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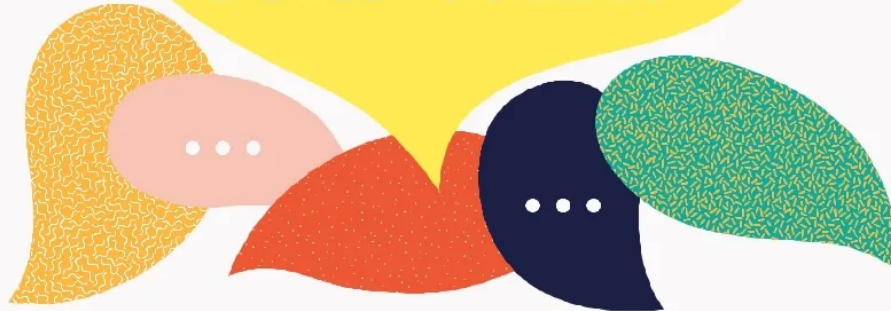
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*Lilli Schipper, broker-associate with LoKation Real Estate in Hollywood, shares tips on how to market new-construction homes.*



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*Innovative* STRATEGIES

# TURN BLUEPRINTS INTO BUZZ

Infuse fun and excitement into marketing new-construction homes.

BY LESLIE C. STONE

When a local builder decided to venture into million-dollar listings with his new project in Dania Beach, he recognized the need to hire a Realtor® to market the homes. Enter Lilli Schipper, broker-associate with LoKation Real Estate in Hollywood, who landed the opportunity after numerous people sang her praises. “Dania Beach was established in 1904, and our houses are typically quite small,” Schipper says, adding that most of the neighborhood consists of ‘50s, ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s era homes. This particular builder traditionally constructed residences in the \$400,000 to \$500,000 range, she says, but he was able to secure three lots and believed a recent surge in property values justified higher prices. However, realizing that finding a local buyer willing to spend \$1 million was unlikely, he enlisted Schipper’s expertise to gain wider exposure.

The concept involved building three new houses, with the properties released for sale one at a time upon completion. “When I took the first listing last summer [the homes] were barely a shell, but the builder had no renderings for me to use,” Schipper says. Anticipating the challenge of marketing the pre-construction homes, which were poised to be the area’s priciest three-bedroom, non-waterfront properties, she knew it would take a super-creative strategy to spark buyers’ interest. Together with her husband, Jason Schipper, a high school teacher and Realtor, who also serves as her part-time assistant, she brainstormed ideas. “We thought, ‘How can we get people’s eyes on



**“With million-dollar properties people think luxury and fancy, but sometimes people need fun.”**

—LILLI SCHIPPER, LOKATION REAL ESTATE, HOLLYWOOD

this property and get them interested in it? What can we do to keep people following along?” she says.

To increase exposure for the listing, the duo came up with an unconventional idea: Jason, who stands an imposing 6 foot 3 inches, would dress up in various zany costumes and provide updates about the property in fun and engaging videos. In his debut video, he appears in a top hat à la Uncle Sam and wishes viewers a happy Fourth of July before inviting them inside the then-under-construction property. After a quick tour, he tells viewers he’ll appear in different costumes in future videos and asks them to comment if they’d rather see him as a Viking or a turkey the following week. “I spread [that video] across Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, and everyone loved it!” Schipper says. “With million-dollar properties people think luxury and fancy, but sometimes people need fun.”

**Here’s her strategy:**

**1. BREAK THE MOLD.**

Open houses weren’t possible during the construction phase, so Schipper would film her husband, Jason, in costumes and invite people to follow along

via social media as the homes gradually came to life. After viewers voted to see him in a Viking costume, he gave them a tour showing the latest construction updates and instructed them to call Lilli with any questions. To further engage viewers, he asked them to vote once again for what character they’d like to see next time. “So far he has appeared as a Viking, a butterfly, a cat, a giraffe and a clown,” Schipper says. “We can only [film] on Sunday mornings when the crew isn’t there.” After seeing a very tall man dressed in a Viking costume on a Sunday morning, the neighbors across the street came out and said, “Oh, the builder is going to love this!” Countless others reached out, commented on social media or would see Schipper around town and comment, “I saw the Viking the other day.”

In general, everybody loves the fun costumes, she says. “Other Realtors think it’s hilarious, the builder and his crew think it’s hilarious—who doesn’t like seeing people in a costume?”

After the initial listing was sold, “Jason the Giraffe” appeared in a video to introduce the property but was quickly interrupted by Lilli in a voice over: “Wait, Jason, it’s under contract.” He then asks, “Well, what if people still want it?” and



## The (Simple) Secret Formula for Video Marketing Success

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Lilli replies, “Good news, we have another one just like it available.” The video then transitions to “Jason the Giraffe” standing in front of the next listing.

### 2. DIY, WITH TECHNOLOGY.

Schipper captures her videos on an iPhone and edits them with the free iMovie app. “When I first started [in real estate] I’d pay hundreds of dollars for videos and photography,” she says. “But I couldn’t afford them every week, so I had to start doing them myself.”

iMovie has a variety of tools and features that help her edit and enhance her videos. She can trim and rearrange clips, add music and sound effects, apply visual effects and more. After she records video footage, she simply opens iMovie and imports the clips into a new project. From there, she can edit and customize the video to her liking and then export the finished product to share on social media or other platforms. “We shoot it two ways: 15- to 20-second videos for the story and then the [main] video,” Schipper says, adding that she refined her editing skills with each shot. “Keep in mind that people tend to have short attention spans so, ideally, videos should be under a minute.” During one especially windy day, she had to think on her feet and improvise. “I ended up using my car to block the wind and captured the video through the car window,” Schipper says. “It was funny in the beginning.”

Using an iPhone allows her to affordably create videos. “There are so many amazing tools available that anyone can do it themselves,” she says. Experiment with it and, if you receive encouraging feedback, persist and keep improving. If it’s bad, don’t fret. Just take it down immediately.

### 3. CROSS-PROMOTE VIA SOCIAL MEDIA.

Cross-promoting via Instagram, Facebook and YouTube helps Schipper reach a broader audience. “I always [advertise] properties in Dania Beach Press and Hollywood Magazine, so every month I would put them in there,” she says. “You never know where people are coming from. We also have a sign on the property, and I personally do showings, of course. We try to do a video every few months,

working around the [builder’s] crew.”

While her efforts may not lead to viral fame and millions of views, repetition is key to building exposure and achieving results. “Taking risks and thinking outside the box can pay off in a big way, especially on social media,” she adds. Schipper knew other agents were taking notice when one of her neighbors, who’s also a Realtor, approached her and said, “I heard it’s sold.” She happily corrected him with, “It’s under contract and we’re closing soon.” “Mission accomplished; people know what’s going on with the house,” she says.

### 4. MAKE TIME FOR THE BUILDER.

Providing exceptional service to the builder is crucial when it comes to marketing new construction, Schipper says. “I definitely did a lot of handholding in the first month or two, just to make sure things were running smoothly and everybody was on the same page. The builder is amazing; we have a good connection. Oftentimes, I was driving to his house to discuss updates and get answers because he doesn’t even have email or a computer!” Since Schipper and the builder live in the same neighborhood—she lives a mile from the property, and the builder lives a block over—she kept a close eye on the project and frequently stopped by. She also maintained regular communication with the builder by sending updates and information electronically to his wife, who was able to share it with him. The first listing sold earlier this year to a buyer in Miami, and now Schipper is preparing to sell the remaining two properties. “The individual who bought the first listing was in Miami,” she says. “As the best-priced new construction east of U.S. 1, this property offers unbeatable value. It’s rare to find a new-construction property that’s just two miles from the beach and also affordable.”

When it comes to nontraditional listings, traditional methods may not always work. “To stand out and achieve success, it’s crucial to embrace creativity and take risks,” Schipper says. “I like being different.”

*Leslie C. Stone is a Vero Beach-based freelance writer.*

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