

5 Tech Insights from a Power Panel

by Geoff Lewis

One thing I've learned throughout my real estate career is that when experts and visionaries get together to talk about the industry, it's smart to listen to them carefully.

That was certainly the case in August, when RE/MAX invited four of the industry's premier thought leaders to discuss what they saw in the present and on the horizon. We called it the "Power Panel," and it was the sort of dynamic exchange that keeps an audience informed, intrigued and energized about the future.

The participants were John Featherston, founder, president and CEO of RISMedia; Brad Inman, publisher and owner of Inman News; Dave Liniger, CEO, chairman and co-founder of RE/MAX; and Steve Murray, president and co-founder of REAL Trends. It was the first time the four had ever been on stage together.

Here are five takeaways:

1 Despite the advances in technology, **real estate professionals—especially serious, full-time practitioners—are as relevant as ever.** Real estate transactions are complicated,

the stakes are exceedingly high and automation has in no way decreased the value of a skilled, committed agent. And it's not just the industry that feels that way. Featherston noted that 87 percent of all home sellers still rely on a human professional to help them through the process.

2 That said, **clients expect their agents to use the advantages provided by technology.** Inman related a story about an agent who was ethical, caring and committed, but lacked "the basics" of today's tech advancements. Specifically, he noted that she didn't use DocuSign, and he called digital signatures an essential part of the modern process. Clients are demanding that agents embrace technology that saves them time and makes things easier.

3 **Business evolution takes place to meet challenges "seen and**

unseen," Murray noted. For those who take advantage, these shifts generally create a competitive edge. Building on that idea, Featherston said the best agents are in the habit of asking, "Am I doing everything I can to serve the consumer?" "Am I adopting the right technologies and constantly improving my value proposition?"

4 **In some respects, though, agents don't adopt technology; technology adopts them.** That's why everybody has a smartphone—they've become as basic and essential as clothing. When a new innovation appears on the scene, Inman said, fight the urge to get defensive and perceive it as an attack on your role in the transaction. Instead, use it to your advantage. Be open, flexible and agile. After all, most successful careers—in any field—involve multiple changes and approaches over time. For the most part, technology is an opportunity, not a threat. So, identify the best innovators and partner with them.

5 **Younger agents generally don't sit and complain about change. They take action—and older agents have to keep up.** Featherston encouraged the brokers in attendance to set a winning example, to be the leader, to be aware of what's available, and to educate their agents on the services that add efficiency and differentiation: "Look for what works, perfect it and stay aware." He said the bottom line, as it's always been, is to recruit the best agents possible and arm them with the tools they need.

That, whether we're in year 1, year 20 or year 40 of the latest tech revolution, might be the most enduring insight of all. **RE**



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