



Master Multimedia

Associations combine traditional print media with audio and video to get the word out. *by Ken Wysocky*

For increasing numbers of members, a printed newsletter or magazine is the technological equivalent of rune-covered stone tablets. Boring. That's why increasing numbers REALTOR® associations, are slowly turning to audio podcasts and online videos to offers members more interesting and convenient ways to consume association information.

For communicators who are wary of or intimidated by the technology, take heart: Podcasts and their ilk are by no means meant to replace traditional forms of communication. They offer alternatives that may entice younger and more tech-savvy members to participate. They are also much simpler to use and less expensive than their high-tech image might indicate.

Eric Berman, communications director for the Massachusetts Association of REALTORS®, who helps produce the monthly "Keeping It Real: The MAR Report," a podcast for the association's roughly 23,000 members explains, "You can do things with podcasts that you can't do with, say, e-newslet-

ters, where everything has to be short. With a podcast, members can download it to an MP3 player and listen to it on the way to an appointment or maybe while they're working out. It's just another way to reach our younger membership." The podcasts supplement a bimonthly magazine and an e-newsletter, he says.

Much like a radio show, the podcast includes musical interludes and different news segments. The shows present pertinent topics such as new financing programs available for first-time homebuyers or ways to prevent identity theft. Some podcasts offer harder news, like a recent interview with an attorney who was involved in a landmark

lawsuit that resulted in a ruling favorable to state REALTORS®.

"It was an important decision for our members, so it was good to have an attorney explain its ramifications," Berman remarks.

QUIET ON THE SET

The Massachusetts Association of REALTORS® started producing the 30-minute shows last July. Equipment to produce the show cost the chapter nearly \$2,000, but Berman is quick to point out that other associations could do it less expensively.

"There are 'podcasting in a box' products that you can buy for much less," he says. "Plus you can get audio software called Audacity for free on the Internet. We

use higher-end equipment because Mike Cutlip, our IT director, is experienced with audio engineering."

All Massachusetts Association of REALTORS® members are notified by e-mail when a new podcast is available. The e-mail includes any Web site links mentioned during the show, so members can read information even if they don't listen to the podcast. Members can access the podcast on the MAR Web site or receive automatic downloads of new shows to their personal computers when they subscribe to the podcasts via iTunes.

"Every month, about 2,700 members open the e-mail (about 21.5 percent) and of that, we usually get roughly 300