

## Getting Real Estate Leads by Harnessing the Power of the Internet

Every Real Estate Agent has a pretty good idea how important a website can be for generating real estate leads. It is a well known fact that something like 60% of all people looking to buy a home in the U.S. and Canada look to the web as their first source of information.

That means there are thousands of people looking to the web for real estate information about every community in the country. But relatively few real estate agents know how to tap into this huge mass of web surfers.

As an online marketer, your objective should be to turn your website into a lead generating machine. It is not easy. There are millions of websites that no one ever looks at, and many of them are real estate websites. In many cases these sites have cost hundreds and even thousands of dollars. But most have very little chance of getting much traffic, and even less chance of converting that traffic into leads. The reason is that they ignore some of the most basic and most important web marketing principles.

You are in for a rude awakening if you think it is a simple matter of setting up a website and then sitting back and waiting for eager home buyers and sellers to visit. It takes hard work to create a website that gets traffic. And it is even more difficult to turn a reasonable amount of that traffic into prospects.

### Basics of Web Marketing - Getting Traffic

First, you must realize that most of your website traffic is going to come from search engines. In order to get people to your website you need to impress the search engines that your site is worth visiting. Whether you like it or not, you are in competition with every other Real Estate Agent in your community. You are competing for "clicks". And you can't get clicks if you're not coming up in a prominent place on that first few pages.

But how do you get there? That is the question asked every day by millions of people wanting to use the web as a marketing tool. The bad news is that it takes hard work, a fair bit of time, and considerable promotional resources.

The good news is that with persistence, patience, and a relatively modest amount of money you can successfully climb up the search engine ranks. And you will find that the payoff is substantial. Once you develop a "web presence", the number of visitors to your website will gradually become a steady stream.

Getting good search engine ranking boils down to these basic things:

1. Define your website's target audience. In the case of Real Estate sites the target audience is normally defined in terms of location. Make it very clear what location you are serving. Ask yourself "What search terms would someone use who is looking for my service?" Normally it will be something like "Real Estate in My Town" or "My Town Real Estate."
2. Focus your website's content on your target audience, and give them the kind of information they want. Usually this will be listings, information about your community, or general real estate information and services. Don't get bogged down with trying to present a cool "image", or impressing people with your accomplishments. People always want to know "What's in it for me?"
3. Keep your content fresh and updated. Make changes and additions on a regular basis. This keeps the search engines coming back to scan your new content.
4. Get external links from other websites. Links from other websites bring traffic, and also tell the search engines that your site is important enough to link to.

### Turning Visitors into Prospects

Getting visitors to your site is the hard part but it is not the end of the story by any means. If you can't convert some of those website visitors into prospects, then you have wasted time, energy and money, and squandered a golden opportunity.

What is a prospect? It is someone who expresses an interest in using your service. Web leads are usually generated when visitors send an email message asking a question or looking for further information. Often they fill out a form on your website that says something like "Fill in this form for

further information."

The obvious conclusion is that your site should make it as easy as possible for people to contact you and request information. The best way to do that is to have a contact form on every page. That way if they see something they are interested in on a given page they do not have to click around looking for a place to get in contact with you. The form is right there on the same page.

Equally important, you should offer different types of information and services in order to encourage responses from your web visitors. Free reports, free home evaluations, hot listings, regular newsletters -- these all serve as enticements to get web visitors to respond, and in so doing, become prospects.

All of these things can be automated to a large degree. By using what is called an "autoresponder" you can send an instant response to anyone who sends an inquiry. For instance, you might offer a "Free Report on How to Get Your Home Ready to Sell for the Best Price." When visitors fill out the form requesting the report, your autoresponder sends it out automatically without you having to do anything. At the same time you receive notification of the inquiry so you can follow up later. You can even have the autoresponder follow up with a series of messages about other services you offer.

By using these and other similar techniques you can take advantage of the awesome power of the internet, and turn your website into a 24/7 lead generating machine.

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### About the Author

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