

## Start Marketing With Your Cell Phone

By Matthew Ferrara

Is your cell phone more like “Watson, come here!” or “Scotty, beam me up”? By now, you’ve probably mastered the basics, like dialing and voice mail. Great, so you’re using 21<sup>st</sup> century technology just as it was used, say, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century... Oh, okay, so you’ve also learned how to store names in the address book; and you’ve found how to snap cutesy photos with the built in camera. But what about your phone’s email address, SMS features, photo distribution functions, instant messaging, voice dialing and Bluetooth web functions? Oh, sorry; betcha didn’t know about all of that!

If all you’re doing on your cell phone is ruining people’s restaurant experiences then it’s likely you’re really not getting your money’s worth – or your marketing potential – from your cell phone. Considering that most cell phones aren’t cheap (if you have the \$29 phone that came with the \$30 rebate then just stop reading this article now...) it’s about time you got more than a fancy earache out of the investment. So, take out your phone, flex those fingers and get ready to start astounding customers with your cellular marketing system.

And that’s exactly what you need to think of your cell phone as: *a cellular marketing tool* that makes it possible to *send marketing messages* using features other than your voice. Let’s start at the bottom and work our way up:

1. **Get the MESSAGE out.** As a marketing tool, your cell phone’s hidden secret is its ability to send text messages to *groups* of people (yes, remain calm) with just a few clicks. Say you wanted to alert five of your favorite buyers that you just listed a hot new property; or seven other sales associates that an existing listing lowered its price. Leaving five or seven voice mail messages would be, well, tedious at best. But sending out a quick text message, *to the group*, is a snap once you master your cell phone’s *address book*. Yes, that’s right – *the address book*. You might already know how to send a message to an individual: type a message, type their phone number and press send. But to send the message to a group, they have to be in the address book already so you can simultaneously “check-mark” multiple entries. Write a quick message, like “*Hot New Listing: 123 Main St, \$599,900 3br, 2 ba, lg fm rm; Reply for info*” and then click down the list in your address book. Seconds later, the text message appears on the cell phone of *all of the recipients*– instantly communicating your marketing message – without voice mail. And since you didn’t have to leave multiple voice messages, you’re saving on minutes, too! Each recipient can reply and then, well, I suppose you could call them and talk about the opportunity...but you get the point.
2. **Smile for the Birdie!** Now, let’s take that same message and spice it up; rather than just sending some text, why not distribute multiple photos with it. No, not just a single photo – that’s easy and well, passé nowadays. I mean sending an entire *slide show of photos* from your cell phone to another cell phone (or, even a plain old email address, if you must). First, snap a bunch of photos. Second, make

sure you have the phone number or email address in your address book (you can store both for each contact). This time, create a new “multi media” or “photo album” message (it will vary slightly with each phone’s menu, but it’s in there). Write a short text description of the property – keep it short, because the text will be secondary to the cool photos. Next, fill out the *To:* line by selecting one or more people in your address book. Fill in a short “*Subject*” line, like “Great new listing!” and then (here’s the best part), click on the *Attachments* line. On most phones, you can choose to add a *picture, sound file or video* (if your phone can take videos). Choose *picture* and you’ll be presented with your photo album. Select a photo *and repeat the attachment process to add another photo, then another, then another....* When you’re ready, just click *send*. Within seconds, your recipients are going to get the message – well, *get the picture*, is more like it – with nothing more than just their cell phones.

- 3. How R U 2Day?** Find any teenager and ask them how they communicate using the web. It’s likely they’re going to not say “email” and definitely say “instant messaging”. What may be more surprising is that they’ll also say “with my cell phone” and not “with my computer”. If you want to improve your marketing, start considering how future generations of first-time home buyers like to “see” your message: it’s not in print, it’s more on the web, and it’s not just using a computer any more. So the next skill you need to build in your marketing methods is to master instant messaging (IM), especially using your cell phone. While IM with a computer is pretty straight forward, IM on your phone poses the challenge of more difficult “typing”. Using the number keys is not the simplest or fastest ways to interact using text in real time; what you need to master is the “predictive” text and “saved phrases” functions so you can make instant replies to instant messages. These features vary by phone, but in general, here’s how they work: Predictive text enables your phone to “guess” at the word you are trying to type from the first few letters you enter. Using an on-board library, the phone picks the most common word and then inserts it automatically, so you don’t have to peck all of the letters. Make sure this feature is activated on your phone, so replies don’t require excessive typing. Next, locate your phone’s “saved phrases” or “instant notes” function and take a few minutes to save some commonly needed responses. Consider simple phrases like “Just listed new home – reply or call for info” or “Open House, today at 2pm, Address:” and leave the ending blank so you can fill it in as needed. By creating saved phrases, you can quickly distribute common marketing messages without constantly retyping – and you can send them to both other cell phones and IM accounts online: If your client is sitting at their computer, you can chat from your phone to their desk in real time, any time.
- 4. Blast Messages with Bluetooth.** Inside modern cell phones is an internet gateway just waiting to talk to your handheld computer. Just as Bluetooth connects your call to your wireless earpiece, it likewise connects your PDA to the web using your cellular network. And once online, your PDA’s more advanced marketing features – like full-powered Outlook messaging, complete with attachments – make it possible to market anywhere you can get a cell signal. Bluetooth connections to

the web unlock the full potential of your PDA: it's not just for your task list and contact book, but for sending listings, photos, videos, and PDF marketing pieces from the road, coffee shop or beach chair. By using the cellular network, you no longer have to worry about finding an internet "hot spot" to get online. And while using your PDA and cell phone to conduct web marketing will consume some of your monthly minutes, the convenience and speed-to-market factors will certainly offset the cost. To connect your PDA and cell phone, you have to "pair" them using your phone's *Find Me* feature. In most cases, you turn on *Find Me*, which makes the phone "discoverable" by your PDA; they then "pair up" as a team. You will also have to create a "connection" in your PDA to your internet service provider's *dial up* access. Even if you have high speed internet at home, your ISP should also provide a dial-up access for when you're on the road; you might not have been using it lately because your high-speed connection was always "on" but now that you can connect thru your cell phone, it's time to get that number again and put it in your PDA. Once you create the connection, jumping online is as easy as tapping the icon on your PDA and waiting a few seconds for your cell phone to make the connection. Then, check, send and market with email wherever you are.

For mobile professionals, the challenge of modern marketing is speed and flexibility to communicate your message in real time, to new points of contact. In the past, postcards and postage dominated the medium of promoting properties. Today, those methods pale in comparison to getting text, photos and video directly to prospects – by cell phone, instant messaging and multimedia email – using the hidden features of a tool you already have: your modern cell phone.