



The Best Brokers At Social Media: @properties Chicago

Growing Agency Using Active Social Voice to Establish Key Branding and Draw in New Buyers and Sellers

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Being social has always been an important trait for real estate agents and brokers. Those who are aggressive in pursuing new clients end up winning them more often than not. For years, that involved critical shoe leather time: hosting open houses, putting up signs and even going door-to-door. But, in today's digital world, brokers need to have a solid presence online as well in order to compete.

@Properties in Chicago has taken that mission to heart. EstateEnvy spoke with two of their brokers to learn more about how the brokerage is using social media to their advantage. Joanne DeSanctis Kirk is a Broker Associate based in Chicago and Kevin Mack is a Broker

based in Evanston and Chicago.

What would you say is your company's branded voice on social media?

Kirk: I think @properties has a really strong branded presence on all forms of social media. The campaigns are modern and fresh, the "love" campaign has been really well received and they have Snapchat filters that travel through the City. That encourages not just brokers, but everyone to take pictures and post.

Mack: @properties marketing is generally more about lifestyle branding and emotional appeal as opposed to specific listings. There are some great examples of that approach [here](#) and [here](#).

How do you engage with your customers most frequently?

Mack: With current (active) clients, text and email are the most prevalent forms of communication. As far as "touches" with former clients or potential clients, I find that personal snail mail is still the most meaningful and easily repeatable format. My focus when trying to engage with potential clients or reengage with former ones is either to demonstrate value in some manner or to continue the emotional connection. I send out hand written thank you notes and birthday cards on branded stationary. I also select a number of former clients near their purchase anniversaries and send them market analysis of current value on the home I helped them buy.

Kirk: For me it is still email and text. I'm beginning to be better at Facebook and just started an Instagram account. In January, I'll be sitting down with a social media expert to get a consistent look and learn to feed content across all of the mediums.

Is there a certain visual aesthetic your aim to portray across all of your social channels?

Kirk: Yes. We aim to keep the established @properties aesthetic, which includes modern, clean, and forward-looking images.

Mack: We do try and have some similarity across all social media outlets, which is harder than one might expect because they all have different format sizes for photos/cover shots/logos.

How do you choose which homes to feature on your social channels? Is there a particular type of home/landscaping that gets more engagement?

Kirk: Honestly, I try to feature the ones I'm trying to sell at the moment! I gravitate toward evening pictures where the homes are lit up, if they are single family homes, and modern interiors. If it is a condo, I look to highlight the best feature.

What is the greatest challenge in reaching and engaging with your audience?

Mack: The greatest challenge in effectively engaging potential clients is just the sheer volume of information that people are bombarded with these days. Finding a way to be heard above the rest of the white noise is the most difficult part of the marketing formula.

Kirk: My biggest challenge is trying to make sure I hit all platforms to reach as many people as possible. I struggle with how to keep content fresh on Instagram and Snapchat, which can be a great way to reach first time buyers.

How has social media helped you with business development?

Kirk: From the comments I receive on LinkedIn and Facebook, it helps to keep me top of mind for clients and potential clients. It reinforces and reminds people of what I can do for them.

Do you use social media more for brand exposure or for industry networking purposes?

Mack: Brand exposure for sure. In the residential real estate world, I have not found much use for industry networking.

Kirk: Definitely more for brand exposure and for my own exposure as well.

How do you find a balance between posts that are strictly business and those that are more humanizing / culture-based?

Kirk: This isn't scientific, but I really go with my gut. I promote my listings, always try to feed in market updates and statistics, the other stuff I post what resonates with me, and what I think will resonate with my sphere. @properties does a great job of providing us with lots of content. For instance, recently I've posted blog posts from @properties about getting your home ready for the holidays, and some great places in Chicago to find the best hot chocolate. There is a limit, though. I decided not to share a recent blog about where to get the best blow dry for holiday parties, for example. That one just didn't do it for me (though I read it for my own information)!

Mack: I keep a pretty sturdy firewall between my professional and personal social media profiles. I do, however, try to smatter reposts from my Facebook business page into my personal profile, just to keep my circle of friends reminded that I practice real estate.

How important is it to you that your business's culture is reflected on your social channels and how to achieve this?

Kirk: I've never really thought about it in those terms, but it is important. @properties has a terrific corporate culture, but my own business ethos is one of offering first rate concierge service. I'm working to continue doing more in that area to promote that side of things.

Do you strategically plan out content for the month in advance or do you post more as-you-go?

Mack: I don't plan out that far ahead because I feel like that leaves me vulnerable to missing relevant real-time content as it comes out. I do try to schedule a few days-worth of posts at a time via tools like Hootsuite, however.

Kirk: I've very much been posting as I go, though the goal for 2018 is to map out posts at least twice per month, then add as I go.

What is your best advice for a new real estate broker looking to build a presence on social media?

Kirk: Show a bit of yourself. Advice that was given to me was to post a good mix of personal and professional on the same page.

Mack: Reposting of articles, local stats, and industry news is important, but so is original content. I think we are in an age where video content is the best method of communicating your worth on social media. Real estate is very much a customer service industry and, as such, potential clients are making decisions on who to work with based on rapport as well as perceived professional prowess. Video affords the opportunity to simultaneously convey value and personality.

What is the most successful platform for your brand and why do you think that it appeals to your audience the most?

Mack: Facebook is my most successful platform for several reasons. First, it serves as hub for all other outlets. I can post YouTube videos I've shot as well as Instagram and others to Facebook. Second, it is the easiest outlet to have that very controlled drip of my professional profile into my personal world. Sites like Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc. are not structured to make that crossover as convenient and easily curated. Third, and most importantly, it serves as a way for me to stay in front of the people that are the low hanging fruit of potential new clients. The best business to focus on creating is the business you can capture through people who already know and like you. The ROI on those people is much higher than it is on trying bring in business from strangers.

Kirk: Facebook offers the strongest base, many of whom are over 40 and not as active on other social media platforms.

Do you ever collaborate with other brokers / businesses on your social channels to increase visibility? Why or why not?

Kirk: Not yet. I'm not ruling it out, but there is so much to keeping the presence going, along with the other marketing activities to keep yourself and your business out there that I've not pursued partnerships and no organic opportunities have presented themselves. It may be something I pursue in the future, though.

Mack: I work on a team, so, in addition to my own page, we have a team Facebook page, so there is some measure of coordination there.

Do you have a branded hashtag? If so, what is it and how did you choose it?

Mack: I use #work2livechicago. I chose that because I've always felt that we all too often allow work to consume us. We find ourselves functionally living to work when really we should be working to live the lives we want for ourselves. Owning a home is one of the most significant representations of how work serves our lives as opposed to our lives serving work.

How do you choose what outsourced content to share on your feed? Are there certain publications or thought leaders that you find align with your brand/appeal to your followers?

Kirk: I keep track of industry publications like Inman and the National Association of Realtors (NAR). Since real estate is hyper local, I'm always combing Crain's Chicago Business and some of the local online newsletters for articles of interest too.

Mack: I have a self-curated Feedly feed and targeted Google new alerts I use to filter outsourced content. I know a lot of agents who are subscribed to Keeping Current Matters. I think they produce great content that is tailored to brokers. But, because so many agents use it, it leads to a lot of overlap of content in a time when it is of vital importance to differentiate yourself from other agents.

How do you find your balance between original content and shared content? Do you have a general rule of thumb for how often you retweet or repost content?

Mack: In general, I believe original content is always better for your branding than shared content. I should probably have a better structured formula for a ratio, but the truth is, how much original content I post is directly proportional to how busy I am in other parts of my business and life in general.

Kirk: For me, there is no formula. I just do what feels right. I do always post pictures of happy clients after closings with regularity, or at least a picture of the property we just closed.

Do you promote your social channels anywhere other than your website?

Mack: I used to have my profiles in my email signature but in an effort to create consistency of branding, our company policy changed to mandate a strict format on email signatures.

Kirk: Not yet, but that is coming in 2018 to my business card.