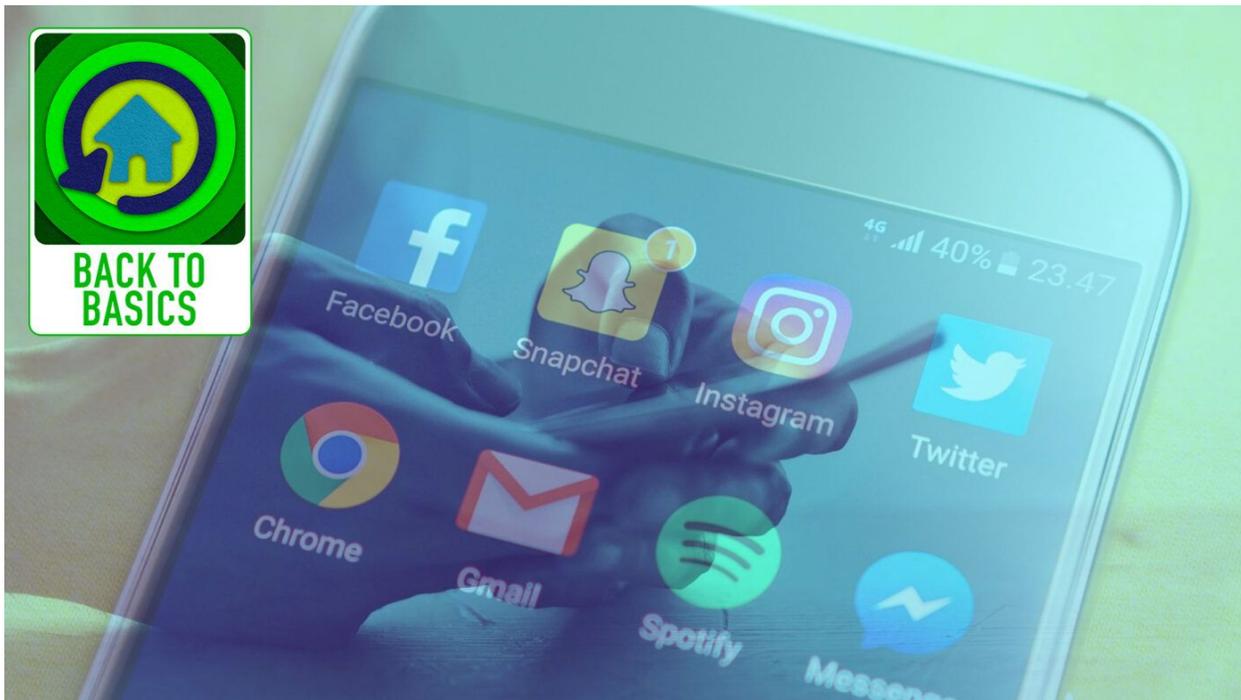


How to build your pipeline through social media advertising

With the right strategy in place, social media is a powerful marketing tool for your business. Here's how to build a social media marketing funnel to continually develop meaningful connections and find leads.



BY KELLY O'BRIEN
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In challenging times, it's a smart idea to revisit the fundamentals of good business. This April, go [Back to Basics with Inman](#).

Leads are the lifeblood of an agent's business. But in this pandemic era, both buyer and seller activity have become, at best, sluggish. How can agents continue to support their business and build pipelines now, with the hope of being able to turn up the selling quotient when the time is right?

What if there was a way for agents to leverage a process that continually develops meaningful connections and "pre-leads"? Enter the "marketing funnel" — a common marketing tool used by the biggest marketers as well as the smallest.

Different levels of the marketing funnel can be activated or enhanced through strategic paid [social media](#) advertising practices. Frequently, this can be accomplished with a modest investment.

The marketing funnel maps to where people are in the buying cycle

The most basic marketing funnel maps a simple customer journey: creating awareness, stimulating consideration and facilitating conversion.

The awareness level of the funnel is the widest because it encompasses the broadest universe. As disinterested people fall out, the number of people naturally narrows in the consideration level. The conversion level is the tightest because it contains not just the fewest, but also the most likely to act.

Given the current situation, agents should focus on top-of-the-funnel activities to generate awareness and consideration of their personal brand. Building goodwill and visibility will pay off later.

An easy way to see the marketing funnel in action is by analyzing common automobile marketing. Consider an afternoon of TV watching. Over the course of a few hours, viewers may see several different commercials for the same car manufacturer. Each one of these commercial types is specific to a level in the marketing funnel.

A brand spot

Typically highly produced, this commercial features beauty shots of the car and aspirational lifestyle scenarios. If there are celebrities whose personal brands align with the car's image, they're sometimes in the mix.

If a viewer is interested in a new car, they're likely to connect with the brand spot while everyone else is using it as a snack break. The goal of the brand spot is to create awareness and an emotional connection with a self-selected audience. Agents can do the same.

A promotional spot

Now that the news about "Model X" is out, the manufacturer wants likely buyers to take a closer look and evaluate its features and fit for their needs. Noteworthy details — backup camera, breaking technology, acceleration, safety features — are highlighted. Price or financing can become recognizable features as in "Toyotathon" or "Happy Honda Days."

The goal of the promotional spot is consideration. It moves potential car buyers closer to the sale by letting them know that "Model X" is obtainable and has features and benefits that offer them value. Agents can take a similar path by sharing valuable information.

A retail spot

The final automobile commercial format TV viewers typically see is the local dealer spot. They feature owners in goofy costumes, special events like barbecues, concerts and local dealer incentives. Higher-end vehicle dealerships might tout their concierge-like service, but the message is still the same: Come on over.

The goal of the retail spot is conversion — to get [potential buyers](#) to see the cars in person and bring their wallets. There's a do-what-it-takes to make a deal message front and center. If an agent has a property to sell, they can tout selling events both online and offline.

Prototyping the social media marketing funnel for agents

Few agents will have a well-funded television media budget, but all levels of the marketing funnel can be serviced through paid social media marketing advertising strategies very

efficiently. The key to success is to be quite clear on what is being offered and to provide very specific call-to-action for the intended target.

Note: Facebook/Instagram now puts home ads into a special category with targeting limitations making your message and creative look and feel even more important to draw the right people to you.

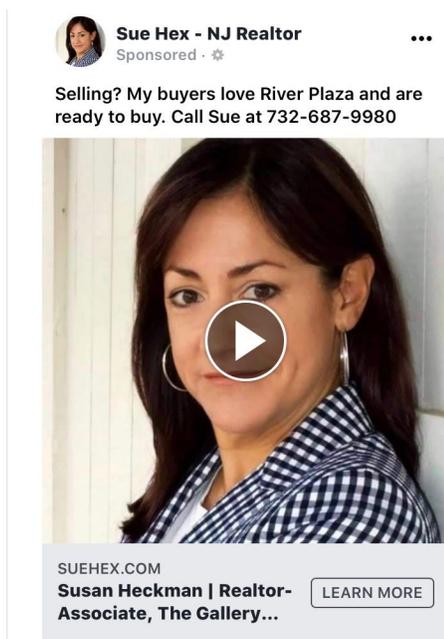
Awareness

Here, it's all about you and your personal brand. It's critical to understand your differentiation and value in the marketplace and to have messages and a look and feel that supports who you are.

Consider this the mixer at an event. You want to network and meet as many people as possible. Remember, you're talking to your broadest audience who may largely be unfamiliar with you. Vegan? Pet-rescuer? Sports enthusiast? Soccer mom? Yogi? Everyone has a dimension others can relate to — be you.

Where possible, select ad objectives for awareness and reach. Push yourself to use video and animated content over static images. Calls-to-action should be low-bar; a “Learn More” button with a link to your site or landing page where they can “[virtually](#)” [meet](#) you is a fine option.

Consideration



A screenshot of a Facebook advertisement for Sue Hex, a realtor in New Jersey. The ad features a profile picture of Sue Hex, her name, and the text "Sue Hex - NJ Realtor" with "Sponsored" and a gear icon below it. The main text of the ad reads: "Selling? My buyers love River Plaza and are ready to buy. Call Sue at 732-687-9980". Below the text is a video thumbnail showing Sue Hex with a play button icon. At the bottom of the ad, there is a grey bar containing the website "SUEHEX.COM", the name "Susan Heckman | Realtor-Associate, The Gallery...", and a "LEARN MORE" button.

Assume people in this level are thinking about buying or selling but given the environment, are hesitant to make a move.

Here's where you bring out the positives about working with you and what you have to offer. Focus on service, not hard-core selling. Showcase real value — market insight, stats, your process and more. If you offer virtual, low-contact services, bring them to life.

The strongest advertising goals map to engagement, traffic and [lead generation](#). An important point: Yes, we are talking about social media here, but it's critical for you to be able to connect with people who may consider working with you in the near future.



Sue Hex - NJ Realtor
Sponsored · 🌐



Simplify and enjoy life! If you're ready to downsize or relocate, you have many options here at the Jersey Shore!



SUEHEX.COM

Move with ease. Move with Susan Heckman!

LEARN MORE

Your calls-to-action should enable capturing an email or phone number or enabling Messenger in the Facebook suite. Most people have the experience of exchanging contact information for rich content. Have a good CRM and post-social plan for these important connections.

Conversion

This level is the closest to a potential transaction. Here, you're focusing on a property. Your objective is to get an appointment, tout a listing, or drive traffic to a [\(virtual\) open house](#).



Katherine Reynolds - The Gallery Residential Brokerage
Sponsored · 🌐



NEW listing in Spring Lake Heights! Beautiful colonial just a bike ride to the beach!



SEP
8

Open House
Katherine Reynolds - The G...

INTERESTED

Acknowledge the current situation by making certain your message and calls-to-action are very clear and explain how your viewer can safely participate.

👍 12

3 Shares 1.7K Views

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share

You should assume people in this level are actively interested in buying or selling. They may have entered the funnel at this point or you may have escorted them through awareness and consideration levels.

Treat them as true leads — capturing contact information and placing as few barriers as possible between engaging with the ad and action on their part.

Some final tips

Keep reality in check

The marketing funnel is a great tool, but in real life, people don't always move linearly, especially now. Still, it works because it allows you to meet them on their terms wherever they are in the process.

Enable success

Identify a budget and stick to it for a few months as you gain learning and traction. Learn and document your baseline of engagement and seek to grow it. Measure and test ad units. Some of the platforms have automation tools to do the heavy lifting for you.

Commit to quality over quantity by creating a few solid pieces of content for each level of the marketing funnel, and support them in your ad-buying strategy.

Step outside your comfort zone

Test new ad formats and platforms. Video is a clear winner across the board, but usage of Facebook Messenger and other messaging apps are growing. Stories ads are full-screen and have high engagement. Maybe it's time to try a new platform.

If you are entrenched in Instagram or Facebook, try Google My Business or Google Ad Words. LinkedIn is great for networking, but not an appropriate place for the conversion level.

Compliment paid strategies with organic posts

True, these platforms, particularly Facebook, have sharply limited distribution of organic (non-paid) posts. But when a potential new contact checks your feed or wall, seeing information there that's useful and up-to-date is a good experience for them and reflects positively on you.

Don't forget your post-transaction advocates

Past clients are a great source of future income. Keep them up-to-date and informed on what you're doing via your CRM system and social media.

The marketing funnel is neither a marathon or a sprint, but a sensible and flexible way to shape your go-to market strategies that can help you expand your base now with the expectation of a market return.

You will gain control of your leads by connecting to them with appropriate content and experiences about working with you — and at a more economical price than continually paying other providers.

Kelly O'Brien is the founder of [Beach House Strategies](#) and based in NYC, Philadelphia and the Jersey Shore. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#) or follow her on [Twitter](#).

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