reality and QR codes are examples, be aware of the impact they are having and factor these into your strategy.

I hope that helps you in planning for the next 12 months, having this in place is a good start in improving the way you market and communicate with the online consumer, it also improves your businesses "Future Fitness" for digital marketing.