



camera action

Beyond the virtual tour, more REALTORS® get creative with video.

By Andrea Orr

● **The share of online adults who watch videos on video-sharing sites has nearly doubled since 2006: 62 percent in 2009, up from 33 percent in 2006.**

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project

You could get a little dizzy watching Jeffrey Douglass' video tour of downtown San Diego. The camera is a bit wobbly and the angle often askew as Douglass, CRS, takes visitors along on his morning walk through the convention center and along the waterfront.

"I don't spend a lot of time on my videos. I think it's important *not* to," says Douglass, owner of RealtyV2. Two years ago, Douglass began experimenting with multimedia on his Web site, www.sandiegojeff.com. He believes the obviously homemade quality of his videos makes them more appealing.

"My videos are shot on the ground, often with traffic noise in the background," says Douglass, who usually shoots his videos with his iPhone. "The quality is not always the prettiest, but it lends itself to real life.

I offer people a real look, not a sales look," Douglass explains.

Not long ago, such videos might have been considered unprofessional, but today Douglass is one of a growing number of REALTORS® who feature homemade video on their Web sites. The shift results partly from an abundance of technology that can turn novices into filmmakers and partly from an explosion in popularity of user-generated online content.

But it is not simply low-cost and easy-to-use technology — such as the Flip video camera and built-in editing software — that has turned so many agents into novice filmmakers. Many have found that by doing it themselves, they can be far more innovative in how they present their properties and reach out to prospective clients.

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Insider's Perspective

One year ago, Jennifer Pollock, CRS, of Keller Williams Real Estate in Englewood, Colo., had no video on her Web site; today, friendly, informal video dominates her two blogs, *denvering.com* and *mayfairdenver.com*. "I don't want to go to a REALTOR®'s site and read a formal statement that says, 'I have been selling real estate for X number of years and this is why you should use me.' I would click off immediately," says Pollock, who always travels with her Flip video camera, an easy-to-use camcorder that sells for under \$200 and isn't much bigger than an iPod.

Pollock's video strategy is focused on showing would-be clients different neighborhoods in a way that presents her as an active and well-informed member of the community while also revealing her fun and quirky personality. She believes this approach is especially useful for out-of-state buyers who need to learn about various communities before they can start comparing homes.

Rather than featuring five-star restaurants and other tourist destinations, Pollock highlights the types of things locals — or would-be locals — would like to know about, from schools to bars to diners. Recently, she posted a 39-second video of herself at a Winter Brew Fest, where she announced, over the raucous sounds of the rowdy crowd in the background, that she was on her third beer. A slightly longer video features Pollock interviewing the owners of a local doggie daycare. At the end of every video, she clearly identifies herself as a local REALTOR® with lines such as, "If you're looking to buy or sell a home in central Denver, I'm your girl."

The offbeat locations where Pollock often films are arguably of little interest to people wanting to get down to the business of buying or selling a home, but Pollock sees it differently. She wants to build a site that attracts all sorts of people, not just those looking to buy or sell a house in the next month. That way, she builds brand recognition so that when people find they do need a REALTOR®, they know where to go. She understands that not everyone will appreciate her unusual approach, but believes some will feel an immediate connection. "I'm definitely not trying to appeal to everybody," she says. "What I like about homemade video is

that it gives a sense of who I am."

Client Testimonials

Anyone can highlight a quote of praise from a former client on a Web site or on a flier, but the testimonial carries a lot more weight when you can see the client speaking with emotion in his or her own words. James Nellis, CRS, of RE/MAX Allegiance in Sterling, Va., recently filmed a client who had remodeled a flawed-but-affordable house into a dream home. This image of the homeowner sitting in his newly renovated home (www.nellisgroup.com/shipwright) provides a concrete example of a happy customer.

Nellis' video of a client outlining the flaws of the home he purchased and detailing how he fixed them might have once been seen as bad public relations. But in an economy where more buyers are interested in staying within budget than paying for lots of extras, the testimonial speaks to those who are unsure whether they can afford to buy or will like the house they can afford. The three-and-a-half-minute video features the homebuyer candidly describing his wish list for his new house when he began his search, and his subsequent realization that his budget was limited. "We had to pick a house that did not have the well-finished kitchen or the well-finished bathroom that had everything up to date," he explains on the video, and then goes on to detail all the interior and exterior renovations he completed. Nellis also posted images of the house after the renovation.

Authoritative Explanation

When Nellis heard clients raise the same concerns over and over again, he decided to produce brief videos to address some frequently asked questions. If three different clients ask you the same question, "the answer should be in a video," Nellis says. After receiving repeated queries from people asking how they could complete



Many REALTORS® keep the easy-to-use Flip HD with them at all times.

more paperwork remotely, for example, he created a video on "how to create an electronic signature." Not only is it faster to send a client a prepared video response, Nellis says, the video also carries more weight — it sends the message that the REALTOR® has researched the question and taken care to provide an accurate and thorough response. This is especially true when the video addresses a financially complex matter. His "how to purchase a short sale" video addresses the growing number of homes that are valued at less than the mortgage owed. While many people expect a short sale to be a quick sale,

Nellis warns in his video that it is actually a prolonged process that should be pursued only by buyers who have plenty of time to wait.

Point of Return

It can be difficult to measure the success of video because it's not always clear what turned a Web site visitor into a client. While most REALTORS® agree that video is a valuable and efficient way to disseminate information and attract more clients, they also say the benefits might not be instantly apparent.

Pollock says she can't yet link any deal specifically to her video, but she believes it has generated more inquiries from both buyers and sellers. "I am getting leads from these blogs from across the country because people are interested in what the Denver lifestyle is all about," she says.

Rather than regarding video as the tool that will immediately produce a surge in business, many REALTORS® see it as a simple way to enhance and support their business. "I do a decent-sized business and I want to keep the ball rolling," Pollock explains. 🏠

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