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Online Marketing: Wasting a Fortune Chasing Internet Success in the Real Estate Business

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“I don’t have enough time in a day to tell you how much money we have flushed in online marketing”, Willard Morris, of Central Alberta told me in a recent interview.

“We’ve done the keyword technology thing, we’ve done the sponsored links thing, we tried reciprocal linking and we hired a website company to build us a real estate site (because—they said—‘that’s all we do’ and they said they’d market it for us, too). It was nothing but a complete disaster.

We have spent thousands and thousands of dollars that we have basically flushed. We spent all that money and had nothing to show for it. Worse, we had no idea of the huge amount of problems we would have establishing our site again after our web designer pulled our site down and handed us a disc with our files on it because we cancelled our \$400/month ‘keyword technology’ agreement with him that we had pre-paid for 16 months. His ‘technology’ didn’t work, we never sold a home from it, we had prepaid 16 months of it, and –boom! We were on our own!”

Ready to dump “Online Marketing”

It wasn’t always that way for Willard Morris. When he started selling new construction almost 30 years ago, he didn’t even need a license. People delivered, generally, on what they said they would deliver, and vendors tried to provide useful service to clients.

When the Internet started to be known for its impact on real estate sales, Willard was quick to try to seize the opportunity to tap into the vast resource it promises to be. The only problem was that he needed professional assistance to help him, and for the longest time, he couldn’t seem to find effective solutions that actually would help him sell houses to Internet buyers. He was so disgusted

he was thinking of just leaving ‘Internet success’ to someone else. (His story sounds like a nightmare thousands of agents have also had.)

But—even a seasoned pro like Willard Smith has a limit of patience and after the debacle with his webmaster; he was ready to give up on the Internet. “When someone asked me if I were receiving leads from my efforts, I replied ‘A website generates leads? Really? (Insert sarcasm here) We thought it was just a business card for people with computers.’” To say Willard was disgusted doesn’t begin to cover how he felt.

“The net is something we have struggled with for 10 years,” Willard Morris continued. “Getting a reliable site built is harder than you think. We have been taken to the cleaners more times than we care to admit. Even when we think we have our butts covered it turns out we just don’t know enough about how it all works.

We finally started to reverse that by having a company that specializes on online marketing services for realtors evaluate our website through an offer we found on a newsletter. We were so impressed with the person that called us back and the report that was presented as well as the plain English explanation given to us on what it all meant. We were looking for something new at that time because we knew what we did have, wasn’t working. We liked the guarantees offered with the product and we liked the price; it turned out that changing from what we were doing then would actually save us money even if it did nothing!

We signed up, expecting very little. When our webmaster found out, our website then became a nightmare and everything started to go wrong. You see, our web host was also the webmaster and site designer and when we opted out of his keyword marketing program he refused to maintain the site anymore. He was forthright enough to admit the reason: without his “special programs” there was no money to be made for him in simply maintaining the site. He told us that we could keep paying him for a “keywords program” that didn’t work, or we could find another webmaster. We were lost and knew nothing about choosing a website company.

We phoned our rep at our new online marketing services company and told them the problem. They referred us to an approved website vendor and introduced us to them. We sold our first home from the website in May of 2009, just 60 days later.”

10 times his money back in six months

“That first sale earned us a \$9600 commission, and before the summer was out, we had closed on two others—one that earned us \$5400 and one that earned us \$20,300. We were very pleased that our \$3400 investment brought us \$35,300 in commissions we would have never made in just a few months—especially after all we went through for all those years attempting to make the Internet work for us! But, our pleasure at our program comes from more than only making money: it comes from being better at what we do because we are now effective online.

For example: We were approached by an out of area Realtor because his brother wanted to sell his lakeside home. We convinced the realtor it would be to his advantage to work with us and not against us. We already agreed on the price for the home but had to convince the city Realtor that even though he lived close (only 90 minutes away) we were the logical choice because Sylvan Lake is our market; after all, we had great marketing, our website was in first page positions on Google and the others, we lived right there to accommodate viewings plus we had an impressive list of buyers just waiting for the right product.

The home owner agreed to a joint listing. We put the home up on the website on a Friday afternoon and we got the call Friday night from an out of town buyer who found us on the net and had created a listing alert for lakeside homes. When he got home from work, he saw the notification in his email, logged in and viewed the details. He called and made an appointment to see the home Saturday. We had the offer in-hand by Monday. This property was exactly what the buyer was looking for. We closed that deal in 12 days, got the seller 98% of his list price (\$747,500) and did it all in a nearly dead market place all because of the power of the web and our ability to sell homes there because of our ability to be found there.”

Buyers and sellers from anywhere

Since being able to be found online, Willard has sold homes to people from England and sold one for people in Thailand. Willard’s marketplace is a town called Sylvan Lake in the province of Alberta, which is situated in close proximity to two of Alberta’s largest cities, Edmonton and Calgary, a small town with a cosmopolitan atmosphere.

You can feel the energy coursing through this town. Sylvan Lake has become a residential hub for people working in the oil and gas industries, commuters working in the City of Red Deer, people who work and service the town itself and recreational users who inhabit the town and summer villages year round or on a seasonal basis. In the past, Willard would sell between 80 and 85 units annually. Despite the economic slowdown worldwide, he continues to sell properties at a rate that assures that he won't be hurting anytime soon!

© 2009 Mike Parker - Mike Parker has written more than 200 published articles about online marketing services for realtors. For help in making your Internet marketing successful even if you've had experiences like Willard Morris or to request a free review of your website to determine if it can be found by internet buyers and if it is set up to be effective for you, [click here](#) and we'll review it for you at no cost or obligation.