

business

Realtors round out the picture

Using video, they offer clients info on shopping, schools, neighborhood events

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Brokers such as Jennifer Pollock, left, are increasingly practicing "hyper-localism" with video. Xenia Belousova runs the camera. Here, Pollock provides a restaurant tour on East Colfax Avenue. (Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post)

Virtual home tours arrived online about a decade ago, as the nation's broadband networks developed the capacity to deliver them. First it was the 360-degree panorama — a houseful of slow pans stitched together with editing software.

Now it's all about full-motion video.

"I've posted all of my listings with video for the past three years," said Jim Smith, a Golden-based broker who acts as his own film crew. He speaks on camera, narrates as he walks the floors, and edits the footage with Windows Movie Maker software.

While some brokers have used video for years, the nation's Multiple Listing Services are just beginning to catch up, said Christian Sterner, co-founder of WellcomeMat, a Boulder company that hosts video for real-estate companies.

Video postings are found on realtor.com, a public site that aggregates listings from many MLS systems nationwide. But many brokers fail to take advantage of the capability, even when their big employers pay for it, Smith said.

"The funniest ones are when they shoot a video but they don't speak. You see the camera moving around the house and all you can hear is the guy breathing," he said.

Video is not just about listings, said Sterner, speaking recently to Denver brokers gathered to learn more about social media. "Real-estate companies have an interest in being a local

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information source. So they produce information about schools, restaurants, shopping and entertainment, not just houses," he said.

Keller Williams broker Jennifer Pollock operates in Denver's Mayfair neighborhood. She blogs and posts video at mayfairdenver.com. Recently, she covered the groundbreaking for a construction project at Palmer Elementary School.

"Video engages people. It gives you a very personal feeling for the neighborhood," she said. Her aim is to sell the neighborhood and herself as much as to sell homes.

In the social-media lingo swirling around video and real estate, Pollock is engaged in "hyper-localism." An enthusiastic advocate of that is Mark Eibner of Denver-based BrokerIPTV.

Eibner urges brokers to blog locally with live streaming video, enabled by common hand-held devices such as the iPhone and BlackBerry.

"If it's easy, you'll do it," Eibner advises.

He advises that clients don't bother with scripting or editing and instead stream their footage to a distribution site such as Qik.com, which will "push" the content to YouTube and dozens of lesser-known sites.

"Quick-streaming video has its place, and so does a carefully planned production," said Mark Schow. He is the Colorado distributor for Obeo, the leading provider of full-service online virtual tours.

There is no rivalry between "traditional" providers and the newer generation of quicker technology applications. Schow also owns Mediamax, producing broker profiles and more upscale property listings.

"Ease of delivery is definitely where the industry is going," he said. "You have to figure out how to make brokers and homes look good at a reasonable price."

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