

## Social Media

# How Madison Marquette Uses Social Media to Support Leasing

By William R. Wilburn, Editor

**A** LOT OF INK HAS BEEN SPILLED documenting the ways shopping center marketers can use social media to connect with the center's customers, or B2C marketing, but what about the center's other customers, the ones who pay the rent? JONESREPORT Plus talked to Kurt Ivey, SVP marketing and corporate communications, Madison Marquette, to learn how his firm has marshaled social media resources for B2B marketing that attracts new tenants to their properties.

Madison Marquette a Washington, DC-based investor, developer and operator of retail and retail mixed-use real estate throughout the United States, has deployed the usual suspects — LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter — to attract and educate prospective tenants, but they've also used some less obvious channels like Craigslist and Yelp.

### Facebook Petitions

Setting up a Facebook page to engage the community is pretty much standard procedure for shopping centers these days, but it can also be a way to develop a list of potential tenants and uses for a project as well as a way to get a desired retailer's attention. When Madison Marquette was trying to build retailer interest in University Mall in Chapel Hill, NC, they used the project's Facebook page to document potential shopper and community interest in the project.

The Facebook page

described the project, welcomed the community and asked potential shoppers what type of retailers they would like to see at University Mall. "Once we acquired feedback from that initial conversation with folks in the community via social media, we could take that information to retailers and say, 'Look we have 500 fans in a very upscale community, ground-up development, household income of \$138,000. They have specifically requested you to be a part of this development,'" says Ivey.

"In addition to the typical ways of reaching retailers, that has given us genuine grassroots data to go to retailers with. Everybody reads the typical market research studies and all the trade area analysis. That's all great, but once you get in a conversation with people both at a local level on the ground and via social media, it becomes not only real, but documentable, and you can share that with retailers," he adds.

### Madison Marquette Retail Network

In 2009, Madison Marquette launched the Madison Marquette Retail Network, an online community for retail tenants in the company's national portfolio of nearly 100 properties. The first-of-its-kind community brings tenants together with each other and with Madison Marquette's in-house experts in retail operations. Essentially, the Network is a LinkedIn community for retailers that features expert support in all areas of retailing, including store design, merchandising, human resources, marketing and accounting.

"We are primarily focused on local tenants and chains that do not have franchise support services," says Ivey. Tenants can post questions and share their experiences and best practices. Madison Marquette's team of in-house experts and consultants will guide discussions and provide their own insights and best practices as

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## Key Takeaways

- Social/Mobile/Digital Media has gone mainstream and should be an important component of your overall B2b and B2C communications program.
- It's not one size fits all. Develop a strategy and define metrics for success.
- Social Media is a commitment and you must be engaged and constant. The ongoing dialog drives the success.
- Just when you think you've figured it out, it all changes again... So don't be afraid to try new things.



MadisonMarquette

## Social Media and Leasing

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well as post relevant articles and research from external sources.

### Advertising on Craigslist

One way Madison Marquette reaches mom and pop retailers in a market is to advertise the space on Craigslist. They use a real estate application called Postlets ([www.postlets.com](http://www.postlets.com)) to create ads for regional retail space available at a given center and post images of the space.

“We’ve had some pretty good success with that from potential retailers,” Ivey says. “We’ve only done three or four centers, but we’ve created six or seven deals, and several of those have turned permanent.”

Madison Marquette has used Yelp ([www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com)), the site that lets customers review businesses, to help canvass for potential tenants. When they were redeveloping University Mall their leasing team visited Yelp to compile lists of Chapel Hill’s top 15 recommended businesses in categories such as restaurants. They created a map overlay of the restaurants and used it to help their leasing team focus on the market.

“We actually spoke to each of those retailers about the opportunity to expand into University Mall,” Ivey notes. “That, in turn, led to mainly temporary deals, but a lot of retailer interest and a lot of dialogue that we otherwise wouldn’t have had, because unless you have a lot of people on the ground in each market you

can’t harvest that data fast enough. Social media has been a real benefit from that perspective.

“Using Yelp and Craigslist allowed us to be more efficient, to broaden our reach and to create that conversation with retailers,” Ivey continues. “We could go into a retailer and say, ‘We noticed you were number one on the Yelp list in your category and we’d like to talk to you about coming to our shopping center.’ All of a sudden you have started an amazing conversation. A lot of times they don’t even know they’re rated on Yelp.”

### Leveraging Print

Madison Marquette has also leveraged *Places* magazine, its corporate marketing piece, with [Places-magazine.com](http://Places-magazine.com). While the printed piece showcasing the company’s expertise in leasing, management, development, real estate taxes, etc., still makes the rounds of industry trade shows, they repurpose the articles to create content for emails,



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