

10 Must-Have Technology Tools For REALTORS®

A decade ago, technology had very little to do with a Realtor's® business. Today, however, technology is essential to an agent or broker's success.

How does one go about choosing the right technology tools? Without over-paying for the latest trendy gadget, below is a list of 10 devices that all 21st century real estate professionals should use. Based on feedback from HomeGain agents, these devices will help increase your business' effectiveness, efficiency and competitiveness.

1 Website

A website is one of the most important marketing tools an agent can have. It's not just a way to tell potential homebuyers and sellers who you are and what you offer, but it's an essential lead generation method. How so? If you set up a form on our site, most likely on your home page, the more motivated consumers will provide you with their contact information. And voila, you have a new lead. If you are out of the office like most REALTORS®, you may want to set up an auto-responder, which is an email that replies instantly to the person who filled out the form. Your auto-responder thanks the person for visiting your site, gives your contact info, and tells them a realistic amount of time when they should expect a return call or email from you. See HomeGain's "Top 10 Website Tips" brochure for more tips.

2 Laptop

A laptop is a key tool for any REALTOR®. It allows you to take your office with you anywhere you go. It is a terrific way to give a listing presentation to a seller. You can bring it with you for a flashy PowerPoint presentation, delve into MLS stats right there at the home of the seller, and dial up the MLS either to help price a property or locate a new one. If interested in accessing the internet, a wireless connection is a must.

3 Mobile Phone & Accessories

Consumers prefer to have instant contact, and a mobile phone is the answer to having them reach you at their convenience. Most have a built-in camera, Internet access, text messaging option. The BlackBerry™ or TREO™ and even the latest iPhone™ are more powerful alternatives to the more standard cellular phone. There are real estate applications made for TREO, and other benefits include using the device as a "key" for secure access to listings or providing on-the-fly calculations for mortgages or seller net sheets. Don't forget a Bluetooth headset so you can talk on the phone while driving and keep both hands on the wheel. Some vehicles nowadays are equipped with Bluetooth technology through the stereo system.

4 GPS Navigation System

Although the majority of homebuyers use the Internet to find homes, you still need to do a lot of traveling to walk clients through homes, to transport documents, and to meet people face-to-face. Unless you only sell in one area, which you know like the back of your hand, you will need to navigate your way to unfamiliar areas. With the costs of gas remaining high, and with little time in your busy schedule, a GPS navigation system in your vehicle will get you where you need to be quickly and efficiently.

5 Automated Marketing & Lead Generation Solutions

Some of the larger brokers or top producing agents have people who can monitor new business in the office while they are out. Most agents still need to do both – drumming up new business while attending to active clients. There are companies that provide lead generation and marketing services for agents and brokers for this reason. HomeGain is a good example. The AgentEvaluator program connects agents with homebuyers and sellers in specific ZIP codes. BuyerLink™ increases traffic to your website. Source4Sellers™ features exclusive agents in one area through HomeGain's instant home valuation tool. AIMS™ delivers you a free website and 20 guaranteed buyer leads per month. All of these programs allow you to focus on closing business, while generating new business specific to your market areas to build into your long-term pipeline.

6 Zipforms™ and DocuSign®

If you have gotten away from all the paper and are doing contracts online, Zipforms will enable you to write and email contracts online. Contracts get automatically updated and you can type on it like a writable PDF. It's easy to use, avoids the messy look of a fax. Using DocuSign in conjunction with Zipforms enables you to insert electronic signatures. Combined, it can be a convenience for clients who are more tech savvy and don't have fax machines.

7 Digital Camera

A high resolution, good quality digital camera can be an agent's best friend when it comes to marketing. A digital camera can be used to take photos of the inside and outside of homes, the surrounding area, and anything else that could help sell a home or purchase one. Photos can be placed on your website, posted on listing sites or MLS, used to build a virtual tour, or emailed to clients.

As a HomeGain member, you can post your listings for free at www.homegain.com/homescout/mylistings.

8 Homefeedback.com

Homefeedback.com is a service that efficiently automates feedback from buyer showings on your hard-won listings. It makes it easy for the buyer's agent to communicate their results faster, and helps you respond more quickly to your sellers, keeping communication lines open. Armed with information from this site, you can easily present your seller with showing results on a regular basis while helping you bypass the fear of contacting your seller with little or no good information. When used consistently, it can help you win listings, go for and get price reductions, and keep your listings until you get them sold.

9 Instant Neighborhood Services

Finding the right neighborhood is at the top of the list for most buyers. There are numerous sites that allow you and your clients to search for neighborhood characteristics, schools, demographics, statistics, resources, and more. HomeGain offers an instant home valuation service, and then lists additional neighborhood information in the results. Once you find the site you prefer most, keep it handy so that you can pull it up on your laptop or handheld device to quickly show your clients information about the homes for sale you are showing them.

10 USB Flash Drive

This handy little device is more powerful than it looks. For any large files, images, documents that you need to back up (to ensure that you never lose the file) or transfer to another computer, simply plug the USB drive into your computer and download/upload it. Some files are too large to email, and sometimes you don't want to bring your whole computer with you. Opt for the 1GB versions to ensure that you have plenty of room for all your files. Oh, and you can even hang it on your keychain for convenience.

For more information about REALTOR® marketing solutions, visit www.homegain.com/realestateagent

HomeGain® is a leading provider of online marketing solutions that connect real estate agents and brokers with homebuyers and sellers. HomeGain offers free services to find and compare real estate agents, research home values, and view homes for sale. Real estate agents and brokers use HomeGain's real estate marketing solutions and real estate lead generation tools to connect to consumers, promote their services and grow their business. A subsidiary of Classified Ventures, LLC, HomeGain has more than 300 online partnerships, including MSN, Yahoo! and USATODAY.com. With an average of over five million website visits per month, HomeGain is the second most visited real estate website in the world.