

Real Estate CyberSpace Society – Supporting International Networking

By Joanne Schenk Paull

Technology can be awesome in its power, overwhelming in its complexity, and revolutionary in its use. Jack Peckham, through his CyberSpace Society, has made technology tools and services available to real estate professionals worldwide.

The first time you click and send a “quick” networking e-mail to 50,000 real estate professionals — without spamming — it gives you a heady feeling. Receiving responses, often in a matter of minutes, can make the experience even more remarkable. This is the power of the Broadcast E-Wizard, just one example of the many tools that the Real Estate CyberSpace Society continually makes available to its members without cost!



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The Society is an organization for real estate professionals who use technology to improve their efficiency and productivity. Over 5,000 real estate professionals in 27 countries have joined the Society since its inception in 1996.

SOCIETY SERVICES

The Society delivers its services to members based on three basic conventions: Knowledge and Support, Networking, and Visibility. For under \$13 per month, the Society provides members with a “Member Tool Kit” that includes a wide array of technological tools and services to support this model.

As an example, one support tool allows members to deliver a personalized monthly e-newsletter called “Real Estate Cyber Tips” to customers in about two minutes. Another member service allows you to access the Society’s Guru Help Line where members can get answers to just about any technology questions or problems directly from the Society’s 60 “Techie Gurus” who cover 40 topics such as Top Producer, Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Word, Excel, Digital Cameras, and List-servers. These services are not just nifty tricks — they save Society members time and money.

Perhaps one of the most talked about services of the Society is its “Real Estate CyberSpace Alert.” To prepare this for Society members, John “Jack” Peckham, the Society’s Executive Di-

rector, regularly conducts and records interviews bi-monthly with 3 real estate experts. A four-page printed summary covering three interviews is prepared; it includes the interviewee’s photo, contact information, and links to all Internet sites and services mentioned. This concise briefing is mailed to members along with an audiotape of the actual interviews. The interview guests are industry leaders who have a combination of technological and real estate expertise. Every 60 days, Society members receive this condensation of real estate technology developments in a document that is understandable and immediately usable.

“I interview people who are really good at using the Internet and technology to make their businesses better, and who have something valuable to share with the real estate professional,” says Jack Peckham, Founder and President of the Society. “We save our members a ton of time while keeping them up-to-date.”

NEW MEMBER KIT

When new Society members join, they receive a packaged “New Member Kit” containing the latest “Real Estate CyberSpace Alert” newsletter and taped interview. The audiotapes keep coming bi-monthly, for a total of 18 interviews annually. Members can listen to the entire catalog of over 100 briefings online and print a handout summary for each briefing complete with photos, contact informa-

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tion and links to services mentioned. In addition to the latest "Alert," the New Member Kit contains the Society's "Networking Wizard" and "Real Estate Web Navigator" — two disks that provide members with easy-to-use, structured programs that save considerable time and add power to their online marketing.

New Society members are often surprised at the wide array of additional tools provided them when they join the Society. Society members also receive a full-featured, personalized real estate Web site and a personalized, online newsletter that can be e-mailed to clients or posted on the member's personal site. And, of course, new members also receive the "keys to the kingdom," their own personal password that gains them access to the features-rich "Members Only" section at the Society's top-ranked Web site: REcyber.com.

RECYBER.COM

Peckham says that one of the most popular sections at REcyber.com is accessible to all Internet users. That area is the "Top 25 E-Tools."

"The section is designed so that people working on the Web can come here for any tool that they would use as a real estate professional," Peckham says. "Many people set this as their home page." A home page is the site that appears when users turn on their Internet browsers.

The tools are right there in one place. Perhaps you want an image of a property from space. Go to REcyber.com; click on Top 25 E-Tools; scroll down to "See Your House from Space." You may be able to access a bird's eye view of your neighborhood or subdivision.

There are other free tools just as simple to use, such as electronic greeting cards with graphics supported by eMaila Card.com. Peckham points out that the tools are centralized, giving users access to practical tools instantly without bouncing all over the internet to locate and get to them.

A visit to REcyber.com pretty much verifies his claim. While there, you can perform a myriad of useful chores quickly and easily. Make a Map, Find Anyone's E-mail Address, Check Out Any Law-

With 40 years in the real estate business and a billion dollars in personal sales under his belt, Real Estate CyberSpace Society Executive Director, **John M. "Jack" Peckham**, knows what works for real estate professionals! He served as Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee of the 800,000 member National Association of Realtors® (NAR) and Chaired several NAR Technology Committees and task forces.

His syndicated column "Real Estate Cyber Tips" appears in several publications, including the New England Real Estate Journal and the Florida Real Estate Journal and at multiple portals online including RealtyTimes.com and IRED.com. He is Past President of the Massachusetts Association of Realtors® and has been honored as its Realtor of the Year.

Jack is the architect of the Society's 5,000,000 hit per month Web site: www.REcyber.com, and the Society's other major assets that include The National Real Estate OnLine Convention and Exposition (April 24-28, 2003) and Real Estate CyberSpace Radio.

His biggest business pleasure is designing Real Estate CyberSpace Society business-building tools and providing concise, easy-to-understand briefings that help Society members do more business in less time! He is proud of the Society's promise to never charge members for any of the new and emerging tools delivered regularly.



yer, and Translate a Message. These are just a few of the Society's "Top 25."

The most common protest that the Society hears from the uninitiated about the organization's 137,000-page site is, surprisingly, its sheer volume of information. However, Peckham reassures new users that the site is not overwhelming. "REcyber.com, like the Society it services, is a giant banquet. When you go past the long table of food, you take what you want and leave what you don't want right now on the table," he says.

SOCIETY CHAPTERS AND SECTIONS

The Society is organized into 110 geographic chapters and 16 specialty sections. The 92 chapters in the United States are arranged by city and state. A significant international presence is reflected in 18 chapters based in countries outside the United States.

The 16 specialty sections include specialties such as residential, commercial, mortgage financing, and hospitality real estate. Members can join chapters and sections at their discretion — at no ad-

ditional cost. Each segment of the organization has its own Web site that contains many of the tools at REcyber.com. Members can be located through the sites in a number of ways — by expertise, location, or name. Chapter members can search for and communicate with fellow members with a click.

Residential professionals network quite naturally with their colleagues, but Peckham has found that communication among experts in other disciplines is also often productive. "The commercial specialists are beginning to realize that the techniques the residential trainers talk about are applicable to the commercial business and vice versa," Peckham says. "As a commercial specialist, I often get great tips when I interview residential practitioners gaining brand new ideas that I am able to adapt."

NATIONAL ONLINE CONVENTION

The Society sponsors the five-day National Real Estate Online Convention and Exposition each year, which attracts tens of thousands of real estate profes-

Profile

sionals. Attendees visit hundreds of online booths and gain valuable insights from a program that includes over 30 nationally recognized speakers and trainers who deliver a wide array of briefings. Attending the convention is free to everyone.

Judy McCutchin, a certified residential specialist with RE/MAX in Dallas, marvels at the concept. "What a stroke of brilliance to dream up a totally online convention complete with the best speakers in the industry and even online 'ebooths,' where from the comfort of your own home, you can check out the latest products available and listen and learn," McCutchin says. "The convention was such a smashing success that the prediction is there will be over sixty thousand attendees at the April 2003 convention. Now that's a real wow!"

ALL INCLUSIVE MEMBER FEE

"Members pay \$149 per year to join the Society and get quite a bang for their bucks. A full 12 months of all the Society tools and services are delivered to members for this modest fee," Peckham says. "Members get the advantage of bulk buying. If they went out and separately bought all of the services the Society includes in the nominal membership fee,

it would cost them thousands of dollars a year. We are able to keep the cost low because of the other sources of income from the Convention booths, sponsorships, and other alliances. And on top of that we give members a 100% money back guarantee! Try to get that from any other real estate organization!"

McCutchin agrees. "The benefits to the members are enormous," she says. "You can listen to Real Estate Cyberspace Radio to hear featured speakers, receive a powerful monthly tape and newsletter series, earn the very well respected RECS designation, and much more! The Society is dedicated to keeping its members abreast of the latest in technology and helping them profit by doing business online."

McCutchin uses technology extensively in her real estate business, last year crediting 45% of her sales — \$15 million — to sales initiated by Internet contact. "I can certainly attest to increased sales from my Society membership," McCutchin says.

PECKHAM'S CREDENTIALS

Peckham has superb credentials to lead the Society. He applied computer technology to sell real estate way back

Top Ten Society Member Services

- Bi-Monthly Briefing Newsletter (With audio tape)
- Powerful Personal Web site (With free hosting fees)
- E-Guru Tech Help Line
- Personalized Customer Newsletter
- BlackBook CyberDisk
- DealMaking Wizard Disk
- Member Networking Listservers
- 110 Chapter International Networking
- Powerful E-Broadcast Wizard (Reach 50,000 fellow professionals instantly)
- Real Estate CyberSpace Radio (90 briefings online 24/7)

in 1963. At that time, he used a behemoth, droning IBM keypunch machine and sorter to match up buyers and sellers for the sales agents at his company, Data Realty Corporation. Along the way, he served as president of the Massachusetts Association of Realtors®, was honored as its Realtor of the Year, and chaired the 800,000-member National Association of Realtors' Strategic Planning Committee.

These days, when not directing the affairs of the Society, he spends ten percent of his time using the Society tools to sell property (lots of it). When he spots or develops new tools or strategies that help him sell, network or build visibility more effectively, he tests them and then passes them along to Society members.

Peckham says that many real estate professionals get overwhelmed keeping up with the sheer volume of change from new technologies, which holds them back from implementing tools that would help them run their real estate business much more efficiently and profitably. "The biggest problem real estate professionals face today is that they can't find the time to keep up with all of the new and changing tools and innovations," he



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comments. “The Society’s most important function is to deliver information in a very usable form so that our members can adapt easily and effectively.”

MEMBERS THRIVE

Mal Duane is president of MalDuane.Com Real Estate in Framingham, Massachusetts. Duane developed and implemented a system of visual tours she promotes by e-mail. This strategy helped her firm sell 104 properties totaling \$23.7 million in 2001. She attributes much of her technological expertise to the Society.

“What I’ve learned through the Society is the importance of staying right up-to-date on Internet and e-mail marketing techniques,” Duane says. “About seventy to eighty percent of our buyers are going to the Internet first to preview or screen properties — even more than to the newspaper. My Society membership gives me access to experts who regularly give me information that has been invaluable.”

E-MAIL TOPS THE TOOL LIST

Peckham and the Society continue to evaluate new ideas and systems while helping members use existing tools to boost their business. When asked what is the most powerful tool available to real estate professionals today, Peckham replies emphatically, “E-mail software easily has the most potential to boost real estate productivity. Unfortunately, up to this time, the majority of agents use their e-mail software only to keep track of addresses and to send, receive and file messages. That uses about 5% of the power of the software they own. They miss the most powerful features that many use to drive traffic to their sites and then, more importantly, convert that traffic into buyers. We show them how to do that.”

As an example, he notes that a real estate agent can easily send a quick e-mail to a customer at times when it would be inappropriate or inconvenient to call on the phone. In the same situation, printing and sending a letter by postal mail can seem too formal and certainly be time-consuming. Peckham says that the most important aspect of professional life that technology can change is time.

COMPETING IN CYBERSPACE

The Society also helps members show owners how their online marketing techniques stand out above the competition. “If you have been beaten out by a Society member who nailed down a listing, you need to understand that just saying ‘I’ll put your property on the Internet’ doesn’t impress most property owners anymore. We give Society members a highly competitive edge — not only in understanding and using technology, but also in interpreting its power to customers and potential customers ... all for less than \$13 per month,” Peckham says.

Peckham does not worry that technology is taking the personal touch out of sales. He says that nothing could be further from the truth. “Technology allows real estate professionals to meet more people who are better qualified to buy or sell properties,” Peckham emphasizes.

“It allows us to initiate even more contacts with whom we can more easily and effectively maintain and develop strong and profitable relationships.”

“I spend ten percent of my time selling real estate. In that ten percent of time, I sell more property alone than my company did when I had fifteen salespeople,” Peckham says. “That’s all because of technology. It allows me more time to do the things I want to do, like developing new tools and services for Society members — and being with my grandchildren!”

— Joanne Schenk Paull

More information about membership in the Real Estate CyberSpace Society can be found at www.REcyber.com. Society headquarters are at 189 Wells Avenue, Newton, MA 02459-3316. Phone: 888-344-0027.

Tools Of The Trade



(Left)

The Real Estate DealMaking Wizard and the Real Estate CyberSpace BlackBook are high on the list of Society members’ favorite tools.

(Below)

With 18 briefings a year on how to leverage sales effectiveness from the

industry’s top trainers, the Society’s “Real Estate CyberSpace Alert” is delivered to members every 60 days in newsletter summary form accompanied by a 90-minute audio tape of three complete interviews.

