

## Notes from Inman Connect, San Francisco, August 5-7, 2009

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### Preamble

Due to the [lengthy Twitter outage](#) that began on August 6, it was impossible to “twit-report” live, from the Inman Connect conference. As a result, information that would normally have been shared with Twitter members all over the world was cut off.

As an alternative, I decided to e-mail “tweets” to myself (well over 100 of them), & later aggregate them into a comprehensive document that could be shared. Doing this also gave me the opportunity to organize the information a bit better & to add a lot of links to additional information, which would not have been possible with real-time twit-reporting. I have also added all of the recommended books to the [Books](#) area of my Resources page.

Remember that this is just one attendee’s experience of the event. I hope that others will provide similar summaries of what they saw, heard, and found valuable. Of course, you can still access all of the tweets that “made it through,” by searching Twitter for the hashtag [#icsf](#).

Please share this document freely.

### Bloggers’ Connect – August 5, 2009

Bloggers’ Connect (BC) is a half-day workshop that precedes Inman Connect, itself. It costs an extra \$100, but is well worth the investment, if you are interested in getting the most value from your online presence.

Twitter was available during this event, and I did twit-report, at the time. However, for completeness, I decided to incorporate that information into this document, too.

This year, there were two BC tracks – one focusing on social media strategy, the other focusing on technical how-tos. I participated in the strategy track.

**[Blogging by Numbers: How to Measure, Analyze & Optimize Your Social Media Plan](#)**  
**(Gahlord DeWald, President/Janitor, [ThoughtFaucet](#) & Dustin Luther, Social Media Strategy, [4realz Consulting](#); hosted by Jeff Turner, President, [Real Estate Shows](#))**

Follow Gahlord on Twitter: [@gahlord](#); fan Dustin on Facebook: [dustinluther](#); follow Jeff on Twitter: [@ResPres](#)

With Social Media (SM), you typically have less control than with your own web site. Causes issues for some.

Your SM strategy should be focused on using the tools to build your business

Reach – Acquisition – Engagement – Conversion - Satisfaction is the customer business cycle. Each SM tool should help with one or more phases of this cycle.

What audience are you trying to Reach with each SM tool? How are you going to Engage them there?  
Can you Acquire them (lure them to your website)?

Best analytic tool you have is your own brain. [Radian6](#) has good info, but costs money; [GoogleAnalytics](#) tells how many, from where, but not why.

Most useful metrics are Engagement metrics: what people are looking at, on your web site. Tells you what people find interesting. Engagement *is* the new marketing measure.

Facebook (FB) & some other SM tools give you the opportunity to separate personal & business uses, so you don't alienate the one, while addressing the other. [Take note, all those of you who feed your Twitter stream into Facebook.]

Create distinct FB "communities" for your business focus(es).

Choose a "topic" for your FB fan page for longer life (e.g., Vin Diesel – general topic with room to grow, vs "Fast & Furious" - limited focus topic with limited life)

Strategy: FOF Marketing (FOF = Friend of Friend/Follower/Family). It's how your message spreads.

When your FB Friends join your fanpage, like something on it, or make a comment, then all their Friends see the interaction & may act on it.

Value of a community FB fanpage is sharing links & info to what *others* are doing. That leads to more fans & more inbound links, too.

Don't just try to be interesting, be interested in the community. That will communicate itself through your posts.

To identify "sharable content" (i.e., retweetable or linkable posts) know your audience well & find valuable info for them.

Before writing a blog post, spend a little time finding out what others are saying about the topic & link out to them. Increases the depth of your post. GoogleAlerts & Radian6 can help you find other posts relevant to your web page / blog / FB fanpage topic.

[I am reminded of what [@ResPres](#) & [@billlublin](#) say: focus on YEO (you, engaging others), rather than on SEO (search-engine optimization).]

Closing tips: get your whole organization involved with SM; build on the FOF (friends of friends) concept.

**Facebook for Fun & Profit: How to Make the World's Biggest Social Network Your New Farm (Ricardo Bueno, Social Media Consultant, [Ribeezie.com](#) & Craig Donato, Co-founder/CEO, [Oodle](#))**

Follow Ricardo on Twitter: [@ribeezie](#) or fan him on Facebook: [Ricardo-Bueno](#); follow Oodle on Twitter: [@oodleblog](#)

Customize FB Newsfeed » Friends tab » Customize lists. Create lists for Pages, Prospects, etc.

Import your blog feeds to your FB page, so they're automatically updated.

To make FB updates more engaging, add pictures, links, videos. ("3 BR, 2 BA" at 3 AM is not sexy!) Be engaging.

Use [Posterous](#) to add media - including video - from your iPhone or BlackBerry.

Organize in-real-life (IRL) meetups / tweetups with your FB/Twitter friends. Helps everyone connect. No need to promote yourself; people will ask!

FB now has [Marketplace](#), where listings can be published.

FB Marketplace is free, for now. Can be searched by location, for sale, for rent, etc. Supplemental benefit: people can comment, like, etc., just as for your other FB posts.

Comments on FB Marketplace listings generate entries in the FB Feeds of all who participate.

Add a FB Marketplace tab to your profile, and you will get a tab called "My Listings."

FB [Advertising](#) is low-cost & easy to do.

To promote listings on FB, get them into FB (Marketplace), promote them (Advertising), then join the conversation.

Coming in 3 months: a FB app to automatically post your listings.

**Keynote Address: Marketing as Effective Communication – Business Blogging**  
**(Sonia Simone, Senior Editor/Author, [Copyblogger.com](#) & [Remarkable Communication](#))**

Follow Sonia on Twitter: [@soniasimone](#)

What is your branding "hook" that people can remember & grab onto?

Blogging builds relationships / trust / rapport that will lead people to want to do business with you. Also helps resolve underlying objections.

Different set of objections for referring business to you, than for becoming your customer in the first place.

Your blog should be part of your overall marketing system. Not just Leads > Followup.

Your blog content now has to be great, & you have to provide exceptional value, to stand out among the bloggers.

Good blogs are personal, entertaining - reveal your personality.

In your blog, be a friendly *authority* - you know your field & market, & you're approachable / good to have a beer with.

Anytime your readers subscribe to your blog or contact you, give them a treat: good content. Make your posts too good to throw away!

What might you be missing? Effective blogging tactics include

- specialization (well-defined scenario & customer
- offering a "special report" to your target audience
- addressing FRO (frequently raised objections)

- providing regular, high-value content / treats (via e-mail "drip").

Sonia recommends [Aweber.com](http://Aweber.com) for drip e-mail campaigns. (Other good services available, too.)

Aweber gets through Spam filters very well

Use 10-part series, packed with valuable content, to keep recipients reading your messages.

Keep your blog clean, and draw the reader's eye to click where you want them to click (read [The Big Red Fez](#) of [@sethgodin](#)).

### **Closing Business in 140 Characters: How the Pros are Using Twitter to Farm the Real-time Web**

(Nicole Nicolay, Co-founder, [eFfektive Solutions](#) & [MyTechOpinion](#) & Reggie Nicolay, Director of Social Media, [Cyberhomes.com](#) & [MyTechOpinion](#))

Follow Nicole on Twitter: [@nik\\_nik](#); follow Reggie on Twitter: [@Cyberhomes](#).

Twitter is an educational service. People you trust & respect are presorting all the articles/info & letting you know what's valuable.

[Business.twitter](#) is a special site for using Twitter in business.

### **Agent 2.0: Cutting-edge Tactics for the Wired Agent**

(Amanda McMillan, Real Estate Consultant, [Prudential Preferred Properties](#); Eric Stegemann, Strategic Development, [Tribus Real Estate](#); Kevin Tomlinson, REALTOR®, [EWM Realtors](#); & Ian Watt, Luxury Condo REALTOR®, [Ian Watt Personal Real Estate Corporation](#))

Follow Amanda on Twitter: [@HomePartner](#); follow Eric on Twitter: [@EricStegemann](#); follow Kevin on Twitter: [@miamibeach](#); follow Ian on Twitter: [@IanWatt](#).

Amanda & Ian are truly making effective use of online resources & are in the top 1% in their respective markets. Wired!

Ian Watt is a West Vancouver agent who is doing very well, by out-sourcing & using Web 2.0 tools. He was very good. Only panelist with PPT slides - well designed, provocative, informative. Guidelines: List your management/administrative duties/time-wasters. Out-source them! Ian uses a virtual assistant (VA) for all of the managerial tasks - through Google apps. Put the team references, templates, etc. on a Google wiki. Technology & VAs help you focus on your customers.

Watch for Amanda's new [ChicagoHomePartners.com](#) launch September 1. Promises to be a model of an Agent 2.0 website.

## **Inman Connect – August 5-7, 2009**

The main Inman Connect conference was a 2-day event, running from noon on Wednesday through noon on Friday. The overall format was

- General sessions on Wednesday afternoon, followed by Cocktails in the Exhibit Hall
- General sessions on Thursday morning
- Breakout sessions, sponsored initiatives, and innovation tracks on Thursday afternoon
- General sessions on Friday morning.

What you will get, below, is a synopsis of just the general sessions.

I spent all of Thursday afternoon in the Exhibit Hall, so will also provide information about the products & services that I believe offer the best value for REALTORS® (just *my* opinion, of course!).

### **The Gig Economy: How Grassroots Innovation Will Save Us (Bradley Inman, Founder/Publisher, [Inman News](#))**

Follow Brad on Twitter: [@bradinman](#)

#### **Innovation**

Brad welcomed us with a cool video of a young girl who's skilled with a hula hoop. Sharing!

Time to pass the torch to next generation: oodles of the 1700 in attendance were < 40. Oldest attendee was 88; youngest was 16. What a range!

Incredible devices offer chance to create new forms of media - combine high-quality video w/ significant text content.

See idea in progress: integrated media (video & text/"book") will be at <http://www.vook.com> in about a month.

Business trends: success is in high fidelity (to true reality), convenience, & expertise.

Use integrated media to aid in understanding of disclosures/forms? See <http://www.vocabvideos.com> for SAT vocabulary examples.

Put annotated forms & other educational presentations online, to explain them to consumers. Issuu.com can help.

See [Flat World Knowledge](#) for a revolution in textbooks, including allowing professors to edit them.

#### **Market Conditions**

Market is clearing on the low end. Some markets are more affordable. Difference between cost to rent / buy is lower. Pending home sales up.

Historical vacancy rate is 1.5%. Was as high as 2.29%. Coming down: now at 2.1%.

Every decade since Great Depression has seen 12% growth. This decade has seen *no* growth.

Impact of government spending is yet to come. Unemployment levels may not improve for more than a year.

### **Download: Ten Tools & Techniques You Need to Know About (& Ideas for Putting Them to Work)**

**(Brian Boero, Partner, [1000 Watt Consulting](#))**

Connect with Brian on Facebook: [Brian Boero](#); follow Brian's partner Marc on Twitter: [@1000WattMarc](#)

I captured just 8 of the 10 tools Brian highlighted:

1. Quick presentations & multimedia workspace at [drop.io](#) (mostly free).
2. [FeedMingle](#) allows aggregation/transmission of RSS feeds.

3. [Geo Chirp](#) helps you find out who's talking about a topic, near you.
4. [Jimdo](#) web site creation (free! – or affordable, for enhanced services) for products, properties, campaigns.
5. [Mail Chimp](#) does e-mail marketing for you. Suggests sending technology tools info to subscribers.
6. [ScreenToaster](#) is a screen recorder. Good for showing people what you do.
7. [UserTesting.com](#) will do usability testing (one run-through) of your website, for \$29.
8. At [Viralheat](#), you can monitor your brand. Jump on any opportunities.

Download the [complete list](#) from Inman.com.

### **Keynote Address: A Vision for the Future of Media (Nick Bilton, Designer/User-interface Specialits/Technologist/Journalist/Hardware Hacker/Researcher, [The New York Times](#))**

Follow Nick on Twitter: [@nickbilton](#)

Nick showed a lot of new technologies, some of which he built himself. Just illustrating how open-ended are the possibilities before us.

Be alert! Watch for new opportunities to connect with people & act on them. Such opportunities are short-lived!

Look for Nick Bilton's upcoming book, *Bite. Snack. Meal.*, about new, technology-based & storytelling business models. Sign up for notification of the book's publication at [bitesnackmeal.com](#)

### **One-on-One with Craig Newmark (Bradley Inman, Founder/Publisher, [Inman News](#) & Craig Newmark, Customer Service Rep/Founder, [craigslist.org](#))**

Follow Craig on Twitter: [@craignewmark](#); follow Brad on Twitter: [@bradinman](#)

Brad's interview with Craig Newmark is a recurring feature of Inman Connect, and one that I particularly enjoy. Craig is a truly interesting person, living 'way beyond his "baby," [craigslist.org](#). Craig's tweets often feature pictures of the variety of birds that visit his backyard. Craig is a politically and socially responsible individual, who works, in his own way, to facilitate change. Read the summary of the interview on [Inman.com](#).

### **An Unusual Response to Desperate Times**

### **Listings, Leads & Videos: What's the Ideal Online Real Estate Business Model (Louis Cammarosano, General Manager, [HomeGain](#) & Sami Inkinen, Co-founder/COO, [Trulia](#))**

Follow Louis on Twitter: [@HGLiveNation](#); follow Sami on Twitter: [@samiinkinen](#).

Louis Cammarosano, HomeGain: HomeGain model is to focus on customer satisfaction & customer success. Consider themselves a real estate provider service. Not all consumers are alike. Don't base marketing decisions on assumptions, but on data.

Sami Inkinen, Trulia: Trulia tries to be the most customer-centered organization, & to continually innovate. By show of hands, all agents at Inman Connect are syndicating their listings through at least one online service, such as Trulia. Readers of [Trulia Voices](#) blogs/Q&A are twice as loyal as readers of other blogs & "do their homework," according to one very successful REALTOR®.

You'll find more information in the [Inman.com article](#).

### **Download: Eight Ideas for Using Social Media (Jeff Turner, President, [Real Estate Shows](#))**

Follow Jeff on Twitter: [@ResPres](#)

Tools are just that. Context is more important. Look for tools that help you achieve your goals. Use *only* those.

The eight ideas:

- 1 - Look beyond the RE industry for innovation.
- 2 - Move from offline to online
- 3 - Care deeply & publicly (using your SM sites) about something.
- 4 - Share openly & often, to attract variety of readers.
- 5 - Listen with intent to what's out there & craft your own tools.
- 6 - Target someone unreachable & craft a strategy to reach them.
- 7 - Teach a newbie & you'll think more about what you're doing.
- 8 - Meet face-to-face with your community at the organizational level.

Download [Jeff's list](#) from Inman.com.

### **Connect Launch Pad**

Alabama broker [didn't catch his name] showed Air app of an MLS-based home search program given to customers. Buttons for Details, Favorites, Ignore.

[InnerCircle.com](#) is putting word of mouth on the web. "Hear" what people are saying. Login with your FB ID or registered e-mail. Person who asks for info gets answer, link to any business recommended. Provider is notified, too. Business directory. Questions can be posted back to FB account, if desired. Contact [Rob@innercircle.com](mailto:Rob@innercircle.com) for info.

[National BLS](#) (Buying Listing Service). Buyers are anonymous. Register self or thru one agent. Contacted through the system. Offers go to the agent. Member agents can see more buyer detail. Agent profile can include additional info such as lenders & recommendations. Code **BRAD1** gives 3 months free; \$20/month thereafter. Cancel any time.

[NeighborCity.com](#) (just released) is a real estate search site. Includes MLS, FSBO, Foreclosure listings. NeighborCity.com REALTOR® references are based on transaction history & consumer ratings.

[RentWiki.com](#) is the first rental info site that builds in SM concepts. Share reviews. Mapping function. All content is supplied by site users.

**The Real Estate Office of the Future  
(Sherry Chris, President/CEO, Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate)**

For info about @BHGRE\_Sherry 's next generation brokerage ideas, see [Next Generation Brokerage](#).

**Keynote Address: Building a Brand that Matters  
(Alfred Lin, Chairman/COO/CFO, [Zappos.com](#))**

Follow Alfred on Twitter: [@zappos](#)

The 3 Cs: At Zappos, focus is on their Culture. From that comes excellent Customer Service. The 3rd C is Clothing - what Zappos actually sells.

Building a Brand that Matters:

- 1 - Decide to do it. Requires patience!
- 2 - Figure out your values & culture.
- 3 -Commit to transparency. Facilitate communication.
- 4 - Have clear vision. Think bigger; be meaningful.
- 5 - Build relationships (not networking).
- 6 - Build your team: visionary/artist/scientist.
- 7 - Think long term. No "get rich quick" formula.

[Peak](#) by Chip Conley recommended by Alfred Lin, Zappos.com. Applies Maslow's Hierarchy of needs to today - simplified to 3 levels. [Tribal Leadership](#) by Dave Logan & [The Four-Hour Work Week](#) by Timothy Ferriss are also recommended reading.

Contact [Alfred@zappos.com](mailto:Alfred@zappos.com) for copy of presentation & culture book. You may also enjoy reading the [Inman.com summary](#).

**Building a Better Mousetrap: The Agent- vs Consumer-centered Approach  
(Glenn Kelman, CEO/President, [Redfin](#) & Kevin Levent, President/CEO, [Metro Brokers/GMAC Real Estate](#))**

Follow Glenn's company on Twitter: [@Redfin](#); follow Kevin on Twitter: [@kevinlevent](#)

Read about this truly "hot" session on [Inman.com](#)

**Keynote Address  
(Jeremy Stoppelman, Co-founder/CEO, [Yelp](#))**

[Jeremy Stoppelman was very ill, so another Yelp executive took his place. Didn't catch the name.]

Follow Jeremy on Twitter: [@jeremys](#)

Yelp now has about 7 million reviews of real estate professionals, in the various markets it supports. Consumers can add businesses not already on the site (all businesses, not just real estate).

## How TV, the Web, Your Phone & the Social Universe Are Colliding (in a Good Way) (Deanna Brown, President, [Scripps Networks Digital](#))

Connect with Deanna on [LinkedIn](#)

Development: **push** (newspapers to readers) > **pull** (www draws visitors) > **flow** (2-way communication, often started by consumer).

What's working? Be available / exposed on all platforms (including newspapers/webpapers, TV), because their audiences still exist. Traditional *and* innovative channels

Facebook: listings, local trends, community info > expert, engaging consumers in his/her market = "flow"

Instead of spending a lot of money, spend a lot of time.

Twitter: position yourself as an expert: provide valuable info (cited [@BoiseldahoHomes](#) as a good example). [Note: This individual protects her tweets.]

"If I were you ..."

- 1 - Don't be Paris Hilton; it's not about you (or your listings); it's about the info flow.
- 2 - You *have* to embrace social space; people *are* clicking web links.
- 3 - Play on *all* platforms (newspapers, TV, community/outdoor, Internet, mobile).

## Mortgage Reboot: Will Startups or Stalwarts Ensure Safer & Saner Lending Practices? (Robert Cringely, Co-founder, [Home-Account](#) & Carter Murdoch, Marketing & Compliance Director, [Bank of America](#))

Home-Account: launched Spring 2009. Aims to revolutionize the way people get mortgages; their lenders usually win vs big lenders. Change relationship between borrower & lender. Financing is often painful process - people hate it. Instead of going for a 30-year relationship (which won't last; on average, < 3 years), focus on shorter-term issues. Too many transactions fail. Home-Account loans are dramatically less expensive. One saving is loan officer pay (traditionally 30 basis points). Company tells consumer if they fail to qualify & help them qualify in near future. About 15 participating lenders. Approx \$2,200 savings / loan - approx \$170 / month. Typical loan-origination fee is < \$700. Converted analog process (had 600 borrowers) to a digital expert system that is constantly updated. Explanatory videos posted on their site.

Bank of America: "[Clarity Commitment](#)" is 1-page document that explains mortgage form in layman's terms. In a declining-rate environment, most loans don't close because the consumer has found a lower rate. Explanation for limited financing: "liquidity" in the system has been virtually frozen since Oct '08, because "trust" between institutions is gone; this leads to limited lending. Need forensic accounting to determine the true financial status of lender being considered. Internet gives consumers power to find the best rate.

## Download: 10 Ways to Work Smarter & Faster (Matt Brezina, Co-founder, [Xobni](#))

Xobni is Inbox, spelled backwards. Follow Matt on Twitter: [@brezina](#) or [@xobni](#)

Matt provided 5 tools and 5 tips:

- 10 - Tool: [xobni for Outlook](#), to help organize relationships with your contacts.
- 9 - Tool: [AwayFind](#) - get the most important messages sent to you by text; free.
- 8 - Tool: [bit.ly](#) - see when/if people click on shortened links you send via e-mail.
- 7 - Tool: [GoldMail](#)- dead-simple video e-mail; can use in sales / negotiation.
- 6 - Tool: [Dropbox](#)- send large pictures & files free (using links); 2 GB storage free.
- 5 - Tip: understand "makers" vs managers; makers need large segments of time to do their work; batch meetings or schedule meetings around other breaks in maker's day (e.g., lunch).
- 4 - Tip: assign dollar value to your time; out-source / delegate anything that isn't worth your time.
- 3 - Tip: don't spend time on things that don't scale (e.g., AdWords); 10% improvement to big piece of pie is worth more than 50% improvement to small piece.
- 2 - Tip: Tim Ferriss's [4-hour Workweek](#) : only check e-mail 2-3 times/day (especially, if you're a maker).
- 1 - Tip: use social connections (FB, LinkedIn, [Hoovers](#)) to learn more about the people who e-mail you.

### **Exhibit Hall: Interesting Products for REALTORS®**

There are always a lot of exhibitors at Inman Connect. This time, the main Exhibit Hall had more than 3 dozen booths & tables; [Start-up Alley](#) (open just the first afternoon) had about a dozen and a half tables. A fairly wide range of products & services was presented to us, including franchise opportunities, training/consulting, new gadgets, suites of online services, and widgets.

My list includes only those products/services that I personally think offer the greatest value to me, as a REALTOR®. Many are free; the rest are affordable. The list is organized alphabetically & not ranked in any way.

- [Altos Research](#) market reports & widgets (Twitter: [@AltosSalesDude](#) & [@mikesimonsen](#) or Facebook: [Altos-Research](#))
- [CellSigns](#) mobile applications & sign riders
- [ePropertyWatch](#) property fraud alerts (619-995-6282)
- [Giroptic](#) 360° camera for virtual tours (Twitter: [@giroptic](#))
- [HGTV FrontDoor](#) listings (Twitter: [@hgtvfrontdoor](#) or Facebook: [FrontDoor](#))
- [iPromote](#) display advertising (Twitter: [@ipromote](#))
- [Open3DHouse](#) floor plans & interior design (Twitter: [@unitedlane](#))
- [Point2Agent](#) listing syndication (Twitter: [@point2agent](#))
- [RealTAG](#) prospect qualification system (877-245-3237)
- [Reply.com](#) clicks & leads (Twitter: [@ReplyDotCom](#))
- [ScanSnap](#) document scanner (Twitter: [@ScanSnapIT](#) or Facebook: [ScanSnap](#))
- [SchoolFinder](#) educational system ratings (Twitter: [@schoolfinder](#))
- [Übertor](#) real estate web site services (Twitter: [@ubertor](#) or Facebook: [Übertor-Realtor-Websites](#))

- [Women's Real Estate & Lifestyle Advisor](#) designation. Learn more about women and real estate decision-making at [{RE} Think Real Estate](#).

### Epilogue

Thank you for downloading these notes. I sincerely hope that you find the information helpful.

All errors contained within this document are mine. If you spot one, please notify me at [Robin@RTREnterprises.com](mailto:Robin@RTREnterprises.com), and I will correct it.