Online customers are fickle... They are only interested in finding the very lowest price... Today’s consumers want instant gratification... They’re not interested in quality, just quantity... It’s hard to keep in touch with customers and leads online... People have such short attention spans these days...

Have you heard any of these sentiments before? Maybe you’ve even thought them yourself. It’s a fact that technology is changing the way we do business and the way we interact with each other. Sometimes it seems like it changes so quickly, it’s hard to keep up. But, regardless of your opinions about where technology is headed, one thing is certain: in order to be successful in business, you must embrace every communication medium that your leads and clients embrace.

Translating what you do best—providing valuable real estate services to your clients—from a brick-and-mortar storefront to the digital world can be difficult, but in many ways, the Internet is just another channel for demonstrating your worth. Follow these simple tips for participating in today’s online economy and you’ll be thriving in no time.

Make it clear how customers can get in touch with you. Yes, there may be more mediums of communication than there used to be, but that should make it easier for leads and clients to get in touch with you, not harder. Don’t bury your contact information deep in your website. Put it front and center, and list every way that someone can get in touch with you—phone, email, in person, or via social media. Give your customers options. They’ll reach out to you in the medium they prefer.

Answer every message. Whether it’s a text message, Facebook post, voice mail, or something else completely, make sure you’re responding to every question or comment you receive. Dedicate time each day to returning messages. With so much technology available in mobile settings, customers expect you to be readily available. Make it obvious to your clients and future clients that you’re available when they need you.

Tune in to how people are communicating with you via social media. The companies with the strongest social media presence are doing one thing right: they see social media as a two-way street. Did a potential customer post something to your business’ Facebook page or Twitter feed? Answer back! Create ongoing communication. Also, regularly post items of value, like market trends, new listings, tips for homeowners, and information on interest rates. Start up online conversations that encourage participation.

Ask your clients what they want. Technological advances allow unprecedented access to your leads and clients. Don’t waste time guessing what your clients are looking for. Ask them! Utilize online technologies to ask your clients what their dream home looks like, what qualities they look for in a real estate agent, or their favorite thing about their neighborhood. Make it fun with online polls, blog posting, or a Facebook contest. You’ll be generating buzz while acquiring keen insight into what’s on their minds.

Embrace online review sites. Many business owners (both in real estate and in other fields) are terrified of negative reviews on sites like Yelp, CitySearch, or SuperPages. And, consumers are more likely to write a negative review than a positive one. However, much can be learned from negative feedback. If you come across a negative review for your business online, reach out to the reviewer and try to make it right. Offer your contact information and tell them you’d like another chance to earn their business. Not only will you learn something from this interaction, but it also shows other visitors to the site that you’re receptive, straightforward, and proactive.

Offer a wealth of information on your website. Your website should be a repository of information for your clients and prospective clients. Offer more than just listings, certifications, and contact information. Including a blog, a frequently-asked-questions section, and advice for buyers and sellers can show customers that you’re truly a real estate industry expert.

Be available offline. Although technology is a wonderful thing, don’t hide behind it. Don’t use email and social media as a way to avoid face-to-face communication with clients, leads, and colleagues. Never underestimate the value of picking up the phone, showing up in person alongside your client, or attending networking events. The Internet isn’t a substitute for being there in person.

Don’t forget about tried-and-true methods. The Internet offers a wealth of new lead generation and conversion tools. But, that doesn’t mean you should shelve techniques that are currently working for you. Continue to ask your clients for referrals, provide thoughtful gifts when it’s appropriate, or send birthday and anniversary cards. If anything, online and social media solutions just offer you more tools in your toolbox with which to do an excellent job.

It’s the little things. When it comes to the world of online lead generation, social media communication, and websites, don’t overthink it. Make your website user-friendly. Write your blog in terms that everyone can understand. Respond promptly, but with all of the information (and more!) that the client has requested. Over-deliver whenever possible. Offer value to your clients, communicate clearly and concisely, and showcase your expertise.

Embracing the online economy in order to reach a higher volume of potential clients and using these tools to build on the relationships with clients you already have isn’t as hard as you think it might be. Take the time to create a thoughtful, logical plan for communicating your value proposition to the world. And, remember that technology is ever-changing. Being quick on your feet, nimble, and not being afraid to try new strategies are things that separate truly successful real estate professionals from the rest of the industry.

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