

Selling a Lifestyle with Drone Photography

By **Lindsey Getz**



Drone photography and videography can be a powerful tool for your real estate listings. After all, drones can showcase a property in a way that standard photos and video simply cannot. The aerial views are not only stunning, but they give potential buyers a much better idea of what the property has to offer. If you're not using drone photography for your listings, you may be missing out on a valuable marketing opportunity.

Stephanie Liskowitz, a Realtor® with Keller Williams East Monmouth, says that a majority of her listings are in close proximity to the ocean or a golf club. She says in listings like these, it's not just the home that is for sale, but what the location has to offer. Liskowitz says that nothing can showcase lifestyle quite like drone photography and video.

"Oftentimes when people are buying a home down at the shore, it's a second home, and they're not familiar with the area," she says. "That makes drone photography even more important. A property might be a mile off the beach but with a drone photo or video, you can get a sense that it truly is an easy bike ride or

walk—and you're there. You'd never get that feeling with a regular photograph."

Ryan Baine, co-owner and founder of Osprey Perspectives, a New Jersey drone photo and video service, says that selling a home comes down to selling a location and a lifestyle, which is why he has so many Realtor® clients.

"What aerial photography can show is just how close your listing is to the downtown area, to schools, to parks, to beaches, or even the golf course around the corner," Baine says. "It is a home's surrounding that really defines the lifestyle the Realtor® is selling and the best way to capture it is with a drone."

Of course, there are instances when you don't want to show off the neighborhood, or you may have a small budget, or the property simply doesn't call for a drone. Baine says this is not a service for every single listing, but if you have a spacious property or the surrounding area is deserving of a spotlight, then this is the best option.



Adding Video for the Full Experience

In terms of whether or not to use video, Baine says he certainly has a lot of Realtor® clients who do. An impressive listing or one that is close to exciting amenities can be made even more enticing with a short video about the property.

"We're living in a video age," says Baine. "People like watching videos and they will definitely help a listing to sell faster. It shows well on Zillow or social media and will help you get more eyes on your listing, which can lead to a sale."

Baine says that video also helps a Realtor® build his or her portfolio. Sellers look to hire a Realtor® who is motivated and hard working and when they see an impressive marketing strategy that includes video, they are intrigued.

"In today's age, video is now the leading style of marketing," Baine continues. "The concept of 'virtual tours' in the real estate market is almost obsolete. Nobody wants to see warped images—they want a real-life view. When we make a video about a property we take a cinematic approach to give the buyer a sense of what his or her life would be like if they bought that property. We might shoot some footage at the beach, around the golf course, and of course areas around the home. We're painting a picture that allows their imagination to really take over."

Baine typically recommends a video be about one to two minutes long—people start losing interest if the video is too long and anything shorter will not showcase enough detail.



"We use licensed music that we pay for to complete the video," Baine adds. "In the end, it comes together like a movie trailer for what that person's life could be if they bought the property."

The Value of Using A Professional




You might be wondering whether this is something you could just do yourself. Although the price of drones has decreased tremendously, there is a lot more to it than people realize. A standard drone may only cost several hundred dollars, but there is also the high-end photography equipment and editing software to consider. Plus, a professional is not going to be using a cheap drone. They'll have invested in the best equipment for top-notch results.

Not only that, but there are licenses, too. While a license is not required for personal use, it is required for commercial purposes—and real estate listings fall into that category, says Baine.

In fact, Baine says there are some serious fines associated with flying a drone for commercial use without a license. According to the FAA, a pilot who is

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unlicensed is subject to a fine of \$1,100 per occurrence/flight where imagery has been used commercially.

"More importantly, perhaps, the fine for the Realtor® who hires an unlicensed pilot is \$11,000," Baine adds. "Of course, if you're an agent who bought a drone and took the photos or video yourself, you would be liable for both fines. Many Realtors® believe they are not commercial operators because they aren't making direct money off their drone photography or video. However, that is a huge misconception since the FAA defines a commercial operation as being a furtherance of a business."

It behooves the importance of finding a professional who is licensed—as well as insured. It's important to protect yourself and your business.

"It's rare that something could go wrong, but you still want to find an insured drone professional," Baine adds. "For example, if a bird hits the drone and it falls and breaks a shingle on a home, you don't want to be liable for damages."

Thomas DeFazio, a Realtor® with Chris Smith Realty in Spring Lake, says that hiring someone who understands the "dos and don'ts" of drone work is priceless to him.

"Finding someone who you can trust understands the licenses and the permitting involved is so important," he says. "I know there are regulations involved with flying too close to an airport—and I trust that my photographer has a good understanding of these regulations."

One of the first questions a good drone operator should ask is for the address, Baine says. The operator should then research the location's proximity to an airport.

"We've applied for basically all authorizations to fly near airports on the East Coast," Baine says. "But it's important that you know your drone operator is covered. The FAA does take a while to approve those authorizations."

The Cost of a Professional

While it's pretty obvious that using a professional is the way to go, you might be wondering what your investment would be. Baine says that his most popular package for Realtors® starts at \$350. That gets you a licensed professional on site and edited professional photography with a 24-hour turnaround.

If you're looking to also produce video, the cost is closer to \$1,000, Baine adds.

Liskowitz says that for the right property, drone work is really a no-brainer for her. She says that when you post drone photos, you see a huge spike in engagement and views. While she doesn't use video on every property, she typically will for those that are upward of \$600,000.

"Nothing gives you a sense of the property like video, so if you have a listing where it's worth investing in it, do so," she advises. "We recently did a shoot where we showed off the house but also included video of the nearby town and beach. This way, people understand the whole package."

Liskowitz says that in general, she invests more in her portfolio and her listings than she does in marketing herself.

"It comes down to where you want to spend your money," Liskowitz says. "Personally, I spend less to market myself and more to market my properties. I feel if they are marketed well, it's a reflection of my brand as a Realtor® and that's where I see the most value."

DeFazio agrees that using drone work has improved his portfolio—and that's incredibly valuable for future listings.

"I think most sellers would hope that their listing agent was going out of his or her way to spend money in marketing—not just slapping it in MLS and hoping for the best," he says. "You want to enhance the ability to sell the home, and drone photography can do that."

DeFazio says that he had one listing that he had been the third Realtor® on—and it hadn't sold. Drone photography changed everything.

"It was a great listing on a golf course and the property backed up to the fairway," DeFazio says. "With a drone we were able to give a great perspective of the course layout. Even though I'd been the third Realtor® on that listing, I had someone there within the same day as posting those drone pictures. It made all the difference." ■