



## Industry News Videos and virtual tour options to build your business

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Products aim to maximize return on advertising dollar

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Despite the slowing real estate market, innovation is running at full speed. It's a brand-new world out there -- are you willing to be part of it?

One of the most exciting aspects of the [Real Estate Connect conference](#) is learning about the latest innovations in the business. My last two articles focused on the trend towards consolidation in terms of lead generation, Web marketing and traditional print marketing. An equally exciting set of innovations is occurring in how we use video and virtual tours to market our listings and our businesses.

For those who are on a limited budget, one of the least expensive alternatives comes from RealEstateShows.com. Jeff Turner describes this solution as being "brain-dead simple." Using the technology created by Ken Burns, the well-known documentary film producer, agents can upload five to nine digital photos and create the equivalent of a much more expensive video. The Burns technology allows the agent to control where the camera moves, and panning in and out.

Once an agent uploads pictures, he or she can select music from the RealEstateShows library. Since most music requires a license to use for commercial purposes, this is an excellent way to avoid potential copyright problems. The agent selects the music and is billed based upon whatever the current licensing fee is for that particular piece.

According to Turner, one of the challenges agents face when using a virtual tour is having to redo the entire tour if they wanted to change pictures as the seasons change or include additional shots at a later date. With their program, agents can easily change their show by changing the pictures. Once the agent creates the show, the agent can embed the show into a blog post or even into the multiple listing service.

For agents who may be more into videos, there's WellcomeMat.com. According to company co-founder Christian Sterner, WellcomeMat aims to be a one-stop resource for both the creation and the distribution of videos. One of the exciting things agents can do with an actual video is to make personal comments about a specific property or invite your sellers to discuss unique aspects of their home or its history. WellcomeMat.com allows its users to select from more than 700 videographers nationwide to produce a custom video/tour for their properties. Users have the flexibility of locating someone whose style is best suited for their market area.

Two other nice features about the WellcomeMat technology include a video player that agents can embed in their Web sites as well as syndication of videos to such places as craigslist.org. The WellcomeMat platform allows agents to control their personal real estate "video channels" in terms of what they create and how it will be distributed.

For example, using the WellcomeMat.com technology, [Douglas Heddings of Prudential Douglas Elliman](#) has received more than 1,100 viewings of one of his listings and another 400 on a second, more expensive listing. When people visit Heddings' listings online, they can click on an embedded map to see other videos of his listings in the same area.

The granddaddy of all video real estate tours is TurnHere.com, and the price point on these is significantly higher than the RealEstateShows and the WellcomeMat products. Phil Schulz, sales development manager at TurnHere, explained that company clients are using TurnHere video films to create 30- to 60-second profiles. D.R. Horton homes uses the TurnHere product to provide its clients with a tour of the community as well as having the potential buyers get a flavor of what the lifestyle in that community is like. Real estate brokerage company Realliving has shot videos of 40 different communities to support the marketing efforts of its brokerage. The videos appear on cable television based upon the ZIP code of the community.

Which solution is best? That depends upon the quality you want and your pocketbook. It's probably not a good idea to shoot your own shaky, poorly lit video, even though many Gen X and Gen Y users are OK with the

