

social@



attract friends, followers, and
connections to your business

ben kinney with **jay papasan**

in partnership with **activerain**

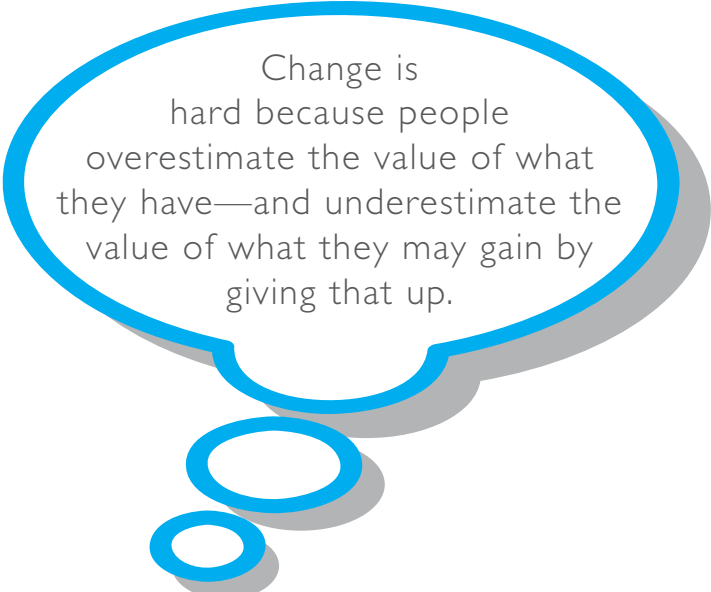
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Change is
hard because people
overestimate the value of what
they have—and underestimate the
value of what they may gain by
giving that up.

James Belasco and Ralph Stayer
Flight of the Buffalo

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foreword

When Gary, Dave, and I began writing *SHIFT* in the summer of 2007, Craigslist was already an institution, Facebook had just topped 50 million users, and MySpace had displaced Friendster as king of the social networking landscape. People were paying attention, but no one knew exactly what to make of this emerging phenomenon. Blogging was catching on, but REALTORS® seemed to be doing more browsing than posting.

By the time *SHIFT* was published in August of 2008, more than 100 million Facebook users were regularly struggling to generate clever status updates three times a day and social networking had officially crested the horizon in the real estate industry. Blogging was going mainstream in-between the two coasts and more than a million postlets plastered Craigslist and the Web with homes for sale.

Over the next twelve months, the deafening buzz around social media became impossible to ignore. Facebook tripled in size to more than 300 million active users, LinkedIn grew from 15 to 40 million users and Twitter exploded on to the scene with A-list Hollywood actors battling pro athletes and even the U.S. president for Twitter-follower-supremacy. During that same period, ActiveRain, the most active social network in the real estate industry, grew to more than 165,000 active blogs. Still, it took many by surprise.

internet, take two

Social networking, as a concept, is older than you might think. Sociologist A.J. Barnes actually coined “social networks” back in 1954 and helped jump-start a whole new way of looking at social connections. Lab coat types began mapping personal connections in all kinds of communities from business units to battle groups, from board members to congressional donors. These social diagrams, or “sociograms,” dot the covers of social marketing books and websites and have become emblematic of connectedness in general. About a decade later, Dr. Stanley Milgram conducted his celebrated “small world experiment” that birthed the idea of “six degrees of separation” for the social sciences (and, just as importantly, birthed the six degrees of Kevin Bacon for a generation of techies).

In the 1990s anthropologist Robin Dunbar conceived the “rule of 150,” the idea that our ability to manage a social network tops out at about 150 relationships. Epidemiologists ate this stuff up; they had a vested interest in knowing how real world viruses spread through human interactions. But other than the Kevin Bacon game, the idea of social networking was far from mainstream.

Credit Malcolm Gladwell and his excellent read *The Tipping Point*, for bringing some of these ideas back into the mainstream spotlight. Gladwell built on all these ideas to hypothesize how ideas sometimes took on the qualities of an epidemic. Done right, social networks harnessed all these concepts and, empowered by Internet technology, could disseminate all things digital in the blink of an eye. Around 2004, tech guru Tim O’Reilly would popularize the concept of “Web 2.0,” a moniker that has come to describe some of the most successful Internet businesses that rose from the ashes of the 2001 dot-com bust. Web 2.0 is social networking and social networking is about connections, conversations, and collaboration.

Now, Dunbar’s idea that we might network with no more than 150 individuals seems a little antiquated. Web 2.0 tools like Twitter and Facebook put us in direct or indirect relationship with more than 55 million social networkers in the United States alone. When your mom sends you a friend request, you can no longer deny that social media has arrived. But what does all this mean for real estate professionals?

While the ideas we share in the Internet lead conversion chapter of *SHIFT*, “Tactic 6: Catch People in Your Web,” remain valid, they simply don’t address all the opportunities and challenges of attracting and converting leads with social media. That’s why we reached out to Ben Kinney and the good folks at ActiveRain to create this ebook. Ben Kinney is recognized across the United States and Canada as a tech leader in real estate. He’s also a brass tacks, serious real estate professional whose Bellingham, Washington based business, Home4Investment Real Estate Team, closed more than 150 transactions in 2009. ActiveRain founder Jonathan Washburn is a former real estate agent himself and, with more than 165,000 real estate blogs on the Active Rain platform, he has a uniquely informed perspective on the impact of social networking on real estate.

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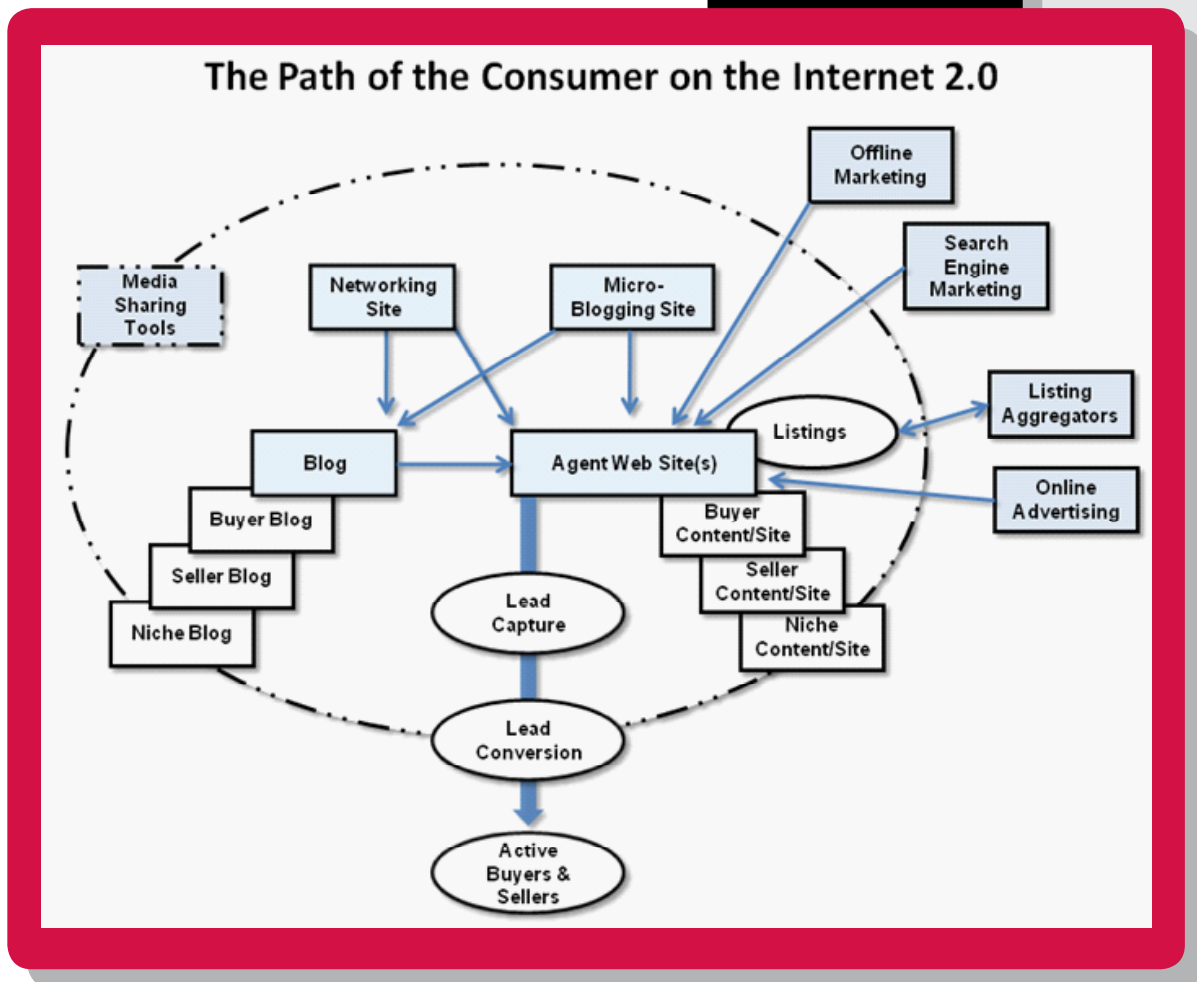
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shift into social networking

Social networking impacts the lead conversion models in *SHIFT* on every level. It provides new channels for buyers and sellers to find you and your real estate business online, as well as new strategies for making offers and capturing and converting leads. And best of all, social networking tools provide inexpensive and effective ways to keep the conversation going over time for repeat and referral business. In short, social networks bring the world to you and you to the world. It's never been easier to connect with new customers and build relationships with them long past the closing table.

Figure 1



The Path of the Consumer on the Internet 2.0 (Figure 1) illustrates some of these changes. If you compare this to the original model, which appears on page 119 of *SHIFT*, you'll note that we've added Media Sharing Tools, Networking Sites, Micro-Blogging Sites, and

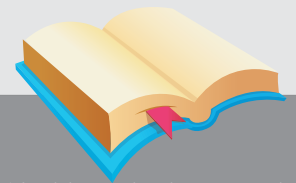
Blogs as proven tools for driving traffic to your website. Ben will provide tactical details on how these fit into your lead generation and conversion strategies in the pages ahead. For now, let's make sure we're speaking the same language.

tools to increase web traffic

- 1) **Media Sharing Tools** – Sites such as YouTube and Flickr empower you to cheaply and easily share multimedia content throughout your Internet world. If a picture is worth a thousand words, what's the going rate for a YouTube video testimonial?
- 2) **Networking Sites** – Sites like LinkedIn and Facebook provide an information-rich platform for connecting with potential buyers and sellers. You can discover who attended school at your alma mater and tell them how cute their babies are too.
- 3) **Micro-Blogging Sites** – Sites like Twitter can be perplexing at first, but micro-blogging sites provide massive platforms for reaching an unlimited audience. William Shakespeare famously wrote that "brevity is the soul of wit." With posts limited to 140 characters or less, micro-blogs bring out the Shakespeare in all of us.
- 4) **Blogs** – Whether you use a mainstream blog tool like Blogger or WordPress or a real estate-centric one like Top Producer or ActiveRain, blogs allow anyone with something to say a fuss-free way to professionally and stylishly publish their thoughts to the Web. If you ever wrestled with HTML code or paid some college kid to do it for you, you understand how miraculous these publishing engines truly are.

These are the four new players in your real estate Internet business model. But the basic rules haven't changed. A shifted market and a scarcity of business will continue to tug at your pocketbook and test your willpower. You must still hold each minute invested or dollar spent to a positive cash return. Nothing escapes your scrutiny. If your Internet strategy is yielding anything short of appointments to do business with motivated buyers and sellers, it's time to address that today. The proven tactics in this ebook can guide you. It's time to shift into social networking.

Jay Papasan
Coauthor of *SHIFT: How Top Real Estate Agents Tackle Tough Times*
January 2010



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