

## Communications Plans Include Mobile as Technology Evolves

Advertising professional Sam Meers defines digital velocity as “*the seemingly unstoppable phenomenon of digital communications growing at an increasing rate.*” This insatiable desire for information has most associations embracing mobile technology as their means for staying in the game. The rationale is in the numbers. A 2010 survey conducted by the Center for REALTOR® Technology revealed:

- Nearly 80% of REALTORS® across NAR use smartphones for business
- 68% use their phone to access productivity tools
- 33% use their phone to access news from NAR’s REALTOR® magazine

### A New Mindset

“Members want information faster. They want fewer emails and more direct, up-to-date information they can use on the spot,” says Jerry Panz from WRAR.

“Sure, many MLS providers offer mobile applications, but members are asking for more services than just MLS. They want instant access to calendars, web usage, you name it. If an association wants to deliver value, they need to get innovative with their mobile plan,” says Mark Allen from the Minneapolis REALTOR® Association.

### An Evolving Tool

So what exactly does “mobile” include? The definition grows every day. Associations are incorporating mobile phone applications, USB flash drives, streaming video, text, QR codes and the mobile web into their technology offerings.



“We are stepping into mobile apps and texting for one very prominent reason: it’s where our members are”, says Dawn Kennedy, CEO in Oklahoma City. “Members are relying on their smartphones more and more to access MLS, to email documents from Transaction Desk and to communicate with clients. Our leadership believes the use of mobile technologies will increase dramatically as GEN Y and the millennials become the primary buying segment. We want to be able to deliver member services in whatever media they choose, and our survey data verifies they are choosing smart phones.”

### An Instantaneous Future

So how do you use technology to become a critical part of the way a member does business? Pam MacConnell, AE from West Volusia won a Game Changer grant to develop an innovative method for members to gain instant access to up-to-date information, from anywhere at any time.

“We launched the ‘Flash Digest Flash Drive’ last fall,” says Pam. “We set up a master Flash Digest on a cloud - one location where we keep our knowledge base.

Each member’s flash drive is preloaded with the Flash Digest, Siber System’s GoodSync2Go software and a custom batch file that tells it to start synchronizing with the associations master Flash Digest whenever they plug it in.

“As a result, whenever we add the latest market statistics, change a member form or add other information, members can get it loaded onto their drive in a flash!”

So far 200 of their 500 members are using the device. Jane Crosby, Broker Sales Associate at Watson Realty Corp calls it The Wonder Drive. "I have been using the flash digest from the very first day the Association made them available to members," said Jane. "It has been such a time saver for my business. From access to Current Market Stats at the click of a mouse to the miracle of the Password Vault, I don't really know how I managed without it."

As you consider your mobile possibilities, remember this: Knowing what is valuable to your members allows you to be the most relevant to them. Seek their input. They'll help you validate the right direction for your mobile strategy.

## Ready to take the next step?

Preparing to incorporate mobile tools into your marketing mix? Begin with three important steps:

### 1. Learn how members are using mobile

- What type of phone do they carry?
- What challenges face them in their daily work?
- What information do they want fast?
- How can you better meet their needs for quick access to information?

### 2. Identify areas where you can make the biggest impact (from member feedback, not feedback from your board):

- Is real time information critical? (text, audio, video)
- Are there simpler ways for members to get involved?
- Register for events via mobile application
- Gain quick access to classes via QR codes on posters
- Is pushing association information your priority? (dues reminders, etc.)

3. **Decide how to measure it.** Whether it's texting (SMS), QR codes or mobile apps, the metrics are there. What you measure helps determine your ROI.

**Always be within arms length from your customer. Are you accessible? Do you deliver value that members can access from wherever they are?**

**Roll out mobile tools one at a time.** Develop, test, pilot and communicate each new tool to members. They'll need time to learn how each one applies to their day-to-day business.