

Getting The Town Talking

When most real estate publicists describe a building, they'll tell you how high it is: "That new development? It's forty stories tall." But when Kelly Kreth, founder of Kreth Communications, describes a building, she'll tell you the number of real-life stories that are in it. "I'm more concerned with the human aspect of stories than merely with the statistics," she says. "It's been a tremendously successful approach. My clients want me because I'm very personality driven."

One such client is PropertyShark.com, a real estate data provider that had been around for three years - and had three press mentions. Since hiring Kreth six months ago they've now gotten more than fifty mentions in prestigious outlets such as The New York Times, Forbes, and BusinessWeek.com.

As an example of Kreth's creative pitching, she got the PropertyShark.com executives to work up a demographic map of rich single men in Manhattan. The "secret map" that highlights where all the great bachelors are was the subject of a local TV piece. "My clients got PR in a market they would never get," says Kreth. "There are tons of single women who are looking to buy property, and they'll go to PropertyShark.com to run comps."

Of course, the work isn't all flash. Kreth spent 14 years in marketing communications and event management to learn how to make story-telling look easy. She worked for clients as diverse as a non-profit trade association, Hilton Hotels, and British Telecommunications before finding that real estate would be her niche.

The epiphany came at Dwelling Quest, a New York City real estate brokerage where she was doing marketing work. "I got the firm on the cover of The New York Times real estate section," says Kreth. "And then I started doing more PR."

At her own firm, the 36-year-old "is constantly reinventing my clients." One of her methods is to use technology: A non-stop blogger, she uses the web to raise her clients' profiles. "My web site is one of the few public relations and marketing communications' sites that has a blog element to it," Kreth says. "From a client standpoint, on top of the original placements I get them, I mention them in my blog and that raises their web visibility.

"A lot of people are afraid of the whole blogging scene," she notes. "But I'm leveraging it." Magazines, she points out, are biweekly or monthly; blogs, however, provide up-to-the-minute coverage for real estate junkies.

Of course, you'll still find Kreth Communications clients like TitleVest and City Connections Realty in traditional outlets like Real Estate Weekly and New York Magazine. The point, she notes, is to land stories that match the personality of the client. "The in-your-face publicist, the Lizzie Grubman, that's not me," she says.



Kelly Kreth

"I make connections other people don't, and I like to get stories that are unique to each client."

Kreth continues to add to her client roster; as her business expands, she looks forward to taking on a developer as a client. (Hint to potential clients: you have to want to be noticed.) "It's not just telling the story of the building itself, although there's a history to the building," she says. "When you think about New York City, people are paying \$2,000 to rent a 20-ft-by-20-ft space, if they're lucky; how do you quantify that? By focusing on the fact that each window is a window onto a world, an experience. It's not the box that you're buying, it's the experience that you're going to get once you buy it."

Kreth should know; she grew up in New Jersey, just ten minutes from the Lincoln Tunnel and couldn't wait to move to the Big Apple. In her case, it meant paying a \$5,000 key fee for a six-floor walkup in Hell's Kitchen, an apartment she lived in for five years. That love of the city is still in her blood. "Why would somebody forgo other things they love, like eating, to spend the kind of money it costs to live in New York?" she asks. "For the experience. There's a world on every block."

And she's there to describe it, one story at a time.

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