# Communications - Creative Media MassHousing's Social Media Strategy

Not long ago, a housing finance agency's communications strategy could be quite successful using press releases, op-eds and the occasional public service announcement, along with a good website. Times have changed. Today, there are numerous channels for disseminating information. Tech-savvy consumers and business partners, armed with mobile devices, expect to be able to connect in a variety of ways, and they are growing accustomed to receiving frequent and timely information directly from the source, not filtered through the media.

MassHousing has fully-embraced "social media" to spread the word about affordable housing opportunities and the results have been encouraging. But a successful social media strategy involves far more than a Facebook or Twitter account with the occasional post or tweet. To get results, social media channels must receive consistent branding, coordinated messaging and frequent and useful updates. MassHousing is using these tools in concert to better reach its many customers and constituencies.

#### **Our Social Media Channels**

Though each social media channel must be used differently based on tools and audience, each plays an important role in MassHousing's larger online communications strategy.

#### MassHousing Blog - http://masshousing.typepad.com

Launched in July 2007, the MassHousing Blog features relatively short, pithy and occasionally humorous articles and essays on all things affordable housing. Blog posts are primarily authored by Corporate Communications staff and occasionally by senior management, and target housing industry professionals. There have been more than 20,600 lifetime visits to the MassHousing blog, and an average week now sees about 160 visitors.

#### Twitter - twitter.com/masshousing

MassHousing launched a Twitter feed in January 2009. Along with news and announcements about the Agency's products and programs, housing news and related resources are posted for followers, all in concise, catchy messages of 140 characters or less. The Agency's Twitter feed currently boasts 950 followers, representing government and nonprofit organizations, developers, property managers, media and individuals interested in affordable homeownership and rental housing.

#### Facebook facebook.com/masshousing facebook.com/MassachusettsFirstTimeHomebuyers

MassHousing maintains two English-language pages on Facebook. The corporate page (launched April 2009 | 263 Likes) is used to communicate Agency news and events to an audience comprised mostly of consumers. The First-Time Homebuyers page (launched March 2011 | 27 Likes) is used to inform prospective homebuyers of programs, news and events that may be of interest and to encourage an open dialogue where buyers can share their experiences and ask questions of their peers.

### LinkedIn - www.linkedin.com/company/masshousing

MassHousing began utilizing the networking site LinkedIn as a communications tool in the summer of 2011, but 354 followers have already been amassed. The messaging here is for an audience of housing and mortgage professionals, and it is used to position MassHousing as a thought-leader in affordable housing. In addition to the company page, MassHousing hosts a private group (33 members) for lenders who originate MassHousing mortgages.

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#### YouTube - youtube.com/masshousingvideo

The MassHousing YouTube channel hosts videos of all sorts, from groundbreakings and ribbon-cuttings to footage from television programs and conferences to interviews with MassHousing partners and customers. The 31 videos that have been posted to YouTube, most of which have been produced internally, have been viewed 2,626 times.

#### Flickr - flickr.com/masshousing

MassHousing uses Flickr to build engaging photo storybooks ("sets" in Flickr-speak) that combine narrative with images from Agency events, ribbon-cuttings and groundbreakings. MassHousing has created 21 photo sets on Flickr, which have been viewed 1,472 times.

#### **How It All Works**

MassHousing uses its blog, YouTube and Flickr to create text, video and photo content that is distributed on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Facebook can also serve as an authoring tool for photo slideshows, as well as discussions, polls and other content.

#### **Branding and Consistency**

Though each social media channel is independent, the Agency has made them cohesive through consistent visual branding and coordinated messaging. All of the social media channels feature a unique red and white "MH" icon, and the background images that appear on the various social media sites share a similar look and feel. In addition each new content item that is created is distributed on multiple venues, each in concert with the others.

#### **Driving Traffic**

MassHousing has made a strong commitment to social media, and is increasing its reach online through consistent, coordinated effort. The Agency's internal and external websites now feature "chiclets" that lead to social media channels. The monthly newsletter links to blog posts, videos and slideshows. Even Agency email signatures have links to the social media channels. Perhaps most importantly, regular entries are made on each social media channel that go beyond self-promotion and are truly useful to the particular audience.

#### **Case Studies**

#### Future of Home Ownership in Massachusetts Symposium

In October 2011, MassHousing brought together representatives from mortgage lenders, real estate brokers, government and academia to discuss the state of the Commonwealth's housing market and how best to move it forward. The Agency's social media efforts played a major role before, during and after the event.

In advance of the event, MassHousing posted registration links and promotions on its blog and LinkedIn, and sent email campaigns to Home Ownership partners. During the event, staff live-tweeted, using a hash tag (#FHOMA) which allowed people to follow the conversation. Videos of the sessions were later posted to YouTube, photos were placed on Facebook, and the event was summarized on the Agency's blog.

#### Old Colony Redevelopment

MassHousing provided more than \$28 million to help redevelop the Old Colony Apartments in South Boston. It was a large commitment by the Agency, and a high-profile project. In November 2011,

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Corporate Communications staff posted to YouTube a video of progress at the community; the video was distributed via the Agency's websites, blog, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. In March 2012, a second video prepared and posted from the ribbon-cutting event was posted to YouTube, and text and photos were posted on Facebook. This content was distributed through concise tweets and brief write-ups on LinkedIn and Facebook.

#### **Innovative**

In developing and implementing a broad, cohesive social media communications strategy, MassHousing is following the example major consumer brands and is taking the lead among HFAs.

#### Replicable

All of the sites in MassHousing's social media portfolio are available to other HFAs. There is no cost to use any of these sites at a basic level. In addition, the sites require no technical knowledge to set up, and can be maintained by internal staff.

#### **Reach Targeted Audiences**

Social media allows MassHousing to tailor its messaging and repurpose the content for each specific customer or business partner. For instance, the Agency can speak to professional partners on LinkedIn and to consumers on Facebook. A review of followers on LinkedIn and Twitter shows representatives from property management companies, developers, government agencies, nonprofits, real estate brokers and lenders. Nearly 300 consumers "like" the Agency's two English-language Facebook pages.

#### **Achieve Measurable Results**

Each social media channel offers tools to analyze performance. Staff have written 134 posts to the blog, which have generated 20,663 page views. There are 932 followers on Twitter, and 354 on LinkedIn; 290 individuals like the English-language Facebook pages. The 31 videos which have been posted to YouTube have been viewed 2,626 times. The 21 photo story sets on Flickr have been seen 1,472 times.

#### **Benefits that Outweigh Costs**

There are few direct dollar costs associated with social media. Aside from the \$149 annual fee the Agency pays for its blog (an optional expense that allows for more design customization), all of the social media channels are free. Corporate Communications staff members are the main authors and administrators of the sites. Though the time commitment varies, staff spends an average of five hours each week updating the social media channels.

#### **Effective Use of Resources**

The audiences of MassHousing's social media channels have all chosen to interact with the Agency by following, liking or subscribing to the various channels. The opportunity to speak to one's target audience in a venue where they are requesting those messages is unique and certainly deserving of staff resources.

#### **Achieve Strategic Objectives**

MassHousing's use of social media helps reach out to potential customers and business partners, and to strengthen relationships with existing ones. Because staff knows to whom they are speaking, they can better craft and target their message. And, because they are free and easy-to-use, social media allows MassHousing to broadcast more information than ever before.

Blog (http://masshousing.typepad.com)



Twitter: www.twitter.com/masshousing



Facebook (Corporate): <a href="https://www.facebook.com/masshousing">www.facebook.com/masshousing</a>



Facebook (First-Time Homebuyers): www.facebook.com/massachusettsfirsttimehomebuyers \_ 6 X <u>■</u> 🔒 😝 🗙 💽 (ing (a) | https://www.facebook.com/MassachusettsFirstTimeHomebuyers ρ. Ele Edit Yew Favorites Tools Help X McAfee -🐧 • 🖸 • 📑 🖶 • Bage • Safety • Tgols • 😥 💥 🚳 Favorites Massachusetts First-Time Homebuyers facebook MH Massachusetts First-Time Ho... | Home | + Search for people, places and things + Create A Page **Admin Panel** Edit Page ▼ Build Audience ▼ Help ▼ Show Now May Massachusetts First-Time Homebuyers 0 -A place for people who want to buy a home in MA to learn about the process and meet others who are in the came situation. Also for people who have recently bought: a first home in Massachusetts and who can share their experiences. Put Your Ad Here Photos Litera Events Hassachusetts First-Time Homehoyers Status Thoto / Video Event, Hilestone + Lkes A place for people who What's on your mind? Hilltown Community Development Corporation (HCDC) MA to learn about the process and meet शामध्यभेश/व्यक्तमान्त्र MH Hassachusetts First-Time Homebuyers shored a lek.
23 hours ago: 48 x5 Like - Massachusetts Community Teamwork, Inc. First-Time Honebuyers Res ths.

Pro-Home, Inc.

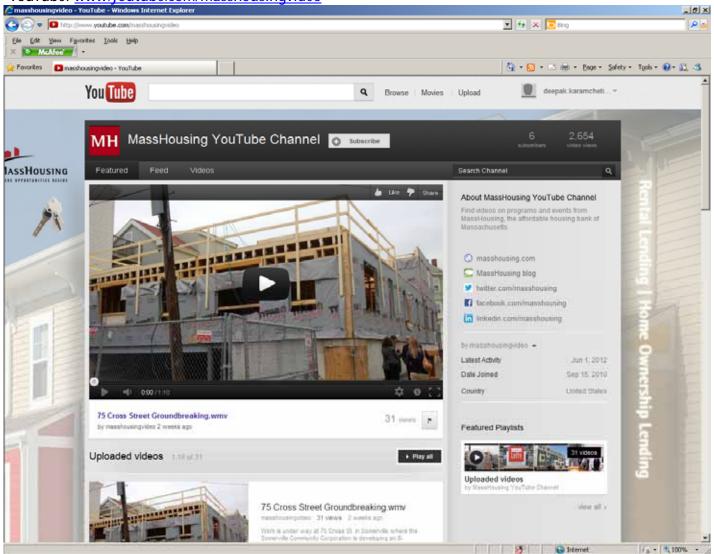
MassHousing's Torn Gleason provided insight and information for first-time homebuyers, June 19 on The Emily Rooney Show. Listen

Advertise Page

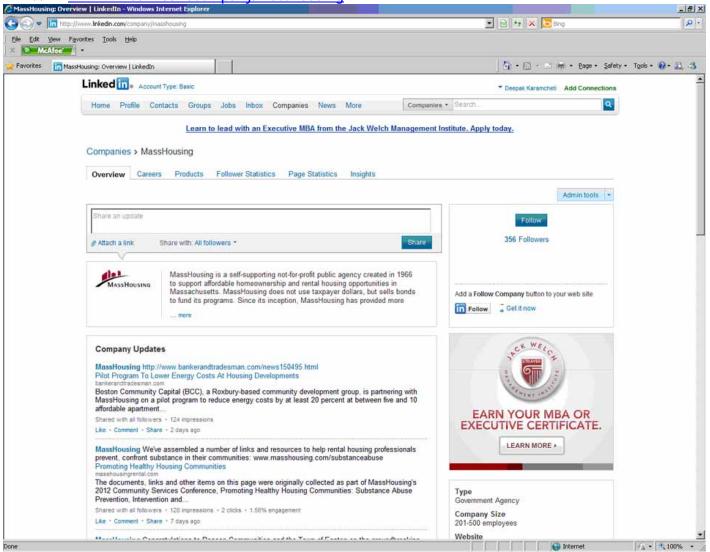
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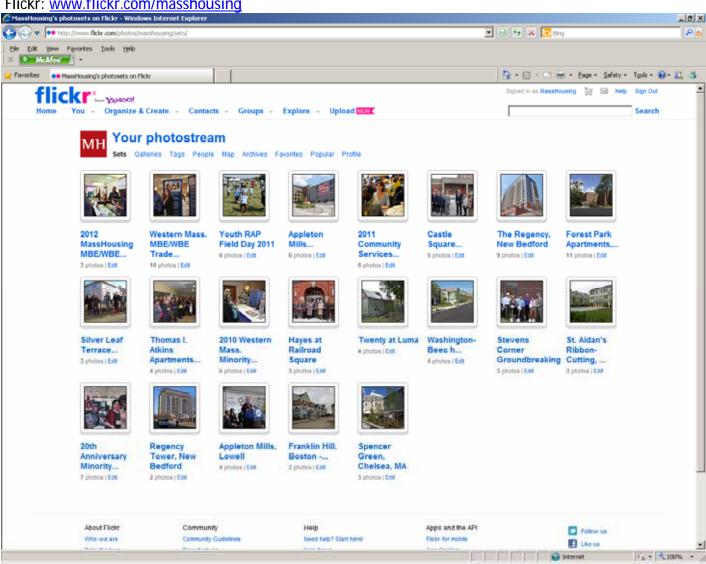
YouTube: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/masshousingvideo">www.youtube.com/masshousingvideo</a>



LinkedIn: <a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/masshousing">www.linkedin.com/company/masshousing</a>



Flickr: www.flickr.com/masshousing



# Case Study: The Future of Homeownership in Mass. Symposium

Blog post prior to Symposium



Tweets from before and during the Symposium

[Parenthinana (Indiahamana)] and Twitter a Windows Internet Explaner

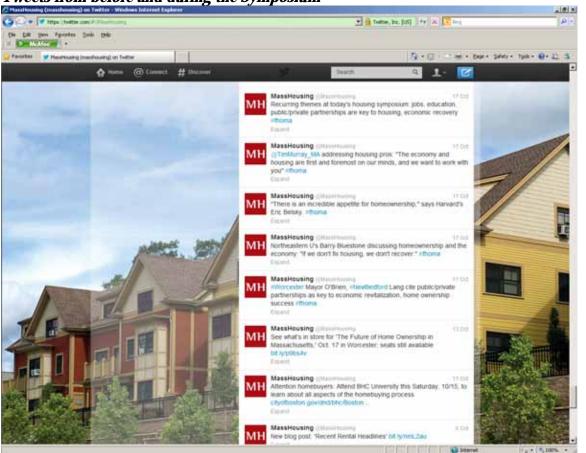
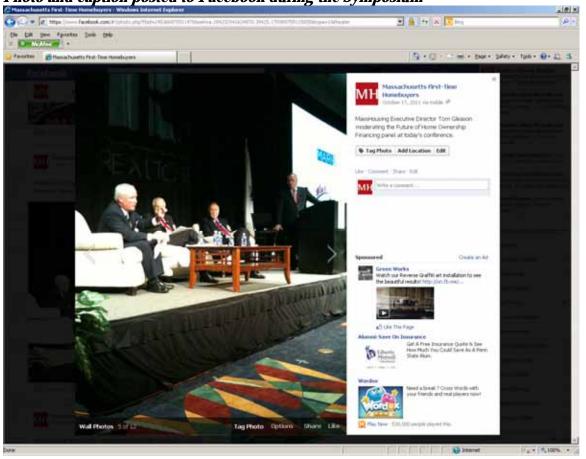
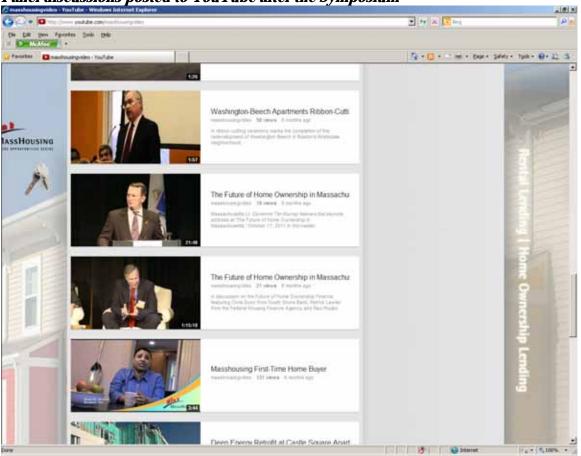


Photo and caption posted to Facebook during the Symposium



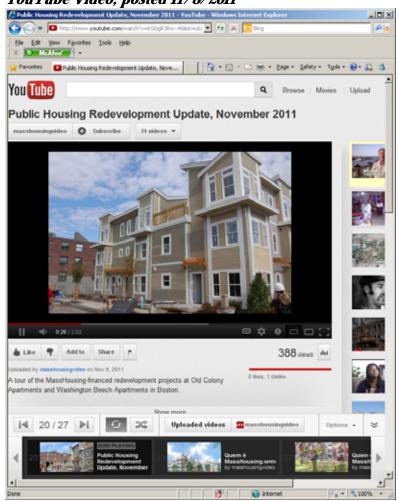
Panel discussions posted to YouTube after the Symposium

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# Case Study: Old Colony Redevelopment *YouTube Video, posted 11/8/2011*

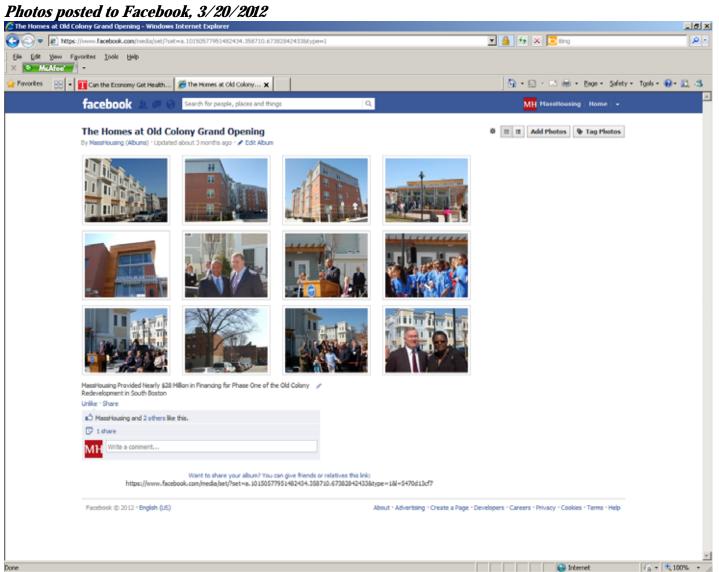


#### Link from Twitter

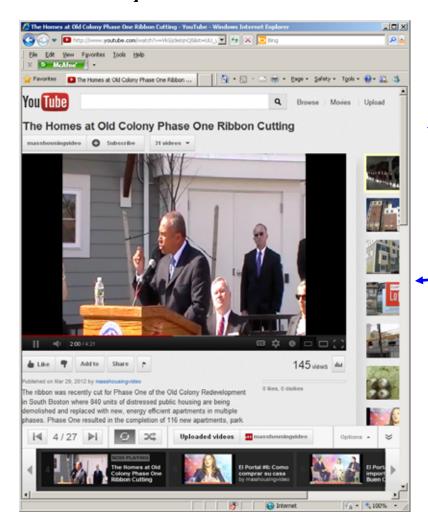


## Link from Facebook





# YouTube Video, posted 3/29/2012



#### Link from Twitter



#### Link from Facebook

