

A PROPERTY MANAGER'S GUIDE TO **SOCIAL RENTING**

7 Steps to Social Media Success





Social media is a powerful tool for property managers in finding new residents and communicating with current ones. Actively participating in a diverse mix of social sites shows you're running a modern business, something today's residents always keep in mind. The key word is "actively." It's not enough to just be on all of the social channels; you need to stay engaged and competitive.

If you're new to social media, the following steps will help you get started on the road to attracting more prospects to your property.

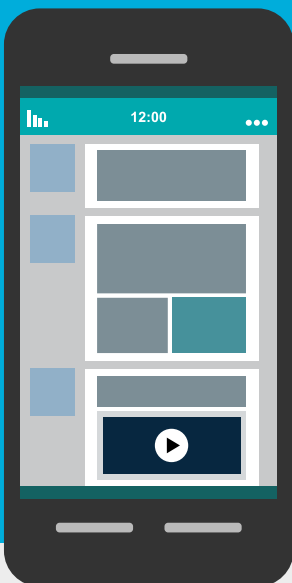


Step 1: Strategize

Defining your social networking goals is the first important step before setting up accounts. Ask yourself a few questions before you hit Sign Up:

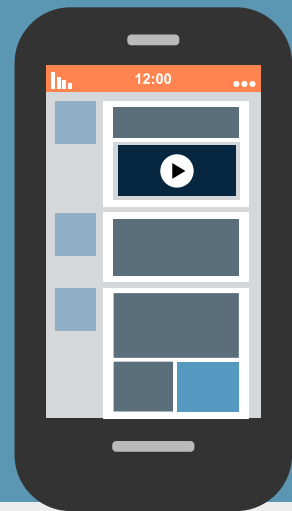
- How much time can you invest each week to responding and posting new content?
- Is your website stable and easy to use if you drive more traffic to it?
- How many social sites can you effectively manage?
- Do you have specific goals for each social platform?
- How will you measure success?

As you're finalizing your strategy, remember there are only 24 hours in a day and sleep is a necessity. While expanding your circles is necessary to staying ahead of the competition, you must be able to post regularly in order to keep followers and fans coming back. Set realistic goals for yourself. Can you afford to hire an outside vendor to update your social networking sites or invest in a full-time in-house social media coordinator? Hiring a social media consultant for hosted events may be a more economical choice for you in the beginning.

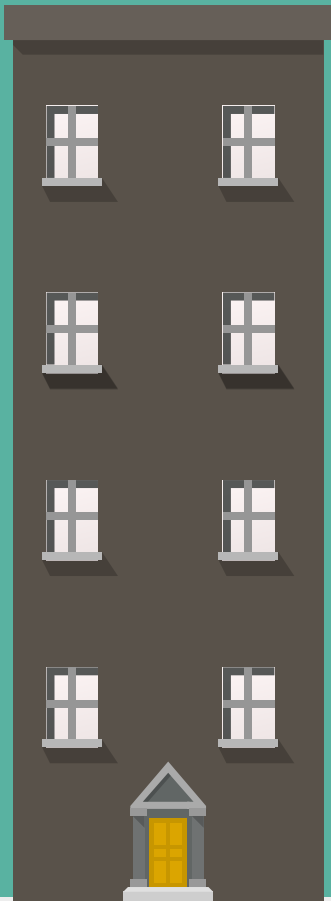


Step 2: Start Small

After you establish your goals and have a detailed plan in place, pick a starting point. Venturing into the social media scene can be intimidating; start with just a few, such as Facebook and Twitter. Like educational resources on Facebook, follow other property managers on Twitter, and see what your current residents are talking about on Yelp. You can gradually expand your digital scope of influence and get a bit fancier—use hashtags to start conversations with other professionals and engage with current residents in comments sections.



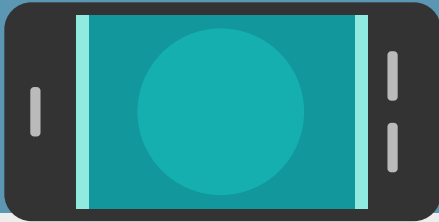
Step 3: Add a Blog



Social media gurus know that hyper-local blogging drives a tremendous amount of traffic to your site. Create a blog populated with things to do in your area and human interest stories about local celebrities, newsworthy events, and entertainment venues. Geo-targeted blog content should appeal to current residents, local web-surfers, and active apartment seekers; keep it informative and useful. Your goal is to start a conversation, and when it comes time to rent, you'll already be a familiar name. So as not to overwhelm yourself, start with one post per week, scheduling a specific time and day. It gives your readers a consistent reason to come back.

Step 4: Expand Your Presence

Multi-channel marketing is utilized by top performing companies. Knowing where your audience hangs out online is critical to reaching apartment seekers on their own turf. According to social media marketing experts, local amplification—targeting neighborhood prospects—is a wise investment of time and dollars.



DID YOU KNOW . . .

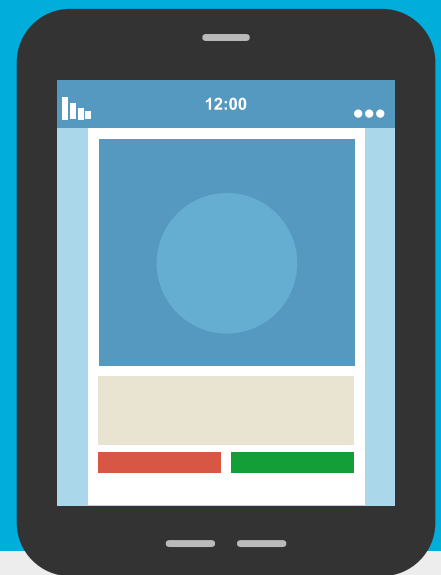
- 71% of consumers are more likely to make a purchase based on social media referrals.
- More than 86 million people use a mobile digital device to access local business information.
- After searching online, 66% visit a business and 70% call for more information.
- At 30%, Facebook is the most influential when making purchasing decisions, followed closely by YouTube and LinkedIn.

Being local isn't only about advertising, it's about giving online searchers value-packed information they can use to improve their lifestyle. Social media lets you inform and educate your audience without a hard-sell pitch.

As you build more profiles and get more engagement, consider free tools that help automate social posts. Word of caution with automated social accounts: don't act like a robot. Mix in automated posts in your off hours or when you know you'll be out of town, but try to post as many live tweets as you can to keep it real.

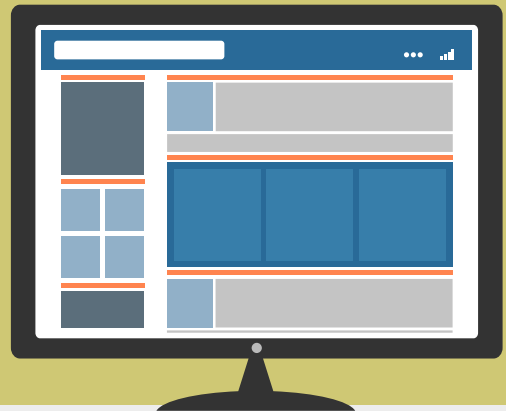
Step 5: Foster an Online Community

Inspire current renters to get engaged with others in the community. Building a members-only Facebook page is an excellent opportunity to showcase the best features of your property, announce upcoming events, host a resident contest, and share community news. A second page for potential residents can focus on floorplans, amenities, move-in specials, and perks.



Step 6: Claim Your Free Online Business Directories

Take advantage of free advertising tools online. Yelp is an excellent venue to share business information and informative, no-strings-attached local content. Encourage your past and current residents to post reviews on your Yelp Business Page.



Step 7: Incentivize Engagement

Social networking is all about sharing; create a reason for your social followers to share your content. It could be something as simple as offering a gift to everyone who likes your page or free credit at the on-site laundry facility to everyone who comments on a Facebook photo. You could take it up a notch and offer new residents a discount on storage, parking, or rent if they submit an application via your social media site link.



Building a dynamic social media presence takes time and effort, but it's well worth the investment. Connecting with social influencers through multiple channels is a most effective strategy. Just remember, Rome wasn't built in a day. Don't try to launch a dozen social sites at the same time if you can't dedicate time to each one. Once you're comfortable with blogging, Facebook and Twitter, think about expanding to other social channels like Pinterest, Instagram, and Snapchat. And when you're a super user, you can start using social advertising.

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Ready, Set, Share

Getting started is often the hardest part, but you now have the guidance necessary to take the first step toward social renting.

