

product but it's affecting our clients. Because of that, we've made our product more flexible. There's a greater need for property promotion rather than personal promotion.

The market is tough so we've been helping our clients work through the market. We work with them individually and make adjustments to make sure that we're not a burden; we do what we can to help them out. Our clients are our partners.

Some have needed to adjust the payment structure of contracts, others are receiving services that might not have been in the original contract but it's something they need. Sometimes it's surprising to them what we can do and how we can help them have a more productive budget. We've always been very conservative, but we've tightened our belts as well.

Jay Gaskill, President
Cyberhomes LLC

REAL Trends: How is the market for your services changing?

Gaskill: The overall economy is depressed and that affects the real estate industry, but we're in it for the long haul. Our core lines of business are b-to-b tech solutions for brokers, MLSs and agents. To a degree, we're picking up some business as people outsource. Secondly, we've spent a lot of time in the last two to three years rebuilding our reputation with customers. If we say we do it, we do it. We may not be cheapest but we do what we stay, we know our costs and we know how we can service the customer.

We're very clear to say what's in our product offering and if enough people need something, we'll build it. It's common-sense business but it doesn't appear those disciplines exist in software providers in the past.

REAL Trends: What are you doing to thrive in the new market?

Gaskill: Clearly, we spent a lot of time making changes to have a higher quality product. We did a huge analysis of products that didn't meet our criteria and dropped some. We narrowed our focus to the things we do well. We put a lot of cost controls in place so we can be profitable.

As long as I'm profitable, I'm sustainable and I can offer long-term solutions. We're really controlling costs and making difficult changes to remain profitable. We're trying to build long-term relationships with customers who speak our language.

REAL Trends: What are some trends in the industry that affect your offerings?

Gaskill: We're examining our offerings every day. We're always looking to the future and we're really holding ourselves to a high level of excellence. We're asking our customers, "What do you need?" Our clients are scrutinizing their offerings and it's not about what they want, it's about what they need and we're trying to fulfill their needs.

We're sticking with what we do well and spending less time on things that might be too forward looking. We can't afford to build things today that people might not buy for the next five years. Times change quickly.

It's pretty clear—consumers must have a clear, understandable idea why this is a great product and the cost must be appropriate. Work hard and be smart—just because I did it yesterday doesn't mean I should do it tomorrow.

Consider Online Video

Some 32 percent of all Internet traffic is video, according to a report by Cisco Systems. And, with 84 percent of all home-buyers starting their home search on the Internet, according to the National Association of Realtors®, it seems natural that brokers would move toward more video on their sites.

However, says Stephen Schweickart, co-founder of Realty Video USA, the problem is that on most broker sites, "video is non-existent. Most companies aren't doing any. Some agents have videos and offer virtual tours but many don't have any content that is video based."

We spoke with Schweickart about some trends he's seeing:

"We're seeing a trend toward mobile video—video on cell

phones," says Schweickart. "We created a product that's a mobile listing service. It works the same as a text message but delivers streaming video when you're sitting in front of a property and enter the code. Brokers are looking to differentiate themselves. Video is a great way to do it. Video keeps people on your site a lot longer. Their interest level is peaked and it can generate more leads. It also helps with recruiting."

Schweickart says, "We're also seeing a trend toward video blogs. In addition to posts on a blog, agents and brokers need to incorporate video and attract a larger audience." Realty Video USA recently introduced RealtyAcademy.com, free professionally produced videos featuring many of the real estate industry's top coaches, speakers, vendors and authors.

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