

# Overcome Your “Social” Phobias

By Rick Broida

Learning how to “social network” is easier than learning how to dance. Step one—deep cleansing breath. Step two—power up your computer. Step three, let’s begin.

## How To > Build a Social Network

**F**rom a marketing standpoint, there’s only so much you can accomplish through face-to-face interaction. Sure, you might meet a few new people every day, pass out a few business cards, maybe get the occasional referral from a past client. But what if you could connect with hundreds, even thousands, of potential clients *and* fellow real estate professionals? That kind of networking could really boost your monthly sales.

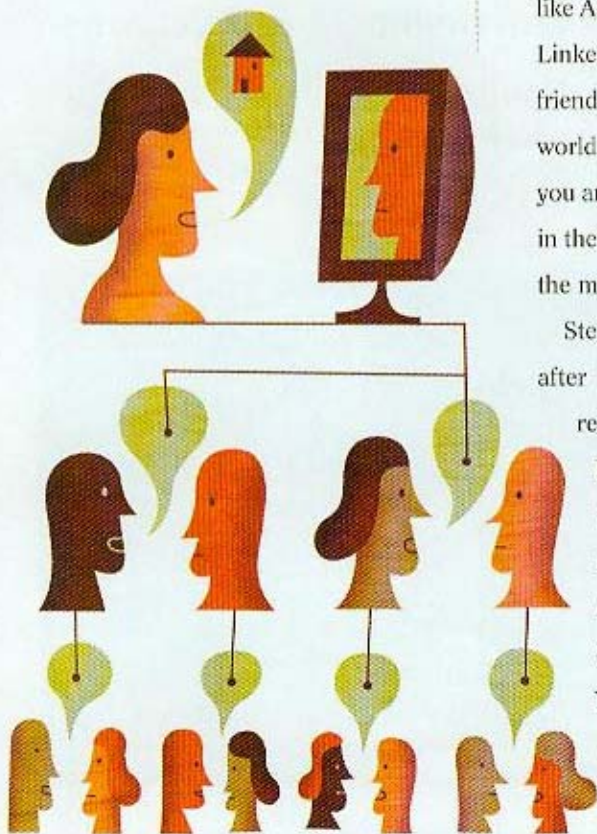
It’s called social networking, and it’s only a few clicks away. Sites like ActiveRain ([www.activerain.com](http://www.activerain.com)), Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)), and LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)) help put you in touch with other users—friends, friends of friends, and strangers alike—across the state and around the world. Basically, you build a profile, a kind of online resumé that describes you and your interests—both business and personal. The more you participate in the site, the more connections you make. The more connections you make, the more you’re able to promote yourself (and your business).

Steve Castaneda, a Houston-based REALTOR®, landed a referral shortly after joining ActiveRain, a social-networking site created expressly for real-estate professionals. Having posted a few items in his ActiveRain blog and comments on other agents’ blogs, he received a message from a California loan officer whose sister was moving to Houston. Read more about his experiences with ActiveRain (and other social networking sites) on his blog (<http://tinyurl.com/2mp7dg>). You’ll be glad to know the only cost to join and use social-networking sites is your time.

### WISE UP!

Resources and ideas to keep you informed.

Check out the Field Guide to Social Networking for REALTORS® (<http://tinyurl.com/2u00do>), which includes links to related articles as well as actual sites you might want to join.



## How To > Add a Video Clip to Your Web Site

**Y**

ou've recorded a walk-through of a new property, edited the video on your PC, and uploaded it to YouTube—now what? It doesn't do much good if visitors to your site can't see it. Sure, you could copy the link and tell visitors to "click here," but the more effective method is to "embed" the video right on your site. Here's how:



1. Upload your video to YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)), making sure to designate it as "public."
2. After YouTube finishes processing the video (this can take upwards of an hour), head to the My Videos page. Click the link for the video you want to embed.
3. In the gray box to the right of

the video player, you'll see a field marked "Embed." Click anywhere inside that field to highlight the code contained therein. Copy this code to your clipboard by pressing Ctrl-C (or Command-C if you're a Mac user).

4. The final step is to paste that code into your site. If it's a blog, you can probably just create a new post, paste the code, and add any relevant comments about the video. If you have a hosted or other kind of non-blog site, you may need to get some help from your IT person to make sure the code gets pasted into the right place.

Always preview the new post or site page before publishing it, just to make sure the video displays correctly. You should see a familiar-looking YouTube player, one that starts showing your video the moment you click the Play button.



## When It Rains, It Pours

**A**ctiveRain's community of real estate professionals is comprised of a sharing bunch that divulges advice and transaction misadventures. A recent visit to ActiveRain's ([www.activerain.com](http://www.activerain.com)) "Featured Blog Posts" found these comments:

- **How to Put Your Blog on the First Page of Google!**
- **How I Use My Feed Reader**
- **The Real Estate Application of Twitter**
- **Don't Do Another Short Sale Without Referring to This!**

**It can take up to one hour for YouTube to process your video before uploading.**



## Text Messaging n00bs

If you're a text-messaging newbie (n00b), you could RTFM (read the freaking manual) or visit Webopedia, a site that bills itself as "the only online dictionary and search engine you need for computer and Internet technology definitions."

> Find it at [www.webopedia.com](http://www.webopedia.com).

### ATTENTION!

## HTML Wallflowers!

**I**f the thought of adding HTML code to your Web site has you sitting on the social networking sidelines, visit [www.MyFreeForum.org](http://www.MyFreeForum.org). No HTML required; templates provided.



### WHEN IT PAYS TO TEXT MESSAGE:

**You need to reach your boss immediately, but she's in an important meeting. You could call, but *who knows* how long it'll be until she checks her messages?**

### How To > Add a Q&A Forum to Your Site

**N**ow that you're a whiz at embedding YouTube videos, consider adding another handy tool to your site: a discussion forum, where clients can post questions, discuss property listings, share advice, and perhaps tell the world what a bang-up job you did selling their homes.

It's another easy way to add value to your site, and it won't cost you a cent.

If you're comfortable adding HTML code to your site, head to Webride ([webride.org/tools/website](http://webride.org/tools/website)) to find a discussion forum you can embed, much like you'd embed a YouTube video. For a simpler solution, try [MyFreeForum.org](http://MyFreeForum.org), which lets you create a custom forum that you can link to from your site. You get to choose from hundreds of available styles, add your photo or logo, manage the forum topics, and so on. Once you've set everything up (a process that takes about 15 minutes, maximum), you just add a "Forum" link or button to your site.

### How To > Text Message

**T**o anyone over the age of 25, text messaging probably seems like one of those strange, complicated technologies only teenagers understand. In reality, it's one more great tool in your communications arsenal, right up there with e-mail and instant messaging. In fact, it treads the line between them: Text messaging is e-mail for cell phones.

Well, sort of. Text messaging relies on a technology called SMS: Short Message Service. It's used to relay brief messages (usually no more than 160 characters, equivalent to a couple of average-length sentences) from one cell phone to another.

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Why would you want to bother with such a tool? For starters, text messages arrive almost immediately after being sent. Unless you have a BlackBerry® or similar Smartphone that “pushes” e-mail to you, there’s no better way to get a message delivered instantaneously.

Suppose, for instance, you need to be notified the instant a contract gets signed, but you’re showing a property to clients and don’t want to be interrupted by a phone call. Your office administrator can send you a simple text message: “Contract signed.” Your phone beeps; you flip it open, read the message, and snap it shut again. Maximum efficiency, minimum interruption.

Likewise, what if you need to reach your boss immediately, but you know she’s in an important meeting? You could call, but you’ll probably end up in voice mail—and *who knows* how long it’ll be until she checks her messages? Instead, fire off a quick text message from your phone: “Deal pending, need your approval on 5% rate.” She’ll get the message instantly and respond using whatever method is most convenient.

So, just how do you send and receive

text messages? It’s easier than you might think. Check your phone’s menu for “messaging” or a similar entry, then choose “New.” In the “To” field, enter the recipient’s 10-digit phone number (most phones will also let you look up numbers from the address book). Yep, the text-message equivalent of an e-mail address is nothing more than the phone number. As for actually composing a message, this is where things get a little tricky: You’ll have to use your phone’s keypad. Check the manual if you’re unfamiliar with entering text this way. (Then start shopping for a keyboard-equipped Smartphone, as you’ll quickly discover that composing text on a keypad is maddeningly slow.)

Virtually all cell phones can send and receive text messages, but you’ll want to investigate your carrier’s rates. If you don’t have a data plan, you may have to pay a per-message charge (usually anywhere from 10 to 25 cents). If you do have a data plan, it may have a restriction on how many messages you can send and receive per month before getting charged extra. ♦

*Rick Broida is a freelance writer and a contributor to numerous outlets including Wired Magazine, CNET, Family PC, and Popular Science; he also is the author of How to Do Everything with Your Palm Powered Handheld, 6th Edition.*