

Using Social Media Effectively

Headquarters
901 S. Mopac Expy
Bldg IV, Suite 125
Austin, TX 78746

PHONE
P : (800) 994.0562
(512) 637.9900
F : (512) 637-9901

EMAIL
Info@SenteMortgage.com
www.SenteMortgage.com

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Introduction

These days, social media is a substantial part of our everyday business and personal lives. However, it is not necessarily the solution to all marketing problems. So why consider social media?

Social media boosts your visibility among potential customers, letting you reach a wide audience without a large amount of time and effort.

- Facebook has 2.3 billion members, is the world's third-most visited website, and is the top platform for both Business to Business and Business to Consumer businesses.
- 260 million LinkedIn users are logging in each month, with 63 million unique mobile users monthly.
- With 326 million monthly active Twitter users, there are 500 million Tweets sent per day, and 74% of Twitter users say they use the network to get their news.
- YouTube has 1.3 billion users, and almost 5 billion videos are watched on YouTube every single day.
- Instagram has 1 billion monthly active users, with more than 500 million of them using the platform every day.

Keep in mind that having social media accounts (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram) will only make a difference if you are actively and strategically using them.

3 Principles for Using Social Media Effectively

To use social media effectively, there are three principles you should follow:

1. **Have a plan.** A good social media plan will help you know and target the right audience with the right services.
2. **You must manage your reputation.** When done properly, managing your social media reputation builds your credibility with customers, strengthening their trust in you/your brand.
3. **Content is king.** Social media is a 24/7 arena, and users are always hungry for new content. If you're not regularly posting new content on all of your social media platforms, you risk losing both engagement and followers.

Principle 1: Have a Plan

Using social media isn't a marketing plan; it is ***part*** of a marketing plan—a tactic, not a strategy. And the role it plays in your marketing plan depends on what your overall goal is.

Marketing, in general, allows you to achieve one (or more) of 4 goals:

1. **Acquisition**—finding new clients
2. **Retention**—keeping the clients you have
3. **Loyalty**—having your clients refer you to others
4. **Network**—connecting with colleagues

Each of these goals will be served by a different element within social media. For example, loyalty may be served by deep connections on Facebook where people get to know you and build trust. Networking may be served by connecting on LinkedIn, and acquisition can be supported through Facebook ads.

Action Step!
Define 1 goal you would like to achieve through social media on the *My Social Media Plan* form.

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Principle 2: You Must Manage Your Reputation

What You Say

Social media is about you and your relationship with others. What many social media users miss is that half of the value they can derive from social media is through interacting, not just on their own sites, but on sites of others as well.

For example:

About You / On Your Site

- Posts that offer valuable information and demonstrate your expertise.
- Posts that talk about how you have helped someone (without attribution, unless you have their permission).
- Your perspective on a current news item or item of interest.

About Others / On Their Site

- Your response if you are mentioned in a post or answering a question they posted.
- What you think about a situation, such as congratulating a newly married couple.
- Posting a link on your site to useful information found elsewhere.

Where do you get information? The best place is your own experience—what you are learning in the market, recent experiences with your clients, or something you've observed about real estate. Using your own experiences is a great way to build your credibility and strengthen your brand in the eyes of your current and future customers.

What Others Say

In addition to being proactive on social media, you need to be aware of what other people are saying about you. There are several tools you can use to track your reputation online, including the following:

• Google Alerts	https://www.google.com/alerts?	(free)
• Talkwalker Alerts	https://www.talkwalker.com/alerts	(free)
• Buzzbundle	https://www.buzzbundle.com/	($$)
• Hootsuite	https://hootsuite.com/	($$)

Once you choose a monitoring service, then the question becomes what do you look for? Here are some ideas:

- Your name
- Names of any of your partners
- Your tag line
- Your website
- Your email address(es)
- Your real estate office
- Addresses you are listing
- A keyword (such as condos) that you may be interested in

Action Step!
Define 3-5 entries you would like to monitor on the web. Enter these on the *My Social Media Plan* form.

Principle 3: Content is King

When working with social media, it's important to remember...

Followers/Friends/Contacts ≠ **People Paying Attention to You**

When someone signs on to Facebook or reviews their Twitter feed, there may be something specific they are looking for, and it may not be something you want them to see.

As you are developing the information you want to share, be sure to also think about what you shouldn't share. Some information can damage your reputation or your security:

Reputation

- Inappropriate photos
- Confessions
- Risky behavior
- Complaints about work, co-workers, etc.
- Politics

Security

- Birthdate/place
- Mother's maiden name
- Home address
- Planned trips
- Your phone number
- Names, ages of your children
- Layout of your home

For the content you do share, here are 3 simple tips:

1. Pictures rule!
2. Ask questions to prompt interaction.
3. Keep it fresh—at least 3 posts each week.

In finding content, it is sometimes easiest to have a standard model you follow. For example, you could regularly post the following:

- Something about a particular house on **Monday**. For example, did you take a buyer to a particularly nice home? Or did you discover something about a house you are listing?
- An industry tidbit on **Wednesday**. For example, is there a new statistic to share? One way to have this type of information handy is to subscribe to RECON: https://www.recenter.tamu.edu/news/recon.
- Something interesting to do on the weekend on **Friday**. It could even be an open house for a particularly interesting home for sale.

Action step!
Set a content schedule on the *My Social Media Plan* form.



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My Social Media Plan

Define Your Goal

Why are you using social media? What do you hope to achieve? What platform(s) will you use to reach your goal?

Web Monitoring

What names, words, or phrases would you like to monitor on the web? Once these are defined, go to Google Alerts (https://www.google.com/alerts?) to set up feedback.

Content Schedule

Set a standard weekly schedule by type of content, then track it weekly to be sure your posts keep you in everyone's news feed. Be sure to keep your content interesting.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

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