

**EPISODE 393**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:00] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome to The Real Estate Syndication Show. Whether you are a seasoned investor or building a new real estate business, this is the show for you. Whitney Sewell talks to top experts in the business. Our goal is to help you master real estate syndication.

And now your host, Whitney Sewell.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:00:24] WS:** This is your daily Real Estate Syndication Show. I'm your host, Whitney Sewell. Today, our guest is Italina Kirknis. Thanks for being on the show again, Italina.

**[00:00:32] IK:** Thank you for having me.

**[00:00:34] WS:** I know the listeners are going to enjoy this show, because all of us in this business are trying to get better at what you're an expert at, and we need your help. So I'm looking forward to this.

So Italina helps the real estate community's top real estate agents and mortgage professionals upgrade their presence online through LinkedIn, Facebook, and email newsletters. She's a trained attorney, has a JD and a legal background but is now practicing her passion, online branding and marketing. Her business has been the vehicle for her personal and spiritual growth while she creates value for her clients.

So, Italina, this is a great topic. I know most – Like I said, most of the listeners are trying to figure out their brand and figure out how to promote themselves online. So this is a great subject. I'm looking forward to this. But real quick, I want to remind the listeners to go to Life Bridge Capital where you can connect with me. Don't forget to join the Facebook group, the Real Estate Syndication Show, so we can all ask questions of Italina and other experts in the

business that can help us and connect with them.

So, Italina, give us a little more about who you are and maybe where you're located and a little more about your background.

**[00:01:39] IK:** Sure. I am in Sunny California, and I will say background, I'm an avid tennis player for any tennis fans out there and Orangetheory Fitness enthusiasts. Professionally I began in the legal field. Successful on paper, miserable. I'm sure you've heard that before. I actually began looking on LinkedIn for my next career path. I thought I was just too young to settle for this kind of life, started looking for other career opportunities. I started really networking on LinkedIn, and companies started reaching out to me and out to hire me but saying, "Italina, we see you everywhere. It's incredible what you're doing. We want you to do that for us." That's how I ended up starting my business in helping agents, lenders with their social media presence.

**[00:02:26] WS:** Well, you know, maybe for us you could just tell us. Before we – we're going to focus mostly on LinkedIn I think. But then we're going to probably talk a little bit about other platforms and why it's important. But maybe tell us or the listeners why it is important to have a presence online now and maybe how that's changed? Maybe that wasn't really so not too many years ago, right?

**[00:02:44] IK:** That's correct.

**[00:02:45] WS:** But now, things are so different. Could you just elaborate on that a little bit, because I know there's listeners who are saying, "Wait a minute. I don't want anything to do with that Facebook stuff. I don't want anything to do with that. You now, I'm going keep my flip phone over here. I can't learn that." But tell us a little bit why it's important that maybe they should be thinking about this.

**[00:03:04] IK:** As we all know, life and things change. I remember back when there were the yellow pages. It was all about being in the yellow pages. You got that thing at your door. You're like, "It has to happen." Then websites came out in the '80s, and it was like, "Whoa! We've got to have a website." Slowly by slowly, the Yellow Pages started to fade, especially when Yelp,

whether we love it or hate it, Yelp came out. That completely obliterated the yellow pages.

We've just seen over and over where technology has disrupted and demolished other businesses like that. Look at taxis and what Uber and Lyft has done to that. Technology. So I believe that – or we're seeing – not my belief. We're seeing that social media is doing that to, again, obliterate the yellow pages and even the website. People are using social media not even having a website. I'm not saying don't have a website. I'm just saying people are spending time on social media, meaning your audience prospects are spending time on social. You obviously want to be in front of those individuals where they're hanging out, and that's on social media. Not at your website.

**[00:04:15] WS:** It's all tied together though, right?

**[00:04:17] IK:** Yes. Absolutely.

**[00:04:17] WS:** The social media – Because all of us I think feel like or we're trying to get people to our website, right?

**[00:04:23] IK:** Yes.

**[00:04:23] WS:** We're trying to get potential clients or in our case investors or whoever it may be to our website. But social media – So much of the time now is what's getting them there, right?

**[00:04:32] IK:** Yes. People are definitely using social to drive people to the landing pages and websites that you have. Yes.

**[00:04:41] WS:** You and I had briefly discussed it. Or you had mentioned just the importance of like tying all these platforms together. I thought you can elaborate on that, and then we know we can focus on LinkedIn I think today. But tell us, why is it important to have a presence on maybe more than one platform?

**[00:04:55] IK:** Well, the real estate professionals that we're working with are finding that their

prospects, their clients, their audience, they're on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. The importance of being on all three of those is, as you know, with familiarity, there comes that wanting and that comfort to do business with you. So if someone is seeing you everywhere over and over, they're like, "Wow! This is legitimate. This is a legitimate professional. I want to check them out further."

**[00:05:22] WS:** So why don't you tell us where we get started though, because that could be kind of overwhelming, right?

**[00:05:26] IK:** Sure.

**[00:05:26] WS:** Like, "Wait a minute. I don't even have a Facebook account yet. But now, you're telling I got to be on all three of these places." So where could we start for somebody that's like, "Wait a minute. I barely maybe have one account or I've never even used it."?

**[00:05:38] IK:** I'm a big fan of starting where you are. I find that most real estate professionals at least have a LinkedIn account, and that's why I do give a lot of talks on how to leverage LinkedIn. Having a LinkedIn alone, that's huge because it is the number one professional site, and it's the place that has a culture where it's okay to talk about business, talk about what you've got going on in real estate.

So I'm a big fan of starting where you are. If that's what you have and that's what you feel like you're willing to dedicate time towards, then yes. Start there. I would say the start there would be, one, your profile. Redo that. Revamp that. That's actually the number one most popular service that my team and I offer. We revamp LinkedIn profiles all day long for those who feel like, "Okay. Well, yeah. I know how to talk about other people. But when it comes to talking about myself and in a marketable manner, I'd rather have it done professionally."

**[00:06:34] WS:** So what's that going to do for us? If I said, "Wait a minute. I can do my own profile. So why do I need to hire somebody to do that?"

**[00:06:42] IK:** Sure. So the one misconception is that the LinkedIn profile is a resume, an online

resume, and it's not. You're in business for yourself as a real estate professional. You're not looking for a job. You're looking for clients. So we need to fashion the profile to speak to clients, not to a job. The other piece is your profile – there's actually a lot of space, or real estate so to speak, that LinkedIn provides you that actually goes unused by the average LinkedIn user because what are you good at? You're good at dealing in real estate. Not necessarily the technology, tools, and marketing tools that LinkedIn has to offer business owners.

**[00:07:23] WS:** So I guess dive in a little bit to LinkedIn, and let's figure out some of these other tools that are available to us that we probably don't even know about.

**[00:07:32] IK:** Well, for example, I actually just got off the phone with someone who messaged me via Instagram. So we practice what we preach. My online presence, I make sure it's all relevant, up to date. As a result, every week I receive direct messages via Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook from people wanting to inquire into our social media services. So I just off the phone with somebody out in the Midwest somewhere, saying he wanted to look into the services. So I went on to LinkedIn, typed in his name. He came on on the second page of LinkedIn, and that's just because I took the time to click on to the second page. Think about is the average user really going to go that far into the second page to try to find you? So one thing that professionally having your profile done is you pop up right away as an expert in the real estate industry when someone is looking for you.

**[00:08:26] WS:** So it's important. I mean, it has to happen fast where people – They're on to the next thing. They've already forgotten about you it seems. So somehow, we're thinking that fast or we don't pay attention long enough maybe. I'm not sure but yeah. So help us to think about what else about LinkedIn that's going to help us to stand out that the average user is not going to know.

**[00:08:46] IK:** Sure. Okay. So here's one thing. It actually sounds very basic, but people just don't know if they don't do it. So the part on LinkedIn where you put in your name, the average user just puts in their first and last name. Then on the bottom like in the subheading, they put in their profession, real estate, financing, lending, commercial real estate, maybe even their geographic area. Maybe, like an advanced user will put in their niche or specialty. What most people don't know is, where you put in your first and last name, you can actually squeeze your

first and last name all the way into the first name slot so that you can use the last name slot to put in your niche, your specialty, your tagline, something that differentiates you from all the bajillion other real estate professionals out there.

Remember, it's all about branding, meaning conveying our unique abilities and our unique message, so people choose you over others in the business. So how do we do that? Our online presence helps us with promoting those unique abilities. Unless we have them listed online, the person can't take advantage of your services.

**[00:09:57] WS:** So I haven't heard that before. So put your first and last name in the first name field, and then you can put something else over there.

**[00:10:04] IK:** Exactly. Promoting your brand and helping yourself stand out.

**[00:10:07] WS:** So then every time you comment as well, that's going to show up.

**[00:10:10] IK:** Absolutely. So whether someone even goes – it doesn't even matter if that prospect does not go to your profile, they see you right there in your heading that you serve this geographic area, that you help with this specific area of real estate.

**[00:10:25] WS:** So what about comments? When do we need to leave comments? When should we not? Or does it matter?

**[00:10:33] IK:** So comments are great, obviously when someone leaves you a comment. So I'm assuming you're talking about if you were to share a post and someone else comes and leaves a comment on your post. I say reply to each and every single one. You might think, "Oh, my god! That's time-consuming." In all reality, only maybe two to five, maybe seven people are going to be commenting on your post, unless you're like Arianna Huffington or somebody big like that. You're not going to get all of these comments on your post.

So reply to each one. You'd be surprised. Those are people who are window-shopping. They are checking you out, and they may very well want to utilize your services. That is, of course, if you are cultivating your LinkedIn connections, meaning tailor-making your LinkedIn connections,

where it's not just a bunch of other people in the business who are your connections but your prospects, your database, your clients, your former clients. Taylor-make your own LinkedIn connections so that you make sure your connections are comprised of prospects, referral sources. Not just competitors in the business.

**[00:11:43] WS:** So that's a great idea there. I haven't heard anybody say that before. So make sure that our connections are potential clients and not so much – I mean, should we not be connected to other competitors or –

**[00:11:56] IK:** I won't say not. It's definitely important to be connected in the industry. I'm just saying, you don't want that to solely be your database on LinkedIn.

**[00:12:05] WS:** So can other people see our posts that we're not connected to?

**[00:12:09] IK:** The only time people who are not connected to you who can see your post is if you guys have a mutual connection in common who happens to like or comment on your post.

**[00:12:19] WS:** So we need those connections then with these potential clients?

**[00:12:21] IK:** Yes.

**[00:12:22] WS:** How do we really narrow down and connect with people who are potential clients and not just randomly trying to connect with everybody?

**[00:12:30] IK:** So what I do is any person who has expressed any interest, meaning they've asked a question, they're picking your brain, those people are window-shopping, and I call those prospects. So anytime someone has some kind of service inquiry, I go ahead, add them to our email database, and then look to connect with them on social media, primarily LinkedIn first, because that's professional. Then once we get more friendly, I may look for them on Facebook or Instagram.

**[00:13:00] WS:** So what about connecting with more potential clients? How do we go about doing that? I guess – So it doesn't come across like we're trying to sell them something. But

how do we – What’s the proper way of making that connection?

**[00:13:14] IK:** That’s a great question. So what I love to do and this is what I teach my clients, our coaching clients, is when you have a professional that you’re looking to grow your LinkedIn network, send a message. Maybe you have a list or maybe you see someone that, “Oh, my gosh! I want to connect with this person,” or someone who is in a particular industry, you feel like they would be good referral sources, etc. Then you check out their profile. You find something to comment on, “Oh, hey! I see that –” I actually really in general like to say, “I saw your profile. I was impressed. I saw your profile. I was impressed. Based on what you and I do, it would be great if we can connect.” What I love about the based on what you and I do comment is it peaks their interest like, “Oh! Well, what does this person do?” So, “I saw your profile. I was impressed. Based on what you and I do, it would be great to connect.”

Another thing is we know that LinkedIn is a culture of networking. A great comment to say is, “It would be great for us to network and see how we might be of resource to each other. It will be great for us network and see how we might be of resource to each other.”

**[00:14:21] WS:** That’s great. I appreciate that really making it easy for us here. But, yeah. Based on what you and I do. So that’s almost saying like there’s some kind of other connection or implying anyway outside of just meeting you here. It’s like you and I have something that we could both benefit from.

**[00:14:37] IK:** Right. What’s great about that is I’m sure you’ve gotten the LinkedIn connection request, and it come with this huge copy-pasted sales script. No, no, no. No, no, no to that. This little slight introduction is a lot warmer and less salesy. It’s not salesy at all. In fact, that’s networking, which is what people look to do on LinkedIn. So if you get a response or they accept your connection request, I like to move on to the next thing, “Hey! Let’s hop on the phone for a quick phone chat.” So now, it’s taking that networking to the next level more personal, so you’re not just typing on the computer all day long.

**[00:15:15] WS:** What about the search feature? How could we use the search feature and really find – Use that time more efficiently and even the connection more efficiently to find better potential clients.



**[00:15:26] IK:** Absolutely. So in search feature, just like a Google search, you can actually type in, yes, a name. So if you have a first and last name. You can even type a profession. So let's say you feel like divorce attorneys are a good referral source for you or CPAs. You can actually type in that profession, and the filter search feature on LinkedIn allows you to filter down to send first-level connections. So you'll find the people who are already in your network who are CPAs or divorce attorneys. Start with them. That's the lowest hanging fruit, the closest connection. They're already in your network. Hey! I see we're connected on LinkedIn, but we haven't truly connected. Let's set up a time for a quick phone chat and see how we can network, be of resource to each other. I call that warming up your cold calls.

So in addition to any cold-calling you're doing, you can work with people who are right there in your database and your network already, and it's professionally saying who you are is less intrusive than a cold call. You're actually asking for the appointment. Once you've gone through the first-level connections, then next is hit the second-level connections. So these are people who are just outside your network. Hey! I see you're a CPA. I see you're a divorce attorney. Based on what you and I do, let's see how we can network and be of resource to each other.

**[00:16:46] WS:** You mentioned earlier adding them to your newsletter. So when is that the proper time to say add them to your newsletter? Should we say anything about that or is it like, after the connection we're going to go and put them in our newsletter list?

**[00:16:58] IK:** So I'm a big fan of only adding people to a newsletter who have expressed interest in your business. So, in this case of LinkedIn, once we've connected with them on LinkedIn and we've had a phone appointment, that phone chat with them, that's when I will say, "Hey! Just so that we can stay top of mind with each other, I figured I can add you to my newsletter or my VIP list, whatever you call it." That way, you're telling them, and it's no surprise to them when they receive your newsletter. Otherwise, they are going to unsubscribe as soon as they get it anyways.

I like to talk to a person first. Again, people who've asked or inquired into our services, I'll ask for their email. Those are people who are clearly interested. They've asked some questions. People who ask you about the market. So for those of the people who are clearly interested, ask them

for the email, “Hey! I’m just going to add you to our list, so we can stay top of mind with each other.” They always say, “Great!”

**[00:17:54] WS:** So what’s the hardest part about managing this, all the social media stuff? Even if we’re talking about numerous platforms, how do we manage all that?

**[00:18:02] IK:** Okay. Sure. So, managing I would say, first things first. Make sure all of your profiles on whatever sites you want to focus on, make sure your profiles professionally market you as a brand, as a business owner, and not just as our online resume. Number two, you obviously want to share content, share posts, establishing yourself as the go-to real estate professional. So sharing posts that are relevant, yet still socially appropriate, so fun, entertaining, or being educational and informative. So sharing posts on a consistent basis. Again, start wherever you are. If once a week works well for you, great. If three times a week works great for you, great. If three times a day works well for you, great. Start wherever you are.

So we’re posting, and then obviously we’re replying to any comments and messages. So you check your inbox. You check your posts for any comments, so you can reply. I would say that will be a good basis, leading up to trying to, again, schedule those phone appointments. I will say all arrows point to hopping on the phone to actually talk to someone to have that business conversation.

**[00:19:08] WS:** How quick in the conversation do you try to get – offer a phone call?

**[00:19:13] IK:** When someone is actually asking about service. So they are clearly now interested, “Hey! I want to know more.” They’re asking any question. Obviously, it’s going to be very hard to text all day or type all day. So you say, “Hey! It sounds like we should hop on the phone for a quick phone chat.”

**[00:19:29] WS:** Then do you send them, say, a link to a calendar or do you actually try to say, “What’s a good time for you?”, and just try to do it at that time?

**[00:19:38] IK:** I find, and this is just my opinion. I understand the link to the account is very efficient. I find it impersonal. What I’m looking to do is establish personal relationships. So while

I'm an advocate of social media, to me social media is not a way to establish a personal relationship. It's a tool that will help you with doing that. We want to eventually hop on the phone or get face to face. So I actually say, "Hey," I first ask, "What's the best number to reach you?", and people are very willing to give their phone number and they find it very personal. They're very much willing to receive a phone call and are less likely to make a phone call.

**[00:20:18] WS:** At least if you have their number, then you can follow up at different times even if they don't answer.

**[00:20:22] IK:** Exactly. So I always – The next step is always to get their contact, because I know I'm going to get a follow-up. Not everyone is good at follow-up. I get their phone number, and I call them oftentimes that very second that they send the phone number to at least say, "Hey! Just wanted to hear your voice and make sure that you're real." They always laugh. I say, "I know I probably caught you at a bad time. We can certainly schedule a better time." That's how I do. We do it on the phone verbally. We can both look at our calendars together. We don't do all those back and forth, "How about, how about?" none of that. We're on the phone together, looking at our calendars.

**[00:21:01] WS:** That's great advice, so I like that, and it's personable. I mean, you're hearing their voice. They're hearing yours. So just a couple minutes obviously before we run out of time. But a couple more questions, Italina. What's a way that you've improved your business recently that we can apply to ours?

**[00:21:16] IK:** Well, definitely as far as on Instagram, I would say Instagram has done wonders for the business. At first, we were really good about posting on the regular feed. We're now adding more stories and more business-related stories. So before, my stories comprised of day-in-the-life with me, walking around my day in the life. People enjoyed that, but I wasn't really doing anything business-focused.

Now, what we're doing is we're repurposing some of the posts that we share in the feed and sharing them in the story. So we are repurposing them, they don't look exactly the same as what you see in the feed or on the page, but it is the same content. It just looks a little different, and it's shared in the story.

**[00:22:01] WS:** Then what about the number one thing that's contributed to your success.

**[00:22:05] IK:** Number one thing. I would say the follow-up piece, because people reach out to you on social all the time. They like, they comment. I actually – When someone likes, especially if they're not already friends of mine, I go and I send them a friend request and I say, “Hey! Thanks for liking my post. It will be great for us to connect further.” Again, I'm always just trying to lead to that phone conversation. So actually following up on those likes, those comments.

**[00:22:36] WS:** Tell us how you like to give back.

**[00:22:38] IK:** So my high school, I went to – I was fortunate to go to an amazing high school, and I actually donate to them so that other kids can receive scholarships for that high school. That's one way I give back. I take part in my other friends, other people in the business, their causes, so like Cycle for Survival. I've done that. I write checks. I ride bikes. I go on – running – do things like that to give back to the community.

**[00:23:03] WS:** Awesome. Well, Italina, this has been a great show. I know I've learned a lot, and I know the listeners have as well. I really appreciate your time. But tell them how they can get in touch with you.

**[00:23:11] IK:** Sure. You can obviously reach me on LinkedIn, on Facebook or Instagram via my first name, Italina, I-T-A-L-I-N-A. On Instagram, you can find me at @italinak, I-T-A-L-I-N-A and the letter K. K is the first initial of my last name.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:23:29] WS:** Don't go yet. Thank you for listening to today's episode. I would love it if you would go to iTunes right now and leave a rating and written review. I want to hear your feedback. It makes a big difference in getting the podcast out there. You can also go to the Real Estate Syndication Show on Facebook, so you can connect with me and we can also receive feedback and your questions there that you want me to answer on the show. Subscribe too, so you can get the latest episodes. Lastly, I want to keep you updated. So head over to

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[OUTRO]

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