



ZEN & the art of real estate

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Feeling lost on Facebook and Twitter? Follow these simple principles to develop a solid reputation on a social network.

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There are many advantages to shopping at local farmers' markets. We explore several tools to help you find markets in your area.

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The NFL season is just a few weeks away. Use these great resources to manage your fantasy football team to victory.

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3 Ways to Makes Your Transaction Go Faster

The average real estate transaction takes several months to complete. However, there are three simple steps you can take to speed things up.

Get your records together

The one common factor between all real estate

transactions is a lot of paperwork. Failure to provide the correct documents is among the most common reasons why a transaction is delayed. Prior to any transaction, assemble all of your important documents (tax returns, home repair records, etc.) into a well-organized, easily retrievable place.

Talk to me at the beginning--not the end

Every real estate transaction is a little different, which means every transaction has a slightly different way to be streamlined. By talking to me at the beginning of the process (when you first have the idea to buy or sell a home), I can advise you of the specific steps you should take, help you develop a realistic timeline and provide guidance throughout the process.

Be friendly and flexible with the other side

Generally speaking, the quickest transactions are the ones where the buyer and seller like each other. If this is the case, both sides will be more flexible with the smaller details of the transaction and stay focused on the end goal. It doesn't take much to foster a friendly environment. A compliment here, a genuine smile there--it adds up pretty quickly and it doesn't cost you a thing.



Is the Recession Over?

The economy is showing clear signs of a recovery, but what will that recovery look like and what dangers lie ahead?

Why the optimism?

Most of the recent optimism began with the release of recent unemployment and GDP numbers which were better than expected, and much better than in the preceding reports. At the same time, the stock market has risen to its highest point in several months. Finally, the housing market is showing signs of recovery to varying degrees in most regions and price ranges.

Is the optimism justified?

Generally speaking, jobless rates and GDP are not the best indicators for measuring the real-time health of an economy. GDP numbers take months to be accurately calculated, rendering them somewhat obsolete by the time they are viewable. Jobless rates are sometimes described as a "lagging indicator," because they are usually the last thing to respond to economic change. However, stock market gains and increased activity in the housing market suggest that the recovery is legitimate.

How long until we're back to normal?

Most analysts are quick to warn that although things are less bad than they have been in months past, they are still not good. For instance, the most recent reports still show our GDP shrinking. In a healthy economy, the GDP would be rising. On the other hand, it is possible that the economy has already begun its long, slow ascent towards sustained growth--a fact that may not be confirmed until the next GDP report.



Easy Ways to Find Farmers' Markets in Your Area

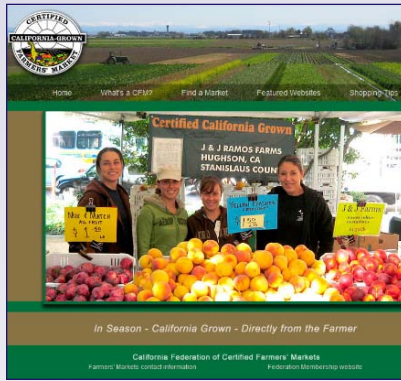
A growing number of Americans are looking for more local produce options. Here are 4 cool tools to help you locate farmers' markets in your area.



Comprehensive directory of local food options
Local Harvest is the most popular online directory of local food sources. Here, you will find farmers' markets in addition to co-ops, healthy restaurants and farms open to the public. Most farmers' markets have detailed reviews describing the available produce, the popularity and vibe of the market. In some cases, you will even find photos of the markets with the reviews. To get started, visit www.localharvest.org

Find certified markets

In an attempt to move in on the current local food movement, some industrial crop growers have started imitation farmers' markets, which are often indistinguishable from real farmers' markets. To combat this trend, California certifies farmers' markets that are verified as legitimate (i.e., the person selling the produce is the farmer who grew it). To find a directory of California certified farmers' markets, visit www.cafarmersmarkets.com.



Find markets from your iPhone

iFarmMarket is an application available on iPhones that can automatically detect your location and show you the closest farmers' markets, sorted by distance.



Find reviews of farmers' markets
Yelp isn't only for restaurants. In fact, Yelp offers user reviews of nearly every business, including farmers' markets. To find reviews, type in "farmers' market" and your zip code. You can sort markets by review rating or distance. Yelp is available at www.yelp.com, and, yes, there's an iPhone app for Yelp too.

Hot New Product



New Remote Controls Works From Anywhere in the House

AT&T's U-verse customers now have the option to purchase a \$49 remote control that works even when the remote is not pointed at the device. For instance, you could store your U-Verse receiver in a drawer and still be able to change the channel, or you could increase the volume from another room. Also, this remote can pair with other devices like DVD players and sound systems, extending its usefulness quite a bit. Currently, this remote is only available to U-verse customers, but look for other cable providers to follow suit in the months to come.



How To Acquire a Great Social Networking Reputation

Looking to build a good reputation on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn? Follow these practical tips and you'll be a top user in no time.

Be consistent

Social networks are like any other social environment; the people who show up the most often tend to be the most popular. Pick a time every day that you can devote to the social network(s) of your choice. It doesn't need to be a lot of time; 15 minutes a day will suffice, but it's important to show up on a regular basis. That way, people will know your account is active and be more likely to engage with you.

See what the top users are doing

Every social network has "super users"--users who are the most active and popular on the network. You can usually use 3rd-party applications to find these users. For instance, www.wefollow.com ranks Twitter users by follower counts within each category. Locate these users and take note of what they are doing differently from the less popular or effective users. For instance, on Twitter you often find top users posting links to interesting articles and websites. By replicating that behavior, you are likely to develop a good reputation on Twitter.

Provide value

If you really want to be beloved on a social network, help people solve their problems. For instance, if one of your Facebook friends posts a status update about losing their job, you could provide that friend with a couple of contacts who may have job opportunities for him or her, or, at the very least, offer some words of encouragement. If you try a new restaurant or see a new movie, post your review. Find creative ways to provide your friends with fun and useful information.

Practice before you play

If you're intimidated by the world of social networking, you can set up a dummy

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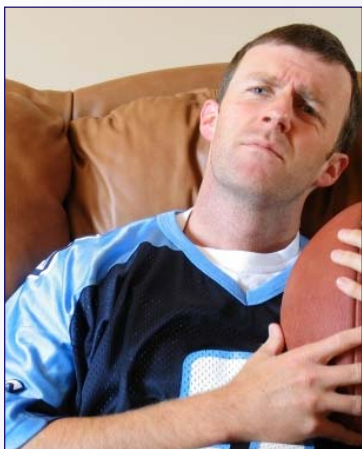
account to learn the ropes before you start building your actual profile. Starting a profile on most networks is free, so you can build more than one. Start with a dummy account that doesn't have your real information on it, and you can freely interact with the network, without fear of making any mistakes in front of your friends and followers.

A Great Online Resource for Modern Parents



Parenting today is more complicated than ever. Fortunately, there are better resources available to parents than ever. Parenting.com is among the most comprehensive parenting resources available anywhere—and it's available to all parents for free. Here, you'll find revealing articles and stories (e.g., "4 Great Family Road Trips," "6 Ways to Stop Sibling Fighting," etc.) and expert advice. What really set parenting.com apart from the myriad of like-minded sites and magazines are the interactive widgets, such as child symptom checkers, milestone trackers, and height prediction calculators.

3 Tools to Help You Dominate at Fantasy Football This Year



Fantasy football has become one of the most thrilling components of the NFL season for millions of devoted fans. If you are in a competitive league, you know that it takes more than a good draft and some lucky breaks to win it all. To win in a competitive league, you need real-time updates from first-class

news sources. Use these free resources to get a leg up on the competition this year.

Yahoo! Fantasy Football



Yahoo! is among the most popular places to play fantasy football (they offer free public and private leagues), so it should come as little surprise that it also happens to be among the best sources of real-time fantasy news. Once

the year begins, staff writers release weekly columns, such as Big Board (ranking the top 50 players by predicted performance for the remainder of the year), and Looks and Touches (a weekly statistical breakdown of how often each running back and receiver touched the ball). To take full advantage, take notice of what day of the week the columns are updated (each one is different), and check back on that day each week.

<http://football.fantasysports.yahoo.com/>

ESPN Fantasy Focus Podcast



If you prefer to receive your information in audio or video form, podcasts may be your best bet. ESPN releases a couple different podcasts for fantasy football news, but Fantasy Focus is by far the most popular, and for

good reason. It is a daily show (usually about 30 minutes in length) that reports injury news, analyzes weekly matchups, and answers fan emails. If every day is a bit too much for you, consider dropping in on their Friday show, which tends to be the most informative.

<http://sports.espn.go.com/espradio/podcast/archive?id=2942325>

CBS Sports



For pre-draft information, nobody does it better (for free) than CBS Sports. CBS offers all of the usual rankings, such as ranking by position, and average expert draft rank, but it's the unusual rankings that set CBS

apart, such as top-rated rookies. Also, you'll find great tips (e.g., articles about position depth) for crafting a winning strategy this season.

<http://www.cbssports.com/fantasy>