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This Article

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Don't Tell Anyone What I've Done to My Website!

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I was recently informed that a new online marketing services client had experienced success ridiculously quickly. I found it hard to believe that someone could sell a home to their first lead from their website, and obtain that lead in their first month of using it, so I wrote the agent/broker and asked if what I had heard were true.

"I told my assistant that she can't tell anyone what I have done with my website. I've had three great leads in two days and I'm in a small boutique market. I don't want anyone else in my area to know what I'm doing!" was the response I received. Well, maybe I can't tell you who I'm talking about, but I can surely share with you what this broker did and perhaps you can use that information.

Lightning-quick success is not the norm online

The Internet is huge: about 11 billion active web pages are out there being indexed every day. It only stands to reason that any action taken to improve your websites rankings and placement take time to accomplish. Normally, it's 4-6 weeks (or even longer in highly competitive marketplaces) before you will notice any substantial improvement in your online marketing results. However, just as success rarely happens overnight, success improves as time goes by and in time, online marketing success becomes something to be maintained, not achieved, because you've already achieved it in 80+% of all cases.

What she did with her website

First she bought in to what is not always obvious in online marketing: It is not about bombing people with information they don't need as much as it is about tantalizing them to ask you for more information that they want. Accordingly, the broker stripped her homepage to give minimal information and her online marketing services company rewrote it for her to be as powerful as possible in the eyes of Google and the other search engines. That allowed three major things to occur:

1. Her properly optimized homepage is on page one of Google, Yahoo and Bing for what she sells in both her market targets. This has increased her traffic considerably.
2. In her first few weeks, 76 different people found her in this niche market on the first page of search engines. Here's what one of them who signed in asked for: "Please send me brochures, school info, community events, a Visitor's Guide, and maps for Residential and condos any info you could email would be great. Prices range 300-500k." This was accompanied by the Internet buyer's name, phone and email address.
3. Having attended the "How to follow up an Internet lead" course, our broker knew what to do: she called the prospect and sent a personalized (never an auto responder) email confirming that she had received his inquiry and was complying with his request. She did this within an hour of receiving the lead.

The rest, as they say, is history!

After a year with a website, just 30 more days to succeeding online

This broker subscribed to her online marketing services on August 13, 2009. Production optimizing her site and rewriting her homepage was completed on August 21, 2009. She was selling homes online right after Labor Day.

"I've had my website for over a year," she told me. "It's a very good platform and I'm very happy with how easy it is for me to maintain. I read about another broker who also had a Point2 site and who started selling homes to Internet buyers after Compass tweaked her site, optimized it for her and gave her the training courses. After talking with that broker, I decided to take the \$3400 gamble and give it a try. I have to tell you, I am so impressed at the results and I am very glad that I did!"

If you could see this broker's site, you'd know her listings range from \$280,000 for raw land to \$5,575,000 for a top-of-the-line estate, and anywhere in between; do the math at what the commission on just one Internet sale might be. It is that return which is the basis for investing in online marketing services for realtors: with 87% of all residential real estate sales starting online, chances are good that the cost is recovered several times over during the initial year of subscription.

Don't tell!

It's a common thought to keep something that gives you an unfair advantage to yourself, especially in a very small niche market. Most agents, however, are up to their ears in competition, and want to know about anything that can give them that edge. A major problem today is that "experts" of all sorts are pushing all sorts of technology for all sorts of reasons and a lot of that "must have" technology is baffling to regular folks like you and me. So, whatever you do, don't tell anyone that succeeding online is a simple three-step process:

1. Enable your website to be found on the major search engines under what you sell;
2. Convert 5-15% of all visitors to leads by signing them in and tantalizing them to ask you for more information;
3. Follow up immediately and respond as fast as you can with what they want.

One more thing: don't tell anyone that 87% of all residential homes sales today begin on the Internet or that 92% of Internet homebuyers find the agent they buy a home from through a search engine. NAR's been trying to tell folks that for years, but somehow, the message is getting blocked. Just imagine what agents and brokers would do to succeed in online marketing if they knew these things! Just imagine the huge difference in your income stream if you could tap into that 87% of transactions.

While the identity and location of the broker who is the real source for this column must remain secret, the facts listed above are no secret. Success can be yours, regardless of market conditions, in the place where 87% of all residential real estate transactions occur. The question is: are you going to try to compete on your own, or are you going to seek help from professionals? Because without a doubt, you must become active online or you will become inactive as a realtor. Whatever you decide, the time to begin is now. You can't sit in your cozy little office and wait to be fed leads anymore. You need to find a way to make them for yourself and the place you can do that is online. © 2009 Mike Parker

Mike Parker has written more than 200 published articles about online marketing services for realtors.