

The Chairman's Report

A Message from Lawrence F. Flick, IV, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Prudential Fox & Roach, REALTORS® and The Trident Group



SPRING 2012

Real Estate *in the* Digital Age



THE DAWN OF THE DIGITAL AGE

Fifty years ago, John Glenn launched into space and orbited the earth. Around the same time, an obscure idea known as the internet was conceived. Needless to say, times have changed since then. Today's Ford 150 truck has more technology than Glenn's Friendship 7 space capsule, and the internet is the infrastructure that informs and connects our lives. While the birth of the internet wasn't as dramatic as the launch that propelled our country into the space age, it did create the foundation that would thrust us into the digital age.

A lot has happened in the past 50 years, but in just the last couple of years, the accelerated pace of technology has been mind-blurring. This is especially true in residential real estate. Consumers began using the

internet about ten years ago for home searches, but the most recent online tools have revolutionized the way sellers reach out and connect to buyers.

MARKETING REAL ESTATE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

There was a time when buyers relied on the local paper to find homes for sale. They waited all week to browse the Sunday real estate section. But today, a property description of 4 BR, 2 BA, EIK, FR w/FP underneath a grainy black and white photo simply doesn't cut it. Now home buyers expect instant results, attractive and robust content, convenience, simplicity, and real time information. Sellers hoping to connect with today's buyers must market their properties not just in, but also for, this digital age.

WHERE THE BUYERS ARE

If you were looking for a new home, where would you start your search? The internet, of course! Almost 90% of buyers do. Whether having morning coffee, sneaking a peak on the office computer, or after the nightly news, they want instant access to property listings. Most buyers start on one of the national sites — Realtor.com, Trulia or Zillow — but then move to a familiar real estate company's website to fine tune their search. Buyers also check out Craig's List, search on Google and find YouTube videos of homes for sale.

ABUNDANCE OF INFORMATION

The newspaper ads of yesterday have been replaced today by the virtual equivalent of a full page color ad, and in real estate, this translates into incredible exposure for each property. Buyers expect informative, attractive, robust format that includes an array of professional quality photographs plus a virtual tour. Moreover, they are curious about what's going on beyond the property's lot lines. They want to know about the surrounding area's amenities, parks, and schools, as well as real estate trends in that community. They can explore all of this online.



CONVENIENCE AND SIMPLICITY

Seeing a “For Sale” sign on a house may spark a buyer's interest, but calling the phone number displayed on that sign doesn't even begin to satisfy their curiosity. They want to know all about the property right then and there. So, today's buyer texts a number, and voila! GPS gives them information about listings closest to wherever they are at that moment. Also, with the growing use of GPS enabled smartphones and apps, homes for sale are a single click away!

Contemporary buyers also like each property to have its own website. They expect to key in a street address for an instant in-depth look, without having to search around. And while online, they're only a few clicks away from setting up an appointment to physically tour their potential purchase with a professional.

REAL ESTATE IN REAL TIME

Buyers don't want to get excited about a property if it's already been sold. By the same token, they don't want to miss finding out about a new listing. The internet allows real estate to be real time and allows buyers to make the best use of their time.

HOW SELLERS BENEFIT FROM REAL ESTATE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Sellers also gain tremendous benefits in this digital age. There's a flip side to buyers wanting fast facts from the internet about properties for sale. When your home is positioned properly in the virtual world, then real world buyers will find you at the speed of a keystroke. Marketing in a digital age gives properties maximum exposure and gives sellers access to high-tech reporting capabilities.

PRIORITY PLACEMENT – GET “ABOVE THE FOLD”

Advertisers in newspapers would pay a premium to be prominently positioned “above the fold” for greater visibility. The same concept applies in online marketing. Properties that appear first get the most exposure. If you're a seller, it's important that your listing gets priority placement.

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SOCIAL NETWORKS

The richness of digital marketing provides the equivalent of a virtual color brochure. So why not show it off on Facebook and Twitter? Or email a link of your property's website. It's an easy and fun way to give your home additional exposure.

REPORTING CAPABILITIES

One of the best things about online marketing is the ability to see how many times your property is viewed and which sites are attracting the most views. With this enhanced reporting capability, you can easily monitor the online marketing of your listing.

YET SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

The digital age has irrevocably changed residential real estate sales. It's an exciting time for buyers and sellers,

and for me, too! But no matter how much freedom cyberspace gives us, whether we are buying or selling a house, we still need a trusted advisor alongside us on our journey. Just like John Glenn relied on his crew to bring him back to earth safely, every buyer and seller relies on a team of experts to get them home. To learn more about real estate's digital age and how it can work for you, visit prufoxroach.com or contact your Prudential Fox & Roach sales associate and Trident Mortgage consultant today!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lawrence'.

Lawrence F. Flick, IV
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Prudential Fox & Roach, Realtors® and The Trident Group

AN INDEPENDENT VIEW



*Chris Smith is the Chief Evangelist for **Inman News**. He is the emcee of their nationwide agent focused technology conference Agent Reboot. Chris also co-hosts **Real Estate Connect** happening in New York City and San Francisco. **Inman News** is where real estate and technology truly connect.*

There are three statistics that I am fascinated with when it comes to the internet and the home buying process. Now, 88% of the home buyers start on the web. The average cycle from web research beginning to closing on a home is eighteen months. In 2011, for the first time ever, 51% of homes purchased were brought to the Realtor by the consumer.

We are often an industry reluctant to change. So was Kodak. So was Blockbuster. So was Blackberry.

In the past, being average online with your marketing was okay. The mediocrity of real estate websites and blogs has been accepted because they were tools only for the “bleeding edge.” Now, social media—Facebook, Twitter and YouTube—have been bolted onto an agent’s or brokerages’ “real business.”

The companies and agents who will thrive will not look at the plethora of platforms and tools and ask “How will this help me sell a home?” Those who will gain market share will be storytellers who use the new online consumer hangouts as a way to humanize their brand and create empathy and feeling through consumer experience.

Owning a home will always be an emotional experience. Telling that story on the web and in the mobile devices will be more important than simply having listing details and photos available.

Visit Chris online at Next.Inman.com or on Twitter @Chris_Smith

